

QUESTIONS ABOUT TITHING (Church Finances)

What is tithing and what is the difference between a tithe and an offering?

- “Tithe” means “a tenth part.”
- A “tithe” is giving the first tenth of my income.
- An “offering” is anything I give in addition to my tithe.

Seems easy. And yet, sometimes figuring out how to support a church’s ministry has caused confusion. You may ask, “Should I give a tenth (tithe) of all I earn (as was required under the Old Covenant)? But (you say) I’m not under the Old Covenant. I’m a New Covenant Christian – with a new life in Christ. Perhaps I should give more than the Law of Moses required ... or less. Maybe I’ll just write a check from time to time whenever I have some money to spare.”

We get it! It’s not an easy question to answer. Let’s take a moment to go back to the beginning – literally – to the book of beginnings, Genesis. There we read:

Genesis 14:18-20 “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed [Abraham] and said, ‘Blessed be Abram [Abraham] by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!’”

Abraham had just won a major battle rescuing his nephew Lot. Then he meets Melchizedek (priest of God Most High) and this happens. ...

“And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”

It seems clear that, for Abraham, paying a tithe (a tenth) to Melchizedek was an act of worship. It was an individual act of worship without pressure. No Law told him he must do this. Rather, he had to decide whether he was going to thank God or not. Thus we discover that the concept of tithing “as an act of worship” predates the Old Covenant Law of Moses. (See also Hebrews 7:9-10)

Melchizedek declared that Abraham’s victory was from God. For Abraham not to tithe at this point would have been the same as denying that God had given him the victory. So then, what is the best way to acknowledge God as the source of our victory – and our wealth? Some Christians would just say thanks, but Abraham tithed.

Concerning Abraham, the Apostle Paul wrote, *“For the promise to Abraham and his offspring (that he would be heir of the world) did not come through the Law but through the righteousness of faith. ... That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the Law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” Romans 4:13, 16.*

So, Abraham, not Moses, is the one we look to in order to discover the importance of faith in God’s promises, including faith in God’s Son and His sacrifice on the Cross. We also look to Abraham to learn about the tithe. Jesus wrote, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad” John 8:56.*

Therefore, at Innovation Church we practice tithing for the support of the church, as an act of worship - and to show our gratitude to God. We recognize that giving a tenth of our income was the standard that Abraham used. We view the giving of tithes and offerings as worship to Jesus Christ and as an expression of the relationship between the individual giver and the Lord. Funds are not “income only,” for the church. Rather, they are worship, and must never be considered as a business transaction, but as an expression of gratitude toward God.

Although we are not under the Old Covenant, we can still learn about tithing from those who practiced it in that generation.

Tithing demonstrated to them that God had first place in their lives.

- *“The purpose of tithing is to teach you to always put God in first place in your lives.” Deuteronomy 14:23*

Tithing reminded them that everything they had was given to them by God.

- *“Always remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the ability to produce wealth.” Deuteronomy 8:18*

Tithing expressed their love to the Lord.

- *“Each of you should bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you.” Deuteronomy 16:17*

Tithing gave God a chance to prove He exists and wanted to bless them.

- *“Bring your whole tithe to My storehouse. Test me in this” says the Lord, “and see if I will not throw open*

the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you won't have room enough for it!"
Malachi 3:10

They believed that the tithe should come from the first part of what they earned.

- *"Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of all your income." Proverbs 3:9-10*

And they believed that the tithe should be given where they worship.

- *"Bring your whole tithe to My Storehouse (Temple)." Malachi 3:10*

Again, when we seek to find the best way to acknowledge God as the source of our wealth, some Christians would just say thanks, but Abraham tithed. So do we.