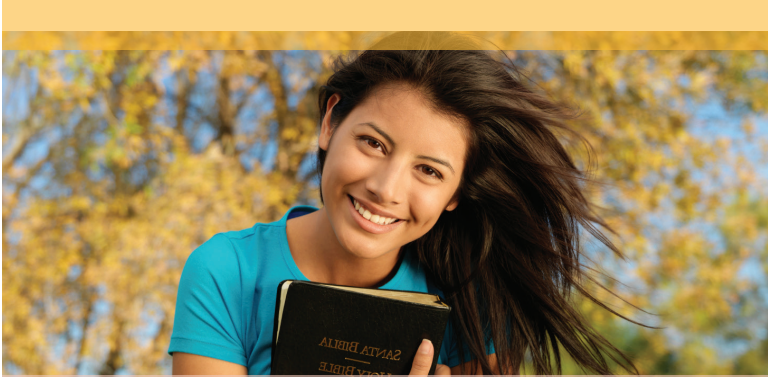


PROSPERITY CONSCIOUSNESS AND TITHING



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Prosperity and Tithing in the Bible

In the Bible, prosperity and tithing are profoundly interconnected.

One day Abram heard that his relative Lot had been taken captive in a war. The captors were the armies of an alliance of four kings. Abram decided to do something about it. He gathered up a group of 318 friends and set out to liberate Lot from captivity. Surprisingly, Abram's little band of men managed to defeat the four armies and rescue Lot, along with other captives and substantial booty. When Abram returned, he was met by Melchizedek, who brought out some bread and wine.

Now no one knows anything about Melchizedek except that his name means "my king is righteousness," that he was king of Salem (which

means “peace”), and that he was priest of God Most High, the first priest mentioned in the Bible.

Melchizedek pronounced a blessing on Abram, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all his possessions (Genesis 14:19-20). This is the first mention of tithing in the Bible. It was an acknowledgment of God as Source and an offering of thanksgiving for overcoming difficulties and other blessings.

Later Abram’s grandson Jacob was on his way to live with his uncle. Along the way he stopped to sleep. While he was sleeping, he dreamed of a stairway to heaven on which angels went up and down. We don’t know if the angels climbed or floated up and down; maybe it was an early escalator. In the dream, Jacob heard God say, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring ... Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go” (Genesis 28:13-15).

When Jacob awoke from his dream, he knew that God was present and he believed the place where he slept was “the gate of heaven.” So he set up a pillar to honor God and made a promise, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God ... and of all that you give me I will surely give one-tenth to you” (Genesis 28:20-22). This is the second mention of tithing in the Bible. It was a contract with God—Jacob expected God to be with him and promised an offering of one-tenth of his wealth as an acknowledgment and thanksgiving.

Later Moses announced God’s commandment to the people of Israel that they should give one-tenth of all their produce to the priests and caretakers (the Levites) of the temple (Numbers 18:21). The commandments of Moses were a contract with God. The people of Israel for their part were to keep the commandments. The promise to them was that if they kept the commandments, God would prosper them. “Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them [the commandments] diligently, so

that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you” (Deuteronomy 6:3).

Tithing is always associated with prosperity in the Bible. The prophet Malachi announced that God told him, “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing” (Malachi 3:10).

The New Testament does not specifically mention tithing, but Jesus said we should give “to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17). Jesus’ original Jewish disciples would have understood that what belongs to God includes a tenth of all one earns. Jesus also said, “Give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38), which indicates that our giving is directly connected to what is given to us.

What is tithing? Does it really prosper us as the Bible promises? If so, how does that happen? To understand what tithing is and how it prospers us, we must first understand the nature of what is called “prosperity consciousness.”





Prosperity Consciousness Prosperes You

Aesop told the tale of a miser who sold all that he had to buy a lump of gold. The miser buried the gold in a hole in the ground by the side of an old wall. Every day the miser walked to the spot to look at his gold. One of his workmen noticed the miser's daily visits and saw the lump of gold. The workman stole the gold. The next day the miser discovered that the gold was missing. He began to pull out his hair and wailed loudly in grief. A neighbor noticed the miser's grief and inquired about it. When the miser told his neighbor about the stolen gold, the neighbor replied, "Please do not grieve so. Why don't you go get a stone, place it in the hole, and pretend that the gold is still lying there? It will amount to the same thing. After all, when the gold was there, you didn't really have it, since you did not make the slightest use of it."

A genuine miser, no matter how much money and property he or she may have, can really experience only poverty. The miser has extreme anxiety about losing, spending, and sharing money. The miser does not feel prosperous and lives as if in poverty. The miser constantly fears loss instead of using and enjoying wealth. The miser state of mind is poverty consciousness, the exact opposite of prosperity consciousness. Consciousness of being prosperous is characterized by confidence, generosity, gratitude, and cheerfulness.

Both Buddhist and Christian traditions contain a tale about a poor widow who had only one copper coin. In both stories, the widow gave her last cent as a religious offering. An enlightened one who observed her act of generosity then praised her for giving the greatest gift possible—all that she had. The widows in the stories had prosperity consciousness in the sense that they were able to freely give great gifts and consequently received the blessing and praise of enlightened beings. A widow's gift of her last penny is more valuable than a miser's lump of gold buried in the ground.

The extreme cases of the miser and the widows indicate a truth about wealth: It is more a state of mind than a quantity of matter. The cases also suggest that the true measure of wealth is what one gives away, rather than what one hoards.

“Miser consciousness” is indicated by fear of not having enough to share. True consciousness of prosperity is indicated by the confidence to share freely. Prosperity consciousness is rooted in faith that one has more than enough.

Stephen Covey did research on what makes people effective, which resulted in his best-selling book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. He found that one thing characteristic of successful people was an “abundance mindset.” The “abundance mindset” is a key element of “prosperity consciousness.” The abundance mindset is the mentality that there is more than enough for everyone.

Prosperity consciousness includes more than the “abundance mindset”—it also includes the other primary “positive” attitudes, including cheerfulness, generosity, goodwill, and magnanimity. The attitudes

of mind that generate what may be called “positive energy” tend to prosper those who have positive attitudes. That is a fact that quickly becomes evident when you think about restaurants.

What kind of restaurant do you like to frequent? If a restaurant has cheerful and friendly servers who are eager to make your experience as enjoyable as possible, that restaurant will have a “positive energy.” If that positive energy also pervades management and ownership, the restaurant will have very good food, pleasant atmosphere, and reasonable prices. A restaurant or any business that has positive energy will flourish. A restaurant characterized by disgruntled, unfriendly, and negligent staff will soon go out of business; it has “negative energy.”

Just as the prosperity of a business depends upon its energy, individuals also flourish or flounder depending upon their energy. If you cultivate the attitudes that generate a positive energy, you are certain to prosper in whatever you do. Your energy does not just affect your home and business—it affects the energy of the world around you. The world rewards positive energy.

A spiritual approach to life includes adopting a way of life consistent with spiritual beliefs and values. The spiritual perspective is relevant to developing the prosperity consciousness. Anyone who truly believes that God is omnipotent and good ought to also believe in a universe with more than enough. Would an omnipotent, good God make a deficient universe? Anyone who truly believes that love is an important value would want to express all the attributes of divine love, including friendliness and generosity. Anyone who truly has faith in God and love for humankind will prosper, for they will generate the positive energy of prosperity consciousness.



The Relationship of Tithing to Prosperity Consciousness

Tithing is a spiritual practice that is intended to expand your prosperity consciousness. Tithing practiced correctly is a movement of spiritual energy through your mind, heart, and hands. It is very important to understand that tithing prospers you when you practice it correctly.

The correct practice of tithing is more a matter of quality of thought and feeling than of quantity of money. Tithing should be an effect of inner positive attitudes generating a positive energy into the world through a spiritual community. Prosperity consciousness generates positive energy, which attracts physical manifestations of prosperity.

The attitudes behind correct tithing can be stated in the form of affirmations. By persistently, mentally repeating affirmations, you can develop the attitudes necessary for the prosperity consciousness behind correct tithing. Here are a few examples of prosperity-attitude affirmations:

- *God is the infinite source of good. There is always more than enough.*
- *Divine love flowing through me prospers all abundantly.*
- *Positive spiritual energy flows through my mind, heart, and hands, prospering all that I do.*
- *The presence of God fills me with joy and gratitude.*
- *God is omnipotent good; therefore, I have positive expectations right now.*

Spiritual affirmations are statements based upon faith in the omnipotence and goodness of the Source of all. As your consciousness of God expands, statements of spiritual truth will occur to you spontaneously.

Attitudes express as actions, and actions reinforce attitudes. Expressing love and appreciation feels good; the good feeling is both reward and motivation to express more love and appreciation.

Tithing is an act of love and appreciation, which expands your “more than enough” consciousness. Tithing practiced correctly is an expression of prosperity consciousness, which reinforces and expands that consciousness, which in turn increases prosperity.

Tithing is a “contract with God,” a commitment to experiencing the Presence and Power of God in your life; it is a prayer and an act of faith. It is an act of loving generosity, which supports spiritual work, teachings, and community. Tithing is also an act of courage, for it risks “looking foolish” to nonbelievers and there is no way to “scientifically prove” that “it works.” Nevertheless, those who are committed to tithing from the spiritual perspective prove to themselves the truth that it works.

Technically, tithing is giving ten percent of your income to support your church or spiritual community. Just as correct tithing by an individual prospers the individual, correct tithing by a local ministry to its national organization prospers the local ministry. When spiritual communities flourish, it glorifies God, the spiritual teachings, and the community as a whole. The more prosperous a spiritual community becomes, the more positive energy it radiates to the world and the more good services it can provide for the larger community.





The Symbolic and Practical Reasons for “One-Tenth”

Assuming you want to fully support and participate in a spiritual community, you might wonder, *Why give ten percent of my income? Why not give one or five or fifteen percent?* Is the number practical or is it just arbitrary or superstitious?

In fact, the number ten in Hebrew is symbolic, and the tithe fulfilled a practical purpose; it was not arbitrary to the authors of the Bible. The number ten in Hebrew is related to the word for “increase,” hence giving one-tenth of one’s wealth was mentally associated with the symbolism of increased wealth. The practical reason for ten percent was that the Levite tribe responsible for building and operating the temple did not receive a distribution of the land of Israel. The other tribes had land so they could

grow food, raise livestock, and produce goods. The Levites, without land, could not resort to those means of livelihood. In exchange for maintenance of the Temple and providing worship services for the nation, the Levites received a share of the nation's wealth. Some of the tithe also was used to feed the poor.

There are also practical reasons for the ten percent figure in modern times. The primary, practical reason for tithing is to expand your prosperity consciousness. Only a significant amount of giving can stretch consciousness to the “abundance mindset.” The goal is to achieve a “more than enough” consciousness, and a “more than enough” consciousness gladly shares.

Ten percent is an affordable yet significant amount for most people—it stretches consciousness. For most people, giving ten percent would require making it part of their budget; it would require planning and thoughtfulness. When you plan for expenses, you decide what is important to you. The things you plan to pay are important to you. It makes sense to plan your giving as part of your budget if your spiritual community and your spiritual growth are important to you.

Another practical reason for the ten percent figure is that it is easier to calculate than any percentage one might choose, other than one percent.





The Difference Between Tithing and Charity

Tithing is not the same as charity for two reasons: (1) Tithing supports the spiritual community while charity supports secular programs, and (2) tithing expands spiritual consciousness while charities can sometimes promote “lack consciousness.”

A spiritual community provides a place where like-minded and spiritually dedicated people can mutually support each other. When a spiritual community builds up faith, love, wisdom, joy, and God-consciousness, tithing supports those values. Only spiritual communities are actually dedicated to promoting the value of being charitable; charities derive support from those who are charitable. Charitable organizations support specific programs to try to solve specific problems.

Spiritual communities and charities can be mutually supportive. Spiritual communities encourage people to be empathetic and charitable, thus promoting a consciousness of charitable giving.

Tithing expands spiritual consciousness, not only because it expands “more than enough” consciousness, but also because it is directly connected to spiritual thinking and values. Charities focus upon what is lacking in the world and therefore can sometimes promote “lack consciousness.” In that sense “lack consciousness” is not necessarily always unproductive, since it is an awareness of ways the world could be better. Nevertheless, the empathy of love can also make us aware of those ways to make the world a better place and motivate us to act. Lack consciousness can motivate us to try to make the world better; the positive energy of faith, encouraged by spiritual communities, is what gives us the power to succeed in making the world better.

There are good reasons to give to charities and good reasons to tithe; it is not an “either/or” situation. One can work both tithing and charitable giving into one’s budget. The point here is only that tithing and charity are not the same things.



Summary

- Prosperity consciousness is characterized by an “abundance mindset” and “positive” attitudes including faith, cheerfulness, generosity, goodwill, and magnanimity.
- The true measure of wealth is what one gives away, rather than what one hoards.
- Positive attitudes generate a positive energy. When you generate positive energy, you are certain to prosper in whatever you do—the world rewards positive energy.
- Tithing is a spiritual practice that is intended to expand your prosperity consciousness. Tithing practiced correctly is a movement of spiritual energy through your mind, heart, and hands.
- By persistently, mentally repeating affirmations, you can develop the attitudes necessary for the prosperity consciousness.

- Tithing practiced correctly is an expression of prosperity consciousness, which reinforces and expands that consciousness, which in turn increases prosperity.
- Tithing is the biblically based practice of giving ten percent of your income to support your spiritual community. Spiritual communities radiate positive energy to the world.
- Ten percent is an affordable yet significant amount for most people; it stretches consciousness. Giving ten percent requires planning and thoughtfulness. When you plan for expenses, you decide what is important to you.
- The “stretch” in consciousness increases the abundance mindset, which prospers you.

Most important, tithing is a practice reflecting a commitment to greater awareness of God. Abram tithed because he was aware that God was his Source. Jacob tithed because he became conscious of God as present with him. Jesus proclaimed, “Give, and it will be given to you” because he was conscious of God within him expressing through him. Consciousness of God presence is the greatest prosperity, for it is consciousness of joy, love, power, and all good.



200 Unity Circle North, Suite A
Lee's Summit, MO 64086
Ph 816.524.7414 | www.unity.org

www.UnityWorldwideMinistries.org