



EMBERS FROM MY FIRE

FEBRUARY 2009

WHAT DOES GOD THINK ABOUT TITHING?

By Pastor Ken Damon

It would be interesting to know who actually reads this article with the uninviting title.

Do you feel like you already know the answer to the tithing question? Are you anxious you might get some self-serving preacher hype that adds or subtracts from what God really says? Or is it possible you don't want to know what the Bible says because you might feel compelled to change? Let the courageous and curious continue to read.

#1 EVERYTHING YOU HAVE BELONGS TO GOD

"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Psalms 24:1

Personal property rights are an important part of democratic society. This great principle can, however, create the illusion that what we have belongs to us. People who believe God is the Creator of everything have no choice but to believe we are only temporary custodians of material things. Even atheists would have to agree all ownership is temporary. Furthermore, if God pulled the plug on my life, this nation or the world it wouldn't matter how hard we had worked to gain possessions.

#2 THE TITHE PAYS HONOR TO GOD AS OWNER

God says through the prophet Malachi, **"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house." Malachi 3:8-10**

The Old Testament concept of the tithe is that God requires a return to Him of 10% of our income as part of our worship. To withhold the tithe is to actually steal from God. That's obviously not good.

#3 GIVE GOD THE FIRST AND BEST

"As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything." 2 Chronicles 31:5

God desires the firstfruits of our income, in other words, the best and first; not the leftovers. If God is to be our top financial priority it is logical it will take planning to make this happen. God will not send you a bill or bother you with annoying collection calls. We are God's dearly loved managers.

Tithes supported the priests who worked at the Temple or Tabernacle. It was also used to help the widows, orphans and resident aliens. (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). We try to do the same basic things at SRBC. Check out our budget to see how we are doing.

#4 GIVE CHEERFULLY AND GENEROUSLY

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

The last thing God wants or this church wants is for people to approach tithing legalistically. Everyone's situation and gifts are different. God is not out to torture you but to bless you and others as you give faithfully.

The tithe is a representation of us giving our whole life to the Lord. Part of the cheerfulness of giving is that God lets us keep 90% of it! That is why in many African churches they dance the offering to the front of the church. God has blessed, so it is a blessing to give back to Him in worship. This is why at SRBC we have often sung the Doxology as the offering is presented to God. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow ..."

Please prayerfully and thoughtfully fill out the "SRBC Financial Decision Card" in this newsletter and return it to the church. We also would appreciate your God-led service and feedback as church family members. This communication will help your church leaders better serve God as we make decisions about the ministry and mission of SRBC. It is an honor to receive your tithes for the Lord!

Pastor Ken Damon