

# Tithing: Obeying God

**Bible Truth** – Malachi 3:6-12

**v.6** – “I am the LORD, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob, are not already destroyed.”

If God stopped being patient with us, if the Lord’s mercy ceased, if God were as inconsistent and unreliable as we human beings often are, then every person on earth would be destroyed.

We know God is holy, just and all-powerful. Thankfully, He is also loving, merciful and forgiving.

**v.7a** – “Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them.”

If you look at the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament you will see these descriptive words over and over again: stubborn, rebellious, arrogant, stiff-necked, corrupt, disobedient, etc. These are only a few examples of the words God often used to describe the people of Israel.

These same words could also be used to describe any of us. At times, each of us has been stubborn, rebellious and disobedient.

Remember this and never forget it: **God’s kindness to you and me has everything to do with how loving He is and absolutely nothing to do with how lovable we are.**

**v.7b** – “‘Now return to Me, and I will return to you,’ says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.”

In every relationship, there are at least two persons. Each person has some responsibility to nurture or cultivate that relationship. The same is true in our relationship with God. God has done His part and more to develop a healthy, growing relationship with humanity. We have a responsibility to respond to God’s kindness. It takes more than just words. Becoming a Christian and growing as a disciple of Christ includes both God’s commitment and actions towards us and ours towards Him.

**vv.7c-8** – When the people asked, “How can we return when we have never gone away?” God told them they had been cheating Him. The people asked, “What do You mean? When did we ever cheat You?” How did God reply?

“You need to build Me a big, extravagant sanctuary.”

“I want to hear beautiful singing.”

“You must work hard every day for Me.”

No! God’s response to the question, “How are we to return?” is essentially, “Prove you love Me by paying your tithes and giving offerings. Then I will know you really mean what you say!”

Do you see? We can talk all we want to about how much we love God, how we desire to be close to Him, and how desperately we want to please Him. But we are deceiving ourselves if we think we can have a strong relationship with God and yet refuse to obey Him at the most basic level.

Illustration: If we compare Christian discipleship to playing baseball, then tithing is like hitting the ball and getting to first base. You cannot score a home run, if you don’t even make it to first base. If you intend to have a genuine, strong, lasting relationship with God, then you had better start obeying His Word by paying your tithes and offerings.

**v.9** – “You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating Me.”

We will never experience all the blessing God has for us as individuals, as families, or as a church as long as we are not paying our tithes.

You may ask: “John, why are you preaching about tithes and offerings? Will the church die if I don’t pay my tithes?”

NDIC is the work of God, so, no; the church will not die just because one or more people are disobedient. God’s Kingdom is not so insecure that it will crumble and fall if you and I refuse to obey Him. However, NDIC will never experience the level of effectiveness God wants us to have, unless each of us as members are walking in obedience to God. There are people in this community who may never experience true salvation unless we obey the Lord.

Is God up in heaven thinking, “If John doesn’t pay his tithes this week, I don’t know how I’m going to make it”? Of course not!

If I disobey the Lord and refuse to pay tithes and give my offerings, God does not suffer, I suffer. My disobedience does not bring God under a curse. It brings me under a curse.

Tithing is a recognition that everything we have comes from God. The practice curbs our greed, promotes personal discipline and thrift, testifies to our faith, promotes God’s work in the world, and helps to alleviate human need.

**v.10a** – “Bring all the tithes...”

The Hebrew word for tithe actually means a tenth part. The tithe is 10% of my gross income. It is not ten percent of whatever I have left over after I have paid all of my bills.

For example, if I earn €50 each week, my tithe would be €5. If I earn €300 per week, my tithe would be €30. Then I give my offerings over and above the tithe.

In Deuteronomy 8:18, Moses commanded the Israelites – “Remember the LORD your God. He is the One who gives you the power to be successful...” Everything we have is only because of the gracious provision of God. This is true even for those who are not Christians. They just don’t understand that, and/or they don’t care.

James 4:17 – “Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.”

Some Christians do not tithe, claiming they cannot afford to give up 10 percent of their income. Simple arithmetic certainly suggests that 90 percent will not go as far as 100 percent in satisfying essential family needs. But God has built a multiplication factor into our giving of tithes and offerings. You may say, “Well John, that doesn’t make sense. It is not logical or natural.” That is correct. God is usually not logical and He is never simply natural. He is, however, all-wise, completely trustworthy and utterly supernatural.

**v.10b** – “into the storehouse, so there will be enough food in My Temple”

Where are we supposed to bring the tithe? The “storehouse” is the local church where we worship. That is where our tithe belongs. As a disciple of Christ, if I am truly obedient to God, I cannot choose where or how I want to spend the tithe. The tithe belongs to God.

How long could you provide for your family with no source of income?

How long would Vomar, or Gamma, or Action be able to continue without an income?

Just as no family or business could survive long without an income, so the church cannot survive and grow and effectively minister without an income. Tithing is God’s design to generate income in the local church.

**v.10c** – “If you do,’ says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, ‘I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in!”

“Try it! Put Me to the test!” – God is issuing a Divine challenge. It is as if God is saying, “I dare you to trust Me. I dare you to step out in faith and believe My Word. Try it and see what happens!”

Joy and I have tested the Lord in this matter. Ever since we were children, we have paid our tithes and given offerings over and above that. We have never lacked anything. God has always provided for every need and even some desires.

We are not the only ones who can testify to God’s faithfulness. Have you ever heard of KFC? Colonel Harland David Sanders was a Christian man. He paid tithes on all of his income. In fact, if I understand correctly, he kept increasing his contributions to God’s Kingdom until he was giving a very large percentage of his income to God.

J. L. Kraft (of Kraft cheese products, mayonnaise, etc.) was a Christian man. He paid tithes on his income, gradually increasing his contributions to greater and greater amounts, and God poured out His blessings.

“open the windows of heaven...and pour out a blessing so great...” – We have the picture here of a gigantic blessing that God wants to give us. This blessing is pressed up against the windows of heaven. God is simply waiting for our obedience so He can give the order to open the windows. Then this great blessing will pour down upon us; so great a blessing, in fact, we won’t even have room for it.

**v.11** – “Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease...”

Here, God promised His protection, favor and blessing. If we will demonstrate our obedience to God by paying our tithes and giving our offerings, He will stand guard over us. God will cause our clothes and cars to last longer. He will bless our coming in and our going out. His favor will be upon us when we lie down at night and when we rise up the next morning.

KJV – “I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes...”

In John 10:10, Jesus calls Satan “the thief,” and says, “The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy.” When the thief comes to devour our resources, God stops him. God says to Satan: “What do you think you’re doing? This is My child. He is walking in obedience to My Word. He is honoring Me by paying his tithes and offerings. You take your hands off of him and his family.” God rebukes the devourer for our sake.

Exodus 34:20 – God said: “No one may appear before Me without an offering.”

Someone may say, “Well, John, I don’t have any income. I live with my parents, or another family member, or a friend. I have no personal income.”

If you have no income then you also have no reason to feel guilty about not paying tithes. You cannot pay a tithe on what you have not earned. However, even someone who has no money can pay a tithe of their time and talents in volunteer service at the church. It is not about whether your gift is large or small. It is about whether your heart is stingy or generous towards God.

I challenge you to put God to the test. Pick up your baseball bat, hit that ball and run to first base. Become proactive in building a good relationship with God. Take that first step of obedience in paying your tithes and offerings. Be amazed as God keeps His promise: “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in!” Let’s begin to see all God will do here at NDIC as we agree together to obey Him in everything, starting with our tithes and offerings!