

**Joke:** A couple's young daughter went to college. After 6 months she happily let them know she was engaged to a student who is studying to be a pastor, and is bringing him home for the holidays.

After the introductions the father and the boy sat down and the father asked: " How old are you?"

"19 the young man replied"

"And where are you going to live?"

"God will provide," was the response

"And where are you going to get money?" I mean ministry doesn't always pay that well

Once again, "God will provide." Was the young man's response.

Later that night the mother asked the father: "What do you think of him?"

"He seems to be a nice guy, but he thinks I'm God."

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Some of what I am going to talk about over the next couple weeks may offend some, it may even anger some. I say that because some of it is going to be new to you. Different then what you have heard.

But ultimately my prayer is that it will help each of us learn some.

One thing is for sure most of us will need to unlearn some stuff so that we can receive some stuff.

I'm not sure how far we will get and I won't be doing much preaching. But rather a whole lot of teaching. I'm going to try and answer the questions you have even before they are asked. However, if you do have one then feel free to ask. Don't just yell it out, but feel free to let yourself be known that you have one. And I may not have the answer today, it may be that I plan on addressing it already at a later date, in either event I will try to answer to the best of

my ability or at least make a note so it can be addressed in the next couple weeks.

But understand I by no means have all the answers and if I don't know I will let you know that as well.

One more thing, I will be jumping around quite a bit dealing with multiple topics, I will try to stay on topic the best that I can, but there will be things off my original thought that needs to be said to bring clarity to it. So just follow along closely I really don't want you to miss anything.

You all ok with that?

John 8:32 (NLT): And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Let me begin with a few questions: Simple true or false so at least you get a 50/50 shot.

You don't need to yell out your answer or raise your hand, you are welcome to do that but this is really just something

to think about. Although the answers you have will say a lot. Ready?

1. Christian's struggle with sin because we are still a sinner?
2. Christian's will give an account for their sins on judgement day?
3. Christian's should tithe at least 10 percent of their income to the church?
4. God gets angry with us when we repeatedly sin against Him?
5. The Bible tells us that we will obtain rewards in heaven by how much we do here on earth?
6. We should continually ask God to forgive and cleanse us when we sin?
7. The New Testament started in Matthew 1?

I hope to answer those and more over the next couple weeks. Also you will probably hear some Scriptures mentioned more than once possibly even in the same message.

The word religion is traced to the Latin re meaning “again” and ligare meaning “to bind.”

In other words religion will put you in bondage again. We really do need God without all the religious stuff.

Hebrews 11:39–40 (NIV): These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

You need to understand something. The Priests of old were committed, devoted, and yet none of them received what had been promised.

But on this side of the cross God had planned something better for us.

So let's get started. I'm going to address question 3 first. Remember what it was? Christian's should tithe at least 10 percent of their income to the church? By the way the

answer to this particular question is false.

And for those of you that have been coming here for any length of time know this is not a topic I talk much about and for that let me start by saying I'm sorry. Because honestly since I haven't addressed it much some have been misinformed on the topic and frankly because of that it has caused some uneasiness in your life.

Some of you have felt embarrassed, disappointed, or even shamed because you either decided not to give or felt like you couldn't give.

And when you have those emotions it is difficult to feel free. And God came to set us free. Remember the truth will set you free.

2 Corinthians 3:17 (NIV): Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

And here's the thing, money breaks up marriages and money is what all too often turns people off to church.

So where did the idea of 10 percent come from? Great question I'm glad you asked.

Malachi 3:8–10 (NIV): Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

So, let's look into this. Malachi was written to the nation of Israel. The tithe was brought into the storehouse to support the priests from the tribe of Levi, and I want you to remember the tribe of Levi because we will deal with that sometime as well, but the tithe was brought into the storehouse to support them as they were serving in the temple.

What do you store in storehouses? Grain not money.

The tithe was given to fund and feed the Levitical priesthood who were not allowed to have worldly possessions or additional income.

Unlike pastors today who have jobs, property, and all sorts of other stuff.

And there's that part of that text that says. . .You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.

Let me just say this, do you really think you can buy God's blessings? Here's the truth. . .As New Covenant saints, we're already blessed with. . .look at this

Ephesians 1:3 (NLT): All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

Does that sound like we are cursed to you?

Ok what about the blessing part. Now hear this church



I'm not saying God doesn't bless us. I have seen Him bless my family, our finances, and so much more but let me be clear. If you believe that God is obligated to bless you because you are faithful in giving then you are greatly mistaken.

Remember what Ephesians told us. . .we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

We already have every spiritual blessing because we are united in Christ.

And church this one really bothers me. I have heard of churches giving a challenge to their people that goes something like this. . .if you will give God your 10 percent for the next 60 or 90 days and prove Him like Malachi tells us. If after those days are past and you haven't been blessed then come and tell me and the church will refund all your money.

Now that might sound like a real step out in faith moment

but there is a couple of real big problems with that whole idea. First of all your putting a time limit on God. And last I checked God doesn't always work on our time schedule. Secondly, who is going to be the one to run to the pastor and say, you know pastor it didn't work for me, I would like my money back.

And let's be honest even if you had the boldness to do that. The leader that set up that challenge all too often already has a response ready and it goes something like this. . .you have been blessed in so many ways. You just don't recognize them. And when a church partakes of that sort of thing it is nothing shy of manipulation.

Now let me address question 7 before I continue with the tithe topic. The question was, did the New Testament start in Matthew 1?

That too is false. I know what your Bible pages say, but here's the truth.

Hebrews 9:16–19 (NIV): In the case of a will, it is necessary

to prove the death of the one who made it, 17 because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. 18 This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19 When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people.

Now I must be honest I'm glad I missed out on that one. I don't like the idea of being sprinkled with blood.

So, the New Covenant did not and could not go into effect until after someone died. Jesus was not born into the New Covenant, look what Scripture tells us. . .

Galatians 4:4–5 (ESV): But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

So let that soak in a minute. Jesus was born under the

law, he ministered to people under the law, all those who we read about in the four gospels lived during the Old Covenant era of the law.

The New Covenant didn't start with the birth it happened after the cross.

We under the New Covenant with better promises live no longer under the law, but under this thing called grace. And hear this church grace doesn't mean do what you want, how you want, whenever you want not at all. And I will deal with that probably next week as well.

Now let's get back to the money thing. . .I will come back to to the Covenant issue sometime but for now let's finish up this topic.

I mentioned what I did about the Old and New because some have said that the 10 percent is a good starting point for New Testament believers. They say It's the minimum, but under grace, we can give more, but never less, than what the law required. I mean after all think about we it

are told the new is full of better promises, so we really most owe God more, right?

But here's the thing church the law is not a starting point for anything. We are no longer slaves to the law. What other part of the 613 laws are you going to start with. No pork. . .I failed, no mowing your grass on Saturday. . .failed again.

James 2:10 (ESV): For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

So, under the New Covenant 10 percent is not a starting point you are truly free to give what ever you have decided in your heart, not by manipulation and not under pressure to hit a certain number.

(Tell story of when my pastor asked who would match him in giving).

Here's one more for you watch this. . .

Matthew 23:23 (NIV): “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

Did you notice what Jesus says the tithe was a part of. . .the law. Look at it again. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law.

So, if Jesus is saying that tithing is matter of the law and we as New Covenant believers are dead to the law, and I will talk about that one as well, then what should we conclude about tithing?

Oh, I do need to say this about the law through. . .as a non-Jew we weren't even invited to the law anyway. It was given to the nation of Israel we were excluded from that club. We had no law, no covenant, and no relationship with God. And because of those things we were never really invited to the tithe anyway.

Watch this. . .

Ephesians 2:11–13 (NIV): Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

One more thing about law based tithing. Under the Law, giving actually totaled more than 10 percent. And as we talked about, it was more about giving food than money.

So here’s what you need to remember if anyone comes to you pushing a percent of income. Number one, it’s the wrong covenant. Number two it’s the wrong percentage, and number three it’s the wrong currency.

Now with all that being said, if we are not bound by the 10 percent rule what should we give? Or do we have to give anything?

And church here's the thing. I am by no means suggesting that you should give nothing. It's about our motivation. God doesn't want us inspired by guilt or manipulation. But I do believe God does bless us to be a blessing.

Look back at when the pandemic hit. Most forgot you can give online on our webpage. Out of sight out of mind. And what happened? We almost didn't have a place to worship because even though we weren't meeting we still had bills. And when you have little money coming in and a bunch going out. Well you can do the math. And if it wasn't for each of you stepping up to the plate we would not be here.

So even though God may not hold us to a standard in giving there are consequences for not doing it.



See I don't believe God needs our money he owns the cattle of a thousand hills.

Acts 17:24–25 (NLT): He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.

However, there is a principal about sowing and reaping. And if everyone keeps their wallet in their pocket and a tight fist around their fortune there are earthly consequences. What are they: For one we simply won't be meeting together in this place. We won't be able to provide meals for the EMT's or gas for others.

**Share story of the Crusaders.**

So, let's look at giving under the New Covenant.

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NLT): You must each decide in your

heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."

It sounds to me that giving is supposed to feel good, not hurt.

The church should be the last place that puts pressure on people to give.

Here's the truth, remember how I started this thing from John. . ."And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Truth is you are free to give whatever you decide to give from your heart. And one more thing it's also whatever you can afford. Most churches miss this because they are so caught up in the 10 percent part but watch this. . .

2 Corinthians 8:10–12 (NLT): Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were

the first to begin doing it. 11 Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. 12 Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.

See here's the thing church when we give, we can experience a heartfelt pleasure knowing that we were a blessing, we met a need, or helped further the Gospel message.

There are three good reasons for giving that are discussed in the New Testament. First, we're told to give when there's a need (2 Cor. 8:12). Next, we're told to share with others when we have abundance (2 Cor. 8:13–15). And finally, we see the early church giving because they were excited about the message and wanted to see a spiritual "harvest" from their giving (2 Cor. 9:7–10).

Remember how you felt when we gave you the money to be a blessing in this community. Remember?

When you give from your heart and not out of manipulation or some religious duty it truly does set you free.

Let me wrap up today with this. Not once in the New Testament are we told to give a tenth of our income to please God.

As a matter of fact the word tithe is mentioned just a few times in the four gospels. We mentioned one of those where Jesus talks to the Pharisees, and remember they were under the law, but no where does it talk about New Covenant believers giving a set amount.

I will be changing our giving envelopes from these, to these (show the tithe and then the new offering envelopes).

So here's the thing about grace, it doesn't change when we get out our wallets. You are truly free to give what your heart decides. Free means free. You're free to give 2, 5, 10, 4, 20, or 50 whatever percent you decide.

When you can't pay your rent don't feel obligated to give at all. You don't owe God anything

Watch this. . .

Colossians 2:14 (TPT): He canceled out every legal violation we had on our record and the old arrest warrant that stood to indict us. He erased it all—our sins, our stained soul—he deleted it all and they cannot be retrieved! Everything we once were in Adam has been placed onto his cross and nailed permanently there as a public display of cancellation.

So let me ask you, do you feel more free?