



Breaking

the bondage of LEGALISM

& Embracing

the Spirit of Grace giving

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PREFACE

The preface may be the most important portion to read in this whole book. This will define some terms and clear up some preconceived notions before we proceed to more controversial issues.

If you do not believe the tithe is commanded, and are giving through freewill, Spirit-led giving, this resource is written in support of your view of giving; but if you read this only gaining support for the tithing debate, then you will have missed greater intentions that the Spirit of God has.

If you support tithing (a minimum requirement of 10%), this resource is not written in total support of your view, but if you feel that this resource will make attempts to excuse selfishness, greed, and disobedience, then you will have missed the greater intentions of giving written here. The challenge for all is to gain knowledge and experience of the greater call and higher guilt led by the Holy Spirit. Whether you give beyond the tithe with limitless offerings, or you give freely, you already exercise the tool used to define "Spirit-led giving". This book will challenge you to give sacrificially.

First, let's explain and compare two types of givers.

1. *Cheerful tither* - They follow the examples in scripture about tithing, while cheerfully and willingly committing themselves to give a 10% minimum.
2. *Cheerful Spirit-led* - They feel their instructions for giving only come through the workings of Holy Spirit while cheerfully and willingly submit themselves.

These categories of givers could be broken down into smaller, specific groups if the time was taken; but these points are trying to show the similarities more than the differences. Both types of givers recognize an authority in his life and both choose to be subordinates or not. Tithers just believe tithing is the authority. Freewill givers believe that the Holy Spirit is our only authority.

I recognize that everyone has a freewill, but for definition purposes in further reading, this term will be used to categorize those who do not believe in tithing.

Because a tither and free-giver can both experience joy and sorrow of giving, we cannot determine our doctrine based on stories of provision and blessing from either side. Generations of tale telling can be told on how God blessed and provided for who believe in tithing, or Spirit led giving.

The ultimate question is which authority should we follow, and why? This writing will expose

misconceptions of giving that have been left unchallenged for centuries. One of the main reasons why tithing has not been unchallenged for so long is our lack of understanding the Old and New Covenants. Here is a list to help us lay a foundation of God's covenants and laws.

1. The New Covenant has the authority to endorse, continue, confirm, ratify, or abolish any law in the Old Covenant.
2. When I mention the word 'principle' I am describing an 'eternal principle' (sometimes called a 'moral law'). An eternal principle can be described as something you find by learning the lesson not by doing the exercise. For instance, cleaning your room is just merely an exercise that can teach you a principle. It is 'cleanliness' that I consider a principle and cleaning one's room as the exercise. Lastly, when I mention the word 'law', I am describing any temporary or permanent requirement of God.
3. Let's distinguish the New Covenant and Old Covenant. The New Covenant (NC) did not begin until after Christ's resurrection. Any period prior to this point, God's people were under the Old Covenant (OC).

These points are not necessarily prerequisites for understanding the tithe issue; but they help point out a clearer picture of discerning scripture and the rest of this book.

Even with these foundations laid, I recognize God's word as the ultimate authority.

INTRODUCTION

I was once reading this article about how birds learn to fly. One of the interesting things is they do not leave the nest at all until mama bird thinks they are ready to train. Mama bird doesn't teach them to crawl around before they learn to fly. How mother teaches the young hatchling to fly is by grabbing some food and flying to another branch or a different part of the cliff. She taunts them with the food, and challenges them to come get it. Some of the young birds get the courage to open up their wings and flap. When the right time comes, a gust of wind lifts their bodies out of the nest. Eventually after a few test flights they learn to maneuver enough through the wind to reach mama. Over time they learn to hunt and defend in midair as well.

We've heard that birds have a keen sense of vision and can see for miles and miles. That's partially because they have a sky high view. You can't see much when you are on the ground. There are trees, fog, and hills in the way. But birds have the ability to cruise around at the highest altitude away from all the obstacles.

If a bird never learned to fly it would be useless and defenseless because they are slow and very limited on their feet with the exception of the ostrich. Let's imagine the eagle. We look at it as the king of the sky. We see the eagle as skillful, cunning, and fast. There is no other bird that matches its finesse and tenure. What would we think of the eagle if it walked around on the ground pecking at things like a chicken? You have to admit, chickens are the very bottom of the bird chain when it comes to respect. Nobody wants to be called a chicken considering no sports teams are named after them.

There are a few things that we can gather from a soaring bird that help us compare tithing with Spirit led giving.

Let's observe how birds are trained to fly. What would happen if you teach an eagle to walk before he can fly? How would this type of training prepare him to be the king of the sky?

I view tithing as the type of training for Christians who ultimately intend to walk instead of fly with their giving. The point is not that tithing is the beginning point of our giving, but that God never intended his children to begin their giving with tithing because we are Spirit led people. We are born-again children of God who have been given gifts of giving from the Holy Spirit and empowered and enlightened through his guidance, instructions, comfort, and help. God's power over our lives is not manifested through an ability to give 10%. God is manifested through us by our willingness to give

generously without compulsion, because of the power of love and grace.

Because some people are so familiar with tithing they have trouble understanding how Spirit led giving actually works. They have found that tithing has been reliable and safe as the solid ground, and really see Spirit led offerings above the tithe mainly as an opportunity to boost their confidence about their tithe. In an analogous way, think of a tither using Spirit led offerings in the same way ostriches use their wings. Their wings are there to assist in balance and speed of the hard work of their legs.

For most tithers, there is a sigh of relief when there is enough in the checking account to quench any punishment for missing a tithe. Because of the exhaustive effort of tithing, offerings are kind of an afterthought. Even with those who can comfortably give above a tithe, their offerings are methodically calculated as well.

The next thing we can learn from birds is how they build their nests high. Since our ultimate destiny is Spirit led giving, why do we build our nest on the ground with tithing? God does not say that tithing is the starting point, launching pad, or training wheels of our Spiritual journey of giving. Such things are not found in scripture. Our destiny is Spirit led giving, and even tithers acknowledge the fact that spirit led giving is the ultimatum through offerings that are given above the tithe. They know that giving 10% is not a spiritual earmark, it is an earthly one. Their offerings above the tithe are in recognition that grace, freewill, and the Holy Spirit have to get involved at some point during the journey of giving. It's ironic how we instinctively realize that freewill offerings without a command or compulsion are the real litmus test for those who love God. Any religious person can be forced, threatened, mandated, frightened, or obliged into giving to their deity.

Most believe the Holy Spirit's involvement in giving, is having a good heart, or being cheerful about giving. Even if that's what they think Spirit-led giving is, then their idea of the Holy Spirit's role in giving is very shallow.

Our destiny is Spirit led giving, but we've set up the roadblock of tithing that does nothing but distract us from our ultimate goal. High above all the other obstacles that hinder our vision is where we become kings of the sky. In the sky, we can see further into the purposes of God's calling, and we become in tune with the destiny for us.

The last thing that we can learn from flying is that the sky is limitless, and has no restrictions on where it could take anyone. With Spirit-led giving, there are no earmarks, no training wheels, no starting or stopping points. There are no roads or paths that are worn out or traveled. We create our own paths, and the only thing to guide us is the wind. We are completely bound by the freedom of

the sky.

I'm not saying that we should not have goals, or personal standards. Each one of us has our own individual destiny.

I will say that my journey into Spirit led giving has been liberating, challenging, and breathtaking. There are many times when a gust of wind from the Holy Spirit was prompting me to give. Sometimes I obeyed; a lot of times I didn't. God has taken my giving to places that my tithing legs could not have taken me. The Holy Spirit knows about the needs of everyone because the Spirit is the one calling. If the Spirit is capable of calling anyone to build a ministry, then the Spirit is capable of calling others to support it.

FIRST FRUITS

Exodus 23:16 And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field:

Lev 23:20 And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the LORD,

First Fruits and Tithes were separate types of giving found in the Old Testament. They were not considered equal nor were they given together. Most believe that firstfruits and tithing were synonymous, but you couldn't be further from the truth. We will look into the significance of first fruits and why correlating it with tithing defiles the meaning.

THE FIRST AND BEST OF OUR OBEDIENCE

Although the tithe did not consist of the first fruit, God does expect the best and utmost obedience from us when we give; but if we think that giving the best and first fruit of our tithe is what obedience is, then we should take a look at the scripture to see what God really did expect from Israel in their giving.

*Leviticus 27:32, 33 - And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever under the, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD. **He shall not inquire whether it is good or bad, nor shall he exchange it;***

God does expect the best type of obedience, but as we can see, God doesn't always ask for us to give up the best of everything. The tithe that Israel gave was counted one out of every ten and was given regardless of its condition. Giving God 10% from the top of your paycheck and the best of your earnings is honorable and commended, but according to scripture, it was not even required under Law.

If we wanted to honor the first fruit principle, why not give our first pay check of the year? The first fruit was not only talking about the highest quality of your total increase, any more than it was talking about giving up the first paycheck of the new year. The first fruit was collected when only a few of the very first ripe fruits were ripe enough to be harvested.

Israel did not honor God with a first fruit tithe, because the first fruits were given prior to the tithe. The first fruit offering was the first available opportunity to honor God with their increase.

Many people highlight the tithe as a test to prove God's ownership over your life, but look at how easy it is to give God 10% when you have already gathered your increase. A first fruit offering was given before Israel knew what would come of the rest of the harvest. All of the harvest was not ripe enough to glean yet, but they decided to give God the first portion of their increase when there was going to be no guarantee for more ripe fruit to come. A tithe is given after you've collected your whole harvest, and is easier to calculate how the other 90% will carry you through. A first fruit offering is a gift of 100% of your ripe fruit, and is given in greater faith, believing that God will protect the rest of the crop from the devourer.

When Israel crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land, one of God's instructions was for the tribe of Levi to take the first step into the rushing waters. This was before God provided them with the blessing of stopping the water. This type of faith is just like our giving. Faith giving is not of faith if we look down at our checkbook and see how God will take care of the rest of the needs for that week or month. Faith giving is hearing what God is telling you and stepping into the rushing water before he performs the miracle to provide for you.

There are people who have developed the budget for the next year down to the last penny. Each week, they put God's amount in an envelope, put the house mortgage amount in an envelope, and an entertainment amount in an envelope, but what they miss is the concept of first fruit giving. Giving to God before your budget could be planned out or before you received your harvest was a huge part in the lives of Israel. This is not saying that budgets are bad. What it is saying, is that obedient giving must take faith that goes beyond your budget. Be obedient. If God gives you instructions, take the step of faith of first fruit offerings, and you will see the rushing waters of Jordan subside so you can walk across to the promised land on dry ground.

FIRST FRUITS – A TYPE OF CHRIST

Scripture makes a few correlations between first fruits and Jesus. So, let's look at the life of Jesus on earth and take into account what his examples of giving were for us.

I Cor 15:20-23

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

The spiritual picture of the firstfruit offering is revealed to us here. It was a specific gift that Israel

gave, representing Jesus Christ, the first born of the resurrection of the dead. What it does not mention is that the tithe represents Christ. Notice in a parallel passage we read in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he GAVE”. What did God give? Not a tithe, but his **only** Son. If we can put it this way, God gave not just a portion of many sons, but he gave his only son, which was **everything** he had. Once again we re-visit the concept, that when Israel gave firstfruits that was everything they had at the time. As a result of the first fruit offering, many more came after that and became a bigger harvest for God.

Because of the definition of first fruits we know that neither Jesus Christ, nor the first offerings represented just a tenth of what Israel had. An example of this is found in a passage in Nehemiah 10 when the first born of the sons and of cattle were to be brought in the house of God. So obviously, the first born male is not a tenth.

Most people know the story of when Jesus asked a boy for his lunch, consisting of five loaves of bread and two fishes, so that he could feed over 5000 people. What Jesus did not do in this situation, was require a tithe from the boy or the assembly, so the disciples could go out grocery shopping and feed everyone. Jesus asked one boy to give up his whole meal. Through the faithful giving of one person, a miracle was born, that fed more people than anyone can imagine. God does not require a tithe; neither does he ask that you physically give everything away. What he does want is what you have inside. It's not what a man has on the outside that allows miracles to happen, but instead, it is what a man has on the inside. Jesus could have used an empty basket with nothing to begin with, but he did not want empty faith either.

ABRAHAM AND JACOB

At bare minimum it does not make sense that the church was left to pick up Abraham or Jacob's tithing torch and run with it without any authorization to do so. Spirit-led, freewill givers have most of the church disagreeing with them, and the reason why they are not running away is because there have been hard answers given to easy questions. "Father Abraham" is the pro-tithe response, instead of "Father God".

ABRAHAM'S ENCOUNTER

Many use the meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek in Genesis 14 as an example showing the validity of tithing today; but in the interpretation of Abraham's encounter, OT scripture and opinions are mended together to fabricate tithing as an eternal law or "principle". There is certainly no basis for that thesis and there is no so reason to look the other way when I use scripture based upon scripture to show how Abraham's encounter is not a validation of tithing.

We read in Genesis 14 the account of Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek.

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all. Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'

The number one argument is that Abraham gave a tenth 400 years before the law was written. But doesn't it seem strange antiquity alone gives it any degree of truth? Let's expose some errors.

The first error is that many believe the ceremonial law was not initiated until Israel was given the law by Moses. If we flash back our memories to the beginning of Genesis, we remember how Adam sinned, and God provided a sacrificial substitute for sin. Do we forget that the ceremonial law started at Genesis 3:15, thousands of years prior to Abraham? Let's not forget that many other rituals began long before tithing. The error in our thinking is that sacrifices are more antiquated than tithing, but we believe that sacrifices are abolished and a tithe should be enforced.

If you truly believe that Abraham's actions is the model for our giving then read again the account of Abraham and Melchizedek; because it is interesting to note that Abraham gave nothing from his own possessions.

If Abraham's tithing upon his spoils of war are an example for future generations, then why do we read in Numbers 31 about Israel being instructed to give less than 1% of the war spoils to the Levites? Because of these issues, we cannot take Abraham's example and use it as proof for tithing. God didn't even tell the Israelites later on to follow Abraham's code, so how could we, being under a whole new covenant, follow Abraham's tithing? By the way, if paying a tithe was already required prior or to Abraham, why did God have to make it an ordinance for Israel?

Other inconsistencies in our contemporary worship that were practiced differently prior to Abraham include the Sabbath. It was declared in Genesis 2:3, yet Christians traditionally meet on the first day instead of the last day of the week.

While digging further into the inconsistencies of Abraham's practices compared to ours, we bring up we can address the purpose of a storehouse. There was no storehouse, cathedrals, temples, or churches all those years prior to Moses. The storehouse was not located in Melchizedek's town of "Salem". Salem was a pagan city, inhabited by Canaanites. There was no temple and as we will study below, Melchizedek very well may have worshipped a pagan god.

Hebrew was a Semitic language, related to Akkadian, the lingua franca of that time. An Akkadian noun that Abraham was most likely familiar with, given his Babylonian background was esretu, meaning "one-tenth." By the time of Abraham, this phrase was used to refer to the "one-tenth tax," or "tithe." Because of this standard one-tenth tax in Babylon, Abraham of the Genesis account was most likely familiar with the concept of giving up ten-percent of goods as tax. (Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tithe)

This historical fact is the only evidence we have to declare the motivation behind Abraham's giving. We no longer have to figure out if Abraham gave voluntarily or out of duty to God. More or less Abraham recognizes the civil authority placed by God in his life and submits to Arab customs at that time in giving 10% to Melchizedek. After all, give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's.

WHO WAS MELCHIZEDEK?

So who was Melchizedek, and why does it seem the bible praises him as a high priest and king? Once again it is a common misinterpretation of who Melchizedek was, and why the bible was mentioning

him. In Hebrews chapter 7, we read about the correlation between Jesus as the high priest and king and also Melchizedek's office as high priest and king. One thing we need to understand is that the bible doesn't mention Melchizedek as a Godly man. Before we read into Hebrews 7, notice how Genesis 14 describes this event.

Genesis 14 - Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.

*But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the **LORD** [JEHOVAH], God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth. . .*

Because Hebrews 7 describes Melchizedek without father and mother, without descent, and without a beginning of days, many people think that Melchizedek was God incarnate, but what it really meant was that Melchizedek's lineage was undocumented and unknown, so this is why the bible describes him in this way. The significance of this was that an Israelite priest had to have documentation of his lineage in order to be considered a priest.

Even with the historical record of tithing war spoils to the local king, tithe teachers still argue that Abraham gave the 10%, because the eternal priesthood office was inherent through Melchizedek. All of these accounts add to the blurry account between Abraham and Melchizedek.

I like how Jim peacock, writer of, "A study of enforced giving and tithing within the church", explains how Abraham's example should be followed.

Tithers argue that the priesthood of Jesus is superior to and supersedes the Levitical priesthood and its ministry. Christ is greater than Abraham, Levi and all his descendants. This passage does not tell Christians to tithe; it establishes nothing about New Covenant giving. Furthermore, in all 75 New Testament references to Abraham (based on the NKJV); the only practice of his that we are told to follow is his faith.

In Hebrews chapter 7, Paul is describing the path of change from the OT ceremonial law to the new law. In that chapter the term "tithe" is used 7 times and "law" is used 7 times. Is that a coincidence? I don't think so. Why else would Paul be preaching to the Jews about change if they were to keep tithing like they always did for over a thousand years? In other words if there was no need to change tithing then why was he preaching the change to a group of people that already tithed? Russell Earl

Kelly in his book, “Should the Church Teach Tithing” clears up this quandary with a concise statement, “*It is totally illogical to teach that [Hebrews] 7:18 abolished every ordinance pertaining to the Levitical priesthood except tithing!*”

Usually the next argument presented about Abraham and tithing is the fact that circumcision was directly terminated in the New Testament while tithing was not. The reason why the abolishment of circumcision was directly stated in the NT is because uncircumcised men were considered unclean by the Jews and they had trouble accepting uncircumcised men into their fellowship. Gentiles had no obligation to Tithing in the OT, so the Jews did not struggle with the Gentiles lack of performance to this duty.

JACOB’S ENCOUNTER

Abraham willingly gave a tithe during his encounter towards Melchizedek’s earthly authority. But somehow we overlook how Jacob bargains the tithe during his encounter with God.

The tithe was a token of Jacob’s covenant he made to God. Read the description of Jacob’s covenant token with God in *Genesis 28:22*,

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Jacob made a conditional covenant contingent upon God’s protection. He asked God to meet a certain criteria, and if God’s end of the bargain was met, then Jacob would fulfill his end. The covenant or token wasn’t set by God, but by Jacob. If Abraham’s past example was affirmation of God’s unconditional requirement to tithe, why wouldn’t Jacob have sealed the covenant with something new or beyond ten percent? For instance, let’s say at my marriage ceremony my wife asked that I give her one red rose every day as part of my duties in marriage. Of course, because I love her, I obey her wish. Then one day after having an enlightening dream, I create a new covenant with her stating, if you prepare my food, stay by my side, and get me to where I need to be in life, I will give you one red rose every day. In response, I would see a strange look from her eyes. First of all, she would want me to have those things in the first place. Second of all, if my goals were going to require extra effort on her part, I would at least need to bump it up to two roses every day to convince her. If I was God, and already expected a tithe, I would say something to the effect of, “thanks Jacob for sealing the covenant with something I have already wanted you to do anyway.” A

token promise should be unique and sacrificial. There is nothing wrong with committing to God a specific portion. But there is something wrong with taking a promise of your father Jacob, and burdening the children of God with his tokens.

Every child of God goes through life with an opportunity to present our tokens to him in exchange for God's provision in life. Because God predestined us, he gave us dreams, goals, and ambitions that you want to accomplish in life. There's a land or a place in life that we've asked God to bring us back to. What is our token promise going to cost us? God makes covenants with us every day, and in exchange he wants us to seal our covenant with something that's unique and sacrificial. So many people have gone through life, and have given up some very expensive tokens. It may have been a career, a house, a loved one. Through it all, we know that God is preparing our destiny. He is paving the path for us to get back home. Jacob wanted safe passage to his father's house. What are you giving up for a safe passage to your heavenly father's house? Is it money? Maybe...maybe not. Jacob said, "Keep me in the way that I go". I believe he was saying, guide me, because I've got a long journey home.

You may have the prayer of Jabez moments in your life, where you ask earnestly and receive it. But more than likely God is just waiting for your token. He is waiting for your offer. Whatever it is, I'm not sure if it will be obvious, but it will be a sacrifice. I think how Jacob decided what to give to God was the thing that he deceived from God in the first place-financial blessing. Jacob robbed Esau from his birthright, and afterwards fled in fear of his life. And from then on, the blessing he coveted, he began to run from. Finally, he gave it to God. There is an area in everyone's life that we've been chased by, something that we've robbed from God. We risked our lives attaining it and now were being chased by it. Could it be your token? Then give it to God. What birthrights have been given to you? Is it popularity, success, wisdom, passion, energy, love? The best thing to do with it - is give it to others. If you keep it for yourself, you will never reach the potential that God has for you. You may not even reach his destination for you.

John 7:22. Moses gave circumcision (not because it was of Moses but because it was of the fathers)

No one will know if Jacob offered a tenth to follow the footsteps of his father; but what we do know, is that Jacob wasn't required to. Not unless Jacob thought he was pulling a string on God, tithing was not a previous law.

While looking back at both Abraham and Jacob's covenant practices with God, both were sealed with a token - circumcision being God's idea and commanded by Him, and the tithe being Jacob's idea and voluntarily being offered by him. When we study giving in light of the terms tithe along with

freewill-offering we see that prior to the Mosaic Law, the tithe, without a doubt was given as a voluntary freewill offering by Jacob. The bible does not say whether Abraham was required to give it or not. All we can do is study accounts of recorded history in another book and conclude Abraham was required to tithe according to a civil law in the land.

Jacob's account presents a huge hole in the argument of tithing. Tyler S. Ramey, author of *Tithing Today*, states, *"It seems that Jacob's pre-Law method of tithing loses modern-day appeal because of its conditionality. How often does one hear tithing teachers encouraging people to tithe only when the circumstances of life allow it or the conditions to tithe are satisfactory to the giver? (This is exactly how Jacob acted)"*

Achim Nkosi Maseko in "Church Schism & Corruption" makes a good point, "Even though Abraham's circumcision was in response to God himself and his tithing was in response to a man, we place Abraham's example of tithing at a higher authoritative value than circumcision."

Don't read into Abraham's response while overlooking Jacob's so you can apply the era of the Mosaic Law to the New Testament church.

JESUS ON TITHING

Many of us have heard the term, “context is King, but in the New Testament, when Jesus rebukes the Pharisees’ legalism, many take his words out of context. Instead they mis-interpret Jesus’ single comment about the Pharisees’ tithing and crown it king over the Church’s giving.

THE PHARISEES

Matt. 23:23 Woe to you, scribes [teachers of the law: [NIV] and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith; these you ought to have done, without leaving the other undone.

Jesus was speaking to a group of people who were good at keeping only the “Law”. The Pharisees, who were not good at keeping God’s principles, practiced the law beyond perfection. They did not do so with weightier matters, such as justice, mercy, and faith. Hence, Jesus’ rebuke for **not** obeying them. So, what does this say about tithing? The Pharisees actions could be used to distinguish what the Law is and what is Universal Principle. It’s very simple. Whatever laws they neglected were actually the universal principles that still stand today; and whatever laws they flourished at are what is not required today. As we’ll see, the Pharisees neglected justice mercy and faith, but were commended for tithing.

Matthew 23 shows that the lovers of the law obeyed tithing to the minutest extent since they tithed on the smallest herbs of their garden. I am amused at those who conclude that New Testament tithing is no longer under the meticulous letter of the law because of grace; but they use a mathematical fraction 1/10 to determine their giving, they only give from their gross not their net, and they believe tithing must go to the church storehouse. Talk about meticulous!

One of the things that the Pharisees wanted most was money. In fact Jesus made that distinction in his statement, “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money”. I am going to toss a statement out here, mainly because of the accusations that I receive about being greedy. Many call me greedy and say my “anti-tithe” stance is just an excuse to get out of giving, but take a note, that it was the ones who strictly followed tithing who were called lovers of money. This is important to recognize that tithing does not rid hearts from the grip of greed. As a matter of fact, if you notice that most greedy TV preachers are the staunchest supporters of tithing. I’m not calling tithers a Pharisee or a lover of money. That statement is not to be taken dogmatically. All I’m trying to say is that the same amount of greed falls on both sides of the fence. Also keep in mind that Matthew 23 was not a criticism to

those that do not tithe.

Matthew 23:1-3 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

At the beginning of Matthew 23, right before Jesus commands tithing, He commands the disciples to obey the Pharisees, but why does he command them to follow these hypocrites? The answer is right there in verse two- they "sit in Moses' seat". Is there anyone today that sits in Moses' seat? Are you under the law of Moses still? No. You are not, but you are under God's eternal principles.

Jesus still recognized the authority of the Mosaic Law in the lives of Israel and still needed them to continue to obey the law of tithing. Calvary had not come yet.

THE DISCIPLES & MINISTRY

Jesus' earthly ministry did not receive a tithe, nor did he pay tithes. Instead He led through other examples on how the gospel should be spread and how church giving should be structured.

Luke 8:1-3 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and . . . Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuzza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

Matthew 10:7-10 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.

There are two passages here that involve Jesus, his disciples, and ministry. In both passages you can see the similar factors. Jesus and his disciples operated his ministry on the support they received through the generosity of freely led people. Luke 8:1-3 is self-explanatory. Neither Jesus nor his disciples took from the temple treasury, or from the storehouse. He was supported by the ones whom he was spiritually feeding.

Many are afraid that our ministers will be neglected without the mandate of tithing, but if the women

in Luke 8 were already burdened with Old Testament laws of giving, it's surprising that they were able to also support Jesus and his disciples with freewill offerings on top of that. What I'm saying is if the Jews under the heavy obligations of the law were still able to support Jesus through freewill offerings on top of all the other requirements of giving, then born again, Spirit-led Christians without the mandate of tithing are capable of supporting our ministers with freewill giving as well.

In Matthew 10 above, Jesus sends the disciples out, and tells them God was going to provide for them through the generous giving of others. It was the very first seminary internship, commissioned by the greatest teacher of all. There is no command here to collect money for their journeys, instead by faith they were to receive what is given and needed for their journey. The gospel is intended to be free. It is not intended to have a 10% tariff placed on its active members. Now the Levites received the tithe and were ministers as well, but the price of the gospel of Jesus Christ was not paid yet.

JESUS & THE TEMPLE TAX

When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?"

Peter said to Him, "From strangers."

Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. 27Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a £piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

In this case Jesus did not agree with obligated giving. If he did, then He would have been fine with giving the tax for its original reasons. Jesus made it clear that the Children of God are not under any direct obligations. Let me be clear. Giving is commanded, but we have no specific commands instituted for us, only principles. Jesus implies in that passage that we are free not to give, but as children of the king we should seek to give.

We can see that Jesus did give the tax, not because it was expected, but to stop others from being offended at their liberty. He gave an excuse to put away his liberty for the moment. Jesus had a good enough reason to not pay the tax at all but because He's such a great guy, I'm sure he lets out a big sigh and comes up with a half decent excuse to pay it anyway. What a great guy! I find myself in the same scenario, making similar types of excuses as well. For instance, if you are on a diet and this big

piece of chocolate cake is staring at you. If you happen to convince yourself of some moral justification to eat it, then by all means, you should be able to have your cake and eat it too. Jesus does the same thing here. He clearly doesn't agree with this obligation to give. I would think he could just say, "I'm not giving it", but he finds a moral justification, and gives it anyways. If you eliminate the ones offended at Jesus, I would find no reason why Jesus would pay the tax.

ETERNAL PRINCIPLES

I think we can all agree that everyone is required to give something. I think we can also agree that giving back is an everlasting requirement. Whether on earth or heaven, we can pretty much count on the fact that our creator expects us to continue giving. But the question now is whether or not giving 10% is an eternal standard? To me the obvious answer is a simple - No. It seems pretty straightforward that we are to abide to the principles of giving, but the standard can fluctuate based on the Holy Spirit.

THE SPIRIT AND THE LAW OF GOD

Galatians 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Being judged by the Spirit relinquishes the idea of giving by the law as stated in the verse above

The Holy Spirit is the influential factor that tells us how God wants more time, and treasure. God would not have given us the Holy Spirit if He could have left us the law to walk our life by.

The tithe and offering laws in the Old Testament were established to accommodate what the Israelites lacked in spiritual rebirth. Our rebirth in the New Testament and Spirit filled baptism leads us to a different destination that the law could not get us to; and because of God's spirit, we can receive personal instructions for our life. It is what's in our heart that will last for eternity, and also the premises of what we will be judged on.

We can take laws from the Old Testament and actually gain eternal principles from them. For instance *1 Corinthians 9:9* Paul alludes to the Old Testament in order to glean a principle.

For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain."

Paul is pointing out that we should give to the saints that devote their time into ministry so they can continue devoted to their calling. We can see this principle repeated in scripture elsewhere.

II Chronicles 31:4 - Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the LORD.

If we extract the core principles of these passages, we find that it is important to support those who minister to us. We do not see anything that instructs us to tithe, nor do we take this passage as a

spiritual mandate against muzzling an ox.

For another example, *Philippians 4:18* Paul also alludes to giving as a sweet aroma to God, but is this a command to burn incense?

Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable, well pleasing to God.

In this example, Paul was not showing the necessity of burning incense and sacrifice to God, he was illustrating the principle, which was pleasing God with our giving. The Old Testament is much like an illustration, pointing out the overall bigger picture. Sacrificing for God is the principle, spices and animals, and tithing were once considered God's standard.

If the Holy Spirit is telling someone to give 30% and they do not obey, then wouldn't you consider them guilty of violating God's command? Let's say a Christian is reluctant to listen to the Holy Spirit; is there any clause in the bible that tells us to knock some sense in them by implementing the law?

1 Peter 3:18 - being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit

Galatians 3:2 - Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Because faith is the evidence of things not seen, we cannot use the works of the law to receive the Spirit of God. Faith is a greater law and the Holy Spirit is a greater authority over OT ritual. The Holy Spirit guidance, empowered by our faith, brings us to a whole new dimension of giving that cannot be bound by earthly traditions or temporary percentages.

Looking back, we can see that the Old Testament rituals and ceremonies were just like an artist's painting on canvas. An artist paints representations of reality, he cannot create reality. OT rituals and ceremonies were put in place to teach mankind and pave the way of Jesus Christ. Before Adam's fall, God tested man with the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Unfortunately Adam disobeyed, and sacrificial and ceremonial laws were immediately put in place to continue to test and teach obedience. Although God's teaching and tests still continue, He has torn the canvas of the Old Testament rituals. You see, God the Father was the artist, Jesus Christ was the painting and the law represented the canvas. So, once the Messiah came and fulfilled what was represented on the canvas, God tore the canvas from top to bottom.

Because an artist cannot continue painting on a torn canvas, he must prepare a new one. In John 14 Jesus announces to his disciples that he is leaving. He was leaving because the old canvas had been fulfilled and was now torn, and Jesus had to go in order to leave a new canvas. That's why Jesus said

“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”.

Because the ceremonial law was torn in half, we need to concentrate on obeying our new teacher – The Holy Spirit. We cannot pick up the pieces of the old canvas and live our lives by the brush strokes of Old Testament rituals. There is a new canvas with different kinds of brush strokes called freedom, liberty, and grace.

As an artist myself, I can appreciate the value that artistic liberty gives me. Artistic freedom provides an ability to create a painting that is more beautiful than ever, but also artistic freedom can create disasters that cause messy confusions. Think of the Holy Spirit as something that gives us the freedom to have no boundaries, but also something that hones, guides our spiritual talent.

Here’s an illustration. Three children are given a piece of paper and crayons to draw with. The first child is given a piece of paper that has an outline of an apple. The second and third children are given blank pieces of paper. For the first child, the picture and the lines are already drawn for him. He can see the picture before it is finished, so all that he has to do is stay between the lines until the picture is finished. The second child sees the blank piece of paper and starts scribbling wildly all over the blank sheet, mixing any color and creating practically a mess. The final child sees the blank piece of paper and begins drawing an outline of an apple tree. Once he finishes the outline, he begins to add the color of the leaves, branches, and fruit.

The Old Testament is represented by the child who is given a piece of paper with an outline of an apple on it. Tithing is also much like the first child. The largest challenge for the first child really deals with the technical aspect of drawing – did he stay in the lines, and did he use the proper colors? Tithing is much like this. Did you prepare your budget to include tithing, did you pay God first? Did you stay in the lines or did you only give nine-percent?

Our New Covenant freedom is much like the second or third child with a blank piece of paper. Both children are given the same freedom, but as we can see, both children do not produce the same results. The same goes with the children of God today. We are all given a blank sheet of paper to draw on. Some of us will create something that turns out beautiful. Others of us use our freedom to create big messes that are worthless.

There is a spiritual truth in realizing that the third boy did not copy the one who had an apple pre-drawn on his paper. Although our freedom allows us to, why do we copy the image that was drawn out in the Old Testament? In light of giving, where should our inspiration and guidelines come from? We find our guidelines by first using Old Testament principles, and then second, by using the

instruction of the Holy Spirit. We've already stated that 100% surrender and full stewardship are the principles. Because our giving doesn't begin with 10%, you can envision receiving a blank piece of paper, and that's exactly what you should feel like.

I've heard one preacher say that the amount of our giving should not be determined by our whim and fancy. I couldn't agree any more. Where we give, how we give, and what we give are not determined by flipping coins or throwing darts. They are determined by pursuing God, and knowing his will through his word and Spirit. Giving to God according to our whim and fancy will create a big scribbled mess. But when we pursue the answers from the Spirit of God, he'll begin to direct our hand. Think of the Holy Spirit as an art instructor, so feel confident about starting with a blank canvas. Seek the advice from friends, read God's word, seek God through prayer; and who says that God will keep his will hidden from us if we do those things?

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

Tithing is not an eternal principle because it does not define the character of God. God didn't create the earth so we could make a profit from its resources to superficially give him 10% back. I say superficially because he owns it all. God's eternal purpose for us is to be worshippers and stewards without any slight hints on tithing. The character of God asks for one hundred percent of it back. We are stewards of God's money and are not in business to keep 90% or even 1% of what God gave us. 100% of what we've been entrusted with, should be invested back towards God.

Take the parable of the stewards for instance. A master left a certain amount of talents with his servants. Two of the servants invested their talents and gave back the master a greater portion than what he had given them originally. The third steward gave no less than 100% of it back. The servant was then rebuked for his actions because God does not seek stewards who know how to give back, he seeks investors.

If tithing was an eternal principle, we should still be practicing it the way God intended for it to be done. Look at *Deuteronomy 14* for an example

"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place

which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.”

In this passage the tithe was used as a feast to celebrate with. At this moment, it was not stored up in the storehouse, or given away. It was all consumed by the poor and all the tribes including those in Levi. Aside from what the tithe was used for, please observe also what it was not used for. In any instance, you will never see the tithe used to pay for the construction or maintenance of the tabernacle or temple. The temple and tabernacle were both paid with freewill offerings, and were maintained by a required tax, separate from the tithe.

In *Leviticus 27* we find that the tithe is “*most holy to the Lord*”. Although “holy” is a term we relate to God, the interpretation of “holy” does not define eternal principle. Future examples and interpretations in the bible give proof of the misinterpretation of the holy tithe. Dr. Kelly states,

The false teaching is that Leviticus 27:30-32 proves that the tithe is an "eternal moral principle" because "it is holy to the LORD." However, these false teachers must ignore the stronger phrase, "it is MOST holy to the LORD," in the immediate preceding verses 28 and 29. This is because verses 28 and 29 are definitely not eternal moral principles in the Church. In its context, the phrases "it is holy to the LORD" and "it is MOST holy to the LORD" cannot possibly be interpreted "eternal moral principles." Why? Because almost every other use of these phrases in Leviticus has long ago been discarded by Christians. Similar phrases are also used to describe all of the festivals, the sacrificial offerings, the clean food distinctions, the old covenant priests and the old covenant sanctuary.

George Potkonyak in his article “The truth about tithing” writes in response to “holy to the Lord”, “What does this mean? It simply means that they were to be used ACCORDING TO GOD’S INSTRUCTION and not for any other purpose, no matter how 'godly' that purpose may appear. Any of God’s instructions are holy, His instruction for our individual lives is as holy as any word from the Bible, but it doesn’t mean his demands are eternal and are for everyone.”

It’s significant to note again that God’s laws were to be used according to God’s instructions and not for any other purposes. This is important because we will talk later on about how we’ve changed the tithe from God’s original purpose.

I don’t understand why people hold to tithing as a principle, because it was grace, not of compulsion or necessity which God modeled giving for us, and it is our grace in return we give up everything as

well. Why would we waste our time using any other platform than the model exemplified by God? Giving is like a totem pole from earth reaching to heaven. The tithe is the bottom of the totem pole, and grace is the top reaching to the heaven. The same analogy goes with the knowledge of God, with fear at the bottom and love is at the top. But once you experience the love of Christ, fear is so far at the bottom of the knowledge of God, you can't even see it anymore (Read Ephesians 3:19). In the same analogy, the church preaches the tithe and looks upward. I preach grace without ever recognizing it goes down.

God's character traits, if you will, are now are a part of our new creature. His word (OT and NT) now lives in us, and His Spirit takes precedence to any law, any restriction, or any treaty (but is never contradictory to principle). Therefore His Spirit will give us greater convictions in our living, and giving than the law ever could.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Romans 14:17 - For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost

Eternal laws do not change, but civil and ritual laws can be changed for mankind. Because mankind does not possess the authority to define morals, moral law only comes from God.

Most of the time when I am in discussions about obeying the Old Covenant, I fail to emphasize the eternal value of principles. I'm trying not to get into semantics here, but I would consider a principle with something of eternal value. That's why the rituals of the OT had to be abolished. The concept of the tithe is temporary, earthly, for man, not an eternal God. Sacrifice, grace, love, justice, and mercy are eternal principles. A ten-percent benchmark is not eternal, but the principles of giving found both in the old and new Testaments, will never vanish.

The bible and its laws were written to help us obey the eternal laws. Here is a list of phrases that are used in the bible.

Eternal life	Eternal redemption	Eternal Inheritance
Eternal word	Eternal Spirit	Eternal Fire
Eternal power	Everlasting Covenant	Eternal King
Eternal purpose	Everlasting Gospel	Everlasting Love
Eternal glory	Everlasting kingdom	Everlasting consolation
Eternal salvation		

How can one even imagine to include an everlasting or eternal tithe?

In the Old Covenant the inheritance of the Promised Land was held from the Levitical priests. In the New Covenant, we have all become a royal priesthood and have also been withheld of our promised land. This is because we are waiting for a different inheritance – an eternal one.

Think of our waiting period as our journey through the wilderness and death as crossing the Jordan. While wandering in the wilderness, Israel was not required to pay a tithe until they reached the Promised Land. Once they inhabited the land, they offered a tithe from the increase of their farming. This is a picture reminiscent of our future within the kingdom of God. We have not crossed the Jordan, for we are all still wandering and waiting for God to lead us across Jordan. Then, in that day we will inherit our crowns and cast them at the master's feet.

Revelation 5:10 - And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

2 Corinthians 4:18 - while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Even though our faith requires earthly action we are never measured on a balance that weighs perishable deeds, but only by an eternal balance that can measure the unseen. Because we are flesh and blood, God used material things to teach us his eternal principles, and He did that through parables, rituals, and ceremonies. I do realize that faith and action co-equally prove each other, but on the last day God will measure us and will say that we did not have enough faith to perform action. In other words, our works will condemn us, but only because of our lack of faith.

When we finally understand that 10% is not spiritual, is not an eternal number, does not equal God's character, the sooner we will understand that 10% isn't the principle God wanted us to grasp. Read James 1:5.

If you have a bucket, and the bucket is full, that means its purpose is fulfilled. It can no longer be taken to the well to gather more water. A full bucket doesn't mean that it is dead or meaningless; it just means we cannot use it to gather our water, because somebody else already filled it up with their water.

If the law's purpose is fulfilled, that means we must choose a different bucket.

THE MINIMUM STANDARD

Many times I have heard, “10% is the minimum standard found in the bible“. The problem is the bible does not condone giving less than 100% to God. If you believe that 10% is the bulls-eye, starting point, or training wheels, then you will miss the mark by 90%. God owns it all and he expects nothing less of us than 100% stewardship. I’m sure you agree, but the problem is that you can’t agree that both one-hundred percent and ten percent are the minimum standard at the same time.

Matthew 19 - And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Luke 18 - You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.

CIRCUMCISED GIVING

God’s Spirit has the only answer to the formula for giving. It’s a formula not made with platforms that could have been skewed to cushion man’s insecurity and lack of faith. The Holy Spirit is able to convict in ways beyond the law ever could. The percent that God asks from us is not measured by an amount. That’s because literally giving away 100% is nonsense. But if we know that a circumcised life is 100% under the Spirit’s control, then we know that circumcised giving is the same.

Randy Alcorn, a Christian financial leader states, “[tithing] is the training wheels on the bicycle of true giving. It may not be a home run, but it gets you on base”. Tithing wasn’t the training wheels for Israel, and it didn’t get them on base. God required additional offerings above the tithe, so how can the minimum standard only include tithing? Offerings were also a requirement in the Old Testament. If the Israelites didn’t give specific offerings they would have been punished regardless of their obedience to the tithe. There is no record of God saying give at least ten percent. There is no record that states tithing is the starting point or training wheels of giving. This is unbiblical and has its own way of adding to the word of God.

We are told you can freely give after you tithe, but the Israelites were not free to give whatever they felt after the tenth. Once again Alcorn states, “The tithe is the floor of giving, never the ceiling. Freewill giving begins after the tithe”. One question Alcorn could have difficulty answering is why

are we free from the other requirements of giving for Israel, but not the law of tithing?

Do you ever wonder why we must give in a certain chronological order such as this: “Give your tithe first and then a freewill offering above it.” God never stated an order to giving. So let’s reword that statement. “Give your freewill first and then tithe above.” Rewording that statement re-prioritizes our giving and challenges us to give our freewill offerings the way we should in the first place. Think of the magnitude of influence behind this statement: if we give freewill offerings like we should in the first place, then why should there be a need for tithing? That statement shows how tithing truly is an OT ordinance that is nullified through grace giving. There is no need to mention tithing, let alone teach it to children under grace led who are also led by the Spirit. It’s silly to think that we couldn’t meet all the needs that a church requires, plus more, without the tithe requirement.

In order to live for God, we should be willing to die daily. The sooner we stop talking percentages in our head, and begin to preach surrender, the sooner sacrificial giving will revive. If we stumble in our effort to surrender, get right back up and die again. Is there any athlete that begins the first quarter with a 10% effort but plans to progress throughout the game? So why do we do this with our giving? Why is progressive type giving even considered?

Please consider these questions below:

- How much of our **time** do you say we start out giving to God? . . . at least 10%?
- How much of our **money** do you say we start out giving to God? . . . at least 10%?
- How much do you say we start out giving our **life** to God? . . .at least ____%?

The word “circumcision” comes from the root word “circum”, which derives a meaning of “to go around”. It is also where we get the words “circumnavigate”, “circumference”, and “circulatory”. If you were to circumnavigate the globe you would go around the world completely. Your navigation wouldn’t be partially completed, because the definition itself talks about going around the whole earth. First and foremost, God wants 100% from us because God owns 100%. If we submit to God’s ownership, and heed to leading of God’s Spirit, then we have now become circumcised givers and have circumnavigated the globe of stewardship.

It is very possible that those who practice tithing are wholly given to God. I’m not saying they aren’t. I’m not saying that tithing doesn’t meet needs either. I’m saying that if one truly is surrendered to God, then practicing tithing is nothing more than a form of rhetoric. It is called circumcised giving because that part of our life should be completely surrendered to God. As long as the people of God are wholly surrendered, then we will not worry about whether God will provide without the tithe.

THE TITHING SECURITY BLANKET

Can we let go of our security blanket and just let the Holy Spirit handle the minimum amount? How dangerous can that be? Being Spirit led defies human logic, because we've developed safety nets and security blankets to make our lives more predictable. A security blanket can be anything. It can be a tax system, a house, children, job, spouse, possessions, and a guaranteed resource for income. Because we think highly of ourselves, we think God can take away our job, our children, or any one of our security blankets whenever He wants, and because of our narcissism, we think our response will be what all strong Christians do –“blessed be the name of the Lord”. Let's face it, if God does remove our security blankets, we get nervous, and flap our wings frantically wondering how we will ever survive outside the comfy nest.

Because we naturally feel more comfortable with some sort of standard or mandate to influence a certain level of giving, "freewill giving" is a scary phrase for a pastor, Finances would be less predictable and pastors would feel in less control, because they couldn't pressure their congregation to bring in a set amount each week. My goal isn't to demonize pastors. I know many pastors have a good heart and they mean well by preaching their giving standards, but what else can I say when the word of God disagrees with their teachings on tithing?

Giving standards seem to be a good thing, but there are two reasons we create standards: one, to build protection, or two, to control our situations. For some of us who can afford more than the tithe, giving ten percent doesn't protect us from God's additional requirements and judgment. So, ultimately, we enforce the tithing standard for reason number two - because we think laws can control and teach people better than the Holy Spirit can. I have no apology for being so candid either.

Many standards of giving are stated all throughout scripture, so here are some of them.

Rom 12: 8 - *he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity;*

Mt. 10:8,9 - *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

Mt. 19:21 - *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shall have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

How can we take dichotomous levels of giving (tithing vs. freewill offerings) and declare that tithing trumps freewill offerings as the starting point? Many come up with the excuse that tithing is

mentioned all throughout scripture, but they neglect to realize that tithing is only mentioned in 17 passages in the bible! How many more examples do we have of freewill giving, or offerings? Others have taunted me about the frequency of tithing until I realized that freewill giving and offerings outnumber tithing by much more. Tithing arguments sound so good but are deceptive.

We think the Christian life is like learning how to ride a bike. Naturally we have training wheels when we first begin to ride, but there is no such statement in the bible that refers to tithing as a training exercise. It doesn't even exist in the Old Testament, let alone the New Testament. The bible describes the Holy Spirit as our tutor, not the tithing law. If the Holy Spirit is our teacher, then naturally wouldn't the Holy Spirit choose our training exercise?

Jeremiah 17:9 it states, *train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.* If you were a teacher would you tell your students to answer 10% of the questions on an exam? Why not? It's a start, right? This same folly is used in the logic of tithing as a starting point. If you train the younger Christian to live under letter of the law, then he will never learn to depart from it. Teach the young Christians to learn from the Spirit of God, so that when it's time to fly above 10% they aren't in uncharted territory. We think tithing is there to help us, protect us, and guide us, but that fits the description of a security blanket more than a training exercise.

It takes more faith to rely on the Holy Spirit to instruct others in their giving, than it will take to command a minimum amount in order to predict what's going to be in the plate. So take off the training wheels, and pull off the security blankets, because they never belonged there in the first place.

THE LOCAL STOREHOUSE

In many places in the bible, it instructs the Israelites to store the tithes and offerings in the storehouse. The building in which we worship is not an example of what a storehouse was in the bible. Compared to the Old Testament storehouse, heaven, which is intended as our true storehouse, has limitless storage. So, the challenge today is to fill up the borderless gates of **heaven** with our goodwill and charity.

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

Daniel 5:26-27 This [is] the interpretation of [each] word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting;

Instead of benefiting the needy, tithing is commanded in order to secure the funds to build religious empires. As I was working in the church office a man stopped in and asked for some help to pay for his rent and groceries in order to take care of his children, so I volunteered to help him. I took the man out, gave him some cash, and paid for some groceries. While on our trip around town, he began sharing his testimony with me. I was astounded at what this man's life had gone through. He had the scars to prove it, so he wasn't throwing me for a loop.

He informed me that he stopped down the road to ask two other churches that had both built brand new, multi-million dollar facilities. Come to find out, he walked out of both of those "temple storehouse" without a cent (it doesn't sound like it was much of a storehouse). Expecting nothing from us, he showed up at the church facility I had been working at, which was run down, old, and smelly, barely furnished, but there God met his need. To make a long story short, I believe I was more blessed than he was by the end of the day.

I am not trying to discount the tithe solely based on the abuse of it, I would like to make the point also that if we believe in New Testament tithing then we need to administer it for its original purposes. You see the Storehouse was the place where the poor, and the stranger could find meat; not spiritual meat, but real, physical, digestible meat. The purpose of tithing is not separable from the purpose of tithing. You cannot say, 'I like the concept of tithing, but I don't like what it was used for'. The tithe was not used for maintenance or building projects. So how does this disprove the validity of tithing today? Well, we know the tithing law does not fit into the New Testament model, so we've taken portions of the law to fit it into our own doctrine. We've changed the tithe. Let me restate that- We've changed God's word in order to incorporate portions of it that were pertinent to

accomplishing our empirical goals.

After I took that man out and dropped him off, I began to think of why the other churches that he asked for help from could not give just a little bit. The answer is that multi-million dollar facilities require much attention from our pocket. If they just asked themselves one question, “Was it worth it?” I do not boast, but through the power of God I was able to help this man and fellowship with him, when he needed it most. In the end the giver was blessed through his giving. Along with it, heaven’s unlimited storehouse is collecting untold riches through God’s ability in me. Yes, their pews might be filled, their plates might be full, their ratings may be high, their music may be loud, but their eternal storehouse is empty. Yes! Empty! And if I could write on their elaborate gold laden walls. . . MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN!

THE ROOT OF ALL KINDS OF EVIL

Money is the root of all kinds of evil, but somehow we don't think that the richest organization (the church) in the world is not effected by purse strings. We are too quiet about it and if questioning the disbursement of funds we are perceived as judging the Holy Spirit and touching God’s anointed. In the end we think that only secular organizations are capable of mishandling money. Always follow the money trail, because we know that “where your money is, there your heart is also”.

The number one thing that the church's money is tied up in is mortgage debts. If I had to guess, I would say the Church owns more property and land than most governments. I do not diminish the idea of having a central place of mass service, but I do not condone the idea that a church structure is the main tool to evangelize to the community, nor is it pertinent for the assembling of ourselves. If you're not sure where your church stands, check the budget. If you think the church structure should be one of the main tools that we invest in to reach the heathen, than compare what you're saying to the Old and New Testaments. I believe that buildings, programs, and equipment are tools to reach people, but we need to be honest with ourselves and admit that we developed a bad habit to only see tithes for what we want to see them for.

Luke 12:16 - Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.’

Let's make this clear. This verse is NOT endorsing the expansion of storehouses in order to hold the increasing harvest. When our congregation outgrows our facility, the first response is typically expansion. I think our greatest mistake is believing that after the church grew in numbers, we must collect money to build temples. The verse asks the question - "*then whose will those things be which you have provided?*" Do we think it is for the next generation? The next generation many times does not fill the pews of the previous generation, because they have their own goals and dreams to fulfill. In other words, your crops and enormous storehouse will be gone one day. The millions of dollars placed in your construction are more of a risk than it is even an eternal investment, let alone an earthly investment.

I truly don't want to go on anti-building rant, but I truly do believe that we've distorted God's word so bad that we feel the sole purpose of the tithe was to expand the temple. Where would we be today if we had taken all of the funds from tithing and strictly applied them towards physical needs, and used the offerings to build our worship centers? Don't just think of how differently we would look, but how differently would we act?

THE CONTENTS OF THE STOREHOUSE TITHE

The temple storehouse in Jerusalem did not permanently contain the entire tithe. The Levites first collected from the Israelites, and then gave ten percent of their tithe to the priests ministering at the temple. The storehouse portion for the priests was only 1% of the total gift of Israel. The other 9% given by Israel was kept in the Levitical refuge cities mentioned in Joshua 21:8.

Nehemiah 10:35-39 - And we made ordinances to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, to the house of the Lord; to bring the firstborn of our sons and our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and our flocks, to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God; to bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities. And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse.

For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are, where the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers are; and we will not neglect the house of our God.

As we can see here 1% of the tithe, firstfruits, and other offerings were brought to the temple

storehouse. Even though offerings were brought to the local storehouse in the Old Testament we do not consider offerings as a storehouse gift. Most assume that we are free to give our offerings above the tithe to any organization they wish. Which brings questions to mind of why is the tithe command to be brought in the local church, and offerings are not?

Over the years, many have taken scripture from 1 Corinthians 16:2, and twisted the real interpretation of the storehouse and the church. Dr. Kelly explains this well.

"Christian tithe-teachers say a lot about the "storehouse" of the church. In order to justify this they juggle the Greek verb thesaurizo, translated "storing up," from First Corinthians 16:2 in order to manipulate the Greek text. The phrase is literally "by himself, to place, storing up." The text does not call the church a "storehouse"; it merely tells the contributor what to do with the gift. Many commentators even say it means "store up at home" with no relevance to a church building (which, by the way, did not exist when Paul wrote First Corinthians) or pastoral support. You will not find Christian tithe-teachers using Second Corinthians 12:14 for their example of the church "storehouse." Yet Paul used the same Greek verb, thesaurizo, while saying "the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."

These misinterpretations are creeping little-by-little into the doctrine of the church. We know better than this, but somehow we think God still mobilizes his pillar of presence based on a mortgage or title deed. As we've mentioned before, tithes weren't even used to build the temple or tabernacle.

THE FUTURE OF THE STOREHOUSE

In many places across the globe, the Church is being forced to close their cathedrals for either economic or political reasons. I'm not saying don't buy buildings or rent them, I just think we need to remember that our facilities aren't as eternal as our souls. Many of the pews of the church facilities built decades or centuries ago are empty, and yet we believe our goals for the next generation are so unique that our children will continue to fill our own pews. There's not much in recorded history to confirm this.

Matthew 24:1 - Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

It seems to me that God wanted the temple to be hewn down in Matthew 24 because he knew at times these icons can be more of a crutch for us than they are an enabler. He also knew that the destruction of the temple was not a representation of the destruction of his Word, and actually it was

quite the opposite. The destruction of this religious structure represented a rebirth of Christianity.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

If a spiritual sacrifice is not made on physical altars; then why is our spiritual storehouse a physical building? The icon we've created, made of brick and mortar, is never eluded as a need in the New Testament.

The church is not the replacement for the temple storehouse in the Old Testament. The only function of the storehouse was to store food. It was not a place of worship. It's very similar to the structures that we store grain in today called silo's. Only a portion of the whole tithe (1%) reached the temple storehouse. The other 9% were stored in different cities so that it could be distributed locally throughout that area.

We cannot conclude that churches are the closest thing to the temple storehouse. Neither can we look at our pastors and carry on with tithing just because they are the "closest" thing to priests. The church organization is not an icon that confirms the practice of tithing.

The closest thing to the temple storehouse is our treasure chest in heaven. The only difference is that the capacity of the temple storehouse was enough to hold only a tenth of Israel's crops; but our eternal storehouse is limitless.

THE BURDEN OF TITHING

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Requiring a tithe on the children of God puts a burden on the poor and creates a stumbling block for the rich. Although there are no New Testament examples of tithing being collected for the church, absence does not provide solid proof against tithing. It does however leave room for the many examples on giving that are inspired by freewill or the Holy Spirit. There are many personal testimonies out there that swear by the law of tithing, but there are plenty of testimonies out there that seem to have been cursed by it as well. The purpose for this chapter is to counter-balance the emotionally charged testimonies that say “the tithing blessing has positively changed the finances” of many lives. I do not crave the opportunity to criticize leaders within the Church, but when dealing with finances within the Church it is unavoidable.

II Corinthians 8:13-15 - For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

Much of what I am going to share in this chapter is going to be personal or practical. There are many things that I do not boast of and are not proud of, but are willing to share because the positive, and unique stories of tithing testimonies, put many frustrations and doubts on those who do not experience blessing of tithing. There are many people who have been giving a tithe faithfully for many years. They have a good heart and Godly intentions. They serve in the church and devote their lives to God. But they never seem to get above the bills and sometimes ask other family members to help pay for the basic needs for their children. Why do we never hear of these stories? I’ve never heard a personal testimony where someone came in front of the church and said that they, “can barely pay for their bills and feed their kids, but God has blessed them because we’re tithing”. You don’t hear these testimonies. So in this chapter, I do not want to bring doom and gloom to the promises of God, nor do I want to diminish our goals of giving, but I do want to bring into reality the testimonies that have been suppressed. My goal is not to show how God has failed (we know he can’t) but to show how we have failed God by not honoring the basic responsibilities he’s given us as stewards of his kingdom.

MY TESTIMONY

I grew up in a home where my parents always tithed; although I'm sure there were dry spells here and there. As a child, I never felt like I lacked any needs. We had eight kids, and my father was the major bread winner. I do not wish to expose sensitive details, but there were times when bills were not paid. In other words, tithing never brought about riches, or helped pay bills.

I went to college, and practically paid most of my way through. Following my parents example, I tithed through college. As any wise steward would do, I never spent money on things I didn't need. But while in college I had to take out debt in order to pay for my bills. I had 3 jobs over the summer, as well as a job during school. I tithed from every single pay check I received, but I was collecting debt to pay for my education. I was very late numerous times on my school and credit card bills. My finances were being ruined. Through all of this, I never magically received an anonymous donation in the mail; no one magically paid my school bills.

At the end of my college life I was challenged by a friend to prove that tithing was a new covenant command. To make a long story short - here I am now, believing in Spirit-led giving. Now several years out of college, I am self-employed with a wife and two children. As a self-employed person, I have no guaranteed paycheck that I am getting this weekend. I practice more faith in my provision than many pastors and leaders do in the church. I have been practicing this for over seven years and God has taken care of every one of my needs. Whenever one week was tough, God somehow provided some extra work. No, I am not rich just because I changed my doctrinal beliefs or my faith. God provides for all of his children no matter what, but now I follow a teacher that is so challenging, He may call me to give it all to the poor and, follow Him. For those that are struggling to reach ten percent, do you ever wonder why it is that the Holy Spirit gets involved after you give ten percent?

Our liberty gives us the freedom to discern, and seek answers to our questions. But what our leaders have done is get our focus off of the freedom, so we ask no further questions about how much or where we should give. We are instructed to give this much of our money to this place, on the premises that our ancient forefather's gave that much. The more questions we have, and the more the Holy Spirit controls what we do with our money, the less that the church budget has control. It makes administrators within the Church nervous when church budgets fluctuate because of volatility of God's Spirit working in people's hearts. When it comes to financial provision Church leaders are uncomfortable with free group of people that are led by their discernment.

II Cor 3:17 - Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

I grew up in a church where Christian liberty was somewhat looked down upon because my church upheld very strict standards (liberty is not something that frees us from responsibility). Because we are humans, we get uneasy if we cannot somewhat calculate the outcome of the future. So, in order to control a situation, we enforce standards. Standards are good because they can protect us, and train us, but mainly they are enforced because the Holy Spirit is not in control of people's lives as He should be. I will touch more on standards later on in this book but I wanted to point out that being free from obeying an Old Testament standard of giving, does not free us from the responsibility of listening to what the Holy Spirit has to say about our giving.

CARRYING A LIGHTER BURDEN

Matthew 23:4 they [Pharisees] bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Jesus didn't say that his burden was light because we didn't have instructions to obey. He said his burden was light because he was talking to people who were following the strict paths of obedience subscribed by the Pharisees. The Pharisees obeyed the law strictly but they were not being rebuked for that. They were being rebuked for burdening their own standards that were placed backs of others.

As I gave my personal testimony earlier, many people probably thought that I became bitter at God and started questioning the area of tithing, so now I am just making excuses to not give to Him. You cannot be any further from the truth. If you re-read my testimony, I never questioned tithing until someone presented questionable facts to me in the word of God. Up to that point, I continued to believe in tithing, until I was convinced from my own spirit and mind what God's word actually does reveal about this topic.

Galatians 6:2 - Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

The replacement of the tithing law did not relinquish our obligation to support one another. The whole idea of the way Israel gave in the Old Testament is developed upon the principle of bearing one another's burdens. But for some reason we've taken one object lesson from the Old Testament and commanded that everyone is obligated to obey this command to tithe. God wanted to teach us the importance of fellowship with one another, and did not intend to continue the ordinances that he prescribed upon a particular group of people. The spiritual and economic structure of Israel does not even come close to resembling how the church functions today. The Church has different offices with different obligations, different restrictions and freedoms, along with different governments, and

finally a new spiritual covenant.

Different Scholars have concluded that there have been as many as three different tithes for Israel: "Levitical tithe", "festival tithe", and "poor tithe". Dr. Kelly points out, "One wonders what "churches" are trying to hide when they only single out the one religious tithe which best suits their purposes and ignore the other three tithes." It is also wrong to teach that the poor in Israel were required to pay tithes. In fact, they actually *received* tithes!

GOD'S SYSTEM OF PROVISION

God always has a plan for provision that might not make sense and many times cannot be logically deciphered. Many people think that 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8 speak about tithing in regards to proportionate giving. It speaks of giving to provide equality, and according to how God has prospered us. The question often comes up, "How can God create equality and how can God tell us to give in proportion if He did not have a command to give in a systematic way, like tithing?" That is a good question. But why should God be limited to the system of tithing in the church? God is not limited to our intellect. He is not bound by systems, nor does he operate by them. God works through his spirit with the authority of His word. God's foreknowledge is capable of foreseeing and preparing for the provision of his people. This means he prepares us and equips us with Spiritual gifts and resources to do the job. God's operational methods are outside the control of mankind. This means it is going to take faith.

If we read Ex.11:2-3 God told the Israelites, who were still in Egypt, to go to their Egyptian neighbors and ask for gold and silver. The Israelites didn't know it yet, but this is what was going to be used to fund the tabernacle, and also to live on as they wander the wilderness. The Israelites practically owned nothing during their whole captivity in Egypt, but God prepared the hearts of the Egyptians to be willing to give away their possessions.

God has unique ways of providing for his people. We begin to reason with ourselves about how God plans on providing for his Church. Logically a systematic way of giving, like tithing, makes sense because it develops consistency for church budgets. But I think what we are missing is the pursuit of God in this endeavor and forget that God is seeking ways to reveal himself to us in ways that do not seem logical. If giving a tenth of our income was the answer to our giving, then we cost God the opportunity to interact with our heart. Graeme Carle says it best in his article "A New Look at Tithing", "What's usually the problem at this point is that we as Christians are often looking for one rule that we all have to live by. One rule, such as giving a tenth, keeps things simple; it can be easily learned by asking someone in the church what the will of God is and then we don't have to look any

further to know how we should be living. In other words, we don't need to have a personal relationship with God.”

Now that we have spent considerable amount of time dissecting the practice of tithing, we will move forward with the rest of the book describing what our giving should look like. Many of you may still have specific questions about tithing and would like to see more scripture. If you do, you may go to the website <http://www.tithing.com/> and read the article on the 60+ answers to tithing arguments. Here is a direct link - <http://www.tithing.com/answers-to-tithing-arguments/>

GREATER GIVING

We have finally come past the point of breaking the bond of legalism, so now we wish to move on to the point of embracing the Spirit of grace giving. I do believe that we are free from the tithing command, but instead are commanded by the Holy Spirit in regards to giving. God's religious system once used rituals that dictated mankind's sanctification; but with the Spirit in control of our lives, we are free to receive instructions from Him. Our liberty is not a license to overlook the command to obey the Spirit, so we are not at liberty to do what we please. The responsibility to sacrificially give cannot be overlooked.

Once the veil was torn, the New Covenant introduced a relationship with God that was not available in the Old Covenant system. We now have the opportunity to hear from God, and communicate directly with Him. The availability of communication with God is immediate and spontaneous; so we do not need a pre-existing assignment to outline what and when to give. At the moment God speaks to us, we have the ability to hear, and the opportunity and decision to obey. God did not tear the veil to the holy of holies, so that a communal relationship with Him could continue to be administered through non-interactive rituals, such as tithing. Tithing in the New Covenant is a way of restoring the veil that was once used when man had no direct access to God. Tear the veil away and encounter God inside the holy of holies with Spirit led giving.

The dysfunction with practicing tithing is that anyone can do it without having to worry about encountering God. Anyone can accomplish the goals set forth by any other systematic ritual without even truly knowing God. But one cannot be Spirit led unless they know God. Personal interaction with God is the fundamental difference between the Old Covenant and New Covenant giving.

Do you want a Church that is willing to encounter God? There's no question that God wants to elicit a sacrificial response from us when we give, but the question is, what type of response is God looking for? Is it the response that is spawned through our personal and intimate relationship with Him, or is it a response that is considered a Xerox from Abraham's actions? Through our relationship with God, each and every person has a responsibility to pursue when and where our Father is calling us to give. I implore you to study the aspects of Spirit led giving, and consider the spiritual ramifications between instructing people to tithe, or instructing them to be Spirit led.

Tithing does not require a spiritual inquiry with God on where, how, why, when, or what you should give because everyone knows that you give 10% of your gross income to your church every Sunday

because Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek. Systematically tithing to your Church every week answers the how, when, why, where, and what questions, and requires absolutely no inquiry with God on what you should do, but this type of giving does not fall in line with the structure of the new covenant and His Church.

In the new covenant we have direct communication with God, and do not need rituals and calculated laws that dictate our appropriate worship to him. I'm not saying that there are not clear examples of laws we must obey in the bible, but I am saying that God gave us his Spirit to guide and direct our steps. The bible is the lamp unto our feet and is clear about right and wrong, but the bible doesn't take our steps for us. We have choices to make and decisions that will affect not only our lives, but others as well. Because of this dilemma, God tore down the veil that once separated us from direct communication to him. We now have direct access to the holy of holies, and also have the ability to inquire about the how, when, why, and where questions.

In the Old Testament, the priest was the only one with direct access to God. Today, through our tithing we act as if God is out of reach and does not want to be bothered with our questions about how to give until you start talking about giving more than 10%. It's like the real estate market. God desires communication with us from the very beginning. He wants us to seek out where we should give our money, when, and why. Automatic, calculated giving falls completely out of touch with the relational structure we have between each other today.

A prayer about tithing winds up being an earnest plea about how God will provide, and what he is going to do in return. A prayer of a Spirit led giver leads a prayer that is more about what we are to give, not what we are going to get. Why would you need to prayer about what you are going to give as a tither when you already know the answer?

We have lost touch with what it's like to hear God directly speak to us. Now in our days, we see a picture of a burnt piece of toast with a portrait of Jesus face we think that God is sending us a message. What kind of communication is that? What is God's Spirit for? Is he just the little white angel on your shoulder trying to convince you that tithing is what's best? Or is the Spirit much more sophisticated than that? Can he tell you how much to give? Can he tell you where to give?

WHAT DOES THE WORLD SEE?

It is often noted that our tithing and generosity is a testimony to the world about how generous our God is, but when you look at the fact that we are required to give as much as we do in order to please our God, then the only thing the world sees is your level of dedication to your master.

Compulsion is the lowest form of response to love so obviously our testimony of generosity is shallow at best.

Most believe that our generous actions are only manifested because we are required to perform a minimum amount of duties in order to appease our God. They may see our love for our God, but they don't see our love for them, which means they don't have a way to find out how God loves them. Most of the time, our generosity is not for their benefit, it is not because we care about them, and it is not because we love them. Our giving becomes a monotonous chore that we perform week in and week out to fulfill our duty. The world does not believe that our actions are in response to any form of care that we have for their soul. Why would the world ever feel that their creator has an interest in them until they start doing, and saying the "right" things?

If we don't show love to others by our spontaneous, non-compulsive giving, then who or what else will testify? Does God do things for us because he has to, or does God bestow his graces upon us day after day? Our testimony can be more beneficial when our giving is spontaneous, cheerful, liberal, and sacrificial. With those attributes, unbelievers will be attracted to our relationship with God. They will ignore our testimony if we serve our God the same we the other pagans serve theirs.

TITHING & PAGANISM

We say that our God is alive, but we give to him in the same manner as pagans do. Any pagan can give a tithe to his god; and any religion can develop monotonous rules that promote consistent giving. But Christianity is different. We have a relationship with a living God. We also claim to have communication with our God; but we continue tithing as if we do not know how to talk to God in regards to giving. We're just like robots that do as their told. We might as well say that we believe our God is a stone statue just like other god's that can't communicate.

Stone statues don't communicate with their worshippers, nor do the stone statues tell them what to bring to the altar. Every religion develops their own way of pleasing their god's, and Christianity follows suit in the same manner with our type of giving. We have the opportunity to be led by the Spirit, but instead we want to be led in the same way that pagan's are led. We have the opportunity to hear what our God's Spirit is convicting us to give, but instead we've developed the deaf ears of pagans, and replaced our God with stone lips that do not speak personal instructions.

When you drive by a graveyard, you will see hundreds of flowers sitting on top of everyone's grave. Do you see jewelry, clothes, a watch, shoes, vacation tickets, or a pedicure coupon? No. Because giving flowers, just like everyone else, is the only way we know how to express love to a dead person.

We don't know what they want, nor have we been in touch with them to even instinctively understand what they desire. This is because they are dead! Our relationship with a dead person is all one sided. We can talk to them, but they don't talk back. This sounds a lot like how Christians want their God to be. We want him to hear when we need something; other than that we hope He stays dormant.

When I see the plate passed around in church it is much like watching people visiting their loved ones in the graveyard. They all come with the same gift in hand because tithing seems to be the universally accepted gift for someone who's been dead to us all week.

Tithing is such a cold way of giving. Could you imagine on your anniversary giving your spouse the same exact gift, wrapped in the same paper, put in the same box, along with the same card every year? This is a dull way of celebrating your relationship with your spouse. But why do we celebrate our relationship with God with un-spontaneous, un-radical, and un-romantic giving? It's a shame that our relationship is administered through a flat and dull way of giving. God is spontaneous, radical, and romantic, and our giving should reflect this.

Spirit led giving is a romantic way of celebrating our relationship with God. Our God is not a picture on the wall, or even a wooden statue. Our God is in the midst of us and within us. He is here walking, talking, and holding us along the way. In terms of marriage, we are his bride. But every week we manage to wrap our anniversary gift in the same paper with the same box and hand him the same card. How can we possibly stand to give like this? Make your giving radical, spontaneous, and romantic. Open up your ears to the living God and worship him in a way that pagans will marvel at.

ROMANTIC GIVING

Godly attributes portray a relationship that is healthy, living, and romantic. Other religions do not have a living god, which makes it hard for their worshipers to mimic a personal response through intimate feelings with their deity. Their god is dead. They have no intimate feelings and personal relationship with it.

I can sacrifice for my wife unlike me can for any other person in the world. She is bone of "my" bone, and flesh of "my" flesh. She is as much a part of me as any organ in my body. I can tell you that it is not what I give to my wife that will make her appreciate the gift. It is how I give to my wife that makes her appreciate it.

There was one Christmas that my wife and I were completely broke. We had no money in our account to buy each other a gift, but I can tell you that that Christmas she received the best gift she ever had. All I did was print off a very thoughtful and deep love letter to my wife and printed off a picture of us on the front, and taped it all up. I just poured my heart out to my wife so when she read it tears were coming out. She did not care about the foolish financial mistakes that made us broke. She wasn't upset that I didn't set aside some money right when I first received a paycheck. If she wasn't upset, then why would God be upset if we gave to him in the same way?

We've developed a pseudo-threat from God that claims if we don't pay God, and pay Him first, then he is going to curse our finances. This is a bunch of garbage. I had a hard time explaining the compassion of our God until I remembered how my wife accepted that cheap but valuable Christmas gift. I couldn't understand why God doesn't need us to offer possessions. He needs our heart. God is deeply in love with us, and he wants a romantic relationship with us. He wants quality and not quantity. If you want to argue with me about that, go ahead. I hope you understand one day, that even when we do sacrifice a whole lot for God, it's not that it was a whole lot that God is happy about, it's the fact that it was a sacrifice.

You may think giving a whole lot and giving sacrificially are synonymous, but they are not. There are many times when I can give up very little, and still make a huge sacrifice; and other times where I can give a whole lot and not sacrifice hardly anything. Although, I do realize that at times our sacrifice may require us to give up a whole lot.

Whatever God wants us to sacrifice, it will cost us what we treasure; because that's where our heart is. Our treasure may be a job, spouse, home, time, hobby, money, computer, games, friends, security, and even yourself. Our treasure could be worth a lot, or a little; but it doesn't matter, because our heart is only satisfied with what God wants to fill it with.

While I was going through school, I remember working hard over the summers, so I could scrape out enough money to buy my wife an engagement ring. I would venture to say that most men buy a ring that is probably out of our price range, but because of our puppy love we put our logic aside and buy that ring anyway. Looking back, I don't think that I could tell you that my sacrifice was foolish. As a matter of fact, I would say that it probably wasn't foolish enough. I'm not the one who is going to wear the ring & show it off, so it doesn't concern me that other people know how rich I must have been or how much money I have. I just wanted my wife to know one thing. I want to represent how valuable she is through my sacrifice.

Romantic giving will cost you. Other people will look at you to the point of being foolish, but what

does a man care when he's in love. What does a child of God care when he's in love with his creator? Love makes us silly. Somehow I think it ties into the reason why 1 Corinthians says 'God loves a cheerful giver'. The root word for "cheerful" in that passage comes from our word "hilarious". It's ironic that love makes us silly & how God is pleased with a silly, in-love giver.

Charles Spurgeon once said, *"But you are not under a system similar to that by which the Jews were obliged to pay tithes to the priests. If there were any such rule laid down in the Gospel, it would destroy the beauty of spontaneous giving and take away all the bloom from the fruit of your liberality! There is no law to tell me what I should give my father on his birthday. There is no rule laid down in any law book to decide what present a husband should give to his wife, nor what token of affection we should bestow upon others whom we love. No, the gift must be a free one, or it has lost all its sweetness."*

If God wants our heart, he wants our treasure. If he wants our treasure, how is a tithe calling us to do that?

SPIRIT LED GIVING IS MATURE

Giving 10% is pretty cut and dry. There's no need to ask God where you should give, when you should give, or who you should give it to. With tithing, our giving is simply laid out for us plain and simple. There's no second guessing or confusion about what you need to do. Tithing seems like a simple and effective solution, and in a way it is, but who are we fooling? Why do we need giving laid out for us? Are we immature children that do not know how to discern on our own? Are we little toddlers that need our parents to pick out our friends for us as well? Are we that immature that we need to enforce a type of giving that I would consider as a babysitting rule? Do we need to learn through milk? Does God need to teach us by spoon feeding us with the simplistic act of tithing? We should be beyond tithing, and eating the mature meat of Spirit led giving.

God did not give us his Spirit so that we can take the easy path and passively sign a check over each week for the same amount. God established a relationship with us in the New Testament as a way to strengthen our motives and build our spiritual maturity. Tithing does very little in building of spiritual maturity. Giving our money away does take some maturity, but communing with God regularly about the habits of our giving and the needs of others takes more involvement during the process of Spirit led giving. Spirit led giving encourages us to seek and consult with God. Tithing just develops a habit and uneventful repetition. Spirit led giving develops stronger character and a deeper relationship with God.

Anyone can give 10% without a relationship with God, but you can't be motivated and led by His

Spirit if you are not one of His. Spirit led giving always is a motive to encourage one-on-one interaction with God. The main thing that tithing encourages is for us to be good little obedient children. When you were a child, you used to do things because you were told to, but as you matured, your reaction to your parents migrated to more mature motives. You had a deeper relationship with them that connected their desires with yours. Sure we can continue to be checklist Christians and make sure that we've done everything that is supposed to keep us safe, but if we do not spend time connecting with God on a more deeper level, then our desires will never connect with God's.

This is the part that tithers cannot get past in their minds. Sure, there are commands in the bible that we should follow. Do not hate, do not lust, do not be deceitful; but there are also relational commands that are only told to us through prayer or revelation. For instance, if there was a decision in your life to leave job "A" so that you can go to job "B", then you understand that the path of God's will in this area is not written in black and white. You need to seek God and wait for an answer from him. Our giving is much like this. God did not intend for his Spirit led Church to give in a way that was recorded in black and white. He intended for us to seek him and be active in waiting for answers. The command to give is clear, but how much, to whom, where, and when is what God is most excited about telling us; but we've decided to rob Him of this opportunity.

A veil once separated mankind from communicating directly with God. In order to restore His communication with us, God tore down the veil that separated us from a personal relationship with Him. Which begs the question, do I still need to have my giving pre-determined for me if I have immediate, direct access to God's will?

Sure, automatic tithing works very well and provides for many needs, and that's okay if we think God keeps tithing around because of its efficiency. That seems kind of a shallow reason for God to keep tithing around. He established a relationship with us through his Spirit, so we could go about our giving in that manner. We have direct communication with God, and it's up to us to use it. The tithing law is another way of restoring the veil that was once used to separate our communication from God. Spirit led giving is a way of recognizing that the veil no longer exists and allows you the liberty to directly communicate with God and seek the Holy Spirit's counsel in regards to giving.

The fundamental difference between the Old and New Testament is our relationship with God. Of course, as you know, the torn veil was iconic in restoring our communication with God. Being Spirit led is a crucial function of continuing to strengthen this intimate relationship with God. Yes, tithing in a way can build faith, and has some good things going for it; but the problem is that it acts as a veil

between us and God because it can be done without intimate communication with Him.

If all we had to do was establish a good standard to live by and call it safe, then God would have never torn that veil. There would be no need for his children to communicate with him because he wrote all the instructions down and gave them to Moses.

Christians know that the Spiritual laws of the universe supersede the physical laws. True reality is not what we see, but what we don't see. This is why spirit led giving, if spirit filled, will defy logic & reality. When we read the book of Acts and hear about the extraordinary giving, we think this was just a unique time period. The only thing unique about it is lack of selfishness. A logical person thinks that they must sustain their physical needs so that they can continue ministering the spiritual, but in actuality, it should be reversed. It is our spiritual needs that minister to the physical needs. As we see from the words of Jesus, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of the mouth of God." Another passage that comes to mind is, "take no thought for tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself". This is not saying, don't worry about retirement or don't create financial security. In context it is reminding us that we are first and foremost spiritual beings & second of all physical beings.

Giving in the early church was not influenced by physical laws & logic. Their giving and motivation was inspired and limited to the spiritual laws. This was mature giving.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Most of this book had been written years ago during my early studies of tithing and giving. But in my closing thoughts, I would like to add some fresh thoughts that may not have reached these pages. The original transcripts for this book are well over 200 pages, but without trying to beat you over the head with my thoughts; it's been shortened down to a fraction of that. . . good for you. I mention this to you because the topic of stewardship along with the breakdown of tithing can be exhausting. Who knew so much could be written about giving?

When I first began my studies on this subject my goal was to search scriptures to defend tithing. In the end, I wound up accepting Spirit led giving. Through my journey, I can tell you without a doubt that my heart is more burdened than ever with the call for sacrificial giving. I cannot write a single page without feeling conviction in my heart about how I give.

Spirit led giving is a daunting and daring challenge. It is not easy. In a way, the task is seemingly unrealistic. To walk a life that is wholly surrendered 100% of the time is humanly impossible. I guess that's why I am attracted to Spirit led giving as opposed to tithing. It is tithing that is humanly possible, but to be Spirit filled and Spirit led, that is what's humanly impossible.

One thing I keep in mind sometimes when I struggle with a decision in my life is how much faith does my decision require? You can pretty much guarantee that the bad decisions you have made in your life were the ones that required very little faith, and the good decisions in life were the ones that required the most. It seems the more faith, the more enjoyable the outcome.

This is what I want you to keep in mind in regards to giving. How much faith are your actions going to take? At the beginning of the book, I outlined two types of givers. One, practiced tithing, and the other practiced Spirit led giving. Although I am very stern about my stance against tithing, I do realize that a tither can be blessed by his faith. I would never deny the spiritual blessings that a tither experienced throughout his tithing experience. But as someone who practiced tithing diligently, and

then converted to a Spirit led giver, I can say that my blessing as a tither cannot come close to my blessing as a Spirit led individual that gives sacrificially.

If you continue to struggle with the decision to tithe or not to tithe, then do more research. There's no harm in that. There are so many resources out there that provide you pros and cons. But regardless of what path you choose, I challenge you to take the path that requires more faith.