

TRAINING

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FORGUYYS

10%

What's all this about tithing?

You get some Christian preachers telling you that you **must** give 10% to God in order to be obedient, in order to be blessed. "It gets His attention, makes Him look at you", they say. Infact, they preach it week after week in their churches, you'd be a fool not to hear the message. And the church seems rich and the preacher has a nice suit.

Then you go somewhere else and they never mention giving at all, unless the roof needs fixing or the boiler blows up. The you're asked to give to keep the building going.

Is there a Bible based answer to all of this? Of course, but you have to understand the Bible first. You have to know the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

We can preach our hearts out, if we want, about the rules of tithing, for instance [Malachi 3:10](#)

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.' But this was part of the Old Covenant God had with Israel, before Jesus came and established the New Covenant.

Israel was set apart by God to be His people, as a sign for this they had to live in a distinct way that was unique in the world. The Law was given which they had to obey, sacrifices were there for when they failed to and to help them to observe festivals and sabbaths. Tithing was part of the Law, and part of God's provision to look after the Levites and Priests who had no land and hence could produce no food for themselves.

But then you might hear someone say "Ah, but

Abraham tithed, and that was in Genesis, *before* the Law, so it's an all time thing we have to do. In Genesis 14 Abraham gave the priest Melchizedek a tenth of everything, it says. This was an expression of Abraham's gratefulness and worship to God. God did not command him to do it, he did it out of love.

There is also the story of Cain and Abel, where Cain's offering was not good enough but Abel's was. Abel offered 'fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock' whilst Abel brought 'some of the fruits of the soil'.

Partly this was about the need for blood sacrifice, which Abel brought but Cain didn't (and we don't have to, because Jesus' death put an end to the need for blood sacrifices) but also this is about Abel offering from his first born, and plenty (fat portions means large portions) whilst Cain just brought 'some, eventually'. God wants our first and best.



NEXT TIME WHEN I PREACH ON TITHING, DON'T SING 'JESUS PAID IT ALL' AS OUR INVITATIONAL HYMN

In the New Covenant we see that God gave His first and best - He gave Jesus. Always through scripture we see that God's aim for us is that we are like Him. God wants our first and best. That's what Abel gave, and that's what Abraham

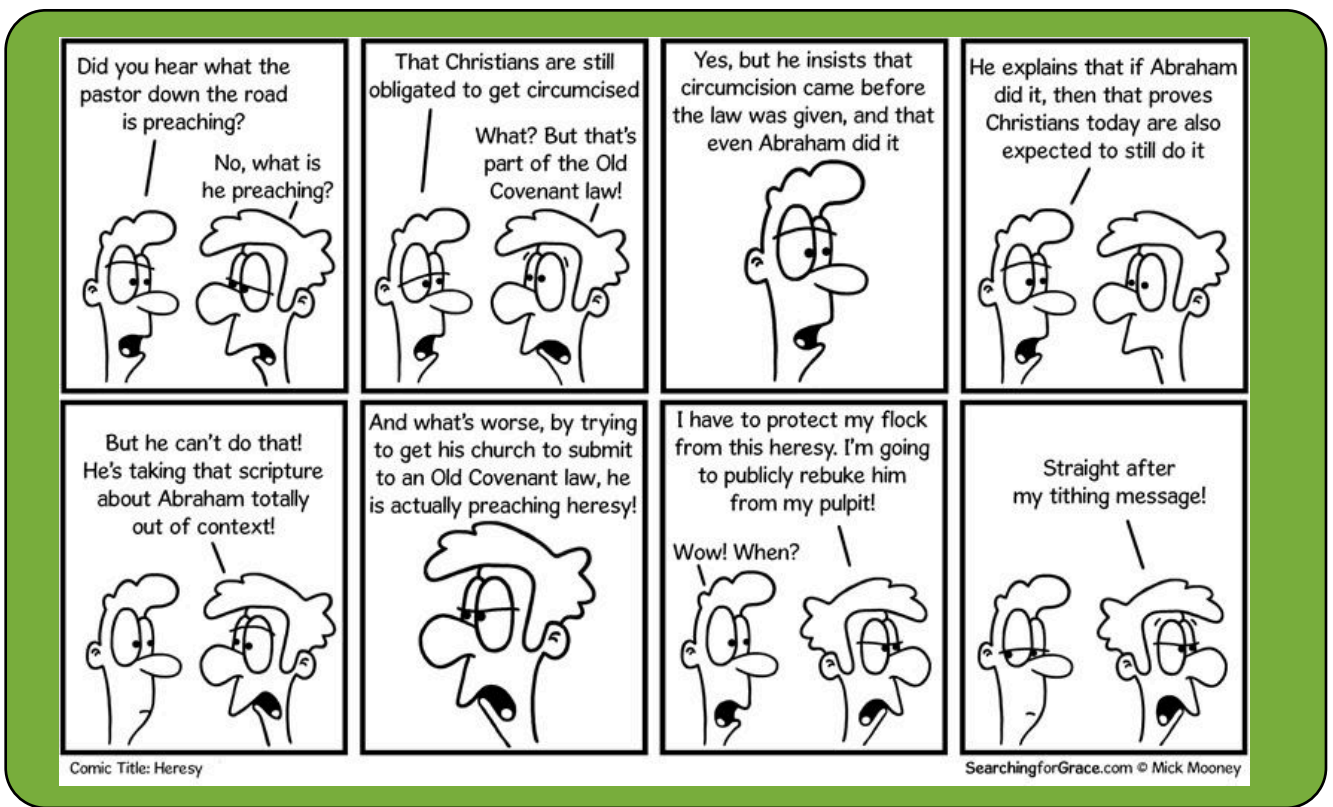
gave. It's also what He commanded the Israelites to give in the Old Covenant.

What does it mean to give Him our best, our *first* fruits? I don't think that can be answered by saying 'give Him 10%', especially when people add 'does that mean before tax or after?'

How much of Jesus was given? *All of Him*. How much of us does God want us to give back? *All of ourselves*. That includes our possessions, and our money (which is essentially a very modern thing to be giving, for most of history it would have been gifts of produce that were brought to God).

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Graphics sourced from the internet

I like what it says in Anglican liturgy as the offering is brought forward:



Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is yours. All things come from you, and of your own do we give you.

We are giving back to God what He originally gave to us.

Where the Old Covenant was about rules, the New one is about relationship. We have a relationship with God that starts from His first loving us, and continues with our response to Him. It's a dance, really, for He continually gives and we continually respond. Never forget that Colossians 2:14 says that Jesus cancelled the written code with its regulations.

So, our lives are lived in God's grace and in relationship with Him. Our giving, then, is part of that relationship. He gave all for us, we need to give all back to Him.

I'm not saying that passages like the one in Malachi quoted above are not relevant because they're in the Old Testament- but we do need to read them in the context that they are Old Covenant not New. There is still a point to the OT, but there's no space here for more on this now.

What does that mean when it comes to giving finances? We clearly can't give every penny! The principles are:

- £ It's a relationship of love and you want to bless God and honour Him with your wealth (Proverbs 3:9). What does that mean for you?
- £ God gave His *first* and *best* when He gave Jesus, what does that mean about what you give Him?
- £ The gift of Jesus was sacrificial, the gift of ourselves should be a living sacrifice.
- £ It's a relationship, not a religious rule. If it becomes a regulation, change it. That's what you'd do to keep an earthly romance alive, so that's how you should be in your relationship with God.

Next time we'll look at where you should give

(By the way, having said all that, personally I like 10% and do give that as a minimum... it's so easy to work out. You just move the point.)

Bible Study Series
We continue our series on 1 Peter chapter 2, looking at verses 18-25.
The attitude slaves should have

Read the passage, and go to
www.tfgministries.org.uk/podcasts and join in.

Why would living close to a mobile phone mast cause ill health?

You might walk into it.