

# Does the Bible ask Us to Return Tithe From the Gifts We Receive?

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This important question is often asked. Therefore we will offer some brief observations from a biblical perspective. At the outset, we should bear in mind that, for the ancient Israelites, there was no question about this. In an agricultural economy, anything a person received was by default considered as “income.” However, in modern society we make a distinction between our paycheck and the gifts we receive. Indeed, the Bible does not address this point directly, but offers some hints. When Abraham met Melchizedek, “he gave him a tithe *of all*.”<sup>1</sup> Later, Jacob recommits himself to the Lord by vowing that “*of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You*” (Gen 28:22). Significantly, the classic passage on tithe says: “Bring *all the tithes* into the storehouse” (Mal 3:10). Turning to the New Testament, the apostle Paul instructs the Corinthian church: “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up *as he may prosper*, that there be no collections when I come” (1 Cor 16:2). In another passage, the apostle says,

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And *God is able to make all grace abound toward you*, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work (2 Cor 9:6–8).

While these latter New Testament texts do not discuss the subject of tithe, they contain important principles that also apply to tithe paying.

From the above, a few observations can be derived. First, we should return the tithe *of all* that the Lord gives to us. Certainly, the gifts we receive are part and parcel of God’s blessings to us. Gifts that increase our property or income are to be counted as part of the prosperity God graciously brings to us. Thus, they should be factored in as we return our tithes and give offerings to the Lord. Second, the qualifying word “all” in connection to tithes seems to imply that we may neglect to return the tithe “of all” or forget that “all” the tithe must be brought to God—hence the emphasis on absolute fidelity in returning all the tithe to the Lord. Third, whatever the circumstances, our tithes and offerings are to be brought to the Lord with a cheerful heart. After all, He is the source of our blessings. By returning tithes and giving offerings, we acknowledge that everything we have ultimately belongs to Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Italicized portions throughout this article indicate emphasis supplied.