



“My First Commitment as a Christian” (Christian Basics Series 2013)

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Intro: We have taken a brief break from our regular study through the NT to look at what I consider to be basics of the Christian life. Without applying these basics, I believe we will not attain the level of maturity God intends for each one of us, and we will miss out on the fullness of the Lord’s blessing upon our lives. Last week we looked at how bad company corrupts good character, and because of this the necessity of developing and maintaining Christian relationships after committing your life to Jesus Christ.

The text that best sums up this Christian basic is II Cor.8:7 (Power Point). The giving referred to here is financial, and just so you know right up front, that’s the basic I am going to talk about today.

Acts 20:35 (Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian elders) In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Follow the trail of your time, energy, affections, and money, and there you find a throne. And whatever or whoever is in on that throne is the object of your worship.

What we do with money reveals the condition of our hearts (see Luke 12:33-34).

Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

I Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Ruined Balaam, Gehazi, caused Israel to repeatedly violate the Sabbath, the Pharisees loved money, kept the rich young ruler out of heaven, caused Ananias and Sapphira to forfeit their very lives (Acts 5).

I titled this message “My First Commitment as a Christian.” Giving was the first commitment I made to the Lord. I was 19 years old when I committed my life to Jesus Christ. I had \$2,000.00 in the bank, and I wrote a check for \$200.00 to Emmanuel Baptist Church. It was my first tithe, and I have tithed ever since (over 37 years). I intend to continue to tithe on every dollar the Lord blesses me with until I see Him face to face.

Tithe = 10%

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE TITHE

Proverbs 3:9; II Chron.31:5 (firstfruits = the choice part)

Abraham (Gen.14:17-23); Hebrews 6:19-7:10; Psalm 110:1,4

Jacob (Gen.28:10-22)

Lev.27:30, 32; Num.18:26

Jesus commends the Pharisees regarding their practice of tithing, even though they neglected more important matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23b).

THE BIBLICAL MOTIVATION FOR THE TITHE

Honors the Lord (Prov.3:9).

Is an act of faith/trust (Malachi 3:10-12).

Acknowledges that all my wealth is from God (I Chron. 29:12-14; Deut.8:18a). The tithe represents the whole.

Opens the door to spiritual blessings (Luke 16:11).

Opens the door for greater financial blessing (Malachi 3:10b; Luke 6:38; II Cor.9:10-11).

Lays up personal treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20).

Furthers the work of the local church/kingdom of God.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR TITHING THROUGH THE LOCAL CHURCH

In the OT, the people's offerings went to support the ministry of the temple and the Levitical priesthood. Every third year, tithes were to be used to help the Levites, foreigners, the fatherless, and widows (Deut.26:12). There were many years of unfaithfulness by Israel in regard to tithing, and during these times the ministry of the priesthood was not supported, ministry to the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow was neglected, and the blessing of God was not on the people of Israel. This was the case during Malachi's ministry (see Malachi 3:8-12). Under King Hezekiah's leadership Israel experienced a great revival, and one of the results was the people's recommitment to tithing (see II Chron.31:4-10). I am absolutely convinced that if every Christian in every local church tithed, the church would have more than enough for the ministry God has called it to.

In the NT, the church is now God's entity for ministry, and that is where the tithe is to be offered to the Lord. Please note: When we give, we give to the Lord, through the church. And it is the leadership of each local church that decides how these monies are to be spent.

Acts 4:34-35

I Cor.16:1-4; II Cor.8:16-21

I Cor.9:7-14

I Timothy 5:9-10, 17-18

Note: I believe it is unbiblical to tithe to an outreach ministry of a local church, or a para-church ministry ; Leader at CCSP suggesting that he and I tithe for a few weeks to buy a sound system that CCSP needed in the early days of our ministry. We certainly have the freedom to give to outreach and para-church ministries, but I am firmly convinced that the tithe be given through the local church, and distributed by the leadership God has ordained at that church.

BEYOND THE TITHE

Various offerings beyond the tithe: Ex.35 and 36 (The Tabernacle); I Chron.29 (The Temple); Haggai (Rebuilding of the Temple); Good Samaritan giving; Paul's ministry to the poor saints in Jerusalem, etc.

Sacrificial giving: This is giving when it makes no sense, humanly speaking.

Luke 21:3-4. The widow who gave her last mite, I Kings 17, the widow of Zarephath, II Cor.8:1-4, the Macedonia churches. This is the only time we can truly see the Lord do a miracle in providing for our needs. Sometimes for a person to give a tithe requires this kind of sacrificial giving.

PRACTICAL POINTS REGARDING TITHING S

Give off the gross, not the net.

Give each pay period, and immediately off of other means of financial increase (I Cor.16:2; II Cor.9:5).

OBSTACLES TO GIVING

Love of money (Matthew 6:24; I Timothy 6:10)

Lack of faith

Younger less generous generation (Read from The Great Evangelical Recession, pp.90, 91).

CONCLUSION

II Cor.8:7