

## General Considerations for Biblical Stewardship within the Local Congregation

**I support lots of ministries I'm interested in. Why am I still supposed to tithe to my local church?** Some Christ-followers believe they can direct their tithe to a ministry of their own choosing instead of supporting the church they attend. This, however, is not a biblical view. Exodus 23:19 says to bring the firstfruits "into the house of the Lord your God." Malachi 3:10 directs bringing the whole tithe "into the storehouse". Again, this goes back to one of the threefold purposes of tithing, namely, to support God's work on the earth. Malachi was speaking to a situation where the priests actually had to go out and work in the fields themselves as the Israelites were failing to tithe and provide for them as God had directed (Nehemiah 13:10-12). The tithe was supposed to be brought directly to "God's house" to support the priests, among others. What this means in a modern-day context is that we are to tithe where we are fed spiritually, supporting the work of our local church. To the extent we wish to support other ministries, that is another purpose for offerings that we give over and above our tithes.

**I volunteer at church and help with children's ministry several hours every week. Am I still supposed to tithe money in addition to my time?** As an initial matter, it is important to remember that the "tithe" is defined as returning to God 10% of one's gross income; not 10% of one's time. Thus, it is not accurate to refer to serving in ministry as "tithing of our time." In a broader sense, though, giving of our finances is simply one component of stewardship. God has made us managers of "everything" He has given us, and that includes our time, talent and our treasures (Psalm 24:1; Psalm 31:14; Ephesians 5:15-16; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Matthew 25:14-30). There simply is no biblical authority for the position that giving in one of these areas suffices as giving in all these areas. Our entire lives belong to God and His desire is that we will serve Him with everything we have.

**What is the difference between tithes and offerings?** By definition, a tithe is 10% of our gross income returned to God and offerings are amounts we give in excess of that. A great example of a biblical offering is described by the Apostle Paul when he was collecting an offering from the Corinthian church to be taken to Jerusalem to support those in need there (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:5-15). This would be akin to a modern-day church taking up a special offering for benevolence, to provide for the poor or individuals with particular needs. While tithing refers to a set percentage of our income, offerings have no numeric limit. Paul only advises that they be given with generosity and cheerfulness.

<http://newbreak.org/giving/faq> – This website is the source for the above excerpts.

**Other websites, among many, that may help in understanding Christian Stewardship?**

<http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-parishes/stewardship/give/>

<http://m.christianity.com/church/tithing-and-giving/christian-giving-11598443.html>

<http://www.armcanada.org/article32.htm>

*(These web resources are merely to help provide some slightly different perspectives. Their reference here does not constitute my endorsement of every aspect of their views, but they do reflect my general biblical understanding. Particularly noted is an articulated difference between biblical obligatory giving [also referred to as a 'tithe'] to fund pastoral teaching salaries and the operation of the common local fellowship in contrast to offerings /almsgiving to assist those in need within the Covenantal Community and for evangelistic missions. I am not sure there is such a biblical differentiation, especially when one acknowledges that 10% was not the minimum expected of the Israelites [more like 22-23% total as a minimum every year] to give to the Covenantal Community to meet all these aforementioned needs. More likely and in light of the New Testament witness, offerings/almsgiving, in my view, are more of what an individual would give, beyond their regular obligatory giving to support their local congregation, to meet a wider yet particular missionary or poverty need among other brethren outside the local congregation. If this is correct, what implications does it have for giving to a diocese, and how should funds received from local congregations/individuals be used at the diocesan or national level? –Marc Wilson)*