

The Power of Giving



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 17

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Mark 16:15; 1 Peter 3:8, 9; 1 Corinthians 9:14; Romans 3:19–24.

MEMORY VERSE: “Surely you know that those who work at the Temple get their food from the Temple. And those who serve at the altar get part of what is offered at the altar. It is the same with those who tell the Good News. The Lord has commanded that those who tell the Good News should get their living from this work” (1 Corinthians 9:13, 14, ICB).

AS WE SAW LAST WEEK, the Bible teaches that we must pay tithe. Paying tithe means giving back to God 10% of all the money we get. Paying tithe is the same as passing a test. When we pay tithe, we show our faith. So, we pass the test when we pay tithe (2 Corinthians 13:5, NLV).

The first time we read about tithe in the Bible is in the story about Abraham in Genesis 14:18–20. In this story, Abraham gives tithe to Melchizedek. The Bible also tells us the Levites took tithe for the work they did in the temple (2 Chronicles 31:4–10). Today, tithe is used to support those who share the Good News.

Tithe is God's plan. So, we need to understand the importance of paying tithe and how the money is used in the church to do God's work. God made this plan to help us grow stronger in our spiritual lives. Paying tithe is God's way for us to support the preaching of the Good News about Jesus. So, every loyal manager should pay tithe. Yes, paying tithe is the first work managers must do. This week we continue to study God's plan for tithe.



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OUR MONEY HELPS GOD'S WORK GO FORWARD (Malachi 3:1–6)

Jesus tells us to “preach the Good News” (Mark 16:15, NLV). He also tells us to “go and make followers” and to “teach them to do all the things I have told you” (Matthew 28:19, 20, NLV). Yes, God wants us to be part of the most important work on earth. That work is bringing people to Jesus. We are responsible for providing the money for this work. So, we must support God's work with our money. Then we will grow closer to God. We will want to tell other people more about Jesus too.

Every follower of Jesus is a manager of everything God gives to him or her. God's gifts to us include our money. So, we must bring God our tithe. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. Our tithe is used to help finish God's work on earth. This work is holy. So, we must pray that we will be loyal to God with our money. We must pray that we will all help support God's holy work. Then our faith will grow strong.

Read Malachi 3:10. As this verse shows us, what is God's plan for supporting and finishing His work on earth? What does the “entire tenth [10%]” (Malachi 3:10, NIV) mean? What does the wording “so that there may be food in My house” (Malachi 3:10, NLV) mean?



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People have paid tithe since the time of Abraham and Jacob (Genesis 14:20; Genesis 28:22). Maybe people paid tithe long before this time, too. God provided this plan to support His church.

Today, many Christians give very little to help the work of God. That is very sad. But what would happen if every Christian gave a loyal tithe? Something powerful would happen! A miracle too wonderful to put into words!

God always has people who are willing to provide money to support His work on earth. All of us must work together to support this important work. But we must support God's work in the right way. We must not be careless. We have much more important work to do today than the people and the Levites had when they said to Nehemiah, “We will not forget to take care of the house of our God” (Nehemiah 10:39, NLV). We must work together to support God's work.

God's plan to save the people of this earth is very big (read Revelation 14:6, 7). So, what part do we each have in using our tithe to support this work?

“ ‘GOOD THINGS FOR YOU’ ” (Malachi 3:10, NLV)

Yesterday, we saw in Malachi 3:10 that God promises to pour out “ ‘good things’ ” (NLV) on His followers who are loyal to Him with their money. But we should not think that this verse means we will receive only more things from Him. That idea is very limited. It shows we fail to understand the true meaning of God’s promise to us.

The good things Malachi talks about are not just things we can touch and see. They include spiritual things, too. What are these things? They are the gifts of happiness, peace, and believing God always is doing the best for us. Did you know that when God pours out His gifts upon us we must share those good gifts with people in need? So, God gives to us so that we also may give to others.

Read 1 Peter 3:8, 9. In these verses, Peter says there is a connection between getting good things from God and sharing them with others. What is the connection?

Paying tithe is a two-in-one gift: (1) God gives to us; then (2) we give to others. God’s gifts fill our hearts with the desire to share with people the things God gives us. Then God’s gifts touch their lives in ways we can see. “ ‘Give, and you will receive. . . . The way you give to others is the way God will give to you’ ” (Luke 6:38, ICB).

Read Acts 20:35. How can the truth of this verse also be used to help us understand better what tithing means?

The best gift we get from paying tithe is that it teaches us to trust in God (Jeremiah 17:7). “God built the plan of paying tithe on a rule that was everlasting. The tithe plan was a gift to the Jews, or God would not have given it to them. This tithe plan also will be a gift to those who follow it to the end of time. Our Father in heaven did not make this plan to make Himself rich. Instead, this plan is God’s wonderful gift to man. God saw that this plan was exactly what man needed.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 3, pages 404, 405, adapted.

Think of how God has shown you His favor by what other people have done for you. How can you do this same thing for others too?



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THE PURPOSE OF GIVING (1 Corinthians 9:14)

Paul writes: “ ‘When a cow is walking on the grain to break it open, do not stop it from eating some,’ ” and “ ‘A person who works should be paid’ ” (1 Timothy 5:18, NLV). Here, Paul says what Moses said in Deuteronomy 25:4 about the ox and what Jesus said in Luke 10:7 about the worker. The saying about the ox means that it is good and right for the ox to eat grain while working. In the same way, Paul says that those who preach the Good News should be paid.

Have you ever noticed that God takes the separate things that He makes and then arranges them together in groups to do special work? He made the stars to give light. He filled forests with everything needed to support life: trees, plants, soil, rocks, sunlight, and water. He made your stomach to make use of the food you eat. In the same way, He also made the plan of tithe. The plan of tithe is God’s command for us to give back to Him 10% of all the money we get. The plan of tithe supported the work of the Levites (Numbers 18:26) in God’s place of worship. Modern-day Levites are pastors. They give their whole lives to the work of preaching the Good News. So, God made the plan of tithe to support pastors in their work.



“God has a special use for our tithe. Tithe must not be used as money for the poor. Tithe is to be used to support workers who are spreading God’s message over all the earth. Tithe should be used for no other purpose.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels [Advice] on Stewardship [Taking care of the gifts God gives us]*, page 103, adapted.

What does Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 9:14? How does this verse and 2 Corinthians 11:7–10 show that we must support those who spread the Good News?

Paul received money from a poor church in Macedonia while he worked in a rich church in Corinth. Paul tells the Corinthians that those who preach the Good News should be paid for their work.

Tithe should be used only for one special purpose. And we always must follow this plan. “God has a special use for our tithe. Tithe must not be used as money for the poor. Tithe should be used to support workers who are spreading God’s message over all the earth. Tithe should be used for no other purpose.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels [Advice] on Stewardship [Taking care of the gifts God gives us]*, page 103, adapted.

Read Leviticus 27:30. How is the rule found in this verse important for us to follow today?

THE STOREHOUSE (1 Chronicles 26:20)

Did you know God has a storehouse for wind (Jeremiah 10:13)? And one for water (Psalm 33:7)? And one for snow and hail (Job 38:22)? God has total control over them all. But God's most precious storehouse is the one for tithe. Tithe is the money we give back to God. It is 10% of all the money we get. "The people of Israel will give a tenth [10%] of what they make. I give that tenth to the Levites. This is their payment for the work they do serving at the Meeting Tent" (Numbers 18:21, ICB). This verse is the first time the Bible tells us where the tithe is kept. From this verse, we get the idea named "the Storehouse Rule." The Storehouse Rule explains what should be done with the tithe. The Bible says God told the Israelites to bring the tithe to the place He chose (Deuteronomy 12:5, 6). During the time of Solomon, tithe was sent to the temple in Jerusalem. So, the Israelites knew exactly what and where the "storehouse" was when God's special messenger Malachi told them: "Bring to the storehouse a tenth [10%] of what you gain [get]" (Malachi 3:10, ICB). *Storehouse* was a word picture. It meant the place where God was worshiped.

Read 1 Chronicles 26:20; 2 Chronicles 31:11–13; and Nehemiah 10:38. As these verses show us, what other names does the Bible use for storehouse?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has members all over the earth. They accept and practice the Storehouse Rule. Seventh-day Adventists are encouraged to send back their tithes to the local church where they are members. From there, the tithe is sent to the church treasury. Then pastors are paid out of this treasury.

"God's work will spread. Then many workers for God will ask for money to help to spread the Good News. More and more, workers everywhere will ask for money to help them do God's work. So, it is important for Christians to obey the command in Malachi 3:10. People who say they are Christians should bring to God their tithes and gifts of money. Then God's treasury will be full."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [Leaders]*, page 338, adapted.

What if people sent their tithe anywhere they wanted? Then what would happen to God's work? Why is it important to send our tithe to God's treasury, where it belongs?



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GIVING TO GOD AND GOD'S PLAN TO SAVE US (Romans 3:19–24)

Read Romans 3:19–24. What important truth is taught in these verses? Why is this teaching important to all our beliefs?

The most important idea of these verses is that no one is worthy to be saved (Romans 3:23). But what if we were worthy? Then that would mean we could be saved by the good works we do. But that idea is wrong.

Read Romans 4:1–5. What do these verses teach us about the truth that we are saved by God's loving-favor and not by our own good behavior?

The Bible teaches us that being saved is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8, 9). We cannot do anything to earn this gift. We are saved because Jesus died for us on the cross. God gives us His favor because of what Jesus did on the cross. So, that means we do not earn points for any special favor from God because we pay our tithe. After all, the tithe already belongs to God. So, how can we earn God's favor by giving back to Him what already belongs to Him?

Paying tithe does not save us. And we cannot be saved by any other good works that we do. But God made us for that very reason: we were made to do good works. The Bible tells us, “[God] has made us to belong to Christ Jesus so we can work for Him. He planned that we should do this” (Ephesians 2:10, NLV).

Paying tithe does not save us. But paying tithe shows the faith in our hearts. When we give back tithe, we also show we are not proud. We show that we serve God. Paying tithe shows we understand that we owe God everything. Giving back tithe shows we know we are only managers of the things we have in this life. The Sabbath helps us understand this truth about tithe too. Each week the Sabbath helps us remember that God made us and saves us. Paying tithe helps us remember these things too. How does paying tithe do that? Paying tithe shows we understand we did not make ourselves. Paying tithe shows we know that our lives and our being saved are gifts from God.



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What does Luke 21:1–4 say to us about what it means to live a life of faith?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: It is so easy to forget that every breath and every pump of our hearts and each moment of our lives comes only from the Lord. In Acts 17, Paul talks to the people of Athens. Athens is a city in Greece. Paul talks to the people of Athens about the true God. Paul says that God is the One who made us: “He is the God who made the world [the earth]. He also made everything in it” (Acts 17:24, NIV). Also, God is the One who keeps us alive. His power helps us “live and move and keep on living” (Acts 17:28, NIV). The people of Athens did not know about the true God. But we know because we are Christians. How we live our lives must show this truth. God asks us to do many things for Him. So, our lives need to show we are doing those things that God wants us to do.

“God puts His treasures in the hands of men. But He commands that we separate 10% of all the money we get. This 10% is for His work. God orders that this money should be placed in His treasury. We give this money to God because it belongs to Him. This money is holy. It is to be used for holy purposes. It is to be used to support those workers who spread the Good News to all parts of the earth. God commands that 10% of all we earn should be put to this use. And so, there always will be money in God’s treasure house. Then the truth can be spread to everyone near and far away. God’s loyal followers will give back to Him 10% of all the money they get. In this way, they show that everything belongs to God.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 6, page 386, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① Ellen G. White says, “We must not hold back from God what belongs to Him.”—*The Acts of the Apostles [Leaders and Teachers]*, page 566, adapted. What do these words mean? What do we lose when we do not pay tithe? Paying tithe is giving back to God 10% of all the money we get.

② Think more about church members doing whatever they want with tithe. Some members might send it to help people instead of sending it to God’s “storehouse.” Why is that a bad idea? Why would sending the tithe wherever we want cause the church to become weak?



Paul tells the people of Athens that God is the One who made us.