

Questions/answers on Tithes

by James Blaine Chapman

James Blaine Chapman addresses common questions about tithing, emphasizing its biblical foundation and practical benefits for Christians today.

Scripture: Genesis 14:20, Proverbs 3:9, Malachi 3:10, Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 9:7

Topics: "Stewardship", "Tithing"

Description

James Blaine Chapman emphasizes the scriptural and practical aspects of tithing for present-day Christians, highlighting examples of tithing before the Mosaic law and its continued relevance in the New Testament. He explains the benefits of systematic tithing, such as maintaining a good conscience, bringing order to one's finances, and adequately supporting the church's work. Chapman addresses misconceptions about God's involvement in financial matters, stressing the importance of paying tithes regularly and cheerfully to receive spiritual and temporal blessings.

Transcript

QUESTION #291 -- How does our church get the authority for teaching tithing for present-day Christians?

ANSWER #291 -- There is a common error to the effect that tithing was a matter of the Jewish economy and that it belongs "under the law." But you will find in the Old Testament that Abraham and Jacob paid tithes, and their casual manner suggests that the practice was common among their contemporaries, a long time before the law was given to Moses. And in the New Testament there is no set and regular plan for the support of the church apart from what was already known and practiced, and there is abundant evidence that the tithing plan which came long before the law was given continued to live after the ceremonial part of the law had become obsolete. The tithing plan is scriptural and practical, and it works. I suggest that you try it

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QUESTION #292 -- Should Christian people pay tithes?

ANSWER #292 -- Since you have stated the question this way, I am tempted just to answer with an emphatic yes, and let it go at that. Even those who still contend that the tithing system belongs to the Old Testament age and is not obligatory now could not reasonably object to such an answer. For leaving the legal phases of the question out, there are three benefits that come from systematic tithing that cannot be

denied: (1) Paying tithe gives one basis for a good conscience in good times and in ill. (2) Paying tithes of necessity injects order into one's business (for if one knows what one tenth of his income is, he must also know what ten tenths are) and this within itself is worth all it costs to the average person. (3) If all God's people should tithe scripturally and systematically the program of the gospel would be adequately supported. For even when the tithe is not sufficient for such support, tithers will be liberal also with their freewill offerings. And there is really no possibility for anyone, poor or rich, to complain against the justice of the tithing plan. For when one has little income, his tithe will be small, and when he has a large income, he will have plenty left after he pays his tithe.

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QUESTION #293 -- We hear from the. pulpit quite often, "Now if you do not give God your tithes and offerings, He will get them anyhow, even if He has to take a cow, horse, car, barn, or your health, or something else of money value." Please tell us how God gets the tithe in this way, and also tell us whether people who tithe and make offerings ever suffer financial loss.

ANSWER #293 -- There is evidence of carelessness in the statements which you quote. God sends His rain on the just and on the unjust, and affliction also is the common lot of humanity. Some saints are poor and sick and even die at an early age, and some sinners have good health, long life, and temporal prosperity. If it were like as is intimated in the quotation you make it would secularize the kingdom of God in spite of all. It is much better as it is. But there are many advantages in paying the tithe and in making offerings for the promotion of His kingdom, even as there are advantages in keeping all His commandments and doing the things which are pleasing in His sight There is a business advantage in systematic tithing, for if one knows what one-tenth of his income is, he must also know what his whole income it, and this bookkeeping element is worth more than the tithe involves to the average person. So that it often happens that the tither has the advantage in this one particular enough so to mark him as more prosperous than his non-tithing neighbor. Then the tither literally takes God into partnership in his business, and this makes for honesty and carefulness and industry-great factors in prosperity. But most of all, the tither has a good conscience, and when adversity and afflictions come, he bears up better than his careless neighbor and comes back to health and prosperity much sooner and much oftener. I sat at the table with a man who has been almost a life long tither. He said, "Afflictions and reverses have come to me, but I have found sweet refuge in the knowledge that I have never wasted anything God ever gave me and have never failed to tithe whatever came into my hand. So I know my adversities are not judgments." The tither has the advantage in times both of prosperity and adversity-there is no doubt about that

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QUESTION #294 -- I am a local church treasurer and have to see some things that cause me to wonder. Some people, I find, refuse. to pay their tithes if they do not like the preacher. Some others use the tithe in their own business and just pay up once or twice a year when they can afford to do it. Do you think these practices are justified?

ANSWER #294 -- If one is to get the full blessing that God promises, he must pay his tithes to the Lord, not to the preacher, and he must pay regularly. The work of God must go on as well as a man's private business, and no one can tell when the opportunities of the year may be the best. Pay your tithe fully and cheerfully and regularly and God will bless you with spiritual and temporal blessings. If you do not like the preacher, here is the chance for you to be true to God under a handicap, and if you are full and cheerful

and regular under these circumstances, you will gain an extra blessing. I believe all this with all my heart. You try it for a couple of years and then if it does not work, drop me a card.

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QUESTION #295 -- What is the income of a farmer who owns his own farm? What is the income of a tenant farmer who has to borrow money to meet his part of the expenses? What is the income of a factory man or wage earner who has to pay transportation to hold his job? How would the tithe be computed in each case?

ANSWER #295 -- Income has two forms, viz., gross and net. As to the gross, there is usually no question, for it is all the income one has from all sources whatever. But the tithe is due on the net income and here one has to face the question of what is the expense of production. Sometimes people say they are not making anything at all. But when you inquire you find they mean they are unable to make any permanent saving above their living, and they are inclined to count their living costs in with the production costs. But this is not correct. The great majority of people are unable to make any permanent saving in the whole of their lives above the family and personal cost of living. In the examples given above, the wage earner is certainly entitled to deduct the cost of transportation to and from his work, the tenant farmer is entitled to deduct the interest on his borrowed capital, and the farm owner is entitled to deduct the taxes on his farm. All this is apparent right on the face. But there are instances in which questions arise as to whether certain items are production costs or living costs. In such cases, it is best to "give God the benefit of the doubt" and reject the deduction. Genuinely Christian people get so much joy out of paying their tithes that they get to where they seek rather to make the tithe as large as they can, rather than as small as they dare. Tithing is both a duty and a grace: both a requirement and a privilege.

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QUESTION #296 -- A, who has been a tither for years while in business, bought a farm in March, 1930, expecting payments on a property he had previously sold to meet the considerable balance on the purchase price of the farm, and to buy stock and equipment. But the expected payments have not been made and may never be made, so A is left with a heavy debt and without the equipment to make his farming operations profitable. He cannot meet outside obligations, let alone support himself and wife. Under these circumstances what would you consider his duty regarding tithes?

ANSWER #296 -- The tithe is based upon the "increase" -- this is fundamental. The case you present is just a matter of one's absorbing his increase in the endeavor to recoup a loss in his capital, and that is a delicate matter indeed. A number of rich American bankers tried to do this regarding their income tax accounts, and they got by on the legal technicalities, but the country in general did not approve, and the reputation of bankers as men of honor suffered. I believe that in the case you present this farmer should figure out the income just as he did when he was in business, and that just as he did then, he should count the value of whatever he and his family consume as income and should pay tithe on this. The only case in which a man who continues to exist has no income at all is the case where he is drawing directly from his accumulated capital which has already been tithed at the time when it was produced. And such a man will have means for "freewill offerings," or else his day of complete penury must be right now at hand. The tithing method of supporting God's work is such a blessing to those who follow it sincerely that they usually strive to find a way to have tithes, and do not seek to avoid them.

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QUESTION #297 -- I am a Christian and believe in tithing. My husband is unsaved and objects to my paying or giving anything to the church. I do what I can, but feel uncomfortable when he asks me about what I do with money, 'Low much I give to the church, etc. I am not clear just what to do. Should I go on as I do now, make bold to have an understanding with my husband on the matter or give over to him as regarding this question?

ANSWER #297 -- I would not advise you to jeopardize your home and family peace in this regard. God understands and will not demand anything unjust of you. I believe you should keep it always clear to your husband that you would rather give your money to God than to spend it for any other purpose and never quit praying that God may touch his heart. And while waiting for the answer to this prayer, I think you should not do anything that makes you ashamed before your husband. In the end I believe you will win and that the church will be better off than it will be for you to take chances on this secrecy which, after all, is probably no great secret to your husband.

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