

WHAT is a tithe?

The simple way to answer that question is to look it up in the dictionary:

tithe (tith) *n.* [ME. *tithe*, *tethe*, properly an adj., thenth, fr AS. *teoha*, *teogetha*, tenth.] A tenth part, or loosely, a small part; esp., *Brit.*, a tenth part of the yearly increase arising from the profits of land, stock, or personal industry, paid, in kind or money, to the church or for religious or charitable uses; hence, any small ratable tax or levy.

Well, maybe not that simple after all. But it really *is* simple: **a tithe is the tenth part of income given back to God, through His Church, in thanksgiving for His gifts.**

Where did that idea come from? It came from God Himself, actually. It was set down in the Law of the Old Testament where it was commanded, “Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year.”¹ The reason was “so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.”² Or, more explicitly, “a tithe of everything from the land ... belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the Lord.”³

Actually, the practice goes back even further, to the meeting of Abraham with Melchizedek (whom Paul saw as the figure of Christ in the Old Testament, the High Priest) when Abraham, having been blessed by the High Priest, gave him “a tenth of everything.”⁴ This has been the practice of grateful Jews and Christians ever since.

But aren’t we just talking about an ancient tax? True, the tithe has been seen as a tax in various circumstances, but that is not the heart

of the matter. The heart of the matter lies in how you regard what you have, your possessions. Are they yours? “Of course,” you will say, “I’ve worked long and hard for what I have.” True. And you are entitled to benefit from your hard labor and saving. But could you have done it alone? Could you have done it without your health? Could you have done it without your brain? Or your body? Could you have done it without all the resources at your disposal over which you had little or no control? All that we have, ultimately, is the gift of God.

This is a critical understanding for the Christian. “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.”⁵ No man ever thought up a brain; no man ever willed his birth into a nation or circumstance. God has provided the raw material for everything that we have. We owe Him our gratitude, our deep, utter gratitude. And how better to express that gratitude than to return a part of His creation to Him?

But it is finally God who has made this the measure of our gratitude. He established the tithe and He has even gone so far as to suggest that withholding a tithe is equivalent to “robbing God.”⁶ Pretty strong language, eh?

But why return a tenth? And why to the Church? The quick answer is because God tells us to. But with good reason: it is fair. A tenth is a proportional payment of return, measured by ability. The rich man pays a substantial part of his wealth but a poor man, the one on a pension or even welfare, pays a much smaller part. It simply means getting

along on a bit less, commensurate with your share of God’s bounty.

The Church acts on behalf of God to receive that money. But what does it do with it? It brings the reality of God into the world. It preaches the Gospel, trains the young, comforts the ill, provides the Sacraments to all its people – without regard to the amount of that tithe. It uses that tithe for God’s purposes. It had better! That money received in Old Testament times, by the way, went for the support of the temple – and a tenth of the tithe was allocated to the priests and Levites who served there. What better way to spend that tithe than to further God’s kingdom with it?

All right; but face it, I’m nowhere near giving 10% of my gross income to the Church. If I give 10%, I’ll grow broke! Right ... and wrong. First of all, you are very right. Few Anglicans give in the range of 10% to the Church. That is really a sad commentary on the commitment and spiritual maturity of our people. And it seriously hampers the work of the Church, make no mistake about it.

If you look at the fastest-growing denominations in the country today, you’ll find they are the ones in which most of the people tithe. Indeed, if you have a tithing congregation of ten families, you can pay a pastor the average salary of its members; another ten families and you can build a church building – and on, and on. But it *can* be done – many church members do it and they are not wealthy.

What’s important first and foremost is to make up your mind to do it. Then set about it gradually. Certainly an immediate jump from 1% or 2% to 10% is going to take an adjustment to ones style of living which may not be made overnight. But you can move this year from 1-2% to 3-5%. And the next year another

¹ Deuteronomy 1:22 (NIV).

² Deuteronomy 14:29b (NIV).

³ Leviticus 27:30 (NIV).

⁴ Genesis 14:20 (NIV); see also Hebrews 7:2-6.

⁵ Psalm 24:1-2 (NIV), quoted in part in 1 Corinthians 10:26.

⁶ Malachi 3:8-9.

er jump to 7%, until in a relatively short time, you are doing God's will with what is His. Sure it pinches now and then. It's hard. As one wag put it, "God loveth a cheerful giver⁷ ... but He accepts the tithe of a grouch." But really, there is no cause to fear.

"No cause to fear? Cutting 10% out of my income? Surely you jest!" Not at all. In the very same passage in which, speaking through the prophet Malachi, God reprimands His people for robbing Him by not paying their tithes, He makes a most remarkable promise: "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse [tithes were usually paid in grain, the commodity of exchange], 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 you will not have room enough for it.'"⁸

"Test me," He says, and many have. Virtually everyone who tithes testifies to the fact that *God helps make it* possible; that doors open that they never knew were there before. He will help! But taking that first step, making out God's check before the rest of the bills are paid, is probably the first real test of faith, of commitment, of trust in God, that most of us will ever have. Try it. Test Him.

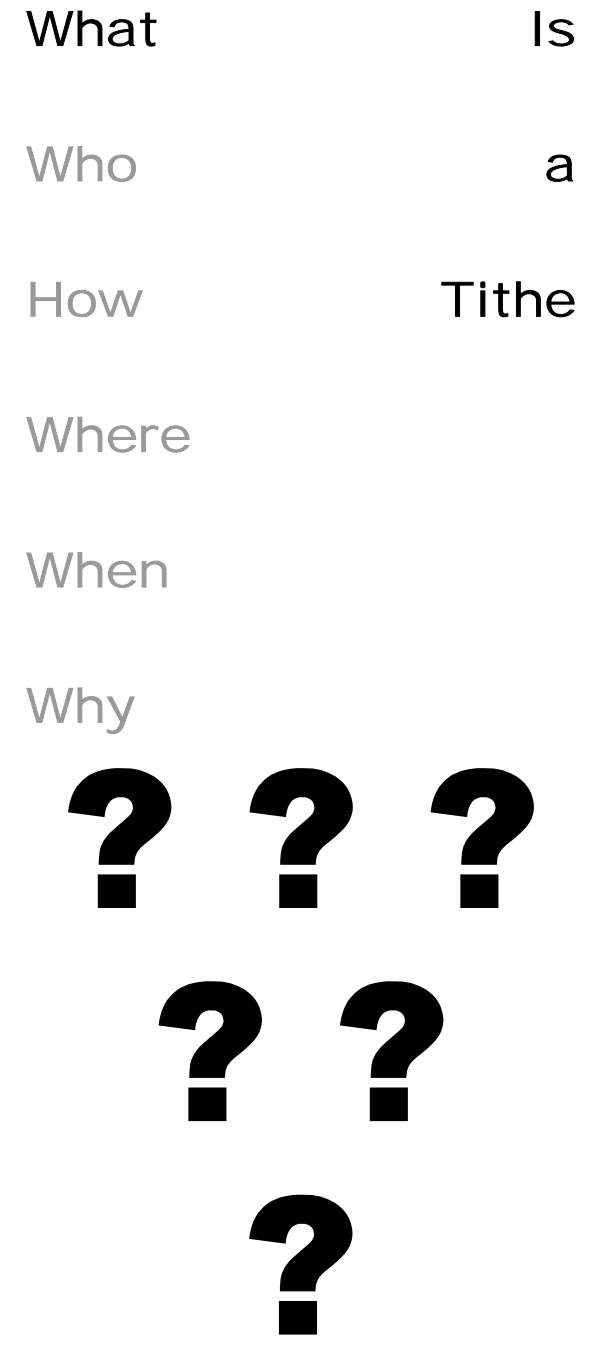
One more thing. This tract is published by the Church. It is published, not to make money or "raise funds," but to teach the Christian faith. It is not printed because we need the money that tithing will bring, although we certainly *do* need it. It is published to teach you how to enjoy your own possessions. It is printed, not because the Church needs the money, but because *you* need the blessings

that tithing will bring to you and your family. No one is too rich or too poor not to benefit from this discipline of faith.

The promise of God's blessing is available to everyone who will follow this simple practice. This message is for you, for your spiritual health and for your enjoyment, as you share with God what He has shared with you. Think about it. Pray about it. Then do it. And change your life for the better.

WHAT DOES A TITHE LOOK LIKE?		
Yearly Income	Tithe per Year	Tithe per Week
5,000	500	9.62
10,000	1,000	19.23
15,000	1,500	28.85
20,000	2,000	38.46
25,000	2,500	48.08
30,000	3,000	57.69
35,000	3,500	67.31
40,000	4,000	76.92
45,000	4,500	86.54
50,000	5,000	96.15
55,000	5,500	105.77
60,000	6,000	115.38
65,000	6,500	125.00
70,000	7,000	134.62
75,000	7,500	144.23
80,000	8,000	153.85
85,000	8,500	163.46
90,000	9,000	173.08
95,000	9,500	182.69
100,000	10,000	192.31

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⁷ 2 Corinthians 9:7 (AV).

⁸ Malachi 3:10 (NIV).