



Episode 3: Findings from REVEAL on Tithing

In this episode, we talked about what we know about tithing based on REVEAL survey data from 2,000 churches and more than 500,000 congregants and what you can do to increase tithing in your church.

Key Tithing Statistics

In the REVEAL dataset, approximately 40% of congregants say they tithe, meaning they give 10% or more of their monthly income to the church. Many pastors have said that number seems high. Statistics from other surveys may differ from REVEAL based on who they survey (Christians in general, not church attenders) or how they survey (smaller samples). Also, it might be the case that some people are “rounding up” or including all of their giving, not just what they give to the church.

Tithing percentages do vary widely across our database. In the bottom 10% of the REVEAL database, 22% of congregants report that they tithe (no difference based on church size). In the top 10%, 57-60% of congregants say they tithe (higher percentage in churches of 250 or fewer adults).

What Factors Relate to Tithing?

- Income and education are somewhat related to tithing. Congregants with higher incomes and more education are more likely to tithe.
- Age also relates to tithing, with older congregants having higher tithing rates.
- Congregants who are in the more mature segments of the spiritual continuum are more likely to tithe. Just 12% in Exploring Christ vs. 58% in Christ-Centered.
- Satisfaction with your church’s role in your spiritual growth *does not* correlate with differences in tithing. Neither does being satisfied with your senior pastor’s effectiveness.
- Belief in Authority of the Bible: the level of tithing in a church correlates with the percentage of congregants who say they “very strongly agree” that the Bible has direct authority over what they say and do.

- Serving, specifically serving the church, correlates with tithing. We think this is because people become engaged in the mission of the church in a physical way when they serve. It's an investment of time and energy that tends to turn into a financial investment in the church. People who tithe are also much more likely to say that they know and use their spiritual gifts.

Strategies to Increase Tithing

- Make congregants aware. Don't tiptoe around the tithing conversation. This connects to belief in the authority of Scripture. Preach it!
- Make them capable/competent. Budgeting curricula are effective and inspirational.
- Make it easy. On-line giving can keep people on track, even during the dry summer months when giving tends to decline.
- Double down on the Best Practice Principles of Create Ownership and Embed the Bible, based on the finding that authority of the Bible and serving/being invested in the church predicts tithing. In churches that took the survey twice, changes in belief in authority of the Bible are correlated with changes in tithing.
- Also, although satisfaction with the senior pastor's effectiveness does not predict tithing, one aspect of the senior pastor's leadership does relate to tithing: modeling how to grow spiritually. Share your own struggles/victories/convictions around giving.

Finally, remember that tithing is fruit. It tends to reflect the spiritual maturity of a congregation. If you're pursuing the best steps to help your people grow in their relationship with Christ, tithing is likely to be a natural by-product.