

LESSON 2

Honoring God Through Giving

Just like we honor our parents through our obedience, one important way we show honor to God is through how we give.

The concept of a tithe, a “tenth part” given in support of temple function and the priests’ livelihood, was established by God ⁱ not as a tool to gauge our holiness through adherence (as the rulers viewed it) nor to measure our level of commitment. Rather, 10% provided a starting point, a baseline by which His chosen race ⁱⁱ could express their humble gratitude and sincere obedience in contrast to the pagan religious practices of the surrounding nations. Not unlike in Jesus’ day, participating in such an intentional act of honor to the Creator meets the practical needs of those in service in the Lord’s House today and provides a base of support for the local church to fulfill its responsibilities.

While many adults – including pastors, lay leaders, and the parents of many in your class - prefer to debate such questions as “Should a Christian tithe?” our perspective is, rather, “Why wouldn’t a Christian be willing – no, desire! – to surrender a mere tenth?” When taken as a guiding principle more so than a “point of Law” to argue, giving a tithe thus becomes an exciting, wonderful act of worship, not a duty.

We deceive ourselves if we think that we are somehow “giving to God” any specific percentage of something that is “ours.” As established in our first lesson, it’s all His in the first place; so our attentive stewardship of the 90% we get to “keep” is really the crux of the matter. Help your class understand the simplicity – and the accompanying peace – of giving back to God a fraction of what He has allowed us to manage, as a way to show that we love and acknowledge Him.

This lesson will help your class distinguish between two ways of giving that honor God:

1. Giving a tithe as an act of obedience to the principle God established, not to be confused with ill-advised “obedience to The Law,” thus somehow earning righteousness in the process.
2. Giving an extra portion, or what we will “above and beyond” giving; this shows our heart for understanding why and when to release more of the 90% that we got to “keep.”

Think About It:

We honor God through giving a tenth of what we’ve earned or produced to help pay for the church to function and have an impact in our community.

As best as you are able, based on the age of your particular class, reiterate to your class that the idea of a “tenth part” dedicated to funding Kingdom work, through their local place of fellowship (i.e. their “temple”), is God’s idea, not man’s.

Tithing serves as a guideline for obedience in giving, rather than merely answering the heart-revealing question,

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“How much am I SUPPOSED to give?” Ask them if they've ever wondered, “How much am I ALLOWED to give?” Point out that no one really asks the latter question. But we all ask the former.

Talk About It:

WHAT DOES 1/10 LOOK LIKE?

TEACHER NOTE: Open this section with a brief, guided discussion on how to separate out one tenth. Hold up ten fingers, put one down, etc. Grades 3-4 should have an understanding of fractions; but even if not on an individual level, the following activity will help cement the point. Remove one of 10 blocks, or play items, and point out that the remaining 9 are plenty to accomplish play time, or building a projects, and so on.

Also, note that youngsters in grades 1 or 2 may surprise you with how well they grasp and appreciate this concept; don't assume they can't or won't “get it.”

- Younger classes: Using plastic coins (or even real ones, perhaps nickels because they are easier to pick up than pennies!) help them count out 10 and set one aside for God. Spend time discussing what that pays for in real-world terms: electricity, Bibles, local ministry work, missions support, etc.
- Older classes: Using play money, establish different jobs with different pay so the kids can appreciate the real-world fact that not everyone makes the same amount of \$, nor should be expected to give same numerical amount. This is why a “percentage-based” principle is so simple and important: it places obvious value on the idea that God wants us to give according to our ability and earnings, and that He holds us accountable accordingly.
- Optional idea: The beginning of the game “LIFE” does a great job of driving this concept: if you choose the “education” path, you have student loans but you make more on each PayDay. Taking the short “blue collar” road earns less per PayDay but you get to the next “phase” of life sooner. As suitable for the older classes, you could consider playing the game for a few minutes to establish the pay grade and then move into a discussion on what 10% looks like, and have them set it aside from a normal “week” salary.

Think About It:

WE HONOR GOD THROUGH GIVING “OVER AND ABOVE” OUR TITHE TO HELP PAY FOR GREATER MINISTRY AND OUTREACH, BOTH HERE AND ELSEWHERE.

Training our heart to do “more than what's expected” shows an understanding of Philippians 2 (NIV): “And being found in appearance as a man, [Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient unto death – even death on a cross!” Imitating Christ, as the Apostle Paul exhorts us,ⁱⁱⁱ means going above and beyond, willing ourselves past our

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comfort and convenience – and thus bringing glory to God. This principle applies equally to our worship, our work ethic, our parenting, our academics, our service to the church and community, and to our giving.

Whereas the faithful giving of our tithes reflects our obedience to the Father, “over and above” gifts evidence our desire to mirror His example of selfless generosity.^{iv} Note that such an offering must not become an act of “works,” lest anyone boast.^v Scripture shows us that such gifts will be facilitated through surplus and/or by sacrifice.^{vi} What the church has come to call “freewill offerings” is a great example of this category.

Giving over and above is solidified in two distinct passages in Paul's letters to the church in Corinth. We can “set aside” resources from what have presently,^{vii} and we can participate “beyond our ability,”^{viii} effectively believing God to supply what He divinely prompts us to contribute, that we do not yet possess.

Talk About It:

GIVEN THE VARIETY OF “GOOD” CAUSES AND NEEDS OUT THERE, WHERE SHOULD MY “EXTRA” GIVING BE DIRECTED?

Encouragement abounds to those who call Jesus, “Lord.” He makes a straightforward promise in John 10:27, telling us that “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” When we desire to know where else to give, we can rely on this process:

- **Pray.** Communicate with and wait upon the Lord (including fasting).
- **Walk** by faith, not by sight. If we wait until we can answer the question, “Where are the funds going to come from?” we will often never give.
- **Choose.** Follow through on what He directs, and follow His example of generosity.

Use some of these answers to prompt discussion in your class:

- Participation in the vision this church has articulated re: the current campaign (renovation/expansion, new land/building, debt retirement, missions initiative)
- “Para-church” ministries that are currently a focus for your local fellowship (missions organization, crisis pregnancy center, homeless shelter, etc.)
- What else moves your heart? (Compassion Intl, WorldVision, BloodWater Mission, Bikers for Jesus, etc.)

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Lesson Summary

An effective conclusion for this critical lesson is to show how the Word guides our giving: when we prove ourselves responsible with little (obedience), we show the Father that we can be entrusted with much (over and above).

Read or ask someone to read two key verses: **Luke 12:48(b), 16:10**. The inter-connectedness of these two passages reveal the weight placed by the Father on the responsible administration of resources by His children.



Suggested "object lesson" craft or activity:

- Play money exercise / game of LIFE as described above.
- "Firstfruits" game: compare new, fresh candy bar to one with several bites taken out. Any half-eaten food works here (apple, piece of pizza). Lesson 8 in Impact's Children's "Offering Lessons" Series describes this in greater detail.
- "Obedience results in blessing." Lesson 11 in Impact's Children's "Offering Lessons" Series describes this in greater detail.



Memory verses:

- **Luke 16.10(a)** Whoever can be trusted with little can also be trusted with much.
- **2 Cor 9.7(b)** God loves a cheerful giver.



Family Action for this week:

- Discuss your family's attitude toward "how much" we are to give, and to keep? Consider the many things we purchase that are neither needs, nor Kingdom-related. What is God showing you?
- Establish a consistent, prayerful approach to every opportunity to give. Make a list; commit to sowing seed faithfully.
- Follow through! Set aside a special savings account dedicated to the Lord. As resources become available, ASK your pastors/leaders what the most pressing needs are; avoid "designated giving" unless invited to do so. Trust your leaders to allocate the funds that are received.

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i	Lev 27:30
ii	Deut 7:6
iii	1 Cor 11:1, Eph 5:1
iv	James 1:5
v	Eph 2:9
vi	1 Chron 29:3
vii	1 Cor 16:2
viii	2 Cor 8:3