

Tithing Frequently Asked Questions

First of all, you must know that epikos is extremely grateful for your involvement in the ministry. We are a small church but God continues to provide for all of our needs. Talking about money and the church can often be a sensitive subject. Partly because people have been wronged in the past with how a church dealt with money or maybe even manipulated them into doing things they were uncomfortable with. As you read through this understand that epikos is not concerned just about money. At the same time we know that money, stewardship, and giving, are spiritual issues that affect our walk with Christ. Hopefully this will help you understand one part of stewardship; the act of tithing.

What is tithing?

The word tithe is translated from the Hebrew word Ma`aser. Its basic meaning is tenth, tenth part, or payment of tenth part. Tithing is the practice of giving to the Lord at least 10% of your income. This is done to honor God for all of his provisions for us and to remind us that he is the ultimate giver.

“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops.” (Proverbs 3:9)

When did tithing start?

On Mount Saini, God commanded Moses to tell the Israelites that the tithe was sacred unto the Lord. Though the first example of it happened in the book of Genesis 14:18-20 when Abram gave a tithe to Melchizedek the Priest.

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD ; it is holy to the LORD. ” (Leviticus 27:30)

How was the tithe used?

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land the priests (family of Levi) lived off a portion of the tithes and offerings that came in. This allowed the priests to dedicate full time service to ministry.

“I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting. ” (Numbers 18:21)

The tithe was also used to meet the needs of widows, orphans, and other disadvantaged people.

“..bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ” (Deuteronomy 14:28)

Does that apply in the New Testament?

Yes. Paul continued the tradition and made the same case that the tithe would be used for the ministry and advancement of the gospel.

“Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:13-14)

Did Jesus endorse tithing?

Yes. In his warning to the Pharisees about legalism (they were tithing, but ignoring mercy and justice) he tells them that they should not neglect tithing, but also that their hearts should not neglect mercy and justice and other attributes of the law.

“You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.” (Matthew 23:23)

What about the early church in Jerusalem?

The early church showed an example of extreme giving. Some of those first Christ followers sometimes gave everything that they had. 100% instead of just 10%! Those offerings were presented to the church leaders and then distributed as needed to people and the ministry.

“For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.” (Acts 4:34-35)

Is tithing an act of worship?

That's exactly what it is! It's not *just* so the church can operate, but tithing is commanded by God as an act of worship.

Are there benefits to tithing?

God promises blessing for those who are obedient to tithing. While it may not always be a material/physical blessing God's word teaches the benefits. In addition, your heart will be changed as you learn to tithe. You also get to be part of God's work here on earth. Ask those that tithe their stories of how God has blessed their generosity.

One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. (Proverbs 11:24-25)

Should a person's tithe go to their local church or just anywhere?

I think that the precedent that has been set in scripture shows the importance of tithing to the church (Temple in the Old Testament) to provide for the ministry and its mission. A very in depth study of giving and tithing actually shows that the Israelites gave 10% directly to the Temple and gave above that for the needs of the poor. We highly encourage people to consider giving 10% of their income to the church.

What about my friends who raise support or other charities?

Give by all means! Remember that tithing 10% is where you start, *not* the maximum a believer gives. So in light of the previous question, I think it is appropriate to tithe at least 10% to the local church and then feel free to give above and beyond that to anywhere else God leads. All stewardship and giving requires us to go before God and ask for wisdom on such matters. As with any discernment matter we encourage you to search scripture, pray, seek counsel from Godly people, and discuss it with the leaders of the church.

What if I don't tithe, but still want to be very active in epikos?

People are welcomed to participate and be part of epikos as much as they want, but you will not be eligible for covenant membership status. For some people tithing is a huge step and we understand that.

What if I'm not used to giving money to the church? And not used to giving that much?

Well, I think that you will find that tithing is a very rewarding step of faith. Of course there are times when it's hard and seems like a huge sacrifice...but that's the point! I think you will be amazed by being obedient to tithing. There's not better time to start than now.

What if I don't have very much money?

That's not really the point. Remember that tithing is 10% of your income. If you learn to give the “firstfruits” or first 10% to God it doesn't matter if that equals \$10 or \$10,000. I will say though, if you wait to tithe with what is left over at the end of the month you will probably find you never have enough to tithe. Tithing may require to you change some of your spending habits and even cut back on things you don't really need. If we are all honest, we can find lots of things that we spend money on that we don't need. Here's something interesting to consider: I often here people who don't tithe say “I don't have any money” and those that do tithe say, “God always provides for all my needs and

more!”

But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." (Mark 12:42-44)

Can I tithe my time instead of money?

There is no biblical precedent for tithing your time instead of money. As a matter of fact, we are expected to give God our time and our money, not one or the other. The idea of tithing time is often an excuse people give because they don't want to part with their money. By the way, to actually tithe your time would mean that you give 73 hours per month to ministry service....that's a part time job.

Shouldn't I just give whatever amount is on my heart?

God's word says "The heart is deceitful above all things" Jeremiah 17:9. I think we have to be very careful about relying on what we *feel* especially when it comes to money. Again, I often find this question or statement to be an excuse for those who don't tithe. Isn't it interesting that when we rely on our "hearts" to determine an amount we often short change what God desires? What is ironic though is that as we tithe our hearts do change and we do become more generous! This does not mean that we don't pray and ask for discernment in giving issues. Giving IS a heart matter. We just need to be careful not to fall into the trap of making excuses for our disobedience. And on the flip side that we would slip into legalism by approaching tithing as a 10% tax and ignore the heart issues of giving.

Should I give every week, bi-weekly, or monthly?

That really depends on the person/couple. Some people only get paid bi-weekly so it's easier to do that. Some people find it easier to give every week...just so they don't spend it all before they get paid. Those who are on salary often find it easy to calculate a monthly tithe. You should ask others how they find it to work best. The important part is that you tithe not as much if its each week or month.

Is my giving kept private?

Yes. There are only a few people in addition to the pastor that see your giving. As a church we record it because we are required to by IRS law. Your giving will never be posted or discussed publically. Note: If you give cash, please put your money in an envelope and write your name on it.

Is my donation Tax deductible?

Yes. At the end of the year you will receive a receipt from the epikos financial administrators who count and record the money throughout the year. Because we are a 501c3 non-profit organization you can count your donation for a tax deduction. Note: If you give cash, please put your money on an envelope and write your name on it.

Do the pastors, staff, and their families tithe?

Of course! Modeling is the best way to lead others and we wouldn't ask people to do things we the staff weren't willing to do. We continue to stretch ourselves to give above and beyond 10% of our income. God has always been so faithful to provide for all of our needs and much, much more.

So why is this still so hard for me to commit to?

Well only you can answer that question. I think for most of us we love our money a whole lot more than we like to admit. God knows this and that is why money and stewardship is talked about so much in the Bible. God desires for us to trust Him and worship Him alone. One of the most encouraging verses about tithing is Malachi 3:10 where God promises to bless us if we simply trust Him in this area. God even says about tithing, "test me!" That's a significant challenge from God and I invite you to experience God fully by trusting Him through tithing.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." (Malachi 3:10)

Hopefully this has helped answer some of your questions. If not, please talk to pastor Danny or other leaders in the church. Thank you again, and we look forward to doing mission with you!