

With All Your Heart

The Genius of Generosity

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Week 8

Deuteronomy 14:22-29

Bible Reading Plan

[Start the Plan](#)

Click the link above to read the Bible along with your group.

If you been around church, even for a little while, you have likely heard about tithing. Tithing is not something you hear about outside of church, but most people know it is connected to financial giving. But the word “tithe” comes from a Hebrew word that simply means ten, or a “tenth” or 10%.

In our series from the book of Deuteronomy, we have learned about God’s Law that he gave to his people, Israel. Starting in Exodus, with the Ten Commandments, and then all throughout the book of Leviticus, and it is here we first see God give the command to tithe. “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; It is holy to the Lord...The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every 10th animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod—will be holy to the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30. 32).

1. If everything already belongs to God, why would He command his people to give a portion back to Him?

The Lord was not messing around when He said 10% of EVERYTHING belongs to Him. Hundreds of years after the law was given, He accuses the Israelites of robbing him. And they ask, how do we rob you? This was his answer in Mal 3:8-10. “You ask, ‘how do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.” So yes, God is serious when He says the first 10% of everything belongs to Him, and it is holy to Him.

In Numb 18:21. God explains how he intends to use the tithe. “I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting.” The tribe of Levi (one of the 12 tribes of Israel) was singled out and selected to serve God in the tabernacle, where

God's presence would reside. Because the Levites got to serve in the tabernacle, they did not receive a tribal area of land when Joshua divided up the promised land. God was to be their inheritance. The Levites wouldn't have their own fields and vineyards, but they would receive the produce of the lands and vineyards through the system of tithes. As long as everyone tithed, the Levites would be provided for, and the tabernacle would be well maintained.

2. What would you have thought if you had to give a part of your harvest to someone else's livelihood? Does it seem like a fair deal, or would you have had some concerns about the arrangement?

This has all gives us some context leading up to our main text for today from the book of Deuteronomy. Read Deuteronomy 14:22-27.

This passage shows that the act of giving the tithe was to be part of worship to God. It wasn't just a transaction or a community tax. The people were to travel to the tabernacle, celebrate God's goodness and provision for them by eating a wonderful meal there at the tabernacle, and then give the balance of their tithe to the Levites/Priests for their support. As long as everyone tithed, the people would annually renew to their commitment to the Lord, worship Him, and live in gratitude for his provision.

But there is one more element of tithing that often gets overlooked, and it is in the final verses of the chapter, verses 28-29. At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat to be satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. So, in addition to the annual, primary tithe, God also directed that the Israelites were to provide for the local vulnerable populations in their own towns: the local Levites, aliens, the fatherless and the widows. So, in the third and sixth years of a seven-year cycle, the tithes had a direct social component. As long as everyone tithed, the local vulnerable population would have a social support system.

3. But this is all Old Testament Law. In what ways do you see tithing applying to us, though we are under the New Covenant of grace?

Well, the New Testament doesn't emphasize tithing, it shifts to generosity. Paul wrote "Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion." It's no longer about a percentage; it's about more than a percentage. And the shift to generosity does not

invalidate the underlying principle that the first 10% belongs to God. God still wants to be first in our hearts when it comes to our material things.

Here's what Jesus had to say on the matter in Mt 23:23. The Pharisees had become hyper-focused on tithing the tiniest herbs from their kitchen gardens, but Jesus said "You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former." In other words, Tithing was never meant to be a legalistic thing. Tithing is a heart issue that places God squarely in first place.

Tithing is a representation of a core principle that goes far beyond money, and the principle is this: God always wants to be first--First in our lives, first in our marriages, first in our families, first in our thoughts, first in our work... and first in our giving.

4. In what areas of your life is it easiest to put God first and what areas is it hardest to put Him first?

Let's remember the context of Deuteronomy. The Israelites are about to go in and take possession of the promised land of Canaan. They will harvest crops they didn't plant; enjoy vineyard and olive groves that they didn't tend; live in houses and cities they didn't build; acquire animals they didn't raise. In that new and incredible prosperity, they were warned "Do not forget God!" But before any of the conquering and acquiring, God had a principle that He needed to deeply imprint on the Israelites: God always wants to be first. He was to always occupy the first thought in their plans, the first place in their hearts, and the first portion in their giving.

So, let's bring this into our context for E91. We don't have any million-dollar donors driving the budget. It takes everyone at E91 to make our budget work. Church experts say that in a church our size up to 40% of the people don't give anything. They come, participate in worship and in programming, but they don't give. We don't find that here. Our non-givers rate is around 10%--which shows that we are a generous people. And this is all with increasing prices, the burden of student loans and other debt, and with good paying jobs being hard to come by. And maybe you in a place right now, and you are struggling just to get by. In those moments, putting God first becomes more meaningful.

To help us put God first in our giving, each of us can ask ourself:

- Am I really listening to God when it comes to my giving? Or am I just picking a number that I am comfortable with?

- Am I really trusting God to provide for my family, or am I giving an amount that won't adversely affect my careful retirement planning?

When we give our first and best to God, and live on the rest, we're taking a huge next step with Jesus. A huge spiritual step. The genius of generosity is that it's not about the number or the percentage, it's about your heart.

5. What next step can you take in trusting God with all your heart through generosity and giving?