

Give Cheerfully

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God has freely given all we have, and we should return what He has given us.2. God wants us to give willingly with joy.3. In giving, we will receive innumerable blessings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God provides for our needs.2. God blesses and loves those who give cheerfully.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Tithing shows what we treasure in our hearts, and makes more room for God.2. Learn to be generous by giving ourselves first to the Lord.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Understanding Tithing
- B. Examples of Tithing and Giving
- C. Principles of Tithing
- D. The Results of Giving

Life Application

- 1. Learning to Tithe
- 2. Learning to Be Generous

Memory Verse

Conclusion: If we practice giving with a willing heart, it can become a very healthy spiritual habit! Like the Israelites, we should tithe to show our love for God, and to remind ourselves that everything we have comes from Him.

Introduction

Try imagining the following scenario: At the end of every year, a “tithing ceremony” is held. One by one, each family brings one-tenth of their income, and the amount given is read out loud so that the entire congregation can hear. Whispering can be heard... “Oooohh...they’re dirt poor, aren’t they?” “I’m sure they make more money than that!” “Darn, they beat us by \$100. We’ll have to raise it next year!”

This scenario is an exaggeration, of course, and is probably one of the reasons tithing is not strictly enforced by God. He never intended for the act to become a competition or a burden upon His children, as it would were this type of event to occur. Instead, God wants us to tithe cheerfully and willingly. When we can give back what God has given to us, we can make room in our hearts for the grace of peace, joy, and love from God, things money can’t buy. The question is, are we able to give tithe willingly and joyfully?

A. Understanding Tithing

Tithing in the Bible

A tithe is a tenth of our annual produce or other source of income. In the Old Testament, there were three aspects to tithing.

1. First, one-tenth of the Israelites’ earnings was given yearly to support the Levites and priests (Num 18:26–28). After receiving it, the Levites were also required to offer a tithe, as that was considered their income. No one was exempt from offering back to God what belongs to Him.
2. Second, a portion of the yearly tithe was eaten during a celebration to remember God’s blessings (Deut 14:22–23).
3. Third, every year, the tithe was distributed to support the needy, widows, and orphans of the towns and cities (Deut 14:28–29).

From these, we can see that tithing had both spiritual and practical purposes. It wasn’t just to show a person’s spiritual dedication to God, but also a way to support God’s workers and to help the needy. The process was formalized over time, and in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus reminded the people of the essence of tithing.

Let’s turn to Matthew 23:23. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” Jesus Christ admonished the Pharisees for being so meticulous about counting a tenth of such tiny seeds, but then forgetting the larger issues at hand. While we should always return to God what He gave us, we shouldn’t use tithing as an excuse to neglect our duties of justice, mercy, and faith.

Tithing Today

Why do we need to give tithe today? In the Old Testament, the people’s tithes supported the Levites, priests, and the needy, whether they offered livestock, grains, or money. But today, what is our tithe used for? Can you think of any reasons we should give tithe today? *(Allow students to brainstorm. Examples may be: to support church expenses, such as electricity, food, or supplies; to help the needy in both local and international churches; to serve as salaries for workers and ministers for God.)*

Tithing is a crucial element in God’s house. It is a concrete and consistent way of showing that we put God first in our lives. Our offerings are needed for practical purposes, such as paying workers and

ministers. They are also important because tithing is a reflection of our spiritual offering. If we practice it, it can become a very healthy spiritual habit. If we choose not to, however, then we are robbing God! Malachi 3:8 says, “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.” Tithing may not be strictly enforced, but the Bible makes it clear that when we fail to tithe, we have taken what rightfully belongs to God. Therefore, we should always tithe to show our love for God, and to remind ourselves that everything we have comes from God.

B. Examples of Tithing and Giving

Let’s study a few examples in the Bible to understand more about tithing.

1. The Pharisee (Lk 18:10–14)

In this passage, the Pharisee’s attitude towards God is clear. How did he treat his tithe offering? To the Pharisee, his tithe was simply a part of his obligation, and a way to show off his religious devotion. Everything about his worship was for the purpose of keeping the law, not for the purpose of loving God.

2. The Widow (Mk 12:41–44)

Realistically, the widow offered very little! The contrast between their offerings is as if she offered a few cents right after someone dropped a hundred dollar bill into the box! It didn’t make a difference in the eyes of many, but Jesus commended her, saying that she offered more than anyone else. Why is this? What she gave was technically not very much, but it was all that she could give. Moreover, she gave it willingly, out of love and the goodness of her heart. It may have been very little, but it meant a lot for her to help others, despite her own predicament.

These two examples show us how much of a difference our attitude can make when offering to God! The Lord wants us to give what we have willingly, with joy, and with a heart to serve. He doesn’t want us to give like the Pharisee who simply tithed because it was his job, or because he wanted to look good. We should offer from the heart.

Let’s study one more example in 2 Corinthians 8:1–15. The churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea were suffering greatly because of persecution from the Jews. Here, Paul mentioned how the Macedonian Christians were offering money that they didn’t have to spare. Life was tough for the believers, yet they still gave as much as—if not more than—they could afford to offer.

In this passage, Paul wrote, “In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity” (2 Cor 8:2 NIV). Normally, the words “joy” and “poverty” don’t go together, but this is exactly how Paul described the Macedonian Christians! Moreover, the joy and poverty that they experienced didn’t make them any less willing to give. In fact, when they heard about the collection Paul was taking up, they gave as much as they could despite their own afflictions.

Paul brought up this subject because the Corinthians needed more motivation to give. They began a collection but soon forgot it. We don’t know the reasons for this, but we know that upon hearing that the suffering members needed help, the Macedonians responded. Their offering was a sacrificial giving—they were poor themselves, but wanted to help, so they experienced joy in giving what they could.

C. Principles of Tithing

What should our attitude be when it comes to tithing? What principles should we follow in giving tithes? It is important that we avoid tithing out of a sense of duty, or to make ourselves feel or look better. We need to examine our hearts when we tithe, and follow the principles that the Bible teaches us.

1. Giving is a matter of the heart (2 Cor 8:2, 12; 9:6)

The Bible encourages us to give, but it doesn't command us to sell all of our belongings and live in poverty! When Jesus commended the widow, He was teaching us to emulate her attitude. God knows that our ability to give is limited, especially when we are young and don't earn a lot or any money at all! But giving is a matter of the heart. When we give according to what our heart chooses, without any grudge or compulsion, then we will be like the Macedonians who gave with joy and servitude. Remember that God loves a sincere and cheerful giver!

2. Giving is a personal choice (2 Cor 9:7)

When we see someone donate something big like a piano or a large sum of money, we may feel like our five dollars is meaningless. But we shouldn't compare ourselves to others! Giving is a personal matter—it is okay to give according to our means. If we feel like we must give more because of other people, then we aren't giving from the heart, but out of a sense of obligation. If others suggest or force us to give a certain amount, or we perhaps offer a certain amount out of embarrassment, then we aren't giving with the correct attitude. We should choose the right amount for ourselves, and not let others affect our decision.

3. Give in proportion to what God has given (2 Cor 9:10)

Although we might be willing to offer one, five, or ten dollars each week, we must also remember to give in proportion to what God has given us. God stated a very specific number: 10 percent of our earnings! He still requires us to live on this earth to spread the gospel, so it doesn't make sense for us to sell everything and live in poverty! It would be extremely difficult for us to serve Him in that situation.

On the other hand, we cannot use our cheerful attitude when we tithe as an excuse to give less than we can. It is important that we avoid justifying ourselves by saying such things as, "Well, since I'm giving so willingly, a dollar a week will do. I really need to save up for that other purchase I really wanted!" When we choose to give less than we ought, we have forgotten that everything we own comes from God. Even if we need to save up for something important such as bills or tuition, when we offer accordingly, God will always give back to us.

In summary, God wants us to offer what we have chosen to give with a willing heart. He doesn't want to burden us, so it's our choice what we offer. But it is important to remember that "[he] who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Cor 9:6). This is a principle that every farmer knows: you cannot reap what you do not sow. The person who gives only a little will receive back just as little. But if we give bountifully, then God will give us so much more!

D. The Results of Giving

What happens when we give from the heart? What can we expect as a result?

1. God will increase the fruits of our righteousness

Let's read 2 Corinthians 9:10. "Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness."

When we give from the heart, God will remember what we have willingly given and increase the fruits of our righteousness! He will give us our heavenly reward, and we will "enter into the joy

of [our] Lord” (Mt 25:21; cf. Lk 12:32–33).

2. God will enrich our lives

When we give, God enriches our lives in two ways. First, by supplying more of our needs, and second, by enabling us to give even more. When God gives us more, we shouldn’t keep it to ourselves, but continue to give so that we can become a channel for God in supporting His work. When we become a giver, God will take care of us, because giving guarantees God’s provision. Do you have faith that when you give, God will meet your needs?

3. We become partners in the ministry

In Philippians, Paul gives thanks for their “partnership in the gospel from the first day until now” (Phil 1:5 NIV). Their provision was a valuable contribution in spreading God’s word. Not all of us will become ministers or workers, but we can still help by giving. Think of members who travel the world to preach and help our churches grow! Whenever we give, we are supporting those who minister in remote or dangerous areas. This makes us partners in the ministry! Our giving also isn’t limited to financial donations—we can give through hospitality, supplies, or prayers. When we give what we can, we can support the church in so many ways. With the right heart, we can become the means that God uses to meet the needs of our coworkers in Christ!

4. Giving brings thanksgiving and glory to God

Giving isn’t just a gesture of our own thanksgiving—it also promotes thanksgiving within the church, because a need has been met and answered. Our tithe also brings glory to God, because others can see our obedience and our dedication to the Lord, as well as the blessings that He returns to us when we give from the heart. In describing cheerful givers, Paul wrote that “through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God” because their confession of the gospel was accompanied by both obedience and generosity (2 Cor 9:13).

The world’s logic dictates that if we were to give away 10 percent, then we have permanently lost 10 percent of what we gave. But the Bible teaches us the opposite: when we give back to God what belongs to Him, we will receive innumerable blessings, far more than the 10 percent we gave to Him!

Check for Understanding

- 1. Explain the three aspects of tithing in the Old Testament.** One-tenth of the Israelites’ earnings supported the priests and the Levites. Second, a portion was eaten during a celebration to remember God’s blessings, and third, it was distributed to support the needy.
- 2. What did Jesus remind the people of regarding the essence of tithing?** While we should always return to God what He gave us, we shouldn’t use tithing as an excuse to neglect our duties of justice, mercy, and faith.
- 3. What can we learn from the Macedonians’ response to the members’ needs?** Their offering was a sacrificial giving—they were poor themselves, but wanted to help, so they experienced joy in giving what they could.
- 4. What are three principles of tithing?** Giving is a matter of the heart; giving is a personal choice; and give in proportion to what God has given us.
- 5. What are the results of giving?** God will increase our righteousness; God will enrich our lives; we become partners in the ministry; and giving brings thanksgiving and glory to God.

Life Application

1. Learning to Tithe

After today's lesson, do you have a better understanding of why tithing is so important? Let's read Deuteronomy 14:23. The purpose of tithing is to teach us to always prioritize the Lord. When we give on a monthly, weekly, or daily basis, we are constantly reminding ourselves that God takes first place in our lives. But it is more than a reminder for us. The action shows us what we value in our hearts, and also makes room in our hearts for spiritual matters.

a. Tithing shows what we treasure in our hearts

In Matthew 6:21, Jesus explained that "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." The things we treasure are the things that we keep close to our hearts. And there is little more telling about what we value than where we put our money! If I keep my tithe in my wallet, then that's where my heart is. If I put my tithe in the offering box, then I value God more! Where we put our money reveals what is truly important to us, making the act of giving a test from God.

b. Tithing makes room in our hearts for God

Learning to tithe is especially important in a materialistic world that is always yelling at us to spend money for our own comforts and desires! When we ignore the advice of the world and give generously to others, we become less materialistic, leaving more room in our hearts for peace and joy from the Lord. Therefore, instead of accumulating all the "stuff" that we want, we should learn to give.

If we tithe faithfully and consistently, then we are not only proving to God that our heart is where it should be, but every time we give, we are making more room in our heart for His blessings! This all leads us to the important question: where do you put your tithe? Wherever we put it shows what is truly important to us. For those who struggle with giving things up, let's turn to Malachi 3:10.

Here, the Lord has challenged us to test Him. He has promised such great blessings if we dare to give what we have to Him! This means setting aside a mere ten percent of every dollar that we earn, and giving it all to God with joy (2 Cor 9:7). If we do choose to test God in this promise, then He will give us so many blessings that "there will not be room enough to receive it"!

(Teachers: The full version of the testimony referenced in this section is too long to include. However, a separate pdf with the full testimony has been uploaded alongside this lesson. You may read the full testimony with your students if you have time, or alternatively, give them a copy to read at home.)

Testimony: The Path to God's Blessings

In this testimony, a brother recalled how he and his wife barely offered tithe while living in Jakarta. Although their income was sufficient and their monthly expenses were quite low, their savings gradually shrank each month. This continued until they moved to Singapore, where they realized their sin. They deeply repented, and determined to offer tithe regularly. For each paycheck received, 10% first went to God, and the remaining 90% for themselves. The following is an excerpt from this testimony, following their decision to tithe regularly to God.

Our expenses [after moving to Singapore] became higher. My wife became pregnant with our first child in the year 2000, and we now had rent to pay, in a city that had a much higher cost of living compared to Jakarta. But thank God, He always provides what we really need!

While my wife was still pregnant, I received a special salary increase. The normal annual salary increase in Singapore is 2–3% per year, but I received more than 15%! In addition to this blessing, I

was suddenly offered a part time job, and began receiving some extra income. God truly knows what we need, and He will always provide. My meager income – which should have been barely enough to survive – became enough for us to live on. Not only that, we also somehow saved a little bit of extra money each month. As we gave tithe, we began to manage our money better than in Jakarta.

For a time, we continued renting in the city, which meant that we had to move every year. We went from Marine Crescent to Serangoon, then to Tiong Bahru, and from there to Aljunied Crescent. It became very tiring moving from one place to another. But thank God, although my Singapore Permanent Residence (SPR) application had been rejected twice, it was finally approved by the government in 2002. As an SPR holder, we were now allowed to buy a government flat from the open market, and could borrow money from the bank for up to thirty years.

[...] We began looking for flats to purchase, but realized that the selling price was always above our budget, with additional funds required for house renovations. We clearly needed money at the time, but we knew that 10% of my income still belonged to God, and that we should continue to offer tithe. There would be no bargaining in this! So we put the matter into our prayers, and asked God to give us the wisdom to decide whether or not it was the right time for us to buy a flat.

God answered our prayers. It was on a second floor, but we found a flat that was within our budget and required no renovations. In addition, it was near our church at Telok Kurau, which was our top priority while searching. Thank God, we then decided to buy the flat. However, our problems had not quite ended yet. Our existing rental contract had not yet expired, so we still needed to pay the rental fee for the next six months. In addition, I now had to pay additional monthly installments for our mortgage.

The Lord Jesus is always merciful, and never stops showering His blessings upon us. Not long after buying our flat, another opportunity came. I was offered a part time job again by the same company as before, and this time I was paid a sufficient amount to support our monthly expenses.

I really cannot count the blessings God has given my family. He is always there to help us when we need Him the most. It was not until years later that I realized that God's plan and timing were perfect as always. Looking back, I realize that the same year we purchased our flat – the year 2002 to 2003 – property prices in Singapore had dropped to a record low. Moreover, the USD to SGD exchange rate was the highest ever (we had kept the proceeds from selling our home in Jakarta in USD). The rejection of my SPR application, and its subsequent late approval in 2002, was all because of God's perfect timing. It is impossible to believe, but despite my initial belief that it would take us fifteen to twenty years to save enough for a flat, God helped me buy a house for my family three short years after moving to Singapore!

I hope that my testimony will help readers understand that when we are giving our offerings to God, we will never lose anything. When we return 10% to God, our quality of life is not reduced by 10%. In fact, we will receive so many more blessings (Mal 3:10–11)! He always provides what we need. We simply need to learn from the faithful widow who gave all she had in two copper coins (Mk 12:41–44). But because He has given us free will, we can choose to half-heartedly give one coin, or we can choose to offer our whole heart with two coins. Let's count the blessings that God has given us. Let's offer our two copper coins.

May all the glory be unto our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

2. Learning to Be Generous

There are two types of people: givers and takers. The world teaches us to be takers, but the Bible urges us to be givers. This is because every time we are generous towards others, we please God. As Jesus said, “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me’” (Mt 25:40). It doesn’t matter if the person who helped is aware of our actions. What matters is that we learn to be generous with what God has given to us.

Let’s read Proverbs 11:25. “The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.” When we are generous to others, God in turn is generous to us. Jesus added to this teaching, saying that, “Give, and it will be given to you [...]. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Lk 6:38). This means that God’s promise of generosity is predicated on our own generosity towards others. Unless we obey God in the matter of giving, He doesn’t give any guarantee to meet our needs. In fact, God isn’t at all obligated to meet any of our needs if we don’t first obey what He has told us to do! But it is easier for us to become attached to what we have than it is to be generous. So how do we learn to become givers as God wants us to be?

Give ourselves to the Lord before giving to others

It is in the giving of ourselves to God that we become able to give to others. Paul wrote that the Macedonians “first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God” (2 Cor 8:5). In much the same way, when we truly love God, we become more willing to give. When Paul was urging the Corinthian church to act, he wrote, “Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf” (2 Cor 8:24).

Our generosity is proof of our love for God! Therefore, it’s important that we first give ourselves to God in order to learn how to give to others with the correct heart and attitude. Take a moment to ask yourself, how much have I given myself to the Lord? Does the way I give show that I love God?

Memory Verse

“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Meaning

Our attitude in giving is more important than the amount that we give! God is concerned about whether we are giving willingly, with joy. When we become cheerful givers, we please the Lord, and He will bless us.

Conclusion

Tithing is a practical and consistent way of showing that we put God first in our lives. If we practice giving with a willing heart, it can become a very healthy spiritual habit! Like the Israelites, we should tithe to show our love for God, and to remind ourselves that everything we have comes from Him. And as the Bible teaches us, when we give bountifully, then we will also reap bountifully!

Lesson 9 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is the most important aspect of giving according to the memory verse?
Our attitude is more important than the amount that we give! God is concerned about whether we are giving willingly, with joy. When we become cheerful givers, we please the Lord, and He will bless us.
2. "Will a man _____? Yet you have _____ Me! But you say, 'In what way have we _____ You?' In _____ and _____." (Malachi 3:8)
rob, God, robbed, robbed, tithes, offerings.
3. "He who sows _____ will also reap _____, and he who sows _____ will also reap _____." (2 Corinthians 9:6)
sparingly, sparingly, bountifully, bountifully.
4. What principles should we follow when tithing according to the Bible?
Giving is a matter of the heart; giving is a personal choice; and we should give in proportion to what God has given us.
5. What do we receive as a result of tithing?
God will increase our righteousness; God will enrich our lives; we become partners in the ministry; and we bring thanksgiving and glory to God.
6. Where does your time and money usually go? What "treasures" do you keep in your heart?
Personal answers.
7. What is one action that you will try to take each week in order to increase your generosity?
Personal answers.