

## QUESTION: Tithing...

“The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.”  
Deuteronomy 14:23 (LB)

What is a tithe?

*The word tithe means a tenth part or 10%. In the Bible, God tells us that we are to give the first 10% of all we earn back to Him. Giving less than 10% is not tithing.*

Where should I give my tithe?

*The Bible makes it clear that God expects the tithe to be given back to Him as an act of worship at the place where you worship. “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house” (Malachi 3:10). The Bible also makes it clear this should be a plan and consistent act of worship. “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income” (1 Corinthians 16:2).*

What is the difference between a tithe and offerings?

*The tithe is the first ten percent of income given as an act of worship to support the general ministries of the church (Malachi 3:10; Proverbs 3:9-10). Offerings are special gifts which are beyond the tithe given to express one’s deep love and gratitude for God’s tremendous blessings. These are gifts which support our missions and building funds or other Christian ministries (Psalm 50:23; Proverbs 7:4).*

Why should I tithe to the General fund (Ministry Fund) rather than a specific fund?

*Because God says in Malachi 3:10, “Bring your whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house.” Giving is another aspect of worship and to worship God completely involves submitting to God’s will. So when a person directs their tithe, it’s like giving with straws attached and saying, “God I will worship you my way.” (Read Leviticus 10:1-6; Acts 5:1-11 to see what God thinks when we worship Him our way and not His way).*

What should I do when my spouse disagrees?

*Larry Burkett puts it this way: “Because tithing involves money, it is a prime candidate for controversy between a husband and wife (many marital problems stem from finances). However, if both spouses are Christians, they should have a desire to please the Lord. It’s important for both spouses to be trained in God’s principles of finance. That way, they’ll understand tithing is God ordained, not just a personal desire that the wife is trying to impose on the husband, or vice versa. The problem becomes more complicated when one spouse is an unbeliever. If the wife is an unbeliever, the husband must obey the Lord’s direction. He must realize, however, that the Lord is more concerned about his wife’s soul than his money. If tithing becomes a stumbling block to his wife, he should consider not tithing temporarily in order to win his wife to the Lord. If the unbelieving spouse is the husband, then the believing wife should submit to his wishes, trusting that her submissive attitude may win him to the Lord. (1 Peter 3:1-6) But she may still ask him to let her give an amount smaller than the tithe for at least a year. If, at the end of a year, they are worse off financially as a result of her giving, she will cease to give. But if they are better off, she will be allowed to give more. In Malachi 3:10, the Lord asks us to test Him in tithing. Often, this is just the opportunity for God to prove Himself to an unbelieving spouse.*

Doesn't tithing limit one's giving?

*Larry Burkett gives a good answer to this question: "One excuse for not tithing is that it "limits" the amount a Christian gives to God. But the tithe was never meant to be a limit. In fact, the Jew was admonished to give early one-fourth of his income each year. With such giving today, the church could replace government welfare programs. But most people need a starting point. As best I can tell, God never asked less than a tenth from anyone. But if "10%" bothers someone, there's no reason why they can't give 11%, 12%, or twice as much if they so desire." Again, the principle of God's ownership comes into play. God doesn't own just 10% of our money; He owns 100%. That's why we should never tithe with the view that the remainder is ours. After giving our tithe, God may impress on us to give an additional amount to the mission fund, building fund, or other Christian work outside the church. Remember, the Lord wants us to be generous.*

Should I tithe if I am in debt?

*There are a couple of views to consider. Some Christians believe that you ought to pay debt, especially to those debtors who are unbelievers. In this way you keep your being a witness intact. Others believe that you ought to pay the Lord's tithe first and then trust the Lord for the funds to get out of debt. I would encourage you to prayerfully consider that the tithe helps us to honor and respect God (fear God), which is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). If there is anybody in the world who needs God's wisdom in the area of finances, it is a person already in debt.*

Could tithe money be used to support organizations outside the church?

*The tithe is given in God's name and should be used specifically for His work. Tithing to my church helps me say no to all the appeals for finances without feeling guilty, because I know I'm doing what God desires. This does not mean that there are not worthy causes to give to, but that these opportunities ought to be prayerfully considered after being faithful in giving the Lord's tithe to your local church.*