

Reflection on our Management of our Money and Possession and Giving (tithing)

This helps us to know what God says about this subject, corresponding to the spiritual discipline of “prayer”.

1. Summary: Basing our spirituality of stewardship on the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (penance) which is to guide us in our own conversion, we remember that prayer relates us to God, fasting applies to ourselves, and almsgiving directs us to others. Otherwise said, we first (1) must know what God says to us about money and possessions (prayer), then (2) how God guides us to be prepared to carry out this responsibility (fasting – self-denial), and finally (3) how God wants us to do good for others with what he has given us.

2. The Spirituality of this subject. In this study we are primarily concerned about **what God says** about the right attitude toward money and possession, including God’s guidelines on how to use it, i.e., tithes, offerings, and almsgiving. This second step corresponds to **Prayer**. Over 800 verses in the Bible deal with the right use of money. Over half of Jesus’s parables deal with the right use of money and possessions. This is a very spiritual subject!

3. Basic Principle: God has given us all that we have. He is the owner. We are the managers (stewards) for the short time we are on earth of whatever he has loaned to us.

Genesis 1:28-30, 2:15. Psalm 24. “The earth is the Lord’s and all it holds, the world and those who live therein.”

1 Peter 4:10. “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

Fasting and self-denial had its origin in the creation

Genesis 2:16. “The Lord God gave man this order: ‘You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die.’”

4. General Principles:

1. The love of money is described as the root of all evils.

1 Tim 6:6-10: “Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it. If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains.

2. Jesus was poor. He had few material possessions. We should imitate him (cf. St. Francis). Simplicity and voluntary poverty are positive spiritual goods.

3. Our giving is a training ground using measurable and tangible things to demonstrate our faithfulness so that we can inherit eternal life.

Luke 16:8b-13. “For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

5. Concerning Tithing: Giving a tenth of our increase to God and His work. The practice of tithing is rooted in the Old Testament and was reinforced by the teaching of Jesus and his Apostles and the example of the early Christians.

1. Tithing came before the Law. Therefore it is a fundamental aspect of human existence (ontological). Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek (before the law was given to Moses).

Genesis 14:18-20. Abraham first gave a tithing offering as a thank-you to God.

“Then Melchizedek, King of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High and he blessed Abram.... Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”

Jacob also gave tithes to God. Genesis 28:22. “Jacob fell asleep and had a vision, a dream in which God said to him: ‘Know that I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go...’ When he awoke, Jacob could not contain himself and he made a pledge to return one tenth of everything he had to the Lord.”

3. The Law prescribed tithing to the Jewish people. The tithe was that requirement of the Law by which all Israelites were to give 10% of everything they earned and grew, to the Temple and its works.

See Lev 27:30. “All the tithes of the land, whether in grain from the fields or in fruit from the trees, belong to the Lord, as sacred to him.”

See Deut 12:17-18. “Moreover, you shall not, in your own communities, partake of your tithe of grain or wine or oil, of the first-born of your herd or flock, of any offering you have vowed, or your freewill offerings, or of your personal contributions. These you must eat before the Lord, your God, in the place he chooses, along with your son and daughter....and there, before the Lord, you shall make merry over all your undertakings.”

See also Num 18:26; This describes the tithe of the Levites.

Deut 14:24; This passage describes how one can present one’s tithe in money, not produce.

2 Chr 31:5. This describes the liturgical and spiritual reform of Hezekiah. Tithing is a sign of faithfulness.

See Malachi 3:8-12. Yet you say, “How must we return?” Dare a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me! And you say, “How do we rob you?” In tithes and offerings! You are indeed accursed, for you, the whole nation, rob me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the Lord of hosts: Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessing upon you without measure? For your sake I will forbid the locust to destroy your crops; and the vine in the field will not be barren, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land, says the Lord of hosts.”

4. Jesus assumed the tithe and never said anything to negate it. There are a number of references to giving God a tenth of the first fruits, even of garden herbs (**Mt 23:23, Lk 11:42**). Jesus gave no specific instructions on tithing. We assume that he assumed it as part of the Jewish religion. He did encourage the generous sharing of our blessings with others: **Lk 6:38:** “Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

5. St. Paul exhorted the Christians in Corinth to contribute: **1 Co 16:1-4.** “On the first day of the week each of you should set aside and save whatever one can afford.” He gives an extended discussion of sharing in **2 Co 8-9:** “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (**2 Co 9:7**).

6. St James: Every Christian should diligently pray and seek God’s wisdom for how much to give (**Js 1:5**).

7. Acts of the Apostles: See Acts 2:45. The early Christian community took Jesus literally when he told the rich young man to sell all he had and give it to the poor.

8. Heb 7:1-28. The tithe goes from a lesser to a greater. If Jesus is greater than Melchizedek, than more than Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, would we want our tithe to go to Jesus!

Summary: To be able to tithe we must know that

- 1) tithing is part of the very existence of the created world and commanded unto us (prayer and Scripture);**
- 2) tithing has as its purpose both the aspect of thank offering by God’s people and the support of the work of God in the world.**
- 3) we must be able to deny ourselves things we desire and may even be very good for us in order to let go to give to God and to others (fasting);**
- 4) we must actually work out practical models of life and giving in order to “do” or to “respond” to this guideline of God.**

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. What do I and what does our family think about the importance of these guidelines?
2. What kind of changing of priorities and attitudes would be necessary for us to do this?
3. What kind of giving should be considered as tithe, as offerings, as additional help to others and to the church?
4. What would I like my family’s contribution to be?
5. What might be the blessings that could be bestowed upon us if we did this?

Recommended resource: Dave Ramsey, author of *Total Money Makeover* and many other books and resources. His materials are all available in Spanish. He is on KTBB, 92.1, Mon – Fri from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.