

THE 90-DAY TITHING CHALLENGE



By Clif Christopher

There is not a single major denomination that does not encourage tithing of its membership. Strong statements are in place from Catholics to Pentecostals. Yet, we see that far less than 10% of the church members in America practice this level of generosity. In mainline denominations the number of tithers is closer to 2%. There is nothing I have ever found to increase one's relationship with God more than learning to part with that which persons love more than God. Putting an emphasis on tithing should do exactly that. It should never be about getting more money, but always about helping persons grow to trust God more. It will be that trust that brings them ultimate joy and fulfillment, not the money they were previously relying on. To have a more Christ-focused congregation, try this 90 day tithing challenge for September, October and November. Beginning now will allow you to get books ordered and get your staff ready. Here's a plan, part of which I learned from Nelson Searcy of Journey Church:

1. Two weeks prior to the challenge starting, the pastor must preach on his/her tithing experience and how that spiritual discipline has impacted his/her life. It is also important that at this time all staff have agreed to participate in the challenge.
2. Continue with a second sermon on tithing and issue a challenge that all families of the church tithe for 90 days beginning the first Sunday in September. Have a commitment card handy in the pews or chairs for persons to sign right then and hand in. The next day send an email to all members sharing about the challenge and give those not present a chance to email in and take the challenge.
3. By Tuesday or Wednesday send a personal letter to each family who took the challenge and enclose a gift of either the *Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn or *Fields of Gold* by Andy Stanley. The letter should express thanks and offer encouragement. Do not neglect this important follow-up step.
4. The following Sunday share the number of persons who accepted the challenge and let persons know they will be hearing testimonies from various ones as you go through the 90 days. On the first Sunday in October, start a weekly (3 minute) testimony from someone who accepted the challenge. The rest of the service can deal with any topic you desire.
5. In the middle of October, send another letter to those who accepted the challenge letting them know you are continuing to pray for them and wanting to hear from them about their experience and how it is impacting their spiritual lives.
6. One week before the 90 days ends, send another letter thanking all those who took the challenge and asking those who felt it helped them grow spiritually if they were going to continue with the discipline or cease. Give them another card to respond to what their intentions are going forward as well as an email address, if they want to respond that way, and then publish the results the following week and share them in worship. Be sure and keep good records of those signing up.

Three things will be very important to your being successful: First, the pastor must tithe and very specifically testify to it. Second, the emphasis must be on the spiritual benefit and never the monetary benefit to the church. Third, the follow-up contacts must be made throughout the 90 days.

I will be anxious to hear how this works out for you. I believe it will. Following this you can have a 90-day Bible reading challenge or a 90-day worship attendance challenge or a 90-day devotional or prayer challenge. Perhaps all will lead to life-long change and the making of disciples.