

First Fruits

The Bible has quite a bit to say about the topic of first

In fact, some Bible teachers say there is a principal of “firsts”

Putting God first in everything in our lives whether our time, talents or possessions is very important

Starting with our money and giving what we do with the “first fruits” affects every aspect of our lives

If you want to have a *God Blessed Life* you must put *God First*

What are the “first things” of living an abundant blessed life?

Consider this:

- There are more than 500 verses in the Bible concerning prayer
- Nearly 500 concerning faith
- More than 2000 concerning money and possessions

Jesus talked about money in 16 of His 38 parables

- Why would money and how to handle it be talked about so much?
- Money is a test from God
- How you handle money reveals volumes about your priorities, loyalties and affection

It always requires faith to give first

This is why tithing is so important it's the primary way we acknowledge that God is first

- When the first portion is given to God and the rest is redeemed – Exodus 13:2, 12-13

Exodus 23:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.

- The first of your first fruits
- Not the last
- Give it before you pay the bills
- Bring it to the House of the Lord – First day of the week!
- It doesn't say to give your first fruits wherever you want
- The tithe comes to the house of the Lord
- The place where a community of believer's worship together

Malachi 3:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, *even* this whole nation.

- Did God Change?

Malachi 3:6 (NKJV)

⁶ “For I *am* the LORD, I do not change;

Life, Not Law

- Tithing is a principle that runs throughout scripture
- Before, during and after the law

We saw last week how God accepted Abel's offering yet rejected Cain's on the principal of first-fruits

The principle of the tithe (*or first-fruits or first born*) was in operation when Abraham was asked to offer his son Isaac, as well as when he gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek

Genesis 14:18–20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tithe of all.

- Melchizedek is a representation of Jesus – **Hebrews 5-7**

Hebrews 6:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

In fact, the principal of the tithe goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden

Genesis 2:15–17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- God gave them stewardship over the whole garden
- They could eat of every tree except one
- They were not to take of the fruit of that tree and consume it
- Being faithful stewards meant *life* to Adam and Eve

By choosing to eat the fruit they were acting like owners not stewards

- This is exactly the way of the principal of the tithe operates in our lives
- He gives us all things freely to enjoy – **1 Timothy 6:17**
- “The tithe and the first-fruits are mine,” says the Lord – **Exodus 13:2**

We demonstrate faithful stewardship when we give God the tithe

We are showing Him that we realize we are stewards, not owners

If something is right under the law, it's still right under grace?

If something was wrong under the law, it's still wrong under grace?

- Adultery
- Murder
- Theft

Imagine what you would think if one evening you invited me over to your house for dinner and as I was walking out the door after a great meal, I grabbed your television and took it home. What if when you asked, "Why did you do that? The Bible says you're not supposed to steal," my response was, "Well, 'Thou shalt not steal' was part of the law. I'm not under the law. I'm under grace." – Robert Morris – The Blessed Life

What most Christians fail to understand is that tithing is a test

Matthew 6:21 (NKJV)

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The text doesn't say "where your heart is your treasure will be"

- Your heart follows your treasure
- The tithe is a test for every Christian
- Where your tithe goes, your heart will follow
- In fact, the tithe will cause you to be more heaven minded
- 80-20 principal

The word “*tithe*” literally means “*tenth*” or “*tenth part*”

The number ten in the Bible represents *testing*

- 10 plagues to test Pharaoh
- 10 commandments
- God tested Israel in the desert 10 times
- God tested Jacob’s heart by changing his wages 10 times
- Daniel was tested 10 days in the first chapter of the book of Daniel
- **Matthew 25** Jesus tells a parable of 10 virgins having their preparedness tested
- 10 days of testing are mentioned in **Revelation 2:10**
- How many Disciples did Jesus have?
 - Just checking, He had 12

Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ Bring the **whole tithe** into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

- God doesn’t need a test we do
- Tithing is a test
- Some may say, “*why is this in the old testament?*”
- Maybe that makes it more of a test – Just sayin!
- It’s simple – if I tithe I’m blessed, if I don’t I’m cursed
- Blessing or cursing? You choose

Some people will say, I can't be cursed because of what Jesus has done

- Let's talk about that

Galatians 3:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*”), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

- Without a doubt, Jesus bore all the curses of the law
- Having become a curse for us

1 Peter 2:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

- Jesus bore all our sins
- Let me ask you – Have you sinned since you've become a believer?
- Even though Jesus bore your sin you have still sinned
- Have you been sick since you believed?
 - Of course

We must appropriate, by faith what Jesus has done

- When we don't, we experience some of the curse

Here's the good news!

Malachi 3:11 (NKJV) *When we tithe*

¹¹ “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the LORD of hosts;

- When we obey, God rebukes the devourer on our behalf

Some may say that because I'm under grace I don't have to give a tithe

Matthew 5:17–20 (NKJV)

¹⁷ “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

- Righteousness through grace exceeds the law
- When Jesus was questioned about an old testament standard he always raised the bar
 - **Matthew 5:22, 28** – *“if you even look at a woman”*

Do you really want to give according to Grace?

That would mean you would have to tithe much more than 10 %

- The righteousness of grace always exceeds the righteousness of the law
- It's a higher standard

Abraham, Melchizedek, and You

We already established that Abraham gave a tithe of all his spoils to Melchizedek and that he is a type of Jesus (*some bible teachers say that this was Jesus Himself*)

Hebrews 5:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰ called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”

- This occurred 430 years before the law was given

And finally, this

Hebrews 7:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

- Melchizedek (Jesus) receives the tithe
- True tithers are not only giving to the Church but to Jesus Himself

In **2 Chronicles 31** King Hezekiah decrees that all of the tithes be brought into the house of the Lord and given to the Levites

2 Chronicles 31:10 (NKJV) “*Laid in heaps*”

¹⁰ And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him and said, “Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, **we have had enough to eat and have plenty left**, for the LORD has blessed His people; and what is left *is this great abundance.*”

- When God’s people bring the tithe, the storehouse is full and the people are extremely blessed in the process
 - When you go to Church, do you enjoy the spiritual food you get?
 - Someone is paying for it
- Would you go to a nice restaurant, eat and then not expect to pay for it?

Matthew 25:14-30 Parable of the Talents (PT’s Version)

If I gave 3 men \$10,000 per month and asked them to take care of Trish while I was gone on a trip

- All they need to do is send her \$1000 per month from their salary
- One gave \$1000 a month
- Another gave \$2000 a month
- Another sent \$800 the first Month, \$300 the second and nothing the third
- I would discontinue his salary and give it to the most generous one