

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies **a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1 KJV, (emphasis mine).*

Lessons In Tithing



Every dollar, quarter, dime, nickel, and penny counted. I can remember counting half dollars stowed away in a jar somewhere just to buy a gallon of milk. Yes, money was tight, but each day God met our needs. Despite the shortage, we had begun to tithe faithfully; yet, I struggled with the anxiety of making ends meet. The money ran out long before the month did.

That summer, I planned a yard sale and prayed we would bring in enough money to pay our hefty car payment. It was a big task, but I believed God would provide yet again. At the end of the day, we did not have enough for the car payment, but we did have enough to pay another monthly bill. I was grateful. Then, I heard the Holy Spirit stirring inside my heart. He clearly convicted me that day to tithe ten percent of our yard sale earnings. *Lord, no. We cannot even afford to give \$15. We won't have enough left over to pay the bill.*

If you have ever argued with God, you know debating with Him is futile. The next morning in Sunday School I placed my tithe in the offering plate and walked back to my seat. When I opened my Bible, a wad of cash fell out. Shocked, I immediately counted it. When added to our yard sale earnings, it was the exact amount needed to pay our car payment—to the dollar. I was amazed!

Sacrificial Giving

In Philippians 4:12-19, Paul told the Philippians he knew how to be brought low, and how to abound. He had learned by the help of the Holy Spirit, the secret of contentment in plenty and hunger, abundance and need. He knew God would supply his need out of His abundance.

Reflective Questions

What part of these verses is difficult for you to apply to your daily life?

Do you tithe faithfully to your local church? If not, why?

Application

Spend time in prayer, asking God to examine your giving practices. If you know that you need to make changes, make the commitment to begin giving consistently and sacrificially. Invite someone to be your accountability partner.

Acts of Faith

“ . . . As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die” (1 Kings 17:12 KJV).

We find a miraculous account in 1 Kings of the prophet Elijah, a widow, and her son. During the reign of wicked King Ahab, worship of the

false god Baal was rampant. In a revelation of His power, and as a direct consequence of the nation's idolatry, God sent a drought throughout the land. However, He gave His word to Elijah that He would provide for his physical needs during this trying time.

One day, the Lord sent Elijah to find nourishment from a widow in the village of Zarephath. Upon arrival at the village gates, he saw the woman he had been seeking.

He asked first for a simple cup of water, but as she turned to retrieve it, he added "and some bread as well." The widow's heart must have sunk as she turned and faced this prophet of the living God. "We have nothing left. I'm preparing the last meal for my son and me before we die."

With great boldness, Elijah told her to make his food first, but not to worry. God would provide the flour and oil for their provision as well. Indeed, the flour and oil would miraculously replenish until the end of the drought.

I have never known true poverty, not like this widow and her son, or so many others across the world today. I cannot fathom what it must be like to know the

food is gone, and another meal is not coming anytime soon.

The story does not tell us of any other family members or close friends. She was alone and facing grave circumstances. Her stomach could not have been as empty as her heart, as she realized she could not provide enough to keep her son alive. Yet, she risked everything for this prophet. Her faith was remarkable.

I wonder if I could possess that

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same kind of faith. Given the financially desperate situations in my life as a mother, I am not sure I could give away the last of our food. During our financial trials, fear and embarrassment overran my faith.

Driving home one day, after discovering yet another disaster in our bank account, I wondered, like the disciples in the boat in the midst of the storm, if God had fallen asleep. No doubt about it, there have been many times in the last decade that putting our weekly check in the Sunday offering was an act of faith.

The *Life Application Study Bible* says about the widow in 1 Kings 17: "She trusted Elijah and gave

him all she had to eat. **Faith is the step between promise and assurance.** Miracles seem so out of reach for our feeble faith. **But every miracle, large or small, begins with an act of obedience**" (emphasis mine).

Reflective Questions

Have you been praying for a miracle?

Where do you need to step out in faith today?

If God asked you to give *more* than you thought possible, could you do it?

What do your spending practices say about your faith?

Application

Read Hebrews 11:6. Is your life pleasing to the Lord? If so, how has He rewarded you?

Promised Blessing

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. ...that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:8,10 KJV, emphasis mine).

The bottom line—tithing is not optional. It is a direct command from the Lord, and to do anything different is disobedience. We see examples of tithing throughout Scripture, even from the beginning with people like Abraham (see Genesis 14). *Tithe* literally means a tenth. “Israelites were to tithe from their land, herds, flocks, and other sources. Such tithes were intended to support the Levites in their priestly duties; as well as strangers, orphans, and widows. When Israel failed to give the tithe, it was a demonstration of their disobedience” ([Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible](#)).

I believe many churches today have a misconception of what tithing truly means. To give anything less than ten percent is not really a tithe at all. In fact, God calls it robbery. Proverbs 3 tells us to honor the Lord with our wealth and with the firstfruits of all our produce; then our barns will be full (verses 9-10). Honestly, I still struggle with this part. I want to give God the leftovers after everything else is covered. I want to make sure we have what we need (and often want) before I give God what is rightfully His.

This is not what He asks or requires of me. Just like the story of Cain and Abel, I must give God the first and best, with a pure heart. It cannot be what I feel like “passes” as an acceptable offering.

A blessing follows obedience. David describes this blessing as, “I shall not want [or be in lack]. . . my cup overflows” (Psalm 23:1,5). This is a *promised* blessing, and unlike human promises, God does not break His. The old saying is true: “You can’t outgive God.” So whatever *sacrifice* we make in giving, whatever we think it *costs* us to tithe, however difficult it is to obey *fully*, we can trust that “give, and it shall



be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom..." (Luke 6:38).

Reflective Questions

Do you believe this?

What does this mean for your life?

How can you share this promised blessing with others?

Works Cited

Chronological Life Application Study Bible. New Living Translation. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2007.Print.

Holy Bible Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible. English Standard Version. N.p.: AMG Pubs, 2013.Print

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