

# What Is Tithing?

Excerpted from an article by Dave Ramsey

Churchgoers have been talking about tithing since, well, forever. And whether or not you grew up in the church, you've probably at least heard about it. But what does tithing actually mean?

If you've been wondering what a tithe is, how much you should be tithing, and whether you should even be tithing if you're in debt, you're not the only one.

So, let's start with the basics.

A tithe is a portion (10%) of your income given as an offering to your local church. (Fun fact: The word *tithe* literally means *tenth* in Hebrew.) Because the custom of tithing is biblical, many Christians and Jews practice it as part of their faith.

Leviticus 27:30 (TLB) says, "A tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, is the Lord's, and is holy." And Proverbs 3:9 (NIV) says, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops."

Those gardening metaphors may have thrown you off, but what these verses are really saying is to give a portion (specifically a tenth) of whatever you make back to God. And *firstfruits* is just a biblical way of saying that you should give *first*—before you do anything else with your money.

The Bible explains that tithing is an important part of faith for those who follow God and that your tithe should be money you set aside first. Why? Because when you tithe before making a plan with the rest of your money, you're making it a priority instead of an afterthought. You're giving your "firstfruits" instead of your leftovers.

## What's the Difference Between Tithes and Offerings?

Like llamas and alpacas, tithes and offerings are often grouped together, but they're definitely not the same thing. A tithe is a specific amount (10% of your income) that you give first. An offering is anything *extra* you give beyond that.

This can look like giving a cash offering above and beyond your normal tithe, giving money to a charity you support, giving to a friend in need, or giving your time and skills by volunteering.

## Why Should I Tithe?

The Bible tells us tithing is a way to show that we trust God with our lives *and* our finances. Ready for a truth bomb? Tithing isn't for God's benefit. He doesn't *need* our money. Instead, tithing is meant for *our* benefit because sacrificing a portion of our income reminds us to rely on God to meet our needs. Plus, it makes us more aware of the needs of others too.

In fact, supporting the needs of pastors and the work of the local church is one of the main purposes of tithing. Tithing helps your local church actively *be* the church by helping others.

Giving encourages a grateful and generous spirit and can help steer us away from being greedy or loving money too much. Plus, being outrageously generous is a *blast*!

## **Do I *Have* to Tithe?**

While tithing 10% of your income is biblical, that doesn't mean you have to be a Christian to tithe. It also doesn't mean you're a bad Christian if you don't tithe. And guess what? God loves us when we give *and* when we don't give. In fact, 75% to 90% of those who go to church don't give a tithe.

Here's another truth bomb: Tithing isn't a way to earn God's love—because *we already have it*. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus warns against focusing too much on the rules of tithing without paying attention to the more important things like justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

**Bottom line?** You should be giving in some way. But tithing is more of a spiritual topic than a financial one. It's not about the money — it's about the heart. It's about living with the attitude that we've been blessed to be a blessing.

**2 Corinthians 9:7** (NIV) says, "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."