

Biblical Questions and Answers About Tithing

What is a Tithe?

The word *tithe* means “one-tenth.” In the Bible, God instructs all believers to bring a minimum of one-tenth of our income back to Him. Anything above and beyond 10 percent is considered an offering. Proverbs 3:9 tells us, “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase.”

Tithing is an act of obedience that testifies to God’s ownership over your income and finances—that He is first in your life and that you trust Him as the provider of your finances. And when we honor God by giving Him our tithes, He blesses and protects us.

What is the tithe used for?

The main principle behind tithing is to put God first in our lives and return the first portion to Him. We don’t personally direct what the church does with the tithe; we submit it to the Lord to honor Him.

In the Old Testament, the tithe was mainly used to take care of the Levites (the nation’s spiritual leaders) and their families because they did not receive an inheritance in Canaan as the other tribes did. In turn, the Levites took care of the tabernacle (where God met with His people), ministered to the people, and tended to those in need.

In the New Testament and now in modern-day, the tithe is stewarded by the local church to do the same—take care of the church and those who minister to God’s people.

When should I tithe?

The tithe should be the first portion taken from your income. In the North America, taxes, medical insurance, and other types of expenses come out automatically before we get our paychecks. You cannot control taxes coming off your paycheck first, but you can control what you do with the income once it’s in your possession.

God is not legalistic or difficult to please. He is full of grace and knows the condition of your heart. Therefore, tithing on your gross income (your *total* compensation before taxes and insurance) even after government expenses have been taken out is still tithing if it is the first portion *you* set aside.

For example, you have \$10 in 10 one-dollar bills. The tithe on that amount is equal to \$1. Which one of the ten one-dollar bills is the tithe? The first one is spent or given. Therefore, if the first check you write is for the tithe, you are tithing the first portion you’ve been given.

What if I’m having financial problems and I don’t think I can afford to tithe?

The great thing about our God is that He gives us wisdom in every situation. Through His Holy Spirit, He can guide you to the best solution for each situation you face. We believe the Lord wants to partner with us, guide us, and instruct us on how to proceed—especially in dry financial seasons.

Facing a season of financial difficulty is about remembering that God is your provider, and your job is simply to be a good steward of what He gives you, even if it’s just a little. God’s **ability to**

meet our needs goes beyond what we can even begin to imagine; however, He cannot bless a bad steward. In the process of this season, you may need to learn more about what it means to be a good steward.

Our advice is to put the best plan in place that you can take care of this situation. First, put together a budget (a financial plan) that clearly identifies all your current and future personal needs.

Once you have a budget, the next step is to pray and ask God to do the impossible, supernatural provision part. Your part is to be faithful and manage what He has given you well. Trust Him to open doors for you, create opportunities that didn't exist before, and give you the wisdom you'll need to manage it all.

Also, remember that your tithe is based on your income. If you're between jobs and have no income, your tithe is zero.

Matthew 6:25–34, Luke 16:1–13

Should I tithe off my gross or net income?

Essentially, when we receive income, we pay for medical insurance, retirement savings, and taxes, and what's left is our net income. We *benefit* from all of our income (gross income), but we primarily only see the net income because we purchase or save for some things with pre-tax dollars.

In the Old Testament, when the Israelites were given God's commandments and laws, they were told to return the firstborn of every animal and the first fruits of every harvest. They were instructed to tithe from all of their harvest—their gross—to the house of God. Following that biblical charge, our tithe should also be from the full portion of our income, representing God's whole provision for us.

Leviticus 27:30–31; Deuteronomy 14:22

Is tithing in the New Testament?

Tithing is a biblical principle throughout the entire Word of God—before the law, during the law, and after the law. The story of Cain and Able was a representation of the tithe over 2,000 years before the law. Abraham tithed 500 years before the law. Jacob (Israel) tithed 400 years before the law. God instructed Moses to make tithing a legal requirement under the Israelite laws.

Jesus was actually a form of the tithe and is often referred to in the Old and New Testament as the Firstfruits because God gave His firstborn Son for us in faith that we would accept Him. Then in the New Testament, Jesus said we ought to tithe in Matthew 23:23 and in Luke 11:42.

Grace changed the way we give our tithes but not the act of giving them. In the New Testament, it says that not only does God want you to tithe the first 10 percent of your gross income, but that He wants you to return it with a *pure heart*. Not grudgingly or out of necessity (2 Corinthians 9:7) but instead simply because He loves you and you love Him and want to put Him first in your life.

Should I tithe when my spouse does not agree with it?

We believe it is very important to tithe. However, as a godly wife, it is also important that you submit and honor your husband. And as a husband and the spiritual authority of the house, it's important for you to keep peace in your household.

Our tithe is the one thing that God says we can test Him on (Malachi 3:8–12). Our suggestion would be to encourage your spouse to test the principle of tithing.

Then, in a humble and non-threatening way, challenge your spouse to tithe for a time (one year would be best). Let them know that if your family is not better off by the end of the year, that you will not put any more pressure on them to tithe. However, if you *are* better off then, you would like to keep honoring God as a couple through your tithes. We would then challenge you to keep a very close eye on your finances so that you will have evidence to stand on at the end of the year.

Should a business tithe?

As a business owner, the principle of the tithe is to give the first 10 percent of the gross of everything you take out of the business as personal income. We do not believe that a business has to tithe, for the reason that a business cannot be saved.

With that being said, the main thing is to be obedient to what God tells you to do. There are several businesses within our Alive Church community where God told the owner to give and/or tithe out of the company profits and the company has been very blessed. However, they had a specific word from God to do this. It is important to hear God for your specific business and to get His heart for the business.

Should I tithe off my tax return or claim tithes on my taxes?

We believe that tithing is first and that it should be from your gross income (what you earn before taxes), not your net income (your take-home pay after taxes).

During tax season each year, you prepare financial statements and reports for the previous year. The government then takes those reports and determines if you overpaid or underpaid on your taxes throughout the previous year. If you are underpaid, you receive a check for that sum from the government as a tax return.

Because we tithe first and off our gross income before taxes, then we have already tithed off of any money we get back in our tax return. You can think of a tax return as if you overpaid for a bill and they sent you back that money. So, there shouldn't necessarily be a reason to tithe off of your tax returns.

With regard to claiming tithes, the government allows us to deduct our tithes during tax season. Fundamentally, there is nothing unethical or wrong in doing this. Not accepting tax benefits from tithing would be similar to not accepting the tax benefits you receive for having children. If you have children and you mark that you don't on your tax return, then you would overpay. If you have kids and mark correctly that you do, then it is simply being honest and correct. That being said, we believe that by writing off the money that we have given through tithes and offerings on our taxes, we are being better stewards of all that God has entrusted to us.

We suggest you deduct your tithes and offerings out of your taxes and then use your tax return as God directs you. Many people in the Alive Church community actually give their tax return

away, others save it, and others spend it. Seek God into how He would want you to use that money.