

HILARIOUS GENEROSITY

STUDY FIVE

A Tried-and-True Plan That Still Works

Selected Scriptures

How do we dethrone money? How do we learn to be truly generous? I want to offer a tried-and-true method that will work.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

MANY people put off giving because they aren't certain what to give or how to manage their finances in a way that makes giving possible. When the offering plate comes down the row at church, they panic. A quick glance in their wallet reveals a 20-dollar bill, so they drop it in and hurriedly pass the plate along.

Impulse giving may ease our conscience in the moment, but it ultimately lacks satisfaction. Joy in giving is the fruit of a spiritual discipline that God's people have practiced from ancient times—tithing.

Mention the word, *tithe*, and many Christians tense up. Images come to mind of a concerned mother spooning up castor oil and pouring it down her child's throat while saying, "This is good for you."

Actually, tithing is good medicine. It treats the disease of greed that can slip into our spiritual bloodstream and poison our hearts. Tithing flushes out stinginess from our system and keeps us depending on the Lord—who promises to "generously provide all you need" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

So, the way to start building a giving plan is with a balanced, biblical understanding of tithing—a concept that goes all the way back to the days of Abraham.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In *Searching the Scriptures*, we always pray for God's Spirit to illumine our minds as we open His Word. You may wish to pray as Pastor Chuck Swindoll prays before he studies the Word: "Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it."¹



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Abraham had just defeated King Kedorlaomer and rescued his nephew, Lot, who had been captured when Sodom and Gomorrah fell. While Abraham was returning home, a man named Melchizedek came to bless Abraham and acknowledge God's protection and power.

Who was this mysterious Melchizedek? According to Genesis 14:18, he was "the king of Salem [which later became Jerusalem] and a priest of God Most High." The writer to the Hebrews explained the meaning of the king-priest's name and added a stirring insight into his identity:

The name Melchizedek means "king of justice," and king of Salem means "king of peace." There is no record of his father or mother or any of his ancestors—no beginning or end to his life. He remains a priest forever, resembling the Son of God. (Hebrews 7:2)

Was this king of justice and peace the pre-incarnate Christ? Possibly. Abraham certainly revered him as an envoy from God. The old patriarch honored Melchizedek in a way that set a pattern for all God's followers. Let's see what Abraham did.



Observation: Giving Before, During, and After the Law

Observation is an essential first step whenever we open the Scriptures. Read the passages thoughtfully and slowly, looking for action words, setting, characters, cause-and-effect, and repetition of key concepts.

Before Moses and the Law

Abraham's offering came before the Mosaic law. According to [Genesis 14:17–20](#), what did Melchizedek declare? What did Abraham do as a gesture of honor?

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Abraham's "tenth of all" was his *tithe*, which means "tenth." Jacob, Abraham's grandson, followed Abraham's pattern of worship. The morning after God revealed Himself in a dream to Jacob at Bethel, what did Jacob promise the Lord in [Genesis 28:20–22](#)?

Under Moses and the Law

The Lord codified tithing in the Mosaic law as a regular practice. How were the Israelites to view their tithe according to [Leviticus 27:30](#)? Why do you think God instituted the tithe as a spiritual discipline?

The Israelites considered all their possessions as blessings from God's hand. By giving back a portion, they honored God as their provider. It followed, then, that their offerings would be used to provide for others in their community. What needs would the tithe meet, according to [Numbers 18:23–24](#)?

Being set aside as holy, tithes supported the Levites and their worship duties in the temple. In addition to the tithe, the Israelites were also encouraged to give voluntary offerings during special festivals, for building projects (like the tabernacle and temple), and to help those in need ([Exodus 25:1–9](#); [36:4–7](#); [Deuteronomy 16:10](#); [26:12](#); [2 Chronicles 35:7–9](#)).

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Under Christ

We've observed the tithe before and during the period of the law, but what about those who live after the law under Christ? What giving practices do we find in the early church? Use the following chart to record evidence of systematic giving and spontaneous giving.

Examples of Giving	Observations
Systematic Giving <i>1 Corinthians 16:1–3;</i> <i>1 Timothy 5:17–18</i>	
Spontaneous Giving <i>Acts 2:44–45;</i> <i>2 Corinthians 9:1–5</i>	

Did the early Christians tithe ten percent of their income? There's no indicator that they stopped tithing, so it's reasonable to assume that they continued the practice just as before. Such giving would have supported full-time local ministers (*1 Timothy 5:17–18*), full-time traveling ministers (*1 Corinthians 9:11–14*), and the urgent needs of the church community (*Titus 3:14*).

When we turn to the New Testament, we do not find one place where the tithe is removed. The tithe is never rescinded as a legitimate plan. We aren't instructed to stop what has been the tried-and-true plan of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Guidelines on Giving Today

Interpretation draws out timeless truths from the well of the Scriptures we've observed, to drink them in so they can sustain us. We've seen evidence of giving throughout the Scriptures, from the required tithing and voluntary offerings in the Old Testament to the giving practices in the New Testament. From this broad overview, let's zero in on *1 Corinthians 16:1–3* and discover five guidelines we can follow in our giving today.

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From each phrase of *1 Corinthians 16:2*, write a principle. We've filled in the first one to get you started.

“On the first day of each week . . .”

Guideline: *My giving should be systematic and regular.*

“ . . . each of you . . .”

Guideline: _____

“ . . . put aside a portion . . .”

Guideline: _____

“ . . . of the money you have earned.”

Guideline: _____

“Don't wait until I get there and try to collect it all at once.”

Guideline: _____

In light of this verse, how would you like to give? Weave Paul's instructions into a summary statement to guide your giving.

Giving should be on a weekly basis. It's good for us to break the grip of greed once a week. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: More Guidelines on Giving

Correlation broadens our view by drawing upon other passages for insight. Carefully read Paul's inspired "advice" on giving in [2 Corinthians 8:10–14](#) and then summarize his thoughts in your own words to help round out your understanding of giving.

At the heart of it all is the continuation of a tenth, but with that comes gifts for special reasons. First-century needs were much like our needs today. Special offerings for benevolence. There were campaigns of various kinds—festivities, facilities, thanksgiving offerings. Families needed meals, help with children, giving of our time. All this giving helps to break the grip of greed.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Your Tried-and-True Plan

Let's construct a giving plan from the biblical principles we've studied.

A Good Place to Start

A tenth of your income is a good goal to start with for your giving ministry. What would it be for you to set aside ten percent? Can you shave off some unnecessary expenses to reach that goal? How can the guidelines you listed above help you?

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A Great Habit to Continue

Releasing your grip on greed has a domino effect that leads to more giving. Generosity can be habit-forming! In what creative ways can you generate extra cash to donate? Or how about donating quality items you don't need to worthy causes? Can you free up some time to give?

A Generous Way to Live

When giving becomes a habit, it becomes a lifestyle. You don't even think twice about it. The stingy side of you slowly disappears as you become more like Christ. Such transformation is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. Use your final moments of this study to invite the Spirit to strengthen you in your pursuit of making hilarious generosity a lifestyle.



A FINAL PRAYER

Write your prayer here.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2015, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

