

life group study guide

November 16, 2014

Return the Gift: Tithe

The Church and Money. Seems to be an interesting subject for Christians and non-Christians alike- so let us jump into it--

"A man is usually more careful of his money than he is of his principles." -- Ralph Waldo Emerson

"We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." -- Winston Churchill

Q) What exactly is a tithe and where does it originate?

Q) When God says "first fruits," what part of our income is he talking about, pretax or take home?

Q) What's the difference between a tithe and an offering, or is there a difference?

OK- So hopefully we have established what a tithe is. So let's take a deeper look and its relevance to us today:

If we start by looking "inward," we have to ask a very important question:

Q) Is the tithe still applicable to us today? If so, in what way? Is a tithe a suggestion or a command?

If we conclude that the tithe is a command, then if we are not giving that 10% why not?

Q) What are the reasons Christians are not giving at least a tithe?

Q) In what ways can non-tithing Christians work toward giving a true tithe?

Money can be a touchy subject for everyone no matter their beliefs- do we as Christians have an obligation to teach and even help other Christians understand the tithe and help them achieve that goal?

If the tithe is a reflection of the heart, Can or should a tithe be part of a household budget?

Q) Does making it a "budget item" lessen the importance of giving; does it change your heart?

Let's look "outward" for a moment-

Q) Why do you think non-Christians say things like "All the church wants is money or all they talk about is money?"

Q) Have we seen events or people that twist God's tithe principles?

The non-Christian population can never understand the true nature of the Spirit, it is after all, foolishness to those that are perishing, so tithing is indeed a Christian tenet. I would go as far as to proclaim tithing one of God's most important commands to His followers.

--- In today's world, the Church, like any household needs finances to succeed. In this respect, the church is very much like a business in that it has obligations to THIS world. Where the Church differs greatly is in its business. The Church after all, is here to teach and serve the elect, and reach the lost.

To serve the membership, the church requires physical things: We expect the church to be heated in the winter and cool in the summer. We expect the Church to have children's programs and to facilitate our learning and growing spiritually... Therefore, the physical part of the family requires money to pay the bills, electricity, gas, phone, mortgage, and of course staff.

To reach the lost as is commanded, the church sends out missionaries nationally and internationally. We have days of service to our community. We support things like shelters for the abused, and food pantries. In today's world, those things require money.

So we come full circle to the next point of Matt's message- no matter where we are in our giving- a full tithe or not, the question becomes where do we give our tithe?

Ever listen to the words of our leadership just before offering time? I love how they say that visitors are not expected to give, that our membership supports our church. I think this goes a long way to alleviate fears and

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feelings of guilt visitors may have and in my opinion, it also gives us a huge insight to the next part of our lesson...

Can we or should we tithe to the local church? In our case, for most everyone that reads this, that means Kingsway Christian Church. Well the easy answer is of course "YES," but let's look at why for a moment...

READ: Deuteronomy 12:11 --We are commanded to tithe, we've seen that. Our local church, our place of "blessing" is that church, KCC. So we are under command to tithe to the local place God has chosen as a dwelling place for His name; for us, Kingsway.

Let's look at this way- We are commanded to give, and so we give to KCC. Now, the leadership of Kingsway is under those same commands, so they too give. Where do you think *they* give? Yea, me too... Next in this chain is what the church does with our offerings- Well, as leaders they are under a stern warning about a stricter judgment, (James 3:1). This means in all things, teaching as well as resources... So, the bottom line for us is this: We give in obedience to our local church. *That local church is then held to a higher standard, (judgment), on what they do with our offerings.* If they don't use them properly in some way, then THEY will be held accountable for that, and us for why we didn't give our tithe, not for how they used it because we have *complete* confidence in how they use our offerings...

In Kingsway we see our money going to work for the kingdom. We see the programs, the missionaries, yes even the building. Therefore we can, again, *with complete confidence* conclude that Kingsway Christian Church IS where we are to give, and we with assurance that our offerings are being used as God desires them be used. .