

WORD OF CHRIST INTERNATIONAL CHURCH
POSITION PAPER

Topic: Tithing

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

We must agree that Scripture is our final authority in settling questions of faith and practice. But when born-again, Spirit-filled Christians, following proper biblical principles, come to reasonable but differing interpretations; we do well not to become dogmatic in support of one position. We affirm the inerrancy and authority of Scripture and we desire to know for certain what God expects of us. When we come to a sure understanding of His divine Word, we are committed to declaring and obeying those clear instructions.

In the following position paper we address one of many topics that have raised a fair degree of discussion, and, at times, arguments among the brethren. It is not our intention to fuel these arguments but rather to state our position based on our earnest understanding of the Scriptures. With this said, we also exercise caution in not stirring unnecessary strife or division among the brethren, and have made every reasonable effort to base our positions on Scripture, not personal opinion or conjecture. We respect and love our brothers and sisters who hold alternative interpretations on issues that are not critical to our salvation or standing before God.

TITHING

Tithing is giving one-tenth of one's personal income to support the work of God. We believe tithing is a recognition that everything we have comes from God. The practice checks our greed, promotes personal discipline, testifies to our faith, promotes God's work in the world, and alleviates human need. While we do not believe tithing to be a condition for salvation, we do believe it is a very important biblical model, one which should set the minimal standard for Christian giving for people in all income ranges.

BIBLICAL PRECEDENCE

Though some people believe tithing was an Old Testament practice not intended for New Testament Christians, we believe and teach that tithing is still God's design for supporting the ministry and reaching the world with the gospel. Although it is true there is no direct commandment in the New Testament saying, "You must tithe to God one-tenth of your income", there is also no statement declaring the Old Testament plan as no longer valid.

The first instance we learn of someone tithing occurs in Gen 14:18-20, where the account of Abraham giving a tenth of all his increase to Melchizedek is recorded. This event predates the Levitical law by approximately 430 years (Gal 3:17). This is why we hold the position that 'tithing' is not just an issue of the law, or a practice that is relevant only for the Old Testament period. Although it was eventually incorporated into the practice of the law, its genesis was from a much earlier time.

This account of Abraham and Melchizedek is further expounded in the 7th chapter of Hebrews, where the writer makes an important and insightful connection between Jesus and Melchizedek. The writer highlights that where Melchizedek was known as 'King of Peace' and 'King of Righteousness' under the Old Covenant (Heb 7:2), Jesus too has rightfully assumed these same titles under the New Covenant. The writer also goes on to say that Melchizedek was worthy to receive the tithe from Abraham and his lineage. As such, Jesus, in His position as our High Priest today, receives our tithes and offerings.

WORD OF CHRIST INTERNATIONAL CHURCH
POSITION PAPER

Topic: Tithing

There is also evidence that in the very early days of the human race presenting offerings to God from your increase was a common practice. We see this with Adam's children, Cain and Abel, presenting their respective gifts to God (Gen 4:3-4). Who did they learn this from? It stands to reason they learned it from their father Adam, who was taught directly by God his Creator.

There is even evidence that Jesus Himself recognized the importance of the practice of tithing. In Matthew 23:23 Jesus said, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices... But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness." Stopping at that point in the verse might allow some misinterpretation. But Jesus continued, "You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." From here we see that Jesus regarded the Old Testament practice of tithing as continuing into the new covenant under which we now live.

THE PURPOSE OF TITHING

In addition to being an act of trust and allegiance to God and His faithfulness, tithing also has a practical side. Under the law, proceeds from the tithes were directed primarily for the support of the Levites and priests who provided spiritual leadership (Numbers 18:21-29) and for the relief of the needy (Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Today's church still relies on the support of tithers. We believe if believers remain faithful in presenting their tithes, there will always be sufficient finances to fulfill the vision that God entrusts with the leadership of the local church.

The Scripture teaches that Christians should present their 'whole' tithe to the church, not splitting it among different ministries. Christians should fellowship with a local body of believers and bring their whole tithes into that storehouse (Malachi 3:10). While we may designate some of our offerings (beyond the tithes) to ministries outside the local church, the tithes rightfully belong in the church with which the Christian identifies. And if one is not identifying with a local body of believers, he or she disregards God's instruction that we not forsake assembling together with believers (Hebrews 10:25).

THE BLESSING OF TITHING

Some Christians do not tithe, claiming they cannot afford to give up 10 percent of their income. Simple arithmetic may suggest that 90 percent will not go as far as 100 percent in satisfying essential family needs. But God has built a multiplication factor into our giving of tithes and offerings. Malachi recorded God's words, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... Test me in this... and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3:10). Though we do not give to God simply to get more back, God's promises are still true – "He shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19.)

Christians can miss out on God's abundant blessing by looking on the tithe as the entire requirement for giving. The tithe is only one aspect of support for the church and its ministry of spreading the gospel. The Bible also mentions voluntary offerings given by God's people over and above the required tithe. Of course, the attitude with which both tithes and offerings are given is very important. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). The giving of either tithes

WORD OF CHRIST INTERNATIONAL CHURCH
POSITION PAPER

Topic: Tithing

or offerings with a grudging spirit loses the blessing that comes as we faithfully give out of love rather than obligation.

CONCLUSION

We understand that the topic of tithing, and money in general, is a very sensitive subject in the modern day church. Largely due to flagrant abuses by some in church leadership positions, the prevalence of this sentiment towards tithing must not move us away from the truth of God's Word. We believe tithing is a practice that all believers should embrace, and do so with a joyful heart. Not only does it demonstrate our day-to-day dependence on God, it also connects us to God's economy of provision, which far surpasses the flawed economic systems of this world.

-- END --