

=THE CHRISTIAN LIFE=

Lesson 9

Giving

AIM: to teach my pupils the importance and blessing of obeying God's command to tithe their income and to give offerings.

POINT OF CONTACT: Discuss with your class: Who has ever heard of the new math? Have you ever struggled with it—either for your own knowledge and use or for the sake of helping someone else understand it? We will discuss in this lesson a kind of mathematics that is much more complex and important than the new math. Don't be alarmed, however, for the part of the function which is ours to perform is very easy to understand. The result of this mathematics is really understood only by God. For example: I have ten apples (or any other object which you care to bring). I am going to give one apple to one of you. How many apples do I now have? Yes, I have nine. Since I am a Christian, however, I will have more than nine apples remaining. I will actually have my ten apples with more added until the bin or the bowl which holds just ten apples will be running over with more apples than I had in the first place. You say, "What kind of magic are you working?" I am no magician; I will explain in the lesson for today what I mean.

INTRODUCTION: Tell the story found in I Kings 17:1-16. The place was Zarephath; the time in history was during the drought which came during the reign of wicked King Ahab. In this town on the Mediterranean seacoast lived a widow lady with her son. The Lord spoke to this lady, commanding her to give sustenance to the Lord's prophet, Elijah. The drought, of course, affected the godly as well as the ungodly, and God wanted to sustain His own! When Elijah came to the home of the widow, he asked for some water to drink. Of her precious water, the lady readily gave a drink to the man of God. When Elijah asked for some bread to eat, however, the lady informed him that she did not have any bread and that she had only enough ingredients to make one last meager meal for herself and her son before the inevitable death that she knew would come upon both of them because of starvation. Elijah said, "...make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son." The lady obeyed, giving of her substance first to the prophet of the Lord and then taking the small remainder for her son and herself. The Bible says that from that time on, the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse did not "waste" nor "fail" until the rain came again. The lady worked her division problem according to God's commandment and God gave her the result—He multiplied instead of divided. Give to God what is commanded by Him and He will see that your needs are filled. He commands that the tithe and the offering be given to Him.

I. WHAT IS THE TITHE?

1. The tithe is ten percent of all increase. Of course, whatever a person receives is additional to what he already has and is therefore an increase.
2. This has been God's basic plan of giving throughout human history. Jacob promised the Lord that he would give the tenth of all that the Lord would give him, Genesis 28:22. The Old Testament law detailed all the items of which the Israelites were to give the tenth to God—there could be no misunderstanding concerning the fact that everything which they received was to be tithed, Deuteronomy 14:22; Nehemiah 10:35-39. Abraham gave his tithes, Hebrews 7:5-9.
3. Giving the tithe is an act of obedience. God commands it. The command is an Old Testament command; it is also a New Testament command, Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42.
4. Giving the tithe is an indication of trust in God, Malachi 3:10; Matthew 6:33. The Lord promises a blessing bigger than what can be received if the tithes are brought to Him. Keeping God's command—serving Him—insures His provisions for every need. See Luke 6:38. Proportionately as a person gives shall God give back to him.
5. Giving the tithe is an equality. The percentage is the same for the rich as well as for the poor. God's Word stresses that everyone should give as God has prospered him, I Corinthians 16:2.
6. Giving the tithe keeps God from having to take it from His children, I Corinthians 16:2. If He has not exacted it from us before Jesus comes for His own, there will be a reckoning then, if it has not been given.

- II. WHO SHOULD TITHE? Every Christian should tithe. Tithing is not just an Old Testament law. Abraham and Jacob tithed before the law was given. Jesus said that men ought to tithe, Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42.
- III. WHEN SHOULD THE TITHE BE GIVEN? Upon the first day of the week the tithe should be given, I Corinthians 16:2. The Christian should look back upon the week and review his income, giving according to how he has prospered for that week. Consider this: Your employer is just working a convenience for you by withholding the amount of your taxes from your paycheck so that you won't have to pay the whole amount at the end of the year. Taxes, insurance, union dues, and any other item that is withheld from your check are all expenditures of yours just as food, clothing, etc. are expenditures. Ten percent of the gross amount should be set aside for giving on the first day of the week—this amount is the Lord's.
- IV. HOW SHOULD THE TITHE BE GIVEN? II Corinthians 9:6-15.
1. Not with a sense of fulfilling a requirement, nor with a grudge.
 2. With a sense of distributing God's wealth for Him. Psalm 112 gives us a picture of the righteous man. The righteous man is one who received God's wealth, distributes it, and scatters it abroad to those who need it. Note especially Psalm 112:5, 9.
 3. With a grateful, cheerful heart.
- V. WHERE SHOULD THE TITHE BE BROUGHT? The Lord instructed those under the law that the tithe should be brought to the place which He would choose, Deuteronomy 12:5, 6. The tithes and the offering were brought to the tabernacle and to the temple. The Levites and the priests were to collect them. Since the Bible instructs us to bring our tithes upon the first day of the week, it seems logical to assume that it means to bring the tithes to the place of our assembling to fellowship and to hear the Bible preached and taught.
- VI. WHY BRING THE TITHE?
1. To help God? No! God cannot be made any richer than He is; He owns everything!
 2. To keep from becoming a robber. Malachi 3:8 says that a person who has not brought his tithes and offerings has robbed God. As a robber, he is cursed of God—God will exact His share either now or when Jesus comes to judge His own, I Corinthians 16:2.
 3. To be in a position where God can protect. The person who brings his tithes and offering will be protected from the "devourer"—that which would eat up his substance, Malachi 3:11.
 4. To be in a position where God can bless, Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38. The tithe and the offering which are given shall be returned to the giver in the same measure as they were given, pressed down and running over. The tither cannot lose; he stands only to gain by consistently obeying this command of God.

CONCLUSION: Actually, the tithe is only the beginning of God's plan for our blessing in giving. The offering in addition to the tithe is also commanded of God. It is the generous person who has learned the secret to a truly abundant life, Proverbs 11:24, 25; II Corinthians 9:6.