

Why Tithe?

For many Christians, the word “tithe” raises a simple question: Why 10 percent? The word “tithe” literally means “a tenth,” and throughout the Old Testament, God’s people were instructed to give a tenth of what they received back to him. Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:20, Jacob pledged a tenth to God in Genesis 28:22, and the Law later established the tithe as a regular part of Israel’s worship and obedience.

So, what does that mean for Christians today? The New Testament does not present tithing as a means of earning God’s favor, nor does it reduce generosity to a legal requirement. Instead, it repeatedly calls believers to give willingly, regularly, sacrificially, and generously.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper.” In 2 Corinthians 9:7, he adds, “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

For that reason, many Christians understand the tithe as a wise and biblical starting point for giving. Ten percent gives us a concrete pattern rather than leaving generosity entirely undefined. It teaches us to give intentionally and consistently, and it reminds us that God comes first in every area of life, including our finances.

Jesus also affirmed the practice of tithing while warning against treating it as a substitute for genuine devotion to God. In Matthew 23:23, he rebuked the religious leaders because they carefully tithed while neglecting “the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.” Their problem was not that they tithed. Their problem was that they believed outward obedience could replace a heart surrendered to God.

The goal, then, is not simply to reach 10 percent and consider our responsibility complete. Christian generosity should grow out of gratitude, worship, and trust. For some believers, giving 10 percent may require a significant step of faith. For others, God may provide the opportunity to give far beyond it.

For Christians, the tithe is best understood as a biblical starting point for regular, intentional generosity, not a finish line for faithful stewardship. Tithing gives us a helpful biblical pattern, but generosity is ultimately about something deeper. We give because God has been generous to us, because we trust him to provide, and because we want the resources he has entrusted to us to advance his kingdom.

Key Scriptures

Genesis 14:18–20 – Abraham gives a tenth to Melchizedek.

Genesis 28:20–22 – Jacob pledges a tenth to God.

Leviticus 27:30 – The tithe belongs to the Lord.

Malachi 3:8–10 – God confronts Israel for withholding the tithe.

Matthew 23:23 – Jesus affirms tithing while emphasizing justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

1 Corinthians 16:1–2 – Giving should be regular and proportionate.

2 Corinthians 8:1–9 – Christian generosity is shaped by grace.

2 Corinthians 9:6–8 – Giving should be willing and cheerful.