



Summer of Lies

Lie #11: GOD DOESN'T CARE WHAT I DO WITH MY MONEY

LIE#1: God uses shame to correct me and change me.

LIE#2: God is not concerned with my everyday life, only the things I do for Him.

LIE#3: Women are not Created to be Leaders

LIE#4: You MUST be Married to Please God

LIE#5: All I Need is God, Who Needs Friends.

LIE#6: God Doesn't Speak to People Today. It was just for Biblical Times.

LIE#7: A Man is the Priest of His Home and a Covering for His Family. All a Woman needs to do is be Submissive.

LIE#8: God is angry.

LIE#9: I Have to Earn God's Love

It is our perception of love that causes us to disbelieve God's love...

The sin underneath all our sins is to trust the lie of the serpent that we cannot trust the love and grace of Christ and must take matters into our own hands.—**Martin Luther**

July 27th LIE #12: If God is all powerful, why do bad things happen?

Lie #11: GOD DOESN'T CARE WHAT I DO WITH MY MONEY

S#2:

Gnostic belief: What we do here in everyday normal life isn't spiritual business.

ASK: What does a modern day example of this Gnostic belief look like?

Matthew 6:21 *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*

ASK: What does "treasure" look like in our life?

Scriptural Example #1:

S#3:

Ananias and Sapphira

Acts 4:36-5:11

³⁶ And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷ having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Lying to the Holy Spirit

⁵ But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ² And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

⁵ Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. ⁶ And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

⁷ Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?"

She said, "Yes, for so much."

⁹ Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰ Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. ¹¹ So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.



Scriptural Example #2:

S#4:

Widow's Mite:

Luke 21:1-4

And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, ² and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. ³ So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; ⁴ for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

CEB A poor Widow's offering:

Looking up, Jesus saw rich people throwing their gifts into the collection box for the temple treasury. ² He also saw a poor widow throw in two small copper coins worth a penny. ³ He said, "I assure you that this poor widow has put in more than them all. ⁴ All of them are giving out of their spare change. But she from her hopeless poverty has given everything she had to live on."

S#5

Luke 20

²⁵ *And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

⁴⁵ *Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples, ⁴⁶ "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, ⁴⁷ who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."*

Scriptural Example #3:

Jesus' "Opinion" on Human Wealth and Abundance

Luke 12:1-48

S#6

A. Beware of Hypocrisy

¹² *In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. ³ Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.*

Opinion:

S#7

B. Fear God

⁴ *"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!*

⁶ *"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.*

Opinion:

S#8

C. Confess Christ Before Men

⁸ *"Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. ⁹ But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.*

¹⁰ *"And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.*



¹¹ “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. ¹² For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

Opinion:

S#9

D. An Illustration of a Rich Fool

¹³ Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵ And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

¹⁶ Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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.”’ ²⁰ 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?’

²¹ **“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**

Opinion:

S# 10

E. What to Do With Worry

²² Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. ²³ Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?²⁵ And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁶ If you then are not able to do the least, why ^[d]are you anxious for the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not ^[e]arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?

²⁹ “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. ³⁰ For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. ³¹ But seek ^[f]the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

³² “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Opinion:

S# 11

F. A Comparison of Faith-filled and Evil

³⁵ “Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; ³⁶ and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. ³⁸ And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. ³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

⁴¹ Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?”

⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. ⁴⁵ But if that



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servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. **For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.**

Opinion:

MORE OPINIONS IN SCRIPTURE ON WEALTH AND ABUNDANCE

[August 31st Rewards: When the Concept of Godly Rewards Gets Twisted]

20 Tithing Questions/We give because....

S# 12

WHY would God have an Opinion on Human Wealth and Abundance?

Matthew 6:21 *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Luke 12)

S# 13

⇒ Does our attitude towards giving make a difference?

S# 14

2 Corinthians 9:7

⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

S# 15

⇒ Are there blessings attached to giving?

S# 16

Proverbs 3:9-10

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Malachi 3:10

¹⁰ Bring the full 10 percent into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this way," says the LORD of Hosts. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.

Luke 6:38

³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

S# 17

⇒ What does Jesus say about wealth?

S# 18

Matthew 19:21

²¹ Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Where we invest our monies, we invest us.

S# 19



Matthew 6:20-21

²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Luke 12:33-34 (lesson begins in vs 13)

³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

S# 20

[Segway into tithing]

Does Matthew 19:21 mean who should give away all our money and live poor?

²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

- Things can own you and keep you from doing and from being what you were designed by God to do and be.
- **Tithing helps keep money and possessions from being or becoming an idol.**

S# 21

⇒ WHAT ABOUT TITHING

S#22

Giving a 10th of income or property was part of Mosaic Law (Lev. 27:20).

Detailed in **Leviticus 27:30-32**.

³⁰ And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord. ³¹ If a man wants at all to redeem any of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. ³² And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord.

Practiced in Israel's history: Numbers 18:21-32; Deuteronomy 12:5-7, 11-12, 17-18, 26:12-15; 2 Chronicles 31:6.

S#23

Isn't tithing an Old Testament concept?

It is a timeless practice tracing back to **Genesis 14:17-20**.

¹⁷ And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him.

Abram and Melchizedek ¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said:

"Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."
And he gave him a tithe of all.

Outlines that Abraham tithed 10% to Melchizedek (who was a Christ figure in the Old Testament).

Jacob promised he would give a 10th (Genesis 28:22) prior to the giving of the Law.

Abraham's actions reveal tithing is a Divine concept that it goes beyond Old Testament and New Testament. (See Romans 4:12 for New Testament application.)

Does the New Testament address tithing?

1 Corinthians 16:1-2



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Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

Does Jesus say anything about tithing?

Matthew 23:23 (Luke 11:42)

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

Jesus addressed the issue of tithing in Matthew 23:23 & Luke 11:42. By the fact Jesus did not spend a great deal of time discussing tithing reinforces the idea that it was an understood concept of life, much like prayer.

S#24

Does tithing your time count as a scriptural tithe?

No. Scripture does not support this. Once again, if we followed this line of thinking we are choosing how we want to honor God instead of trusting Him by being obedient to what He has outlined in scripture.

1 Samuel 15:22:

Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

What if you are married and your spouse objects?

Following **1 Corinthians 7:12-16**, if your spouse is an unbeliever, honor their request while explaining your belief. If a challenge can be suggested, begin with a 1% tithe and as God shows Himself faithful, incrementally increase the tithe to 10%.

If your spouse is a believer, share the challenge to see God's faithfulness. Do not force your spouse but inform them of your desire to move ahead and that you will keep them updated on the progress of you experimenting with the tithing challenge from your individual income.

But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

Does scripture specifically say we must tithe 10%?

If we are looking for THE one verse that says to live an obedient Christian life we must tithe 10% of our income, we will not find it. If we are looking in scripture to see how we must live to live as Christ, we will find many verses that instruct us to give Him control of all. This includes the money He blesses us with. There is enough direction threaded throughout scripture to define the disciplined standard of 10%.

Deuteronomy 14:22-23

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.

Deuteronomy 12:11

then there will be the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the Lord.



In the Hebrew "maaser" or "maasrah," is translated *tenth*, or *tenth part*, and in Greek "apodekatoo" and in both, it means a *payment or giving or receiving of the tenth*.

What does tithing have to do with Salvation? [SANCTIFICATION]

Nothing. Tithing is a sign of spiritual maturity. It does not buy grace but rather is an outward sign of inward growth. Salvation is not attached to tithing. But growth is. Tithing is a spiritual principle. Just like gravity is a physical principle. The question we should be asking is what happens in the spiritual when we practice tithing?

Concluding Thoughts GOD DOESN'T CARE WHAT I DO WITH MY MONEY:

S#25

Haggai 1:4-6

4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways!

*6 "You have sown much, and bring in little;
You eat, but do not have enough;
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;
And he who earns wages,
Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."*

S#26

1 Timothy 6:9

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

S#27

Proverbs 11:24

*There is one who scatters, yet increases more;
And there is one who withholds more than is right,
But it leads to poverty.*

Proverbs 21:13

*Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor
Will also cry himself and not be heard.*

Proverbs 11:25

*The generous soul will be made rich,
And he who waters will also be watered himself.*

Proverbs 28:27

*He who gives to the poor will not lack,
But he who hides his eyes will have many curses.*

Proverbs 19:17

*He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord,
And He will pay back what he has given.*

CONCLUSION:

S#28. TRY!

Malachi 3:10-11



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*¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,"
Says the Lord of hosts,
"If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you such blessing
That there will not be room enough to receive it.
¹¹ "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,
So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground,
Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,"
Says the Lord of hosts;*

S#29 WHY TRY:

Luke 19:8

⁸ Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

Luke 18:22

²² So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "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."

Luke 11:37-41

³⁷ And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. ³⁸ When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.

³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of ^fgreed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But rather give alms of ^fsuch things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.

Luke 12:15

¹⁵ And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of ^fcovetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

Luke 6:38

³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

Luke 12:33-34

*³³ Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

S#30

Isaiah 32:8
Ecclesiastes 11:1
Matthew 6:19-21
Matthew 25:40
2 Corinthians 9:6
Exodus 25:2-8
Romans 10:14-15
Numbers 31:50
Matthew 10:7-8
Leviticus 14:30

Deuteronomy 5:29
Leviticus 27:30
Isaiah 43:24
2 Chronicles 29:7
Ezra 2:69
2 Corinthians 8:12
Deuteronomy 13:22-23
Isaiah 58:10
Ecclesiastes 5:13
1 Chronicles 29:9, 14-18
Deuteronomy 16:17

2 Samuel 24:24
Ezekiel 33:31
Matthew 26:6-8
Mark 12:41-44
Acts 11:29
Romans 12:6-8
Matthew 28:19
Acts 5:1-2
Mark 9:41
Colossians 3:5
Matthew 19:21



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2 Chronicles 31:4-5
1 Chronicles 29:7-9
Romans 11:16
Ezra 8:28

2 Samuel 8:10-11
1 Timothy 6:8
Matthew 6:1
1 Corinthians 16:1-2A

Mark 12:42-43
Nehemiah 13:10

(Scriptures compiled by Rev. G. Mark Denyes)

Nehemiah 13:10

¹⁰ I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field.

Acts 20:35

³⁵ I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

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NotEs:

What types of giving are there?

Giving can be categorized under: Tithing, Alms/Gifts, and Missions.

What is the difference between Tithing, Alms/Gifts, and Mission giving?

Tithing specifically is attached to money and property. Us giving a percentage of what we have been blessed with back to the storehouse of God. No strings attached. We are practicing letting God be the one in control. We are practicing the discipline of release.

Gifts is us choosing where, when, and to whom our above and beyond tithing money goes to. This type of giving can also be called **Alms**. This is a one-time gift.

There is also another type of giving that is specified but is not a one-time gift. We call this **Missions Giving** as it is disciplined or regular gift that goes to a ministry we choose. This type of giving is above and beyond the tithe as well.

What does 'giving sacrificially' mean?

2 Corinthians 8:1-7

¹ And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵ And they went beyond our expectations; having given themselves first of all to the Lord, they gave themselves by the will of God also to us. ⁶ So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

Does this mean we must give whenever there is a need regardless of our budget? Do we give bill money and trust God to pay the bills? Note the Macedonian's first gave themselves to the LORD. **1 Timothy 5:8** instructs us to take care of our families or we are worse than nonbelievers. We tithe as a spiritual discipline. We give in response to our relationship with the LORD. We give when we hear Him instruct us to do so. This is what is called an inner witness. We respond, usually with compassion, to a need presented. We 'feel led' to do something. We pray about what that something could be. We hear Him say "Go" or "Do" or "Give". It may be more than we could have imagined. It can scare us. It takes sacrifice on our part to accomplish what He is asking. It may mean we sell something. It may mean we postpone buying something. It may mean we choose to live at a lower standard of living so we can invest the money He has blessed us with into His work.

What is Maranatha's philosophy on where the tithe should go?

Under the law, proceeds from the tithes were directed primarily for the support of the Levites and priests who provided religious leadership (Numbers 18:21-29) and for the relief of the needy (Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Whole tithes were to go into the storehouse (Malachi 3:10) to be used for the general populace.

What does Maranatha do with the tithe money?

The tithe money goes into the General Fund. The money from the General Fund underwrites the ministry at Maranatha.

Who decides where it goes?

Overall, the Trustee Board works with Pastor Mike on budget planning. Department Pastors and Staff oversee their individual budgets. Each year the budget is outlined at the annual church business meeting which is held the last Monday of February.

Do we support other Christian groups out of the General Fund?

Yes. Maranatha supports other church and organizational request for Benevolence on a situational basis.

Is the entire 10% to go to the local church or can it be split up among the church, missionaries, and other Christian groups?

Scripture is definite when it describes the tithe as the means of support for the church. Alms and gifts are the means of support for Missions and other, non-foundational, Christian groups.

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TITHE

Tithe to Melchizedek, Genesis 14:18–20; Hebrews 7:1–2.

Pledge to give tithe, Genesis 28:22.

One-fifth to Pharaoh, Genesis 47:24–26.

Value of silver, Numbers 7:13–19; 10:2.

Tithing tithe, Numbers 18:26.

Tenth for personal consumption, Deuteronomy 14:22–23.

Welfare funds, Deuteronomy 14:28 (LB); 26:12.

Evil earnings forbidden, Deuteronomy 23:18.

Dependability when making pledge, Deuteronomy 23:23.

Tithe of tithes, Nehemiah 10:38 (KJV).

Meaningless offerings, Isaiah 1:13; Matthew 23:23.

Challenge to tithe, Malachi 3:6–10.

Tithing without good spiritual conduct, Luke 11:42.

“Pick of the heap,” Hebrews 7:4 (AB).¹

TITHE—the practice of giving a tenth of one’s income or property as an offering to God. The custom of paying a tithe is a timeless practice established as a part of believing worship. The first recorded instance of tithing in the Bible occurs in Genesis 14:17-20. The practice of giving a tenth of income or property was a part of the Mosaic Law (Lev. 27:20). Jacob also, long before the Law of Moses, promised that he would give to the Lord a tenth of all he received (Gen. 28:22).

The Law of Moses prescribed tithing in detailed ways (Lev. 27:30-32) that extended in practices observed in Israel’s history (Num. 18:21-32; Deut. 12:5-7, 11-12, 17-18; 26:12-15; 2 Chr. 31:6). Malachi indicated that Israel had robbed God in withholding tithes and offerings, thus the Israelites were exhorted to bring their tithes into the storehouse in order to enjoy the Lord’s blessing (Mal. 3:8-12). He also asserted the promise of God’s abundance and deliverance as related to believers’ obedience with the tithe.

God does not make a legal demand, declaring that if we don’t tithe, we will not go to heaven. Salvation’s promise transcends legalistic demands. But there is a principle of tithing and giving which God has wrapped into the very structure of creation. Just as the law of gravity manifests predictable responses in the created universe, so does giving or its absence manifest effects in the spiritual realm—and practical outflow of our spiritual responses. Thus, when redeemed humans learn to *let go*, to *give*, to *release*, room is made for life and abundance to flow into their lives according to God’s order.

Even though the Bible clearly reveals tithing as a divinely ordered, financial discipline with the wonderful promises attending and guaranteed by God Himself, some still ask: “Isn’t tithing only in the Old Testament?” This doubt makes tithing a part of the Law and therefore without meaning to New Testament believers. Some even say to teach tithing will deprive a believer of “liberty” and move him or her “into law and out of grace.”

But the truth of the tithe is not only in the Old Testament. The New Testament shows tithing as being as appropriate today as for believers during *all* history. God’s Word also reveals that *all* His blessings and covenants are of grace, not law.

Jesus Himself addressed the issue of tithing: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy

¹ Anderson, K. (1996). [Where to Find It in the Bible](#). T. Nelson Publishers.

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and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matt. 23:23; see also Luke 11:42). Jesus was dealing with the Pharisees, that cadre of religionists who attended to the letter of the law but neglected its spiritual demands. In observing that they tithed, Jesus was challenging their supposition that obedience to a “ritual” released them from the larger reality of obedience to love’s responsibilities.

The “woe” He issued on them was *not* for their tithing, but for their neglect of “weightier matters”—justice, mercy, and faith. If tithing were unimportant to Christ, or meaningless to maintain within the new kingdom order, then as a part of emphasizing that new order He could well have said, “Take care of justice and mercy, and quit bothering with tithing—mint, cummin, or anything else!” But instead Jesus says, “These you ought to have done”—referring to their tithing—“without leaving the others undone”—maintaining righteous attitudes in righteous works.

In affirming tithing, Jesus employed “the moral imperative”—*ought*. To acknowledge something “ought to be” appeals to a preceding or higher order—to the divine will. Thus, Jesus affirms the timeless practice of tithing.

Tithing as a New Testament practice is even further verified in the Book of Romans. We are specifically admonished to walk “in the steps of faith which our father Abraham” walked (Rom. 4:12). In tracing the footsteps of Abraham, we find “And he gave him [Melchizedek] a tithe of all” (Gen. 14:20). Abraham reveals that tithing was established in the Scripture *before* the Law of Moses. It precedes and transcends the Mosaic code as a principle built into the fabric of the human order of things.

Tithing may have begun in the Old Testament, but its spirit, truth, and practice continue today. God’s Word underscores it as ours to believe, rejoice in, worship with, and be rewarded by!

As believers we are also to be generous in sharing our material possessions with the poor and in offerings for the support of Christian ministry. Christ Himself is our model in giving. Giving is to be voluntary, willing, cheerful, and given in the light of our accountability to God. Giving should be systematic and by no means limited to a tithe of our incomes. We recognize that all we have is from God. We are called to be faithful stewards of all our possessions (Rom. 14:12; 1 Cor. 9:3-14; 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8-9).²

TITHE Tenth part, especially as offered to God. Abraham presented a tithe of war booty to the priest-king of Jerusalem, Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18–20). Jacob pledged to offer God a tithe of all his possessions upon his safe return (Gen. 28:22). The tithe was subject to a variety of legislation. Numbers 18:20–32 provides for support of the Levites and the priests through the tithe. The Deuteronomic code stipulated that the tithe of agricultural produce be used for a family feast at the sanctuary celebrating God’s provision (Deut. 14:22–27). The same code stipulated the third year’s tithe for care of the Levites, orphans, widows, and foreigners (Deut. 14:28–29). Some scholars think the differences in legislation reflect different uses of the tithe at various stages of Israel’s history. The rabbis of the NT period, however, understood the laws as referring to three separate tithes: a Levitical tithe, a tithe spent celebrating in Jerusalem, and a charity tithe. Malachi 3:8 equates neglect of the tithe with robbing God. Jesus, however, warned that strict tithing must be accompanied by concern for the more important demands of the law, namely, for just and merciful living (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42). See *Stewardship*.³

STEWARDSHIP Responsibility to manage all the resources of life for the glory of God, acknowledging God as provider.

² Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). *Hayford’s Bible handbook*. Thomas Nelson Publishers.

³ **Tithe**. (2003). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (pp. 1600–1601). Holman Bible Publishers.

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Old Testament *Asher al bayit* is translated “steward” (HCSB, KJV, NIV, and NKJV) or “house steward” (NASB) (Gen. 43:19; 44:1, 4; 1 Kings 16:9). The Genesis references are to Joseph and in 1 Kings, the reference is to Arza as steward of Elah, son of Baasha, who reigned over Israel for two years. The expression is literally “one over a house,” one charged with oversight of household operations. An added term, *ha'ish* (the man), appears in Gen. 43:19. Thus the literal translation is “the man over a house.”

Ben mesheq (Gen. 15:2) is translated “steward” (KJV), “the one who will inherit my estate” (NIV), and “the heir of my house” (HCSB, NASB, NKJV). The expression literally means “son of acquisition.” Eliezer was a servant/slave in the house of Abram, who in the absence of a son of Abraham stood to inherit his estate.

Sar is used infrequently in this regard, and may mean also “prince,” “head,” “chief,” or “captain,” or “ruler.” The term is translated in 1 Chron. 28:1 as “officials” in charge of property (NIV) and as “overseers” (NASB).

New Testament *Epitropos* is the first of two primary Greek terms translated “steward” in the NT (Matt. 20:8; Luke 8:3). In Matthew reference is to a “lord” who speaks to his “steward.” In Luke Chuza (HCSB, NRSB, KJV, NASB) or Cuza (NIV) is identified as the steward of Herod.

Oikonomos, the second Greek term, deals with the person, task, or place of “stewardship.” The word first appears in Luke 12:42, a “faithful and wise steward” (KJV; HCSB, “faithful and sensible manager”). This masculine noun focuses on the person, not the task. The feminine form of the noun, two words later, is usually translated “stewardship,” highlighting the task, the responsibility granted such a person.

This term is used mostly in the NT. Other occurrences include Luke 16:1, 3, 8; 1 Cor. 4:1–2; Titus 1:7; and 1 Pet. 4:10. Each text illumines a little more the meaning of stewardship and frames the NT picture of the believer as a “house manager” for God in this world.

The biblical concept of stewardship, beginning with Adam and Eve and developed more fully in the NT, is that God is owner and provider of all that any of us possess. Since all belongs to Him, it is incumbent that all be used for His purposes and glory. A collective responsibility was given to mankind to have dominion over the earth, care for it, and manage it for His glory. Individually, whether financial resources, real property, other valuable items, time, influence, or opportunity, the believer is to seek the mind and will of God for every decision. God not only expects that we return a portion of what He gives us as tithes and offerings, He expects for all that we have to be used in ways which please and honor Him. He expects that we, regardless of vocation, will exercise responsible stewardship, on His behalf, of every day that we live. One day His eternal kingdom will come. In the meantime, we are to live as if it has already come. See *Tithe*.

Don H. Stewart and Charles W. Draper⁴

CHAPTER 34

Christians Are Commanded to Tithe

Hebrews 7:1–10

The Legendary Teaching on Hebrews 7:1–10

⁴ Draper, C. W. with Stewart Don H. (2003). [Stewardship](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 1534). Holman Bible Publishers.

Some Christians are living in disobedience because of their selfishness. They refuse to give God what is required. They refuse to meet the biblical standard of giving: a tithe. The word *tithe* means 10 percent, so Christians are required to give 10 percent of their income to the local church. Some people use the excuse that to require tithing is legalistic, but tithing actually began before the Mosaic law was given in Genesis 14:18–20. Furthermore, the author of the letter to the Hebrews used the Genesis passage to advocate tithing. He retells the story of Abraham giving Melchizedek 10 percent “of everything” (Heb 7:2). Then he reminds his readers that the people of Israel were required to give a tithe to the descendants of Levi. The key verse is 7:8: “In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives” (ESV). The “mortal men” who received tithes were the Levites. The phrase “he lives” (7:8) is a direct reference to Christians giving their tithes to Jesus Christ.

Introduction: Unraveling the Legend

I was talking with a friend who had two master’s degrees from seminary, and the issue of tithing came up. When I mentioned that tithing referred to giving 10 percent, he objected: “No, *tithing* just means ‘to give.’” After several minutes he calmed down and realized that he was mistaken: *tithe* means “10 percent.” Determining whether Christians are required to tithe is not the exact purpose of this chapter. Rather, the question is whether Hebrews 7 requires Christians to tithe.

The Context of Hebrews 7

Hebrews 7:1–10 is a great text to practice sound principles of biblical interpretation. First, seeking the author’s intent must always precede attempting to apply a passage. Second, the primary meaning of a passage needs to be the focus of interpretation. While secondary or tertiary meanings can be identified and interesting, they should not be the focus of the interpretation. Third, the interpreter must remember that only primary meanings build doctrine. If a text has an implication (a secondary meaning) that appears to support a certain doctrine, a separate text should be located that has that doctrine as its primary meaning. Then the secondary meaning can be used to validate the text that has that doctrine as its primary meaning.

Placing Hebrews 7:1–10 into the context of the argument of the entire letter will greatly benefit the interpretation process. The author of Hebrews explained that Jesus’ sacrifice is superior to the sacrifices of the Mosaic covenant. Because of this, the Jews should not turn back to their former ways. The argument of Hebrews has several aspects to it. After demonstrating that Jesus is superior to the angels (even though He was temporarily made lower than them [2:7]), the author then shows that Jesus’ priesthood was superior to the Levitical priesthood. Based on Psalm 110:4, Jesus’ and Melchizedek’s priesthood are shown to be of the same kind. Since Melchizedek’s priesthood was already demonstrated to be superior to the Levitical priesthood, Jesus’ priesthood must also be superior to the Levitical priesthood. *Hebrews 7:1–10 demonstrates that Melchizedek’s priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood.* That is the main point.

A Closer Look at Hebrews 7:1–10

Hebrews 7:1–10 can be broken into two sections: verses 1–3 say that Melchizedek remains a priest forever; verses 4–10 provide the proof of his superior priesthood. Three proofs are offered. First, Melchizedek is greater than Abraham because Abraham gave him an offering (v. 4). This is the central argument of the three. Second, Melchizedek is greater because he blessed Abraham (v. 7). The third argument needs a little historical

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background. Levitical priests typically served only after they reached a certain age (twenty, twenty-five, or thirty—depending on the source consulted). After a certain age they stopped ministering. Eventually, of course, they would die. Now for the third argument: while Abraham's descendants paid tithes to priests who would die, Abraham paid his tithe to a priest who lives on—Melchizedek (v. 8). Therefore, since Melchizedek was able to perform the functions of a priest without having Levitical lineage, Jesus is also able to be a priest without the necessary lineage.

The one theological truth the author intended is this: *Melchizedek was greater than Abraham and thus greater than the Levitical priests.* Hebrews 7:1–10 is a stepping stone to 8:1–2, which proclaims that Jesus, a superior high priest, rendered a superior sacrifice. This is the author's primary meaning and what he intended to communicate.

Responding to the Legend

The argument for tithing from this passage usually focuses on Hebrews 7:8. Is the "he" in 7:8 a reference to Jesus? Some people have claimed that, concluding that Jesus is proclaimed to have received tithes. However, the word he does not occur in the Greek. It is implied in the Greek but not stated. Furthermore, the implied "he" (or "one") is not a reference to Christ but to Melchizedek. The author did not turn his attention to Jesus until verse 11. Everything before that is about Melchizedek. The contrast in verse 8 is between Levitical priests who received tithes and died and Melchizedek who received tithes but never died.

A second argument states that since Melchizedek's priesthood is greater than the Levitical priesthood, and Melchizedek is a picture of Christ, then Abraham must be a picture of Christians giving tithes to Christ. Typically neglected in this line of argumentation are the inconsistencies between Abraham's actions in tithing and what these advocates teach today. First, Abraham gave voluntarily while many preachers today claim the tithe is mandatory. Nothing in Scripture states that Abraham was commanded to tithe. Second, Abraham's tithe (of the spoils) was a response of thanksgiving to God for victory in war. The requirement for giving on the spoils of war in the Mosaic law was different (see Num 31:27–29). Finally, and primarily, the author of Hebrews was not arguing for the continuation of tithing in the new covenant. Whether tithing was required for Christians is completely irrelevant to the argument the author is making. Hebrews 7 functions as an illustration to demonstrate the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood. New Testament scholar Paul Ellingworth concludes, "Abraham's action is unrelated to the later Mosaic legislation on tithes ... and this is not Hebrews' concern." To prove tithing from the New Testament, a passage must be produced that has as its *primary* purpose to advocate tithing.

Application

Christians should give generously and sacrificially to their local churches. Many principles in Scripture support this claim. However, a mandated 10 percent cannot be proved from Hebrews 7.

Hebrews 7:1–10 provides the theological undergirding to demonstrate the superiority of Christ's sacrifice over the Mosaic law sacrifices. Jesus died for our sins, once and for all. We have no way to receive forgiveness apart from Christ. All other avenues to God are dead ends that provide no hope for forgiveness. Don't turn away from Christ; don't take your eye off the finish line. As Elvina Hall wrote in the nineteenth century:

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

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Annotated Bibliography

Commentaries

Ellingworth, Paul. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

Though not the focus of his comments to any extent, he provides a solid (though technical) discussion on the passage. See especially page 361.

Journals

Köstenberger, Andreas J., and David A. Croteau. " 'Will a Man Rob God?' (Malachi 3:8): A Study of Tithing in the Old and New Testaments." *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 26, no. 1 (2006): 53–77.

The article addresses the larger issue of the biblical arguments for tithing, as well as the legend above. See especially pages 20–25. Available online at www.biblicalfoundations.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/32-Tithing1.pdf.

Websites

Kelly, Russell Earl. "19. Hebrews 7: Extremely Important." Accessed July 17, 2014. www.tithing-russkelly.com/id8.html.

This is a chapter from Kelly's book that he has made available online. It is a detailed treatment of this issue.⁵

Tithe & Offering

What Is the Difference between Tithes and Offerings?

When trying to distinguish between tithes and offerings, it is important to first understand the concept of tithing. Christians today often think that what they give to their local church is a tithe, when in reality it is an offering. Christian tithing is a misnomer because Christians are under no obligation to fulfill the command to tithe as given to the Israelites as part of the Mosaic Law. The tithe was a requirement of the law in which all Israelites were to give 10% of everything they earned and grew to the Tabernacle/Temple (Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:26; Deuteronomy 14:24; 2 Chronicles 31:5). The New Testament nowhere commands, or even recommends, that Christians submit to a legalistic tithe system. Paul states that believers should set aside a portion of their income as an offering, but this is not a tithe (1 Corinthians 16:1–2).

God expected the Israelites to honor Him by giving the first fruits of what He gave to them. Leviticus 27:30 states, "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD." Giving the 10% tithe was commanded of the Israelites and was therefore an obligation. When Christ died on the cross, He fulfilled the requirements of the Law and made the mandatory 10% tithe obsolete. To continue to insist that it is still in effect is to nullify, at least in part, the sacrifice of Christ and return to the idea of justification by works and law-keeping. The first fruits offering found its fulfillment in Jesus. "But

⁵ Croteau, D. A. (2015). [Urban Legends of the New Testament: 40 Common Misconceptions](#) (pp. 201–204). B&H.

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Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

An offering is that which is freely given by Christians to the work of the Lord, the local church, and/or ministries and missions. But offerings are far more than simply the check we write on Sunday. We are to offer much more to God than our monetary resources. Romans 12:1 exhorts us to offer our bodies "as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" as part of our worship. Romans 6:13 gives the reason for offering ourselves: because we are "those who have been brought from death to life" and, as such, we are to "offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness." God is not nearly as interested in our monetary offerings as He is our submission and obedience. The truth is that He doesn't need our resources to accomplish His plans and purposes. After all, He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10) and needs nothing from us. What He desires, however, and what He values, is the heart that overflows with gratitude and thanksgiving to the God who saved us and who gives us all things, knowing our needs before we even ask (Matthew 6:8). Such a heart gives generously, willingly, and cheerfully in response to the love and grace that abounds in Christ (2 Corinthians 9:6–8).⁶

A. The Tithe. When he returned from destroying the Mesopotamian kings, Abraham gave Melchizedek the priest a tenth of the spoil (Gen. 14:20). This was his confession that God was his Lord, the Possessor of heaven and earth, and the Giver of victory (14:19).

Jacob recognized the same responsibility. He vowed to give God a tithe of all that he received if God would protect him in this journey and return him to his land. This humble confession of dependence on God stands against the proud boast, "... My power, and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:17; cf. Dan. 4:30). There was no middle road between these paths.

The giving of a tithe was man's acknowledgment that he is a steward of God's creation. The Old Testament clearly demonstrates that every spiritual relationship of man is expressed in some material way. Rites of worship gave the Israelites a way to confess the operation of their faith in every sphere—not the least of which was the economic sphere.

Israel came out of Egypt by faith in the promises of God. God then claimed the firstborn of Israel (Ex. 13:11–16) and commanded that they be redeemed by the payment of five shekels per male child (Num. 3:46–47). This token payment reminded the people of Israel that they belonged to the Lord; they were not their own (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19–20).

God brought the Israelites into the land promised their fathers (Ex. 6:8), where He would rule over them forever (15:17–18). God would drive out the inhabitants and give the land to them (Ex. 23:28–30). In return, they would acknowledge His bounty by offering to Him the firstborn of all clean animals and the first ripe grain and fruits, at the place He would choose (Deut. 12:11–12, 17–18). There they would bring annual tithes of the fruits of the ground and of the flock (Deut. 26:1–12).

When the Israelites offered their tithes, they confessed God's providence to their fore-fathers, His deliverance in their time of need, His redemption of them from oppression, and His gift of the land of Canaan (Deut. 26:5–9). They invited the Levites, the poor, the widows, and the orphans of their local community to join them at the central sanctuary as they made these offerings to the Lord. No man could appear at a feast empty-handed. The Law required each man to bring an offering proportionate to the way he had been blessed (Deut. 16:10, 17). (*See also "Worship Rituals."*)

Notice the economic dimension of Israel's worship. They offered the Lord a large part of their time; they presented the first fruits of their grain and livestock; they came to the feasts with offerings and tithes; they

⁶ Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). [Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered](#). Logos Bible Software.

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made freewill offerings of their lives and property; and they gave liberally for the building of the tabernacle and temple. When they returned with booty taken in battle, they set aside a portion for the Lord and Levites before dividing it among themselves (Num. 31:26–54). Their devotion to God cost them the best of all they had (cf. 2 Sam. 24:24). The tithe clearly expressed this costly devotion.⁷

A&S

4:36–37 Barnabas (Joseph) is introduced here because he gave money from the sale of **a field** to the apostles to give to those in need. Barnabas would prove to be a respected and important leader in the life of the early church. He was a Levite by birth (a member of the Jewish tribe that carried out Temple duties) but a resident of **Cyprus**. This may explain why he was a landowner (Levites were forbidden to own land in Israel—see Numbers 18:20–24 and Deuteronomy 10:9; 18:1–2). Barnabas would later travel with Paul on Paul's first missionary journey (13:4). John Mark (author of the Gospel of Mark) was his cousin. "Barnabas" means **Son of Encouragement**, and it would prove, over and over, to be most appropriate.

ACTS 5

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA / 5:1–11

Acts 5:1–8:3 tells of internal and external problems facing the early church. Inside, there were dishonesty (5:1–11) and administrative headaches (6:1–7); outside, the church was being pressured by persecution. Ananias and Sapphira, a married couple in the Jerusalem church, concocted a plan whereby they hoped to give a little to God but get credit for a lot. Their scheme was dishonest, and God's judgment was swift and severe. As you ponder their story, ask yourself the question, What are my motives for serving and giving?

5:1–2 The word **also** ties back to 4:36–37, where Barnabas was introduced as a man who had generously given to those in need. At the inception of the church, the practice of selling one's possessions in order to give money to those in need showed the believers' willingness to help other believers. Not everyone was liquidating everything, nor was there pressure to do so (Mary, John's mother, still owned her home—12:12). This was a freewill offering, and it appears to have been practiced only here in the early Palestine church.

It seems that the positive response of the church to gifts from people like Barnabas became a source of envy for **Ananias** and **Sapphira**. They also **sold some property**. They could have given any amount of the selling price, but because they apparently desired the esteem that Barnabas had received, they pretended to give **the full amount** they had received for the field. Instead, however, they kept back **part of the money**.

5:3–4 Given insight by the Holy Spirit, **Peter** saw through Ananias's lie. Apparently involved in the new church, Ananias and Sapphira had succumbed to temptation and allowed **Satan** into their hearts. Their sin was lying to God and God's people—saying they gave the whole amount but holding back some for themselves and trying to make themselves appear more generous than they really were. This act was judged severely because dishonesty, greed, and covetousness are destructive in a church. All lying is bad, but when people lie to try to deceive God and other believers about their relationship with him, they destroy their testimony.

5:5–6 When **Ananias** realized that Peter knew all about his scheme, **he fell to the floor and died**. The Greek word *ekpsucho* literally means "to breathe one's last, to die" and usually connotes death by divine judgment (see 5:10; 12:23;

⁷ Packer, J. I., Tenney, M. C., & White, W., Jr. (1997). *Nelson's illustrated manners and customs of the Bible* (p. 330). Thomas Nelson.

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1 Corinthians 10:6; 1 John 5:16). Peter didn't kill Ananias, nor did he ask the Holy Spirit to kill him. Peter condemned the lying, and the Spirit of God executed judgment.

5:7–8 Sapphira showed up **about three hours later**. She didn't know **what had happened** to her husband. Peter's questions to Sapphira exposed her complicity in the deed. Peter gave her the opportunity to tell the truth, but she told the same lie that her husband had told. In so doing she revealed a hardness of heart that had not been touched by the grace of God.

5:9 To test God is to see how much one can get away with before God will respond or act according to his word (see Exodus 17:2; Deuteronomy 6:16; Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12 for further passages on testing God). The entire direction of this lie by Ananias and Sapphira was wrongheaded, self-serving, church-destroying, and sinful. Ananias and Sapphira had conspired together to mock God, to lie and think they could get away with it as if God would not know. They had tried to **test the Spirit of the Lord**, referring to the Holy Spirit in the body of believers—specifically the apostles before whom this lie was told (John 16:8).

5:10 Like her husband, Sapphira **fell to the floor and died**. As she and Ananias had been joined in their "testing" of God (5:9), so they were joined in death. This is more than just a historical record of events in the early church. This serves as a warning that no one should trifle with the Holy Spirit or take lightly the importance of telling the truth.

5:11 This is the first appearance of the term **church** (*ekklesia*, meaning "assembly") in the book of Acts. It will become the regular word for the universal church and the local church in the remainder of the book (7:38; 8:1; 9:31; 11:22; 13:1; 14:23; 15:22, 41; 16:5; 20:28). God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira produced **great fear** among the believers, making them realize how seriously God regards sin in the church.⁸

4:32 They Shared Everything?

Does this verse describe an idealized behavior of the church, later abandoned? Could it be called "primitive communism"? Is this practice the reason the Jerusalem church became poor? What is its relevance for today?

To understand the two passages that describe the behavior of the early church (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35), we need to understand the methodology of Acts, the context of the passages and their meaning. First, we note the methodology. The author is writing in an environment in which writing space is limited. Both Luke (the first volume in the two-part work) and Acts fill what would be the longest scrolls available in that day. Thus, the author must compress the text in his effort to fit a massive history within a limited scroll. Any word of Jesus that appears in Luke does not appear in Acts. Conversely, the saying that appears in Acts 20:35 does not appear in the Gospel. Another way the author shortens the text is by describing a topic once and then abbreviating it in succeeding references. The gospel messages in Acts are given in their fullest form the first time they appear and after that only in abbreviated form. New material, however, is given in full. Pentecost is the fullest description of filling with the Spirit; only variations are mentioned later. Acts 2 and 4–5 describe what the experience of the early church is supposed to be like. New details are added later, but the basic description of the church is not repeated. We expect, then, that these passages show how the author believed church life should be lived.

Second, both Acts 2 and Acts 4 fall within a context of the filling of the Spirit. Acts 2 includes Pentecost and the initial evangelistic thrust of the church. In the general description of life in the Spirit-filled church (Acts 2:42–47) we discover three elements: (1) signs and wonders, (2) evangelistic outreach and (3) sharing (teaching, food, possessions, prayer). In Acts 4 the believers respond to persecution with prayer for boldness (Acts 4:29–30). Again the church is filled with the Spirit. Again the three elements appear: (1) signs and wonders (Acts 5:12–16), (2) evangelistic outreach (Acts 4:33; 5:14) and (3) sharing (Acts 4:32–5:11). In this last

⁸ Barton, B., Comfort, P., Osborne, G., Taylor, L. K., & Veerman, D. (2001). *Life Application New Testament Commentary* (pp. 488–490). Tyndale.

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passage the author chooses to expand upon the sharing aspect, first describing it and then giving two examples. For the author of Acts, sharing (often translated “fellowship”) is a key mark of the Spirit-filled church. It is not a historical curiosity.

Third, what does the author intend by these passages? We can immediately lay to rest the idea of a “primitive communism” in which everyone turned all of their goods over to the community upon conversion. That has been a viable way of life for some Christian communities, but it is not what was happening in Acts. The description of selling one’s goods in Acts 2:45 is expanded in Acts 4:34. In both cases the verb tense indicates an ongoing process. Whenever a need came to light, those having goods sold them and brought the money to provide for the need. As if these descriptions were not clear enough, in Acts 5:3–4 the author makes it plain that such generosity was not a legal requirement; it was the lie, not the failure to give, for which Ananias and Sapphira are condemned.

What was happening in the Jerusalem church, then, was simply that “they shared everything they had” (Acts 4:32). What had been an ideal to some of the Greek philosophers has been realized by the power of the Spirit in the church. Because they were “one in heart and mind” all thought of possessiveness vanished. They shared freely with one another. This resulted in powerful evangelism and an experience of grace, perhaps indicated by the signs and wonders (Acts 4:33). Consequently, they realized the goal of Deuteronomy 15:4 (“There should be no poor among you”): “There were no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:34). Why was that? To hear of a need was to search one’s heart to see if one could meet the need. As soon as a need was announced those with possessions would want to share (since the Spirit had removed their possessiveness and joined them in heart to their poorer fellow Christians). They shared by bringing the money to the apostles, probably because (1) the apostles would know if the need had been met already and (2) the apostles would guard the anonymity of the donor. Later Jewish charity rules valued the anonymity of both donor and recipient. Joseph Barnabas is viewed as a good example of this practice. Ananias and Sapphira appear as negative examples, trying to fake the impulse of the Spirit and by deceit get the apostles to think of them as more Spirit-filled than they are. But, as someone observed, “in the church in which the lame walk liars die.” The same Spirit that is present for signs and wonders is also present for judgment.

We should not imagine, however, that this practice is what impoverished the Jerusalem church. On the one hand, there were plenty of reasons for that church to become poor. Jerusalem was not in a good economic position, being off trade routes and not in the best agricultural area. Its main business was government and the temple, but the Christians were probably given only limited access to the revenues from either of these sources. Also, evidence in James indicates that the church experienced economic persecution, both in terms of legal oppression and in terms of “last hired—first fired” discrimination. The church had a large group of apostles to support (unlike the tentmaker Paul, a fisherman like Peter could not support himself on a mountain), many visiting Christians to feed and care for, and probably a large proportion of older believers, since many older Jews moved to Palestine to die and be buried in its soil (such pious dislocated people would be especially open to the gospel). To add to its problems Jerusalem experienced more than one severe famine during the 40s. We can read reports of Queen Helena of Adiabene sending relief to Judea, as well as rabbinic references to famine and poverty in Jerusalem. All of these would conspire to make it difficult to maintain the church in Jerusalem. But for the early Christians it was important for symbolic reasons that a large Christian presence remain in that city. It is no wonder that Paul took up a collection to support this church (Rom 15:26; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8–9).

Acts, of course, is giving us historical precedents, not a pattern to be slavishly imitated. It shows what happened when the Spirit was present in power, not necessarily how the church must live today. However, we have already noticed that there is no other pattern for church life in Acts. The frequency of meetings may have dropped to once a week as the church moved into the Gentile world (because the church was no longer

located in one small city where meeting was easy and because the large group of slaves in the church made frequent meetings more difficult), but the author mentions nothing about a change in the charitable spirit. In fact Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15 deals with an abuse of church charity that assumes some system of sharing was in place. He tells the abusers to “shape up or ship out,” but, far from changing the system, he turns to the church and says, “Never tire of doing what is right” (2 Thess 3:13). If this were not enough, we discover the same Spirit is poured out on the Macedonian churches (2 Cor 8). They lived in “extreme poverty,” but had given themselves so freely to God that they begged to be allowed to share with the poor in Jerusalem. The principle, Paul argues, true even across continental boundaries, is “that there might be equality” (2 Cor 8:13; the context makes it plain that economic equality is in view). This equality due to Spirit-directed sharing is precisely the situation we observed in practice in Jerusalem in Acts.

The modern church is concerned about the power of the Spirit. Evangelism is desired; signs and wonders are called for. Given that Paul turns the third part of the precedent of Acts into principle, we should take seriously the practice of the church in Acts, expecting that a full outpouring of the Spirit in any period of history would have all three effects. While it may not take the identical form it took in Jerusalem, the presence of the Spirit will open the wallets of anyone whose heart is truly open to his presence.

5:9 Testing the Holy Spirit?

The story of Ananias and Sapphira is an uncomfortable one that contains a number of difficult issues. What did this couple do that was so wrong? Why weren't they simply exposed and then called to repentance? Why did they die, and why don't we see the same penalty happening in the church today?

The church after Pentecost was “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 4:31), which was manifested in three ways: through (1) bold proclamation or evangelism, (2) signs and wonders, and (3) great generosity. The Spirit of God freed people from the spirit of Mammon so that they gave whenever they saw a need, selling property and belongings if necessary. There was no compulsion, no requirement. It was simply a natural response to the presence of the Spirit of the generous God within them.

Immediately before this story is that of Barnabas, who, moved by the Spirit, sold his property and gave the money to the church. Obviously, the church approved of this generosity. Ananias and Sapphira apparently wanted this same approval but did not have the same Spirit-caused generosity within their hearts. As a result they chose to sell their property but to give only part of the proceeds to the church. At the same time they agreed to claim that they were giving the whole amount. The text makes it very clear that the sin was not that they gave only part of the money (Acts 5:4), but that they lied (Acts 5:3). If they gave and how much they gave was a matter between them and God. It was not a major issue. That they lied about what they were doing *was* a major issue—in fact, it is the issue of the rest of the story.

Before addressing Sapphira, Peter speaks to Ananias: “Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3). In other words, not being open to the Spirit of God, but instead living in their need for security in owning money or property, they had allowed themselves to be directed by Satan into deception. They, members of the church, had been to some extent demonized. This was a natural conclusion for Peter, for Satan is pictured as a deceiver and “the father of lies” (Jn 8:44) from Genesis 3 on. When they turned from the truth (perhaps only the uncomfortable truth that they were not secure enough to give as generously as others), they opened themselves to the archliar. Such a situation does not differ from that of today, for people who reject the impulses of the Holy Spirit or turn from God's truth are likewise often caught in the web of deception and falsehood that seems to descend upon them. Ananias and Sapphira apparently were aware that they were telling a lie before the church, although they were themselves deceived in failing to recognize that the Spirit would reveal the truth to Peter. Peter calls this attempt at deception “test[ing] the Spirit of the Lord.”

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In saying the sin is that of testing God's Spirit, Peter recalls the Old Testament testing tradition and in particular Israel's experience in the wilderness. Even before coming into the wilderness and during their years there Israel had good evidence of the reality and presence of God. He had divided the sea and defeated Pharaoh. He had provided food and water for them. But he also announced his intention to test them (Ex 15:25). He let them come into hard places to see if they responded with trust or with mistrust. In Exodus 17 they came to a place named "Testing" (Massah). Again there was no water. Again the people responded with mistrust: "Is the LORD among us or not?" (Ex 17:7). This mistrust and the demand that God act or they will not believe that he is among them is termed "testing God." In fact, God later says that Israel "tested me ten times" (Num 14:22). It is no wonder that Deuteronomy 6:16 says, "Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah." The same theme is repeated later (Ps 78:18, 41, 56; 95:9; 106:14). The Jews were quite aware of this tradition, for it was picked up quite often in their literature.

Peter, then, is saying to Sapphira that in spite of the evident presence in the church of the Spirit of the Lord ("the Lord" here refers to Jesus) she and her husband had chosen to attempt to "pull a fast one" on him. Their lie contained within it the assumption that the Spirit would do nothing; conscious or not, it was a challenge as to whether God was really present in the church. Will he respond, or will he turn a blind eye to their deception? As noted later in the New Testament (Acts 15:10; 1 Cor 10:9), that is a dangerous challenge. God responds, and they die.

Their immediate death without a chance to repent probably had two reasons. First, it was the first time that believers had issued such a challenge to God, so it was important for God to act clearly and decisively to prevent any misunderstanding about the reality of his presence and his willingness to hear and judge. Second, it was a time of intense spiritual presence, and where the evidence of God's presence is greater the sin of challenging that presence is more serious. There also may be mercy involved in such a judgment. While death is an ultimate penalty from the human perspective, from the divine perspective it is far less serious than a continued movement into sin and deception; the quick divine judgment prevents full apostasy (1 Cor 11:32).

The teaching of the story, then, is twofold. First, Christians are not to put God to the test. Jesus gave the proper example of endurance under testing in Matthew 4:7. Christians are to follow suit and trust God in hard places. Second, the presence of the Spirit in the church is not without its dangers. Some died for ignoring the presence of the Lord (1 Cor 11:30; the sin is a rubbing of salt in the wounds of social divisions in the church). The church was given the authority to make declarations that may have the same effect as Peter's (although perhaps not with such an immediate result; 1 Cor 5:3-5; compare 2 Cor 13:10). I have observed similar incidents in the church today, some of which were reasonably dramatic and others of which took place over a longer period of time. God is a God of holiness, and those who will not treat him as holy will experience the consequences.

The church today often prays for revival. Perhaps it should ask if it really wants what it is praying for. Obviously we would welcome the power of God in evangelism and signs among us. We might even welcome a growing presence of the Spirit in prophecy. But reading this passage in the context of Acts should remind us that "in the church where the lame walked liars died." With the power of God comes his holiness, and those who are not prepared to live in his holiness will do well to fear rather than to seek his power.⁹

5:1, 2 Ananias and Sapphira wanted to have a reputation like that of Barnabas (4:36, 37), but they did not have the same character he had. At a time when others were seeking to serve their fellow believers, Ananias and Sapphira were seeking to serve themselves.

5:3 why has Satan filled your heart: Ananias and Sapphira believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; however, they had succumbed to the temptations of greed and pride. Note that the same word *filled* is used here in connection

⁹ Kaiser, W. C., Jr., Davids, P. H., Bruce, F. F., & Brauch, M. T. (1996). *Hard sayings of the Bible* (pp. 517-521). InterVarsity.

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with Satan as is used in 4:8 of the Holy Spirit. The term means to take possession of or control. God's children, who have been freed from the tyranny of Satan, have the ability to choose whom they will allow to control them. When we choose to sin, we open the door to Satan. The Evil One tempted Ananias and Sapphira with wicked desires and thoughts, and they yielded their will to these temptations. **lie to the Holy Spirit:** The author of all lies is Satan (John 8:44). When Ananias and Sapphira deliberately lied, they took upon themselves the moral character of the one who is behind all lies, the devil himself.

The Danger of Lying to God

The dramatic account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11) immediately after the mention of Barnabas (4:36, 37) draws a stark contrast between two kinds of people. On the one hand, Barnabas serves as a positive model of sincere faith, as evidenced by his open-handed generosity. On the other hand, Ananias and Sapphira serve as negative models.

Externally, they appeared the same. Like Barnabas, they sold land and brought money to the church, where they "laid it at the apostles' feet" (4:37; 5:2). But internally, they had a radically different commitment.

The sins that Peter named—lying to the Holy Spirit (5:3) and testing the Spirit (5:9)—indicate that they were playing games with God. Peter noted that the source of their deception was Satan. As the ultimate liar (John 8:44), Satan had filled their hearts with lies, in contrast to the Holy Spirit, who fills the heart with truth (14:16, 17; Eph. 5:6–21). And like Israel, they were testing the Spirit (1 Cor. 10:1–13), testing the limits of what He would permit, trying to see how much they could get away with.

God dealt severely with this couple by making an example of them. As a result, fear came upon the church (Acts 5:5, 11)—not a cringing fear of dread, but a heightened respect for God's holiness, His moral purity. The incident still stands as a bold warning to believers today about relating to God.

5:4 You have not lied to men but to God: The Holy Spirit is the third person of the triune Godhead. To lie to Him (v. 3) is to lie to God. **in your own control:** Ananias and Sapphira could have kept a part of their proceeds or they could have kept it all; their stewardship was between them and the Lord. But the problem was that they wanted others to believe they had sacrificed everything when in fact they had given only a portion to the Lord.

5:5–7 fell down and breathed his last: The severity of the punishment may seem extreme to some people, much like the story of Achan in Josh. 7:16–26. However, Prov. 6:16–19 tells us how God feels about deception and division. The early church was vulnerable to great spiritual danger. Yet Jesus had promised (Matt. 16:18) that the power of hell would not destroy this fledgling church in its infant stage. God would move with great discipline to ensure its purity and survival.

5:8 Peter gave Ananias's wife an opportunity to **tell** the truth. Sapphira would not be disciplined for the sin of her husband. Even though Ananias and Sapphira were married, they were also brother and sister in Jesus Christ. Sapphira was responsible for her own personal relationship with God. When Sapphira committed the same sin of rebellion and deception that her husband had committed, she received her own punishment.

5:9 to test the Spirit: A challenge to God to expose their duplicity.

5:10, 11 the great fear: Evidences the great respect Ananias and Sapphira had among the believers. If God was so severe with these believers, they knew they had better watch their step.

5:12 Signs refers to supernatural occurrences that point to a warning, instruction, or encouragement from God. A sign gave credibility to the fact that what was being said was from God. **Wonders** points to the response to a

sign. By its very nature a wonder caused awe in those who saw or heard it. Signs and wonders were given by God to confirm His word (Matt. 12:38, 39).

5:13 none ... dared join them because of the recent discipline (5:1–11).

5:14 Not only did fear come upon the church because of the discipline, but **believers** were **increasingly** added to the Lord.¹⁰

Having portrayed the solidarity of love enjoyed by the Jerusalem church, Luke supplies his readers with two contrasting examples: Barnabas whose generosity and openness fulfilled the ideal (4:36–37) and Ananias and Sapphira whose greed and hypocrisy contradicted it (5:1ff.). 'Barnabas' (*Son of Encouragement*) was actually the nickname which the apostles gave, on account of his helpfulness, to *Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus* (36). He *sold a field he owned*, presumably in Cyprus, and laid the money *at the apostles' feet* (37). It was an act of liberality fully in keeping with his character as it later emerges in the Acts narrative. Luke deliberately introduces him here.

2. Ananias and Sapphira are punished for their hypocrisy (5:1–11)

The story of the deceit and death of this married couple is important for several reasons. It illustrates the honesty of Luke as a historian; he did not suppress this sordid episode. It throws light on the interior life of the first Spirit-filled community; it was not all romance and righteousness. It is also a further example of the strategy of Satan. Several commentators have suggested a parallel between Ananias and Achan—the Achan who stole money and clothing after the destruction of Jericho. Thus Bengel wrote: 'the sin of Achan and that of Ananias were in many respects similar, at the beginning of the churches of the Old and New Testament respectively'. F. F. Bruce sees a further analogy: 'The story of Ananias is to the book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God.'⁵

What we are told is that *a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, first sold a piece of property* (1) and then, *with his wife's full knowledge* (or 'connivance', ἰβ), *he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet* (2). To all appearances, Barnabas and Ananias did the same thing. Both sold a property. Both brought the proceeds of the sale to the apostles, and both committed it to their disposal. The difference was that Barnabas brought all the sale money, while Ananias brought only a proportion. Thus Ananias and Sapphira perpetuated a double sin, a combination of dishonesty and deceit. At first sight, there was nothing wrong in their withholding part of the sale money. As Peter plainly said later, their property was their own both before and after the sale (see verse 4 below). So they were under no obligation to sell their piece of land or, having sold it, to give away any—let alone all—of the proceeds. That is not the whole story, however. There is something else, something half-hidden. For Luke, in declaring that Ananias *kept back* part of the money for himself, chooses the verb *nosphizomai*, which means to 'misappropriate' (BAGD). The same word was used in LXX of Achan's theft, and in its only other New Testament occurrence it means to steal.⁷ We have to assume, therefore, that before the sale Ananias and Sapphira had entered into some kind of contract to give the church the total amount raised. Because of this, when they brought only some instead of all, they were guilty of embezzlement.

It was not on this sin that Peter concentrated, however, but on the other, hypocrisy. The apostle's complaint was not that they lacked honesty (bringing only a part of the sale price) but that they lacked integrity (bringing only a part, while pretending to bring the whole). They were not so much misers as thieves and—above all—liars. They wanted the credit and the prestige for sacrificial generosity, without the inconvenience of it. So, in order to gain a reputation to which they had no right, they told a brazen lie. Their motive in giving was not to relieve the poor, but to fatten their own ego.

¹⁰ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (pp. 1374–1375). T. Nelson Publishers.

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Peter saw behind Ananias' hypocrisy the subtle activity of Satan. He confronted Ananias: '*Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself [nosphizomai, again] some of the money you received for the land?*' (3). Peter accused him both of misappropriation and of falsehood, both of stealing and then of lying about it. But there was no need for either sin. '*Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God*' (4). We note in passing that Peter assumes the deity of the Holy Spirit, since to lie to him (3) was to lie to God (4).

⁵*When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.*

⁷*About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸Peter asked her, 'Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?'*

'Yes,' she said, 'that is the price.'

⁹*Peter said to her, 'How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.'*

¹⁰*At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.*

No reply from Ananias to Peter's indictment and questions is recorded. Luke tells us only that God's judgment fell upon him: 'he dropped dead' (5a, NEB). Understandably *great fear*, the solemnity which is experienced in the presence of the holy God, *seized all who heard what had happened* (5b), even while certain *young men* attended to the burial (6). *About three hours later* the incident repeated itself. Ignorant of her husband's death, Sapphira *came in*. Peter gave her the chance to repent by asking her to state the price they had received for the land, but she merely identified herself with his duplicity (7–8). Peter protested that they had conspired *to test the Spirit of the Lord*, presuming to see whether they could get away with their deception, and warned her that those who had buried her husband would bury her too (9), whereupon *she fell down at his feet and died*, and the young men buried her beside her husband (10). For the second time Luke refers to the great fear which seized the whole church, and indeed all who heard about these events (11).

Many readers of this story are offended by what they regard as the severity of God's judgment. Some even say they 'hope that Ananias and Sapphira are legendary'. Or they try to exonerate God by attributing the death of Ananias and Sapphira instead to Peter who, they say, either laid a curse on them or put them under undue psychological pressure, thus anticipating the use of a modern lie detector. But, even if the anguish of a violated conscience contributed to their death on the human level, Luke clearly intends us to understand that it was a work of divine judgment. Once this has been accepted, there are at least three valuable lessons for us to learn.

First, the gravity of their sin. Peter stressed this by repeating that their lie was not directed primarily against him, but against the Holy Spirit, that is, against God. And God hates hypocrisy. Luke has recorded Jesus' denunciation of it, together with his warning that those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit (in deliberate defiance of known truth) will not be forgiven (Lk. 12:10). Yet the sin of Ananias and Sapphira was also against the church. Is it intentional that Luke here uses for the first time the word *ekklēsia* (11)? He thus affirms the continuity of the Christian community with God's redeemed and gathered people in the Old Testament. Luke seems to be underlining the great evil of sinning against God's people. Falsehood ruins fellowship. If the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira had not been publicly exposed and punished, the Christian ideal of an open fellowship would not have been preserved, and the modern cry 'there are so many hypocrites in the church' would have been heard from the beginning.

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The second lesson to be learned concerns the importance, even the sacredness, of the human conscience. Luke will later record Paul's claim before Felix that he always strove to keep his 'conscience clear before God and man' (Acts 24:16). This seems to be what John meant by 'walking in the light'. It is to live a transparent life before God, without guile or subterfuge, whose consequence is that 'we have fellowship with one another'. The 'brethren' of the East African revival, who lay great stress on this teaching, amusingly illustrate it by expressing their desire to 'live in a house without ceiling or walls', that is, to permit nothing to come between them and either God or other people. It was this openness which Ananias and Sapphira failed to maintain.

Thirdly, the incident teaches the necessity of church discipline. Although physical death may have continued in some situations as a penalty for those sins which 'despise the church of God', it came to be associated with excommunication.¹³ The church has tended to oscillate in this area between extreme severity (disciplining members for the most trivial offences) and extreme laxity (exercising no discipline at all, even for serious offences). It is a good general rule that secret sins should be dealt with secretly, private sins privately, and only public sins publicly. Churches are also wise if they follow the successive stages taught by Jesus. Usually the offender will be brought to repentance before the final stage of excommunication is reached. But offences which are serious in themselves, have become a public scandal, and have not been repented of, should be judged. Presbyterians are right to 'fence the table', that is, to make access to the Lord's Supper conditional. For, although the Lord's table is open to sinners (who else either needs or wishes to come to it?), it is open only to penitent sinners.

We have now seen that, if the devil's first tactic was to destroy the church by force from without, his second was to destroy it by falsehood from within. He has not given up the attempt, whether by the hypocrisy of those who profess but do not practise, or by the stubbornness of those who sin but do not repent. The church must preserve its vigilance.¹¹

MITE

A "mite" is a copper coin of very small value. The two mites which the poor widow contributed to the temple treasury in Mark 12:42 were two *lepta*, "which make a *kodrantēs*" (κϰϰ). This is simply the Greek spelling of the Latin *quadrans*, which was a quarter of an *as*. The *as* had suffered successive devaluations throughout Roman history, and was then worth about two-thirds of a cent. A *lepton* was therefore worth about one twelfth of a cent.

The word "mite" in this context goes back to Tyndale; it is retained by the NKJV ("two mites, which make a quadrans"). The majority of other contemporary translations have "two small [NIV, "two very small"] copper coins," "worth only a few pennies" (CEV), "which amount to a cent" (NASB), "only worth a few cents" (NCV), "worth only a fraction of a penny" (NIV), "worth a penny" (NRSV). In the NLT, the widow simply "dropped in two pennies." The parallel passage at Luke 21:2 has similar translations.

The phrase "widow's mite" has come to refer to the small sum of money that is as much as, or more than, one can afford. The phrase is used in literature, e.g., in *Don Juan* (6.41), Byron speaks of Antony, who gave all for love, and of himself who, when younger, and "had no great plenty," gave all he had—his heart:

"T was the boy's 'mite,' and, like the 'widow's', may
Perhaps be weigh'd hereafter, if not now."¹²

Widow's mite, Luke 21:1–4.¹³

¹¹ Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Acts: the Spirit, the church & the world* (pp. 108–112). InterVarsity Press.

¹² Manser, M. H., Fleming, N. B., Hughes, K., & Bridges, R. F. (2000). *I Never Knew That Was in the Bible!* (electronic ed., pp. 292–293). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

¹³ Anderson, K. (1996). *Where to Find It in the Bible*. T. Nelson Publishers.

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lepton [λεπτόν, 3016]

lepton refers to a small copper coin, translated “mite,” which was worth only a fraction of a cent. **lepton** is found in only three contexts, two of which refer to the classic “widow’s mite,” the offering of a poverty-stricken woman (cf. Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2). **lepton** is also found in Luke 12:59, referring to “the very last mite” demanded by a magistrate from a hapless victim of a lawsuit.¹⁴

When a biblical story doesn’t give us chronology (*chronos*) connectors, we often just drop any thoughts of time (sequence). We are all familiar with the story of the widow’s mite in Luke 21:1–4: “As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ‘Truly I tell you,’ he said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.’ ”

If we read this story as emphasizing the virtue of giving sacrificially, we might be ignoring the *kairos* of Luke’s storytelling. *When* Luke tells the story matters a great deal. Luke has just told us Jesus’ warning to beware of religious leaders who (among other things) “devour widows’ houses” (Lk 20:47). They weren’t termites; they were foreclosing on widows who couldn’t pay their debts. Then Luke tells us the widow gave “all she had.” Some might object, “But she gave it to the *temple*—a gift to God! Surely, this is justified.” Luke then immediately states: “Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God [paid for with offerings like the widow’s]. But Jesus said, ‘As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down’ ” (Lk 21:5–6).

What is Luke saying to us through the *timing* (the sequence) of the stories? Is the widow a role model of sacrificial giving, or is Jesus holding her up as an example of how religious folk can exploit the piety of the poor? Should those of us who preach this story actually be afraid of it?¹⁵

1.) What is tithing?

Giving a 10th of income or property was part of Mosaic Law (Lev. 27:20). Detailed in Leviticus 27:30-32. Practiced in Israel’s history: Numbers 18:21-32; Deuteronomy 12:5-7, 11-12, 17-18, 26:12-15; 2 Chronicles 31:6. In Malachi 3:8-12 Israel robs God by withholding their tithe. There is a promise of deliverance and abundance tied with obedience.

2.) Isn’t tithing an Old Testament concept?

It is a timeless practice tracing back to Genesis 14:17-20.

Jacob promised he would give a 10th (Genesis 28:22) prior to the giving of the Law. Genesis 14:20 outlines that Abraham tithed 10% to Melchizedek (who was a Christ figure in the Old Testament). Abraham’s actions reveal tithing is a Divine concept that it goes beyond Old Testament and New Testament. (See Romans 4:12 for New Testament application.)

3.) Does the New Testament address tithing?

¹⁴ [Mite](#). (2005). In S. D. Renn (Ed.), *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts* (p. 641). Hendrickson Publishers.

¹⁵ Richards, E. R., & O’Brien, B. J. (2012). [Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible](#) (pp. 151–152). InterVarsity Press.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

¹ Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

4.) Does Jesus say anything about tithing?

Matthew 23:23 (Luke 11:42)

²³ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

Jesus addressed the issue of tithing in Matthew 23:23 & Luke 11:42. By the fact Jesus did not spend a great deal of time discussing tithing reinforces the idea that it was an understood concept of life, much like prayer.

5.) What types of giving are there?

Giving can be categorized under: Tithing, Alms/Gifts, and Missions.

6.) What is the difference between Tithing, Alms/Gifts, and Mission giving?

Tithing specifically is attached to money and property. Us giving a percentage of what we have been blessed with back to the storehouse of God. No strings attached. We are practicing letting God be the one in control. We are practicing the discipline of release.

Gifts is us choosing where, when, and to whom our above and beyond tithing money goes to. This type of giving can also be called **Alms**. This is a one-time gift.

There is also another type of giving that is specified but is not a one-time gift. We call this **Missions Giving** as it is disciplined or regular gift that goes to a ministry we choose. This type of giving is above and beyond the tithe as well.

7.) What does 'giving sacrificially' mean?

2 Corinthians 8:1-7

¹ And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵ And they went beyond our expectations; having given themselves first of all to the Lord, they gave themselves by the will of God also to us. ⁶ So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

Does this mean we must give whenever there is a need regardless of our budget? Do we give bill money and trust God to pay the bills? Note the Macedonian's first gave themselves to the LORD. **1 Timothy 5:8** instructs us to take care of our families or we are worse than nonbelievers. We tithe as a spiritual discipline. We give in response to our relationship with the LORD. We give when we hear Him instruct us to do so. This is what is called an inner witness. We respond, usually with compassion, to a need presented. We 'feel led' to do something. We pray about what that something could be. We hear Him say "Go" or "Do" or "Give". It may be more than we could have imagined. It can scare us. It takes sacrifice on our part to accomplish what He is asking. It may mean we sell something. It may mean we postpone buying something. It may mean we choose to live at a lower standard of living so we can invest the money He has blessed us with into His work.

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8.) Does tithing your time count as a scriptural tithe?

No. Scripture does not support this. Once again, if we followed this line of thinking we are choosing how we want to honor God instead of trusting Him by being obedient to what He has outlined in scripture. **1 Samuel 15:22.**

9.) What if you are married and your spouse objects?

Following **1 Corinthians 7:12-16**, if your spouse is an unbeliever, honor their request while explaining your belief. If a challenge can be suggested, begin with a 1% tithe and as God shows Himself faithful, incrementally increase the tithe to 10%.

If your spouse is a believer, share the challenge to see God's faithfulness. Do not force your spouse but inform them of your desire to move ahead and that you will keep them updated on the progress of you experimenting with the tithing challenge from your individual income.

10.) Do we support other Christian groups out of the General Fund?

Yes. Maranatha supports other church and organizational request for Benevolence on a situational basis.

11.)What is Maranatha's philosophy on where the tithe should go?

Under the law, proceeds from the tithes were directed primarily for the support of the Levites and priests who provided religious leadership (Numbers 18:21-29) and for the relief of the needy (Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Whole tithes were to go into the storehouse (Malachi 3:10) to be used for the general populace.

12.)What does Maranatha do with the tithe money?

The tithe money goes into the General Fund. The money from the General Fund underwrites the ministry at Maranatha.

13.)Who decides where it goes?

Overall, the Trustee Board works with Pastor Mike on budget planning. Department Pastors and Staff oversee their individual budgets. Each year the budget is outlined at the annual church business meeting which is held the last Monday of February.

14.)Is the entire 10% to go to the local church or can it be split up among the church, missionaries, and other Christian groups?

Scripture is definite when it describes the tithe as the means of support for the church. Alms and gifts are the means of support for Missions and other, non foundational, Christian groups.

15.)Does scripture specifically say we must tithe 10%?

If we are looking for THE one verse that says to live an obedient Christian life we must tithe 10% of our income, we will not find it. If we are looking in scripture to see how we must live to live as Christ, we will find many verses that instruct us to give Him control of all. This includes the money He blesses us with. There is enough direction threaded throughout scripture to define the disciplined standard of 10%. **Deuteronomy 14:22-23; Deuteronomy 12:11**

*In the Hebrew "maaser" or "maasrah," is translated *tenth*, or *tenth part*, and in Greek "apodekatoo" and in both, it means a *payment or giving or receiving of the tenth*.*

16.)What does tithing have to do with Salvation?

Nothing. Tithing is a sign of spiritual maturity. It does not buy grace but rather is an outward sign of inward growth. Salvation is not attached to tithing. But growth is. Tithing is a spiritual principle. Just like gravity is a physical principle. The question we should be asking is what happens in the spiritual when we practice tithing?

17.)Does our attitude in tithing make a difference?

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2 Corinthians 9:7

⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

18.) Are there blessings attached to tithing?

Proverbs 3:9-10

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Malachi 3:10

¹⁰ Bring the full 10 percent into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this way," says the LORD of Hosts. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.

Luke 6:38

³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

19.) What does Jesus say about money?

Matthew 19:21

²¹ Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Jesus actually spent quite a bit of time talking about money. Why? According to **Matthew 6:19-21** it becomes apparent that how we handle money is a direct reflection of the condition of our heart.

Jesus also taught us where our treasure is, there our heart will be (Matthew 6:20-21, Luke 12:33-34). After teaching on how to give, how to pray, how to fast Jesus moved to our heart...how to keep it from being owned by possessions. Don't invest your money in things that will decay and disappear, invest the monies you have into kingdom priorities. Where we invest our monies, we invest us. He follows that with encouragement to not worry about the cares of this life for He will provide.

Matthew 6:20-21

²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Luke 12:33-34 (lesson begins in vs 13)

³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

20.) Does Matthew 19:21 mean who should give away all our money and live poor?

Jesus is using an exaggerated form of speech to make His point. Things can own you and keep you from doing and from being what you were designed by God to do and be. Tithing helps keep money and possessions from being or becoming an idol.

Further Study:

Proverbs 11:24
Matthew 6:19-21
Matthew 25:40

2 Corinthians 9:6
Exodus 25:2-8
Romans 10:14-15

Malachi 3:10-11
Numbers 31:50
Matthew 10:7-8

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Leviticus 14:30
Deuteronomy 5:29
Leviticus 27:30
Isaiah 43:24
2 Chronicles 29:7
Ezra 2:69
2 Corinthians 8:12
Deuteronomy 13:22-23
Isaiah 58:10
Ecclesiastes 5:13
1 Chronicles 29:9, 14-18
Deuteronomy 16:17
Proverbs 21:13
1 Timothy 6:8
Matthew 6:1
1 Corinthians 16:1-2A
Mark 12:42-43
Luke 19:8
Luke 18:22
1 Chronicles 29:7-9
Romans 11:16
Ezra 8:28
2 Samuel 8:10-11
Luke 11:41
Luke 12:15
Romans 12:6-8
Matthew 28:19
Acts 5:1-2
Mark 9:41
Colossians 3:5
Matthew 19:21
2 Chronicles 31:4-5
Rev. G. Mark Denyes)

Proverbs 28:27
2 Samuel 24:24
Ezekiel 33:31
Matthew 26:7-8
Mark 12:41-44
Acts 11:29
Luke 6:38
Proverbs 19:17
Nehemiah 13:10

Haggai 1:4-6

⁴ "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to *lie* in ruins?" ⁵ Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! ⁶ "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes."

Acts 20:35

³⁵ I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak.

And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Luke 12:33-34

³³ Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Isaiah 32:8

Proverbs 11:25

Ecclesiastes 11:1

Matthew 26:6-7

1 Timothy 6:9

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

(Scriptures compiled by

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Deuteronomy 14:22-23

²² Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. ²³ Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always.

Deuteronomy 12:11

¹¹ Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD.

Resources: Freedom of Simplicity by Richard Foster; Financial Peace by Dave Ramsey
[LUKE 15:17](#)

STEWARDSHIP: ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD

Accountability is an integral part of daily living. It is the requirement of the giver and the responsibility of the recipient (1 Cor. 4:2). The employed are accountable to the employer, the married to spouse and family, the citizen to society, and all of us to God (Rom. 14:12).

Jesus tells the parable about a rich man whose steward was accused of wasting his master's goods (Luke 16:1, 2). The steward was summoned and told, "Give an account of your stewardship." While this steward was able to act quickly and wisely to set things in order (vv. 3–9), Jesus used this story to make an important point: "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (v. 10).

God is Creator and Owner of all things (Deut. 10:14; Ps. 24:1, 2). All that is possessed comes as a gift from His hand (Acts 17:25). Our master Jesus Christ will ultimately require an accounting of each person's stewardship (2 Cor. 5:10).

Christian stewards can be prepared for that day of accountability by taking seriously their stewardship responsibilities. Whether the managed resource is time, talent, or money, the steward should endeavor to avoid waste, maximize return, and, above all, assure that the investment is pleasing to God.

Time should be used wisely; talents should be shared to edify others and glorify God; money should be spent carefully and given responsibly. Our drive to execute these requirements faithfully comes from having an acute awareness of our personal accountability to God (1 Pet. 4:10).

See also notes on Debt (Ps. 37); Financial Planning (Luke 19); Giving (2 Cor. 9); Gratitude (Ps. 95); Prosperity (Ps. 2); Time Management (Ps. 31)

FINANCIAL PLANNING: WISE MONEY MANAGEMENT

Good financial planning is a part of wise stewardship. To be a truly effective steward, you must believe unequivocally that the money being managed is someone else's money—God's money. Having this perspective gives a person the freedom to use

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finances as a tool to accomplish God's purposes, recognizing that no one came into this world with any possessions, and no one will leave with anything (Eccl. 5:15).

God has entrusted each person with certain resources. **Money is something that God uses to test your ability to handle properly the other gifts He desires to give you (Luke 16:11).** One day He will ask for an accounting of how you managed the resources He has given you (Luke 19:11–26). A wife who manages resources wisely is a blessing to her husband and family (Prov. 31:28).

You are wise to remember:

The earth and all its fullness is the Lord's (Ps. 24:1). Every resource, even money, is His, and you are simply stewards of His resources.

Avoid an overly consumptive lifestyle. The Bible teaches moderation in all things (1 Cor. 9:25).

Avoid debt (Prov. 22:7; Rom. 13:8).

Maintain a savings program. (Prov. 12:11).

Set long-term goals (Prov. 13:22).

See also notes on Debt (Ps. 37); Goal Setting (Is. 58); Priorities (Matt. 6)

Chapter 18 (2) [Numbers 18:26]	1
44–48). 18:26 While the Levites received tithes from the people, they were not exempt. They	
Chapter 27 (3) [Leviticus 27:1]	2
Dedication to the Lord through vows and tithes . Everything an individual possesses, including	
Chapter 3 (3) [Malachi 3:8]	3
specific directions for the offerings and tithes (Num. 18:21–24). The tithes were used to	
Chapter 11 [Luke 11:42]	4
in the Holy Land. Both mint and rue were tithed by the religious leaders (see chart, Herbs	
Chapter 26 [Deuteronomy 26:12]	5
of Hezekiah (1 Chr. 4:41–43). 26:12 This tithe was to be given every three years to provide	
Chapter 41 [Ezekiel 41:6]	6
the side of the temple were used to store tithes and offerings, as well as temple equipment	
Chapter 10 [Nehemiah 10:35]	7
35 Because the people had neglected their tithes and offerings of firstfruits in which the	
Chapter 14 [Deuteronomy 14:22]	8
19, note; 34:26). 14:22 The giving of the tithe (lit. “a tenth”) was an act of worship acknowledging	
Chapter 7 (2) [Hebrews 7:1]	9
Melchizedek blessed Abraham and Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. Superiors bless inferiors;	
Flowers and Plants of the Bible (4) [Matthew 1:1]	10
similar to the “Israelites’ manna.” Cumin Tithing Herb Is. 28:25–27 Matt. 23:23 “Cummin” A	
Chapter 28 [Genesis 28:20]	11
example of his grandfather in pledging a tithe as an act of worship (see Gen. 14:18, note).	
Chapter 3 [Malachi 3:10]	12
righteousness. If they would bring the full tithe as required, divine blessing would be renewed.	
Chapter 5 [Nehemiah 5:3]	13
the province, the local governor, and a tithe to the temple. The heavy taxation burden	
Chapter 14 [Deuteronomy 14:28]	14
Homeless; 14, Poverty). Every third year the tithe was kept within their own community to provide	
Chapter 5 [Amos 5:1]	15
to God's holy Law would bring about the tithe of a remnant: “a hundred left” out of “a	
Chapter 14 [Genesis 14:18]	16

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Abram (vv. 19–20), and his acceptance of a tithe (v. 20) have prompted some to identify this	
Chapter 6 [Matthew 6:9]	17
before children; husband before parents; tithe before wants; Bible before opinions; Jesus	
Chapter 7 [Ezra 7:1]	18
leaders, and the Sabbath was not kept or the tithes paid. There was widespread divorce and intermarriage	
Chapter 9 [2 Corinthians 9:10]	19
7, 8). In the Old Testament, the Jewish tithe (the first one tenth) was a prescribed percentage	
Chapter 71 [Psalm 72:1]	20
(Lam. 3:22, 23). Demonstrate the joys of tithing (Prov. 3:9; Mal. 3:10). If living apart,	
Chapter 12 [Mark 12:28]	21
Very concerned with Sabbath observance, tithing , and purification rituals (Matt. 23:2–36;	
Outline [Malachi 1:1]	22
robbing of God (3:8–18) 1. The blessings of tithing (3:8–12) 2. The complaints of the wicked	
Chapter 3 [Leviticus 3:17]	23
1. If the offense were against the Lord (tithes , offerings, etc.), a ram without blemish	