

The Principle & Practice of Tithing

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Preacher: Cedric Moss

- [0 : 00] Those of you who are first-time guests, and in particular those who are from out of town, I know that we have a group with Tim and Felicia Ryan serving over at ALC.
- ! Welcome. Thank you for coming. We also have some who are with Tim and Mindy Seely and serving over at ALC. Thank you for coming. And I really just want to, on behalf of all of us, thank you for coming to serve our island.
- I know many of you come at your own expense, and you have come to serve in a context that at times can be challenging. And we are very grateful that you have chosen to come to serve.
- And may the Lord, as he said he will do, that he will not forget your labor of love. And for the way you minister to his saints, and you continue to minister.
- So thank you so much for coming. Well, in three weeks, we're going to be commencing a series in the letter of 1 Timothy.
- [1 : 03] And just because of scheduling reasons, we had three intervening weeks leading up to, well, two intervening weeks leading up to the series.
- And we decided to do three standalone messages. I guess that is three intervening weeks, not two. Three weeks intervening. So we're doing three standalone messages. And the first one that is foreshadowed in the bulletin that you have is a message on tithing.
- And the motivation for this message really is the increasing divergence that we continue to see on the topic of tithing and its applicability or non-applicability for today.
- And so I thought it would serve us to consider this topic so that we can seek to have our convictions, whatever they are, founded on Scripture and not based on just general ideas or on opinion.
- And then next week, we're going to be doing a message that seeks to address the lifelong question of why do the righteous suffer when the wicked prosper?
- [2 : 22] I think we would think that, humanly speaking, the wicked shouldn't prosper and the righteous should not suffer. And the reality is, though, that's not so.
- The wicked do prosper. The righteous do suffer. Next week's message, we'll seek to address that reality. And then the following week, we'll have a message on evangelism.
- And then we will move into our first main series for the year, a study in the letter of 1 Timothy. For this morning's message, I initially, as you will see in the bulletin, I didn't select a text for it because my intention was to turn to several texts.
- But as I studied, I really felt the Lord laid on my heart to use as a foundational text, Romans 14, verses 7 through 12.
- So if you would turn with me to Paul's letter to the Romans. And we'll consider this morning as a foundational text, verses 7 through 12.

[3 : 32] Now, the context for these verses is there was a controversy in the church at Rome. There were those who were observing holy days and there were those who were considering all days alike.

There were those who were abstaining from certain foods and there were those who were eating those foods. And they began to judge one another. And they began to condemn one another for what they were doing or not doing.

And the Apostle Paul wrote his letter into that context. And I think it's very instructive to see how he responds to them.

And I'll say right up front so that you won't miss it. He doesn't take sides. He doesn't take sides. Let's see how he addresses it starting in verse 7.

He says to them, well, he's already told them, one abstains one day above another, the other does not. One eats one thing and the other abstains.

[4 : 42] He says, just do it to glorify God. You can do it to the glory of God. Then he says this in verse 7. For none of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself.

For if we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord. So then whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother?

Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God.

[5 : 46] So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. What Paul essentially says to them is, hold your personal convictions, whatever they are.

But stop judging one another and even stop seeking to persuade one another because one day you're going to stand before God and you're going to give an account.

In other words, save it for God. God is the one who is going to judge us, each of us, according to his righteous judgment.

And his judgment is going to be based not on the things that we do only, but also on the motivations of our hearts. And so as we prepare to consider this subject of tithing where there are divergent views, where brothers and sisters who love the Lord and who take Scripture seriously land at different positions, I think we should bear in mind these words from the Apostle Paul, that we are going to stand before the Lord and we are going to give an account for our lives.

So we should all seek to be persuaded from Scripture for whatever our understanding and practice might be concerning giving back to God.

[7 : 11] And again, it is possible to hold different convictions and glorify God with our different convictions. And obviously that doesn't mean that we don't critique other positions, but what it does mean is that we don't judge one another for holding those positions.

So let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you, Lord, that your word makes wise the simple.

Lord, therefore, your word is accessible to all of us. And I pray this morning that you would cast light on our path as we open your word.

Lord, you know what we need. You know us uniquely. You know us collectively. And I pray that you would speak to us from your word. Lord, I pray that you'd help me, Lord, to be faithful, to handle your word with integrity, not with slight and cunning craftiness.

But, Lord, seeking to be a faithful servant under your gaze, bringing your word to your people. So, Lord, would you superintend this time of proclaiming your word?

[8 : 38] And would you help us all to posture our hearts to hear and obey? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, first of all, I think it would be good to establish some expectations.

And the first thing I would say is that thousands of books have been written on this subject. Thousands of books. So, in one single message, I obviously will not be able to cover as much ground as one of those books certainly is able to cover.

But what I seek to do is not so much delve into a lot of nitty-gritty things, but really just to try to broadly serve us to think about this subject of not even so much tithing, but giving generally in a way that would cause us to interact with Scripture in a faithful way, though not necessarily in an exhaustive way.

So, we want to be faithful, but not exhaustive. And I think we are able to do that. When we think of this subject of tithing, it still falls under the general category of giving.

And that's what I really want to do to cause us to think about it in that way. Second, I think it would be helpful to just give a definition.

[10 : 04] What do we mean? Because people have different ideas about what tithing is. A person would say, well, I tithed \$10. And what they mean is they gave \$10. But what does it mean to tithe?

Tithe simply means 10%. And to tithe means to give 10% of one's income. And that's a simple definition.

There are those who would go into the books of Leviticus and Numbers, and they would actually make a case for tithing to be 20%, 30%. Some people do that.

But I think in general, most people would accept that the tithe means 10% as opposed to considering frequencies and different kinds of tithes that we find in the Old Testament.

And then some people debate that subject. They talk about things like, well, is it on the gross? Is it on the net? Meaning do you pay it before you pay taxes and before you pay deductions like national insurance?

[11 : 09] Or do you pay it after on the net? I really don't think that those considerations, whether it's gross or net, and whether it should be this duplicated or three times the tithe, I don't think it's that.

It's not whether it's 10% or 30% or 0%. It really doesn't matter what one believes on that specifically.

But for our intents and purposes this morning, what we're going to be thinking about is when I refer to it, I will be referring to the classical definition of it in terms of 10% of one's earnings.

Now, for those of you who are taking notes, I've organized the sermon under three headings, and they are number one, common views on tithing, number two, various scriptures on tithing, and number three, concluding thoughts on tithing.

So first, let's consider some common views on tithing. The different views on tithing can be categorized or summarized into three common views.

[12 : 22] And while these three views can have sub-views or subsets underneath them, they sufficiently represent the main views on tithing.

And what I'd ask you to do, those of you who are taking notes, just listen to the views. I'm going to summarize them very succinctly so you can take notes. But right now, just try to think about the views as I share them.

The first one is that tithing is a continuing command that is binding on God's people under the new covenant. meaning that since the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, tithing is a binding command still under the new covenant.

That's the first view. The second view is that tithing is discontinued under the new covenant or in the New Testament, and Christians are free to give whatever they choose.

That's the second view. And among this view, people are kind of like all over the map. There would be those who would argue for extravagant generosity and really giving way beyond what tithes would have been in the old covenant.

[13 : 41] And then there are those who would be arguing on the other side, just really in a way that could lead into stinginess and into just tight-fistedness.

And then there are those right in between. And the third view is that tithing is not a continuing command in the Old Testament, but believers are to give in a way in which their giving is informed by how God's people gave in the Old Testament and should therefore be at least equal to the standard that you see in the Old Testament in terms of the tithe.

So this third view is it's not a command, doesn't continue as a command, but that giving in the New Testament or under the new covenant should be informed by how God's people gave in the Old Testament and that it should be at least 10%.

Now let me summarize the views in ways that you can actually jot them down. The first view can be considered, believers are commanded to tithe 10% of their income.

That's the first view. The second view, believers are free to give whatever they choose from their income. And the third is believers are expected to give at least 10% of their income.

[15 : 16] So the operating words are commanded to give in the first one, free to give in the second one, and expected to give in the third one. In a nutshell, those are the three main views.

As I said, they're kind of subsets, but largely you can put the views in those three categories. So having stated the three main views, I now want to consider various scriptures on tithing.

The first one is in Genesis 4, 1 through 7. Now those of you who know your Bible quickly are probably thinking, that doesn't talk about tithing.

And you're right, it does not talk about tithing. It does not address the subject in any direct manner. But I think this particular passage is helpful when we begin to think about tithing or giving because it is the very first account of giving that we find in scripture.

And therefore, it should be of primary interest to us when we consider the subject of tithing because tithing really is a subset of giving.

[16 : 32] So we shouldn't miss that passage that talks about giving because you have giving up here and tithing is a subset of it. So let's look at Genesis chapter 4 and we will consider the first seven verses.

Genesis 4, verses 1 through 7. Now Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I've gotten a man with the help of the Lord.

And again she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground.

And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering, he had no regard.

So Cain was very angry and his face fell. The Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? And why has your face fallen?

[17 : 57] If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.

Now the big question from this passage is, why was Abel's offering regarded by God and Cain's was not? Why was Abel's regarded, Cain's was not?

Some people believe that the reason lies in the nature of their offering. That in the case of Abel, he brought a blood offering, but in the case of Cain, he brought a bloodless offering.

Some people believe that it has to do with the nature of their offering. Cain's offering was from the ground, Abel's was from animals. But I think when we consider it, that doesn't seem to be a good reason as to why Abel was accepted and Cain was rejected.

It seems reasonable that since these two men had different occupations, Abel's occupation was a herdsman, so he brought animals, and Cain's occupation was that of a farmer, so he brought fruit from the ground, the produce from the ground.

[19 : 18] It seems like that is what they ought to have brought. They were to bring this offering from their labors and offer it to the Lord.

So it seems like more than this being an issue about the nature of their offerings, it had to do with the quality of their offerings. And I think we can see that when we look at verses 3 and 4.

Look at them again. It says in verse 3, In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering from the fruit of the ground.

Verse 4 says, And Abel also brought of the first of his flocks and of their fat portions. And it seems like the writer is trying to contrast by description the quality of the offerings that these two brothers brought.

Abel brought the first, he brought the fat portions. And we all know that they say with animals that the strongest ones are born first. They push their way out and the weaker ones, they come behind.

[20 : 29] So the first ones are generally the choice ones. And the same is true with harvesting. That the crops that you harvest out of the ground, they tend to be the choice crops because they are harvested at an opportune time versus those that may stay in the field a much longer time and they may not be as of a good quality as the first ones.

And we see this that when the Lord instituted this system of offerings in the law that he would specify that they were to bring the first of the animals.

They were to bring the first of the fruits of the ground. So this principle actually grows into the wider portion of the Mosaic law.

Now there's a law of interpretation that we shouldn't miss when we consider this first account of giving in Scripture. It's called the law of first mention. And the law of first mention tells us that when we find something in Scripture for the first time, we should pay very close attention to it.

Here's what F.E. Marsh says, how he describes it. He says, the first time a word occurs in the Scriptures gives the key to understand its meaning in every other place.

[21 : 47] In other words, it really takes on its highest meaning where we see it mentioned first. That's a generally accepted law of Bible interpretation. The law of a first mention.

So we, though we're talking generally about the topic of tithing, we should not miss this particular account because, as I said, the category of giving is the big set and tithing really is just a subset.

I think we should also notice how the Lord describes Cain's problem. The Lord describes Cain's problem in a very graphic way.

He says to Cain in verse 7, if you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.

The issue between Cain and Abel and their sacrifice, at the end of the day, whatever you decide is what you think it is, whether you think it has to do with the nature or with the quality of the sacrifice, God says sin was the issue.

[22 : 58] God says sin was the issue for the reason that he accepted Abel's sacrifice and he did not accept Cain's.

So this scripture, we refer to it this morning because I think it is a foundational lesson that we need to consider in this whole category of giving to the Lord, however we understand it, however we practice it.

Now I want to give a list of the more direct scriptures that speak to the practice of tithing or just mentions the word tithe.

And the first group is before the Mosaic Law. There are two scriptures. These predate the giving of the law and the first is in Genesis 14, 17 through 20, where Abram gave 10% of the spoils of war to Melchizedek.

The second is in Genesis 28, verses 18 through 22, where Jacob promised to give 10% of his increase if the Lord would bless him and return him to the land of his father Isaac.

[24 : 13] The next category is in the Mosaic Law proper in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The first one is Leviticus 27, verses 30 through 33.

And it's a section there. Second, Numbers 18, 20 through 32. And third, Deuteronomy 12, 17 through 19.

Deuteronomy 14, 22 through 29. And Deuteronomy 26, verses 10 through 16. That's the extent of the references in the Mosaic Law.

And then after the Mosaic Law, in the Old Testament, in the remainder of the Old Testament, there are four accounts. The first one is in 2 Chronicles 31, 5 through 11, where the Israelites are told that they're to bring the tithes to the temple.

And then in Nehemiah chapter 10, 35 through 39. And Nehemiah 13, 9 through 13.

[25 : 27] And this details Nehemiah's restitution or reinstitution of the tithe. And the last one, the one that most people know, is Malachi.

I heard one guy said he was actually Italian. It was Malachi. But Malachi, chapter 3, verses 6 through 12.

And here in this passage, the Lord rebukes the nation of Israel for their robbing him in tithes and offerings. Then we move over to the New Testament. And in the New Testament, there are four references.

The first one is in Matthew 23, verse 23, where Jesus rebukes the scribes and Pharisees because he said, you know, you tithe off of the vegetables in your garden, the smallest vegetables, yet you've neglected the more important issues of the law like justice and mercy and faith.

He says, you should have done the former without neglecting the others. and the parallel passage to that is in Luke chapter 11, verse 42.

[26 : 45] And there's a third passage in Luke, Luke 18, 12, where Jesus tells this parable of the tax collector and the publican who go to the temple to pray and the tax collector, the publican, sorry, the tax collector, I'm sorry, he justifies himself and he says, well, I'm sorry, I'm getting it confused.

The Pharisee prays and says, I tithe and I tithe of all that I get. And the fourth and final one that we find in the New Testament is in Hebrews 7, verses 1 through 10, this passage that talks about tithing back to Melchizedek and how Levi tithed in the loins of Abraham.

Well, that's the complete reference that we find in Scripture on tithing. Now, here's what I would say to you. If your position this morning would be that your approach to giving, whatever it is, is really not based on your own conviction and understanding of what Scripture teaches, I would encourage you to prayerfully over some time just consider these particular passages and just ask the Lord to help you as you do so.

Now, I conclude with the third section, some thoughts on tithing. If you're interested in just studying it as a broader subject, there's a book that I would recommend and it's called Perspectives on Tithing by David Croteau.

That's C-R-O-T-E-A-U. David Croteau. And Dr. Croteau, what he did was he has his own view and he brought together three other views, individuals who would represent those views, and he wrote this book.

[28 : 59] So you actually have four perspectives on tithing and they would stay their perspective and one person would do that and the other three would critique that perspective. So at the end of the book you had four views stated and then the other three would critique the view each time a view is stated.

It could be a very helpful book to actually consider. The fourth view is a view that's narrowly held by Christian Reconstructionists and they would view the tithe as like a tax and it's a binding tax that every member of the congregation has to pay.

So they would see it as an ecclesiastical tax the same way you pay your civil taxes. They would see it that way. But it's not a main view and that's why I didn't mention it right up front. Before I share my concluding thoughts on tithing, let me just preface them by a very insightful quote that I read in this book by Reggie Kidd who was one of the contributors and Dr.

Croteau's perspectives on tithing. Here's what he says. When we see tithing, when we see tithing passages, sorry, what we see in tithing passages, what we see in tithing passages depends a lot on what we already bring with us and our conclusions tell us a lot about how we construe the whole of the Christian life.

I think that is such an insightful and charitable observation that what we see in tithing passages depends a lot on what we bring to it, our experiences, our understanding of this practice of tithing or giving whatever our experience or understanding might be.

[31 : 11] And then he also makes the point that in addition to our experiences in forming our study, he makes the point that our conclusions speak about how we view the Christian life.

And if you think that he might be making too much about the conclusion part, I don't think that he is because Jesus does something very similar in the Sermon on the Mount when he talks about how you cannot serve God and money and he makes this sweeping comparison to posit serving God next to serving money.

I mean he reduces it down to that. He says you cannot serve two masters, you're going to love one or you're going to serve the other. You cannot serve God. I thought he would say and the devil, but he says and money.

And I think the point that Jesus is making is that God and money are competing for the very affections of our hearts, for the loyalties of our hearts.

Now I'm sure that there would be exceptions to this observation that Reggie Kidd makes. I'm sure there would be exceptions. But I think in the main what he says is true.

[32 : 32] I couldn't help but think about my deceased father as I prepared this message. My father taught me many lessons, many of them that still guide my life today.

One of the lessons that he taught me, perhaps the first lesson about money was a lesson on tithing. It was probably 11 or 12, no more than 12.

And my brother BJ and I worked in my father's food store and we were packing boys and he worked us for a long time. He didn't pay us, but finally one day he decided to pay us.

And he paid us \$5. I mean, that was not back pay, you know that. And he sat us down and he told us, he said, now, anytime you get money, you earn money, 10% belongs to the Lord.

He said, and that's 50 cents. You owe 50 cents to the Lord. And of course, BJ and I were proud, so, and I don't mean proud in a positive way, we were, we were, proud, the kind that God resists, we were that kind.

[33 : 44] And so we wouldn't put 50 cents in because that jingled, we wanted to put a dollar in, so we would grimace and put a dollar in, didn't want to put it in, but we were proud, so we put a dollar in. And that was our practice, we just did that.

And then I also watched my parents practice tithing. Part of the church that we were in, and I watched them practice it, and one of the things that my parents did was finances were pretty transparent in our family, so we knew when things were really tight and things were difficult, and I observed my parents tithing in sustained periods of financial difficulty.

very severe difficulties, and I observed them doing that. And so for 30 years of my life, I was guided by what I'd been taught.

I never studied it for myself, never really took, I just followed what they had taught me. And so for 30 years of my life, I followed tithing as something that was mandated and required of me, and I did that.

And then, as I began to embrace Reformed theology around 2002, and I began to view Scripture differently and understand the covenants differently, understand the work of Christ differently, and how Christ fulfilled the law, all of it, which includes the tithing law, my practice did not change.

[35 : 21] my practice of tithing didn't change, the way I viewed money, Alexi and I, didn't change, but my view of it certainly did change away from this obligation that was upon me in that regard.

So I changed from seeing it as this duty that I had, more to a logical starting point for my own giving, as I saw it in Scripture, as I began to interact with that more.

I share that to say that I recognize that that's very different for a lot of people. Some people who didn't have those instructions, didn't have the guidance, sometimes there are people who actually approached money in a way that was unhelpful, they drowned themselves in debt, and they then come to hear teachings on giving and tithing locked into particular circumstances that actually have them bound financially.

And so it's easy, as Kidd says, when you come to study this particular practice, that what we bring to it can really inform, and sometimes our circumstances can cause us to make particular conclusions about how we understand what the Word of God has to say in this area of giving broadly.

So I share that to say that we all bring different experiences, and those experiences, things, and the teaching that we may have gotten or not gotten would cause us to engage in somewhat different ways, although it's possible to come from different angles and maybe land the same place as some people have.

[37 : 31] So here are my brief concluding thoughts on these three main views. The first view, believers are commanded to give 10% of their income. regarding this view, I would say it is, I think it is difficult to support this view in Scripture that believers are commanded to do this Old Testament practice today if you accept that when Jesus said it is finished, that it was really finished, and that included all of the requirements of the law, that Jesus would have fulfilled them, he would have fulfilled all the feasts, he would have fulfilled all of the foreshadowings, he fulfilled it all.

So I think that first view is really not sustainable in terms of understanding the covenants and understanding what Christ did as a part of the new covenant.

commitment. The second view, it says that believers are free to give whatever they choose from their income.

It's hard to really respond to this view other than to say I believe that this view certainly does represent a legitimate understanding of giving, post Calvary, but what happens is you really have to consider almost on a case-by-case basis where that view lands people, where people land as a result of that view.

It's legitimate, but I think there can be reason for caution in particular for heart motivations in terms of where does that view take me in terms of my own heart.

[39 : 30] And I say that because for some people, the issue can be almost treating this like how you would approach taxes or approach some obligation and say, well, I'm not obligated to do that, so let me see if I can do the bare minimum in that regard.

The other side of it is some who hold to the generosity can hold to it in such a way that though they say it's not law, they treat it as law in terms of you must do this particular thing, although it's not required.

They're on the extreme side of the generosity and saying that you must actually do that. So that view is a bit difficult to interact with other than to say, I believe that in principle it certainly represents a tenable interpretation of how giving should operate post-calvary.

And then the third view, the third view, which is believers are expected to give at least 10% of their income.

This would be my own view and I think what you would find is there's some overlap between this view and the second view. there's a bit of overlap because just by taking the view that if you're somewhere in the middle and feeling well, I'm called to generosity, bottom line, if you're part of the second view that you should give just generously, if you end up giving at least 10% of your income, then obviously it overlaps with this third view that talks about the expectation, taking into account all that Scripture teaches that this would be the expectation.

[41 : 22] now, here's the reason that I land on this view. The reason I land on this view is because I believe that this view comprehensively takes into account what we see revealed in the Old Testament and also what we see held out in the New Testament.

What we see held out in the Old Testament is this practice of God's people giving in a regular, sustained way. And then what we see in the New Testament is this encouragement to be generous.

We see in the Book of Acts that there are people selling property and giving generously to needs. We see in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 that there are people who are being encouraged just to give very generous offerings as the Apostle Paul would share.

As I prepared this message I interacted quite a bit with Randy Alcorn's book, a book that many of you have heard of, a book called Money, Possessions, and Eternity.

And Randy Alcorn is a man who has written extensively on this subject, but I think his life actually teaches more about giving than his writings.

[42 : 43] And I just want to read, for us, some quotes that Randy Alcorn has in his book.

I think I have them. I certainly had them. Maybe I don't have, I do have them. Here's what Randy Alcorn says.

He says, many people do not give because they have not been taught to give. As the law was the tutor to lead us to Christ, so the tithe can be a tutor that leads us to giving.

If we can learn to give without tithing, fine. But the giving track record of American Christians, and sorry, American friends, we would be the same as well, I think. We mirror the U.S.

in so many ways, indicates that we have not learned to give. In fact, we've learned not to give. Our giving declines as our prosperity increases.

[43 : 53] And perhaps worst of all, we continue to lose ground because our children are giving less than we are. Although grace giving is a wonderful sounding term, it has come to disguise an underlying attitude that is twisted and unbiblical.

It has dishonored us, our children, our churches, and above all, our Lord. Whatever the church is teaching about giving today, either it's not true to scripture, the message is not getting through, or we are being disobedient.

The tithe is God's historical method to get people on the path of giving. In that sense, it can serve as a gateway to the joy of true grace giving today.

Just as it gave rise to the spontaneous, joyful, freewill offerings we see in the various Old Testament passages, it is unhealthy to view tithing as a place to stop with our giving, but it can still be a good place to start.

Remember, even under the first covenant, tithing was never a maximum standard, it was merely a giving, a starting point. He goes on, he says this, can tithing be legalistic?

[45 : 17] Of course. The holy habits of church attendance, prayer, and Bible reading can degenerate into legalism, but that doesn't make them illegitimate.

Anyone who stops going to church, praying, or reading scripture for fear of being legalistic is approaching the problem from the wrong angle.

And then this last quote from Randy Alcorn, which will be projected for you. He says, when we come to grasp that we are stewards, not owners of our money, it totally changes our perspective.

Suddenly, I'm not asking, how much of my money shall I, or the goodness of my heart, give to God. Rather, I'm asking, since all of my money is really yours, Lord, how would you like me to invest your money today?

When I truly realize that God has a claim, not on a few dollars to throw in an offering plate, not on 10% or 50%, but on 100% of my money, it is revolutionary.

[46 : 34] Suddenly, I'm God's steward, God's money manager. I am not God. Money is not God. God is God.

He is in his place, and I am in mine. I want to encourage us this morning to think to think that at the end of the day, what this is all about is God and money, or better still, it's about each of us, God and money, and how we interact with it.

In light of our understanding of Scripture, and brothers and sisters, I want to say to us that this is so important in the sense that Jesus raises the issue of money to the level of serving God on money, that we would do well to take some time to have some biblically informed views about money, because it'll serve us not just now, but for the rest of our life, because for the rest of our lives, we're going to be interacting with money.

We're going to be receiving money, we're going to be spending money, and we want to do that in a biblically informed way, in a way that brings God into that particular area of our lives.

It's not enough to think, well, if I do this, then I can do whatever I want with the rest of my money, whatever your understanding of giving is. That's not biblical stewardship.

[48 : 10] And it doesn't serve your soul to hold on to a view that you aren't able to be persuaded about in Scripture. And I truly believe that as Paul was really saying to the church at Rome, he was saying to them, essentially, listen, Christ's body is diverse enough that if you want to eat those foods and you don't want to eat those foods, you both can coexist together, holding those convictions without judging one another.

Remembering that on that day, you're going to stand before the Lord and you're going to give an account for that. And I think the same is true with giving. I think the same is true with giving that we want to be approaching this from a position of faith as we understand God's word to teach.

And we can land at different places and we can trust God with all of the other things. But we need to take the time to do it. otherwise, many times you can find yourself living under guilt or uncertainty for whatever reason because you have not taken the time to see what does the word of God have to say about this particular subject.

So I pray this morning that this fly over this whole topic of giving would stir you in your own heart if you have not yet done so, to try to settle this issue in scripture.

Let your position on giving, whatever it is, be informed by God's word. And we should never fear where God's word is going to take us.

[50 : 02] God will take us into a good place. And so as we seek to live life together in a way that honors the Lord in a way that edifies one another, let's remember these words that we read early on in Holy Scripture from Romans 14, 7 through 9, for none of us lives to himself.

None of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord. So then whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Paul ends by saying, for to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be both Lord of the dead and of the living.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word this morning. And I do pray, Lord, that you would, by your spirit, speak to our hearts in ways that only you can.

God, we want to honor you with all of our lives. We know, Lord, that you have given us all things that pertains to life and to godliness, and therefore you have not left us to ourselves in any particular area.

[51 : 35] Your word speaks. in all areas of life for your people. So, Lord, I ask that you would help us all to let this topic of giving be, as best we're able to, informed by your word.

Lord, those of us who need to take the time to study your word, to settle this issue in our own hearts where we may have uncertainty. God, I pray by your spirit that you would compel us, Lord, by your spirit to settle this issue and not have it as a lingering, ongoing uncertainty in our souls.

God, I pray that you would help us as the apostle Paul instructed the church at Rome to live for your glory, to do whatever we do for the building up and for the benefit of brothers and sisters.

And Lord, I pray that as we do that, we would do so mindful that on that day, we will all stand before you and we will give an account for our lives.

Would you help us, Lord, to do that with the assurance that with the help of your spirit, we have applied ourselves as best we can to live in a way that's informed by scripture and that's pleasing in your sight.

[53 : 22] Lord, will you do this, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand together. Sing, Lord, I come.

Lord, I come. I confess. Bowing here, I find my rest.

Without you, I fall apart. You're the one that guides my heart.

Lord, I need you. Oh, I need you. Every hour I need you.

I want defense, my righteousness.