

How much do you really know about tithing? By Roger Sapp

Take the following True or False quiz to see how much you really understand about tithing. We predict that many of you will be surprised. Record your answers.

True or False? 1. The Lord Jesus Christ would have tithed.

True or False? 2. Simon Peter, originally a fisherman, would have tithed of the fish that he caught.

True or False? 3. Everyone in the Old Testament seeking to obey the Law of Moses would have tithed.

True or False 4. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek in the same way that believers tithe to the Lord Jesus Christ.

True or False? 5. The Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples that they should tithe.

True or False? 6. There are many examples of people tithing of their incomes in the Bible.

True or False? 7. The New Testament teaches that we should tithe to ministers in the same way that Jews tithed to the Priests.

True or False? 8. The Bible teaches that God's standard for giving is ten-percent.

True or False? 9. The righteous poor tithed in the Old Testament.

True or False? 10. Since everyone is held to the same standard, tithing is fair to everyone.

True or False? Bonus Question. The Bible teaches that everyone should give ten-percent of their ongoing income.

Here are the answers.

True or False? 1. The Lord Jesus Christ would have tithed of His income. This one is false. The Lord Jesus Christ was a carpenter by profession and then after He became 30 years old He was a preacher and teacher. Neither of these professions was required by the Law of Moses to tithe anything.

True or False? 2. Simon Peter, originally a fisherman, would have tithed of the fish that he caught. This one is false also. Fishermen were not required to tithe anything either. There were only two kinds of professions in ancient Israel that were required to tithe. Farmers and husbandmen (shepherds and herders) were the only tithers in ancient Israel. They only tithed food.

True or False? 3. Everyone in the Old Testament seeking to obey the Law of Moses would have tithed. It should be evident by now that this one is false also. There were many people with other professions who were not required by the Law to tithe. For instance, the apostle Paul being a tent-maker was not required to tithe. In fact, none of the Twelve apostles would have been tithers because none of them came from the required professions.

True or False? 4. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek in the same way that believers tithe to the Lord Jesus Christ. This one is false also. Abraham's tithe was very different than what the Church practices today. For instance, Abraham only tithed once. The Church tithes continually. Abraham tithed of the spoils of a war. The Church tithes of its income. Abraham had no increase because he gave the other 90% of the spoils of the war back to the original owner. The Church tithes of its increase. There is no commandment or any logic or indication in the New Testament that believers are to tithe anything to the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers are to give generously as God blesses them.

True or False? 5. The Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples that they should tithe. False. Christ only makes two statements about tithing. Neither statement says that His disciples should tithe anything. Christ's first statement is to the Pharisees not to His disciples. In that statement, Christ says that the Pharisees should continue to tithe food not money. He also says that this tithe of food is a part of the Law and says that it is not even an important part of the Law. His other statement is about a self-righteous Pharisee bragging that he tithes. Christ says that the other man who was not tithing who humbled himself was justified in the sight of God. The self-righteous tither was not justified in the sight of God.

True or False? 6. There are many examples of people tithing of their incomes in the Bible. False. In 4000 years of recorded biblical history there is not a single example of what the Church practices today in tithing money. There are two one-time acts of tithing recorded before the Law. Neither man, Abraham or

Jacob, seems to think that they should continue this process beyond the one-time act. Neither man is tithing of their income since each is only involved in a one-time act. Abraham is tithing of the spoils of a war. All the other tithing recorded in the Bible is found in the Law of Moses. In the Law, money was never used to tithe only food. In fact, when someone wanted to use money rather than bring the produce to Jerusalem, God required a 20% penalty to be added. In other words, God discouraged the tithing of money.

True or False? 7. The New Testament teaches that we should tithe to ministers in the same way that Jews tithed to the Priests. False. The New Testament has nothing at all to say about this. This is extra-biblical logic that is not found in the New Testament. In fact, the Book of Hebrews makes it clear that believers are not of the Levitical order of priests. Believers are of a higher order, the order of Melchizedek.

True or False? 8. The Bible teaches that God's standard for giving is ten-percent. False. Neither the Old Testament or the New Testament teaches this. This is extra-biblical logic again. First of all, the food tithe in the Old Testament was not ten-percent. It was actually more like 23% annually on average. There were three tithes in the Law of Moses. The first tithe was paid only by agrarian families three times yearly to the Priests in Jerusalem. The second tithe was saved by the agrarian families to support this annual trip. It was called the festival tithe. It was for a family vacation. The third tithe was given every three years to the local storehouse, so it amounted to about 3% annually. This was the poor tithe collected for those in need. This is the tithe that Malachi wrote about. None of these tithes were money. They were only food. Those who earned their livings by other occupations did not pay a tithe of anything. However, they did give offerings required by the Law some of which were in silver, gold, bronze and copper coins. Nowhere does the New Testament change this legal obligation of tithe food for some agrarian Israelites in the Law to money tithing for all Christians.

True or False? 9. The righteous poor tithed in the Old Testament. False. The poor had no harvest or flocks to tithe from. They were able to glean the corners of the field of those who were more prosperous.

True or False? 10. Since everyone is held to the same standard, tithing is fair to everyone. False. Tithing is incredibly unfair. Ten-percent of the income of a poor person is a great burden, while ten-percent of the income of a rich person may be no burden at all. If a person only has a \$1000 a month income, then \$100 of that income will affect their lifestyle and may even impact their ability to take care of their children's basic needs and pay their bills. If a person has a \$10,000 a month income then giving \$1,000 per month should have little affect on their lifestyle since they should have a good amount of disposable income beyond

their basic needs. If a person has a \$100,000 a month income, then \$10,000 a month has no appreciable affect on their lifestyle at all.

True or False? Bonus Question. The Bible teaches that everyone should give ten-percent of their ongoing income. False. The modern practice of tithing has five basic elements expressed as everyone gives 10% of ongoing income. How do Bible facts about tithing actually fit with this teaching? Lets compare and contrast the modern teaching of tithing with the Bible. Everyone gives 10% of ongoing income. Considering the Everyone element. The two events before the Law do not support the idea that everyone should pay tithe. Only Abraham and Jacob in each situation are paying tithe. Genesis doesn't record anyone else tithing. Abraham and Jacob don't seem to teach their children to tithe. One of Jacob's children, Joseph, is a particularly righteous man. In the more than ten detailed chapters devoted to Joseph, we don't discover him tithing either. Not everyone tithed in Genesis before the Law.

In the Law of Moses, not everyone was required to tithe or give first fruits. Only those who were actually growing food or raising sheep or cattle were required by the Law to tithe the food or present first fruits. People from other occupations were not required to tithe since they had no harvest or growth of flocks to tithe or to present first fruits from. Not everyone tithed food who lived under the Law. No one under the Law tithed money at all.

Christ has only a few words to say about tithing. In those words, Christ does not say that everyone should tithe. He says that unbelieving Jews living under the Law should tithe food if they are growing it. He mentions three food plants. Christ is not addressing His disciples. He is addressing unbelieving Pharisees. The apostle Paul does not teach that everyone is obligated to tithe or to even to give. He teaches that giving is completely voluntary. The first apostolic council in Acts Chapter 15 does not say that Gentile believers should tithe either. There is absolutely no evidence that any Gentile Christian in the First Century ever tithed anything.

Everyone gives 10% of ongoing income. Considering the gives element. The two events before the Law do seem like giving. They are both voluntary acts. God does not require either man, Abraham or Jacob, to give anything. While this does on the surface seem to support the tithing teaching, it actually contradicts some aspects of the Tithing teaching. While the proponents of tithing teach that tithing is giving, they also often teach that tithing is required, that a tithe must be paid. Of course, this is a contradiction in their teaching. Something can be only given if it is entirely voluntary. If it is required, then it is, in this case, a fee for spiritual services or a religious tax. If some teach that a believer comes under a curse if they do not tithe, then they are not teaching giving but teaching paying an obligated tithe. Of course, they are right in one sense because they are often spiritualizing the Law of Moses to teach tithing.

Tithing in the Law of Moses was never giving. It was much more like paying taxes. The Law of Moses required tithing by farmers and husbandmen. They would not have seen their tithing as giving. There was nothing voluntary in their paying tithes. They would have been in violation of the Law if they had not done it.

Again, Christ has very little to say about tithing. He did say that Jewish people living under the Law pay tithes. Christ does teach a great deal about finances and giving but never instructs His disciples to tithe money or anything else. He does not instruct them to receive tithes either.

Paul writes a great deal about finances and giving but never instructs anyone to tithe or to receive tithes. The first apostolic council in Acts Chapter 15 is silent on the subject of tithing but is clear that Gentiles are not to keep any aspects of the Law of Moses. That would include tithing of anything.

Everyone gives 10% of ongoing income. Considering the 10% element. The two events before the Law of Moses do seem to support the idea that ten percent of something should be given. The number ten is the same. However, the other four elements are significantly different. This makes tithing being practiced by the Church very different from what is happening in Genesis. The only similarity is the ten percent number.

Christ does validate the ten-percent number but only for Jews living under the Law of Moses. He tells the Pharisees that they should pay tithes, ten percent, of their produced food. He also tells them that paying ten-percent is not a weighty matter of the Law. In saying this, Christ does tell us that tithing is a matter of the Law.

The apostle Paul repeatedly warns believers about the curse of the Law. Gentile believers should not attempt to keep any aspects of the Law. Believers are not required to give ten-percent of food or anything else.

The writings of the other apostles, James and Peter, are silent about Christians giving ten percent of food or anything else.

Everyone gives 10% of ongoing income. Considering the ongoing element. The two examples before the Law of Moses do not reveal the practice of on-going tithing. They both appear strongly to be one-time acts. In the case of Jacob, we don't know exactly what he did but it does seem that he is promising to tithe once if God blesses him. The Church's practice of ongoing, repetitious tithing simply cannot be validated by two one-time acts.

The only place in the Bible where ongoing, repetitious tithing can be found is in the Law of Moses. Those who were farming or practicing husbandry in Israel had a lifetime obligation to tithe the food that they produced. This ongoing food tithe to support the Mosaic Levitical ministry is often spiritualized to justify repetitious money tithing in support of Christian ministry. This justification is not found in the New Testament.

Christ's statement about tithing reveals that the ongoing tithing of food is under the Law. Christ says nothing about His disciples practicing ongoing tithing of anything. While the writings of the apostles in the New Testament often speak of generous giving, they are silent about ongoing tithing of anything. The first apostolic council is also silent about ongoing tithing of anything but releases Gentile believers from any aspects of keeping the Law of Moses.

Everyone gives 10% of ongoing income. Considering the income element. Abraham tithes on the spoils of war, not his entire income. Abraham tithed the captured belongings of his defeated enemies. Additionally, Genesis reveals that Abraham didn't even keep the ninety percent that was remaining. He returned those possessions to the King of Sodom. Abraham's income, his possessions or any part of his own wealth wasn't involved at all in his tithing. He had no increase to tithe on. In Jacob's case, we don't know exactly what he did since all Genesis records is his promise to God. In other words, there is no support in the events before the Law that Christians should give ten percent of their ongoing income.

Nearly everyone that teaches tithing resorts to using the Law and prophet under the Law to teach it. Those that teach Christian tithing from the Law often neglect to reveal that only food produced was tithed on but never money. Only those who earned their livings by producing food tithed at all. Those Israelites who earned money by other means such as tent making, weaving, carpentry, money lending, fishing or many other occupations never tithed on their incomes since it was not commanded of them. Christ does not change tithing food to tithing money. The writings of the apostles do not change tithing food to tithing money. The apostolic council releases the Gentile believers from any keeping of the Law. They certainly do not change tithing food to tithing money. The book of Hebrews does mention the Old Testament tithing of food but does not validate tithing money for believers today.

Finally, it should be obvious to the reader that this doctrine is pieced together from these various passages. Not a single passage in itself actually teaches what the Church practices today. Spiritualization of the Law is used to teach tithing. Reasoning that is not found in the Bible is used to justify Christians embracing a legalistic practice from the Old Testament. In more than 4000 years of recorded Biblical history, there is not a single recorded example of tithing that is similar to what the Church practices today. We recommend that every Christian renounce this unscriptural practice and reject any lingering fear, guilt or condemnation! God's children have no debt to their Father to pay other than thanks giving and praise. Their elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, has paid in full the debt.

Christ will build His Church but only with the truth. He needs no help from a false doctrine that puts the Children of God under bondage and the curse of the Law. The children are free!

(A portion of this article was taken from Dr.Sapp's book "The Children are Free" the third book in the "Paid in Full" Financial Series. This book examines in great detail the teaching of tithing.)