



October 6, 2013

Deuteronomy 26

“Honor God with What You Have”

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Pastor Gary’s message this week continues the theme of “What You Need to Know Before You Go.” In this, the fifth in his series in Deuteronomy, we learn the Israelites were instructed by Moses to make sure they honored God with what they had. For example, if a person had nothing to eat, and someone gave them ten loaves of bread, it’s a sure thing they’d be happy. And if they were told they had to give one back, but they could keep nine, they would still be happy, because nine is more than they had to start with. The question someone might ask of the giver would be, “Why didn’t you just give the person nine loaves to start with, since you were going to keep one anyway?” The answer is simple, since the recipient started with nothing; they would at least have something to give back as a way of saying, “Thank you.”

This is exactly what God was doing with the Israelites. He was saying to them, “When you come into the Promised Land, please remember that you are there because of me, and that you have flocks and vineyards because of me, you make a living because of me, and you are blessed because of me. So honor me by giving back 1/10th of what I’ve given you as a way of saying, ‘Thank you.’ ”¹ God wanted the Israelites, as a regular act of their worship of him, to return a tiny portion of what he’d given them as a way of honoring him with what they had, and as a regular reminder that everything was from his hand.

In this study, we will learn about the biblical principles of tithing, as well as the obstacles to tithing, and how giving is an appropriate act of worship for Believers today.

¹ This is the idea behind “*firstfruits*” and the “*tithe*” in [Deuteronomy 26](#).

² “*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*

Historical Background

1. Ancient Israel was an agrarian society in which people made their living off of their flocks and fields, so what God required of them was a tenth of their livelihood, so they were told to bring the firstfruits/tithe of their fields to the House of the Lord.
2. This wasn't the first time the principle of tithing appears in the Bible, the first time was approximately 600 years earlier, which was well before Moses gave the Law!
 - a. Melchizedek
 - i. Abraham
 1. In [Genesis 14:18-20](#), when Abraham returned from battle with the spoils of victory, Melchizedek, a somewhat mysterious figure in the Bible, met him.
 - a. The name, Melchizedek means, "King of Righteousness," which indicates he was either a picture of Christ or Christ himself.
 2. [Hebrews 7:3](#) - *"Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever."*
 3. [Genesis 14:20](#) - *"... Abram gave him a tenth of everything."*
 - ii. Jacob
 1. Jacob (when he went to Paddan Aram to find a wife) had a dream of a stairway to heaven with angels ascending and descending, and he declared, *"Surely God was in this place!"*
 - a. [Genesis 28:20-22](#) - *"Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.' "*
 - iii. Abraham and Jacob
 1. Neither one complained that giving 10% was an Old Testament thing!
 2. Neither one asked whether the 10% should come from the gross or the net!
 3. Abraham and Jacob didn't say, "Please let me start with 1% and I'll work my way up to 10%!"
 4. Abraham and Jacob were "all in," because they saw that giving a tenth was a motivation of the heart, not a mandate of the Law!

b. Jesus

- i. Jesus validated the principle of tithing in [Matthew 23:23](#),² when he rebuked the Pharisees because they parsed out their tenth to God!
- ii. Jesus rejected their practice of “bean counting” when he told them they were neglecting the weightier matters of the Law, like *“justice, mercy and faithfulness.”*
- iii. Jesus was basically saying, “Don’t stop tithing, but *start* practicing justice, mercy and faithfulness!”

c. Summary

- i. Tithing predates the giving of the Law.
- ii. Tithing was codified in the Law.
- iii. Tithing transcends the Law in the New Testament.
- iv. Tithing is not a legal obligation, but a loving celebration, a celebration of God and his goodness toward us!
- v. Tithing is a regular reminder to our materialistic hearts that God is the source of all we have; that he is our Provider; that he has given us everything we have, including the talent and skill to earn a living.
- vi. God doesn’t make us wealthy to raise our standard of living, but to raise our standard of giving!
- vii. Randy Alcorn, in his book *The Treasure Principle*, asks the challenging question, “Does it make sense that God would expect from those of us in the wealthiest nation on the face of the earth less than He expected from the poorest Israelite?”
- viii. [Proverbs 3:9](#) - *“Honor the Lord with your wealth...”*
- ix. [1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#) - *“Now about the collection for God’s people... On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income... [i.e. proportional giving in accordance with a person’s income]”*
- x. [Matthew 6:21](#) - *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*
- xi. There are approximately 2,350 verses in the Bible concerning money, which is about twice as many verses than those that deal with faith and prayer combined!³
- xii. Jesus spoke more about the stewardship of money than he spoke about heaven and hell combined!⁴
- xiii. Sixteen of the 38 parables Jesus taught deal with money or material possessions.⁵

² “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.”

³ Alcorn, Randy, *Money, Possessions and Eternity*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL, 2003, pages 3-4

⁴ Alcorn, Randy, *Money, Possessions and Eternity*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL, 2003, pages 3-4

⁵ Grimm, Eugene, *Generous People*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1992, p. 19

Principles Of Tithing

3. Tithing means we are to bring to God's House (the place we are fed the Word of God and are ministered to) a tenth of our income as an act of worship, and this can be weekly, monthly, or annually.
4. According to [Deuteronomy 26:2-3, 9-10](#), tithing is a reminder that all we have comes from God.
 - a. *"... take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name and say to the priest in office at the time, 'I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the land the Lord Swore to our forefathers to give us.'"*
 - b. *" 'He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O Lord, have given me.' Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him."*
5. According to [Deuteronomy 26:11](#), tithing is rejoicing over God's goodness.
 - a. *"And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord our God has given to you and your household."*
6. According to [Deuteronomy 26:15](#), tithing is rewarded by the Lord.
 - a. *"Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us as you promised on oath to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey."*
7. [Malachi 3:10b](#) - *" 'Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.' "*
8. [2 Corinthians 8:7](#) - *"But just as you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us - see that you also excel in this grace of giving."*
9. Since we live in a strong consumer-oriented culture, it's hard to come to church and realize it's not all about us; it's really about Jesus and his Kingdom.
10. Christians need to come into the House of the Lord to give..
 - a. Of our time in serving and helping.
 - b. Of our money in providing.
 - c. Of our voice in worshipping.

Obstacles To Tithing

11. Most people, including Christians, are financially levered to the hilt!
12. Ideally, Christians should give 10%, save 10%, and live off of 80%, but statistically, most people are living off of 110% of their income!
13. Credit card debt, overspending, loans, and second mortgages are used to accommodate a lifestyle that far too many are unable to pay for.
 - a. According to the Federal Reserve, the average U.S. household credit card debt as of July 2013 was \$15,185.00, and total credit card debt was \$849.8 billion dollars! ⁶
14. A lack of generosity in the church is usually due to poor money management, because Christians simply have a day in and day out lifestyle that's beyond their means, which ends up denying them the joy of generosity, and in the process, they've robbed God.
 - a. **1 Chronicles 29:14b, 16** - *"Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand... O Lord our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you."*
 - b. It's not about the building, but the ministry that flows from the building, because part of the tithe was for the Levites, the alien, the fatherless, and the widow.
 - i. Those who served in the House of God (Levites) made their living this way, and those who were poor and disadvantaged were helped, too.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Deuteronomy 26:1-15** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Provide an overview of the principles of tithing (See #3 - #4 - #5 - #6 above).
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's observations about Abraham and Jacob concerning their understanding of tithing. (See #2a-iii above)

⁶ <http://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/credit-card-data/average-credit-card-debt-household/>

5. After hearing Pastor Gary's message, how biblically balanced were the "giving" messages you've heard in churches you've attended before coming to Cornerstone Chapel?
6. Have you had the experience of being a part of a church in which money was a dominant theme of the pastor's sermons?
 - a. Did the pastor attempt to "guilt" people into supporting the church?
 - b. What are some of the characteristics churches/pastors demonstrate that show they have an unbiblical understanding of tithing and offerings?
7. Were you taught the Scriptural principle of tithing as a child?
8. Do you think the practice of giving 10%, saving 10%, and living off of 80% is impractical or impossible? (See #12 above)
9. Are you living at 110% of your income? (See #13 above)
10. How has your understanding of the offering being a part of worshiping the Lord changed since you came to faith in Christ?
11. Is it your understanding, that "tithing is not a legal obligation, but a loving celebration, a celebration of God and his goodness toward [you]"? (See #2C-iv above)
12. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's observation that "God doesn't make us wealthy to raise our standard of living but to raise our standard of giving." (See #2C-vi above)
13. Read and discuss the quote from Randy Alcorn: "Does it make sense that God would expect from those of us in the wealthiest nation on the face of the earth less than He expected from the poorest Israelite?" (See #2C-vii above)
14. What was your reaction when you heard Pastor Gary say that Cornerstone Chapel has given away more than \$1 million dollars since January 1, 2012?
15. Read and discuss [1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#), and focus on the fact that giving should be proportional with a person's income.
16. How do you, according to [Proverbs 3:9](#), "*Honor the Lord with your wealth*"?
17. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they've seen the Lord pour out his blessings according to his promise in [Malachi 3:10b](#).

18. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember that they live in a good land and are living a good life, and because of these blessings, they are to honor God with all they have; realize tithing is a regular reminder for our materialistic hearts that God is our provider; allow a time of silent reflection on [Matthew 6:21](#) - *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be...”*

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).