

What would happen if the Church tithed?

By Mike Holmes, Relevant Magazine



The church of today is not great at giving.

This isn't exactly news. But it is a statistical fact:

- Tithers make up only 10-25 percent of a normal congregation.
- Only 5 percent of the U.S. tithes, with 80 percent of Americans only giving 2 percent of their income.
- Christians are only giving at 2.5 percent per capita, while during the Great Depression they gave at a 3.3 percent rate.

The truth is: Giving is a heart issue, not a money issue.

Numbers like that can invoke a lot of guilt, which isn't really the point. The larger point is what would happen if believers were to increase their giving to a minimum of, let's say, 10 percent. There would be an additional \$165 billion for churches to use and distribute. The global impact would be phenomenal. Here's just a few things the Church could do with the kind of money:

- \$25 billion could relieve global hunger, starvation and deaths from preventable diseases in five years.
- \$12 billion could eliminate illiteracy in five years.

- \$15 billion could solve the world's water and sanitation issues, specifically at places in the world where 1 billion people live on less than \$1 per day.
- \$1 billion could fully fund all overseas mission work.
- \$100 – \$110 billion would still be left over for additional ministry expansion.

Those are some amazing numbers.

So why don't we give?

The real problem when it comes to our giving is not about money. Not really. Actually, the Bible says it's about our eyes. Rather, it's what Jesus called "the evil eye." He said it like this.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:21-23 KJV)

The term "evil eye" is a Jewish term. Whereas a "good eye" in Judaism refers to good will, benevolence and being genuinely happy when others prosper—the evil eye is quite the opposite.

The person with an "evil eye" feels distressed when others prosper, rejoices when others suffer, loves their money and would do nothing in the way of charity.

So when Jesus spoke about the eye, He was speaking to a largely Jewish audience who knew what He was talking about. They knew a "good eye" was a generous person and an "evil eye" was a stingy, sour Scrooge.

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When Paul spoke about the legendary giving of the Macedonian church he urged the Corinthian church to prove their love like the Macedonians proved theirs:

"But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others." (2 Corinthians 8:7-8)

Then he took it a step further and talked about the highest standard in love and giving:

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9 NLT)

God has always had a special place for radical givers.

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The full power of tithing is found in grace and not in fear—it's something we get to do rather than something we have to do.

So, what does cheerful giving actually look like?

Here are a few suggestions. But I will warn you: This isn't for those satisfied with ordinary or normal:

1. Start Tithing: Based on the statistics, the Church could really do some wonderful things if we just started tithing consistently. But keep in mind: when you start tithing know there is a difference between the law of tithing and the grace to tithe. The full power of tithing is found in grace and not in fear—it's something we get to do rather than something we have to do.

2. Teach Tithing: This is a very delicate subject and has the power to split churches down the middle. This is why people water it down so much or resort to threats. But tithing is a subject that, with some tact and wisdom, can actually make for a great sermon.

3. Take Tithing to the next level: Tithing is just the foundation. Giving that really changes the world is that which is over and above what's required.