



A Rhythm Church Perspective: Grace-Centred Giving: A New Covenant Understanding of Generosity.

Throughout Christian history, generous giving has been central to worship and discipleship. While the Old Covenant established specific guidelines for tithing (giving 10% of one's income), Jesus introduced a transformative perspective on generosity—one rooted in grace rather than obligation.

At Rhythm Church, we embrace this New Covenant understanding: giving flows not from religious duty but from hearts transformed by God's extravagant love. This position statement explores how biblical generosity has evolved from the structured tithing of ancient Israel to the Spirit-led giving of the New Testament church. We believe the tithe provides a helpful starting point for giving but recognize that grace invites us into even deeper generosity. Our goal is to foster a community where financial stewardship becomes an expression of worship, trust, and participation in God's redemptive work throughout the world.

As we navigate this topic together, remember that giving is ultimately about relationship—with God and with others. The question shifts from "How much must I give?" to "How generously can I respond to God's goodness?"

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: FROM TERUMAH TO TITHES

Biblical giving has a rich historical foundation, established long before formal religious structures existed. The earliest recorded tithe appears in Genesis 14, where Abraham offered a tenth of his war spoils to Melchizedek, priest of God Most High. This voluntary act—called *terumah* (a "lifting up" or contribution)—demonstrated Abraham's acknowledgment of God's sovereignty and blessing in his victory. Several generations later, Jacob promised to give God "a full tenth" of all his possessions, establishing a pattern of proportional giving that would later be formalized under Moses. These early examples reveal that giving preceded the Law—it was a natural response to God's provision rather than a legal requirement.

Under the Mosaic covenant, Israel's giving system expanded into three distinct practices:

Terumah: A contribution (approximately 2%) from harvests given directly to priests for their service in the temple.

Ma'aser Rishon (First Tithe): A mandatory 10% of all produce given to support the Levites,

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who received no tribal land inheritance but devoted themselves to religious service.

Ma'aser Ani (Poor Tithe): An additional 10% collected every third year (averaging to about 3-4% annually) specifically designated for orphans, widows, foreigners, and others in need.

Some scholars estimate that the total giving expected of Israelites ranged from 20-23% of their annual income when including additional offerings for festivals and sacrifices. However, this system served multiple purposes beyond mere taxation:

- **Sustaining worship:** Supporting those who maintained Israel's spiritual heritage
- **Ensuring justice:** Creating a social safety net for the most vulnerable
- **Teaching dependence:** Reminding Israel that all blessings come from God's hand
- **Building community:** Unifying the nation through shared provision and celebration
- **Developing character:** Cultivating generosity and gratitude as national virtues

The prophet Malachi later addressed Israel's failure to tithe faithfully: *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this... and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven"* (Malachi 3:10). This familiar passage wasn't introducing a new concept but calling Israel back to covenant faithfulness—both in their giving and in their hearts.

THE NEW COVENANT SHIFT: FROM LAW TO GRACE

Jesus' arrival marked a profound transition in how God's people related to the Law—including its provisions for tithing. While affirming that He came not to abolish but to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17), Jesus repeatedly emphasized the spirit behind God's commands rather than mere technical compliance.

When confronting the Pharisees' meticulous tithing of garden herbs while neglecting "justice, mercy and faithfulness," Jesus noted,

"You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (Matthew 23:23). This statement affirms the continuing value of tithing while placing it within the broader context of heart-level obedience. The early church, emerging from this new understanding, demonstrated a level of generosity that transcended calculated percentages:

- **Radical Sharing:** Acts describes believers who *"were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had"* (Acts 4:32). This communal generosity ensured that *"there were no needy persons among them"* (Acts 4:34).
- **Voluntary Sacrifice:** Unlike the mandatory tithes of the Old Covenant, early Christians gave freely. *"All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need"* (Acts 2:44-45).
- **Proportional Giving:** Paul instructed the Corinthians, *"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income"* (1 Corinthians 16:2). This principle of proportional giving recognizes that followers of Jesus give according to their ability.
- **Generous Excellence:** The Macedonian churches, despite *"extreme poverty,"* gave with *"rich generosity" and "beyond their ability"* (2 Corinthians 8:2-3). Paul commends this as evidence of God's grace at work in their lives.

This New Covenant perspective frames giving as a response to God's generosity rather than adherence to a strict percentage. The apostle Paul reminds us that our generosity stems from Christ's sacrifice: *"Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich"* (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus gave everything for us—our giving flows from this supreme example.

GRACE-BASED PRINCIPLES FOR GIVING

Under the New Covenant, generosity is transformed from obligation to opportunity.

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While the Law commanded specific percentages, grace inspires abundant giving motivated by love and gratitude.

AT RHYTHM CHURCH, WE EMPHASISE THESE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES:

The Joy of Cheerful Giving

Central to New Testament teaching is the heart behind our gifts: *"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:7). The Greek word for "cheerful" (*hilaros*, from which we get "hilarious") suggests giving with delight and enthusiasm.

This contrasts sharply with grudging obligation. When giving becomes a joyful privilege rather than a burdensome duty, it transforms both the giver and the gift. Jesus taught that *"it is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35), pointing to the counterintuitive joy that comes from generosity.

Spirit-Led Generosity

While the tithe (10%) provides a historical and biblical starting point, the Holy Spirit often leads believers toward greater generosity based on their unique circumstances and callings. Jesus highlighted this principle when He praised the widow who gave two small coins: *"Truly I tell you, 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 12:43–44).

Spirit-led giving might mean:

- Sacrificial gifts during special seasons
- Generous responses to specific needs
- Increased giving as income grows
- Creative contribution of skills and resources

The question becomes not "What's the minimum required?" but "What is the Spirit prompting me to give?"

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Scripture distinguishes between regular tithes and special offerings. Under the New Covenant, these might be understood as:

Regular Giving (like tithes):

- Consistent, planned support for the local church
- Disciplined, proportional giving from first fruits
- Sustains ongoing ministry, staffing, facilities, and outreach

Offerings (above and beyond):

- Responds to specific needs, projects, or opportunities
- Often spontaneous or specially designated
- Funds missions, building projects, community outreach, or crisis relief

Paul established that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14), supporting the principle of regular giving to sustain ministry. Yet he also organized special offerings to help distant churches facing famine (1 Corinthians 16:1–4), demonstrating the importance of additional offerings for specific needs.

Honouring Guest Ministers

A specific application of offerings relates to guest speakers and visiting ministers. Scripture teaches that *"the worker deserves his wages"* (Luke 10:7) and instructs believers to *"share all good things with their instructor"* (Galatians 6:6). This biblical principle underlies our practice of receiving special offerings for guest ministers.

When John wrote to Gaius about supporting traveling teachers, he noted, *"It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth"* (3 John 1:7–8).

Special offerings for visiting ministers:

- Honour their investment in our spiritual growth
- Cover travel expenses and compensate their time

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- Express appreciation for their gifting
- Partner with their broader ministry

These offerings typically come from individual giving beyond regular tithes.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION: LIVING GENEROUSLY

Translating biblical principles into daily practice involves intentional choices. At Rhythm Church, we encourage members to:

Start with the Tithe

For many believers, setting aside the first 10% of income provides a meaningful discipline that builds faith and establishes priorities. This practice acknowledges God's ownership of everything and our role as stewards rather than owners.

While the tithe isn't a rigid requirement under grace, it represents a time-tested biblical model that:

- Demonstrates trust in God's provision
- Places God first in our financial priorities
- Provides consistent support for ministry
- Establishes a baseline for growing generosity

Malachi 3:10's invitation to "test me in this" reflects God's desire to prove His faithfulness to those who trust Him with their resources. Many testify that they cannot out-give God—that tithing paradoxically leads to experiencing greater provision and contentment.

For new believers or those facing significant financial challenges, the journey toward tithing might be gradual. We encourage proportional giving that grows with faith and circumstances.

Listen for the Spirit's Prompting

Regular prayer about giving keeps our hearts attuned to God's leading. Questions to consider include:

- "Lord, how would You have me steward the resources You've entrusted to me?"
- "Is there a specific need You're calling me

to address?"

- "Should I increase my regular giving percentage?"
- "Are there non-financial ways You're asking me to be generous?"

This prayerful approach might lead some to give far beyond 10%—perhaps 15%, 20%, or more. Others might sense God's leading to fund specific ministries, support missionaries, or invest in community development. The key is maintaining an open, responsive posture toward the Holy Spirit's direction.

Support Guest Ministers

When Rhythm Church hosts visiting speakers, we provide opportunities to bless them through additional offerings. These gifts represent our gratitude for their ministry among us and partnership with their work elsewhere.

Scripture teaches that "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching" (1 Timothy 5:17). These offerings typically occur at the conclusion of a guest's ministry time and are completely voluntary.

Our heart is to be known as a generous church that blesses those who invest spiritually in our community—recognizing that "a generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed" (Proverbs 11:25).

Focus on Eternal Impact

Jesus encouraged storing treasures in heaven rather than on earth (Matthew 6:19-20), reminding us that financial decisions have eternal consequences. Every gift to Kingdom work becomes an investment with everlasting returns.

When we support:

- **Local church ministry:** We fuel discipleship and community transformation
- **Global missions:** We participate in God's worldwide redemptive work
- **Compassion initiatives:** We demonstrate Christ's love to "the least of these"
- **Leadership development:** We multiply ministry impact for generations

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These investments outlast temporary material acquisitions, producing fruit that remains. Generous giving also cultivates intimacy with God, as “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).

Overcoming Barriers to Giving

Many Christians struggle with giving consistently or generously. Common obstacles include:

- Financial Pressure: Concerns about making ends meet
- Consumer Culture: The constant pull to accumulate and upgrade
- Debt: Financial obligations that restrict giving capacity
- Lack of Trust: Questions about how funds are used
- Misunderstanding: Confusion about biblical teaching on giving

RHYTHM CHURCH SEEKS TO ADDRESS THESE BARRIERS THROUGH:

Financial discipleship: We offer several pathways to financial freedom including:

- Financial Peace University – Dave Ramsey’s proven 9-lesson course that has helped millions get out of debt and build wealth
- Crown Financial Ministries – Biblical financial studies and resources
- Compass – Finances God’s Way – Small group studies on handling money biblically

Transparency: Clear communication about church finances through annual reports and member meetings

Encouragement: Regular testimonies of God’s faithfulness in giving

Practical help: Resources for debt reduction and budgeting, including:

- Every Dollar – Free budgeting app
- Christians Against Poverty – Faith-based debt management program (CAP Aust)

We believe generous giving begins with understanding God’s generosity toward us. When we grasp the lavish grace extended through Christ, our perspective shifts from

scarcity to abundance, from reluctance to eagerness, from obligation to opportunity.

CONCLUSION

Under the New Covenant, we’re no longer bound to tithing as a legal requirement—but we’re freed to give more abundantly, wisely, and joyfully than ever before.

At Rhythm Church, we encourage beginning with the tithe as a faith-building practice while remaining open to the Spirit’s leading toward even greater generosity.

Whether supporting local ministry, global missions, or guest speakers, every gift participates in God’s Kingdom work. As we give, we express trust in God’s provision, gratitude for His blessings, and partnership in His purposes.

The Apostle Paul captures this New Covenant perspective perfectly: *“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work... You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and... your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God”* (2 Corinthians 9:8, 11).

Let us give not from compulsion but from conviction, not from obligation but from opportunity, not from duty but from delight—for this is the way of grace.