

Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

God Calls Us to Be **GENEROUS**

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Your Church**

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Discover the Riches of **CHRIST'S GLORY**



If we want to understand God's generosity,
we must begin with understanding Jesus!



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@DougBeacham](#).

Since 2013, the IPHC has given attention to each of our seven core values: "We Prayerfully Value Scripture," "We Prayerfully Value Pentecost," "We Prayerfully Value Holiness," "We Prayerfully Value Christ's Kingdom," "We Prayerfully Value All Generations," "We Prayerfully Value Justice," and now in 2020, "We Prayerfully Value Generosity."

The final core value of generosity speaks to all the other values, in a sense. The Bible speaks of wise stewardship, of the Holy Spirit guiding us in our resources, and of the need to sanctify ourselves for the judicious use of resources. We see opportunities around the globe to impact Christ's Kingdom. We are to invest wisely for future generations, and use our resources to help others.

In recent months I have been reflecting on various aspects of generosity: Financial resources, tithing, freewill offering, a generous heart and spirit, wise stewardship, world missions, church planting, investing into IPHC ministries of education, and benevolence.

I have found myself thinking about generosity from the standpoint of the nature of God. God's love, holiness, and goodness are all expressed in His generosity towards His creation. John 3:16 reminds us "that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The fact that God gives is a marker of God's essential generous nature.

When we read the letters of Paul, we discover that the apostle understood the essential giving nature of God. Paul found God's generous heart in the person and work of God's Son, Jesus the Messiah.

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, the Apostle Paul wrote directly about the joys of giving. He based his theological and practical guidance on the example of

Christ: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Paul concluded 2 Corinthians 9:15 with, these words of celebration: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

With this foundational understanding that our generosity flows from God's generosity, there are four additional Pauline passages that bring us to discover the riches that are in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19 says: "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." That God supplies means that He fulfills; He makes full, and He gives what is necessary for our need.

Our "need" describes what is necessary for us to live an abundant life as God's creation. The verbal form of "need" is found in Matthew 6:32, where Jesus tells us not to worry about the essentials of life because God knows what we need.

God fulfills our needs "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The "riches of glory" means there is an abundance available for all creation that brings glory to God. Christ Jesus is the instrument through whom these riches are made available to us.

The context of Philippians 4 is important. It is not about get-rich-quick schemes or winning the lottery. It is about a life contentment that mitigates against greed.

Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:18 that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know ... what are the riches of the glory of His

inheritance in the saints." God's riches are found in us, the people of God. These riches are the manifestations of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, natural abilities, and spiritual gifts that God has given us as members "one of another" (Romans 12:5). God's inheritance is found in us as we live for God and for one another.

Paul looked forward to the day when Jews and Gentiles would be fully reconciled, because through this "the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles" would be revealed (see Colossians 1:27). Paul added these words to the end of 1:27: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Notice that the pronouns are plural. Paul is referencing the body of Christ and not just us as individuals. In Christ, Jews and Gentiles are part of the one

body of Christ. I am thankful that the IPHC is engaged in affirming this ongoing effort of Jewish and Gentile believers discovering their uniqueness and togetherness in the riches of Christ's glory.

Finally, in Romans 9:23, in the context of God's plans for Israel, Paul saw that God is at work making known "the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory." God's love, revealed in Christ, works in conjunction with human freedom so that there are people who are "vessels of wrath" and there are people

who are "vessels of mercy."

This is not an expression of double predestination. Rather, it is a recognition of choices of obedience and disobedience that each person makes.

None of us deserve mercy. Yet God, who is "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4), makes us vessels of mercy for the sake of His name



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A place of hope. A people of promise.

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in the earth. The word "vessel" can refer to an object that contains something and to a sailing vessel that contains cargo. Our lives are "vessels" whereby mercy is received, and freely given to others!

I pray that in 2020 we will discover the great joy and purpose of generosity! I pray this discovery will lead us into the character and nature of our loving God who had shown us His riches through His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ! □

You can visit <https://iphc.org/corevalues/> to see resources related to each of the IPHC's core values. There is a free download booklet regarding Scripture at <https://iphc.org/corevalues/scripture/>. Downloads for each of the core values are being prepared and will be released in 2020.

How to Support the Church in **AFRICA**

There is a right way and a wrong way to show generosity to your brethren overseas.



BY TONY
MKAMANGA

TONY MKAMANGA and his wife, Charity, are leaders in the IPHC. They are based in Mzuzu, Malawi, but they travel throughout the country training new pastors and leaders, especially at the IPHC's training school in Blantyre. Both Tony and Charity have served in conference leadership. They have two daughters.

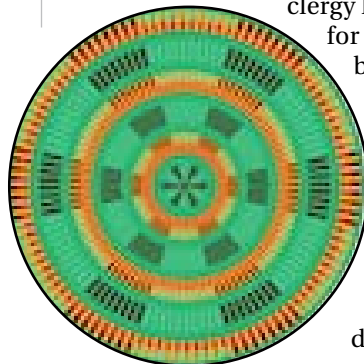
Ever since the missionary era began, Africa has been deeply indebted to the Western Church for its growth in the gospel. For many years the church in the West has sent courageous men and women to labor for Christ. Without them the gospel would not have reached some parts of our continent. The sacrifices have been enormous.

Through the Western church, congregations in my country of Malawi have surely grown over time. The seed that was planted has borne good fruit. The International Pentecostal Holiness Church first entered Malawi in the 1950s. That's a long time for a church to grow and be established. But the needs are still great.

The church in Malawi has been able to raise her own leaders, and evangelize and plant many churches, but our growth has been hindered. Some of the first congregations planted by IPHC missionaries were in remote villages; today those villages are hard to reach, and this has restricted our growth today. We desperately need to reach the more urban areas.

Also, the illiteracy rate is high in Malawi, as is the poverty level. Even many clergy live on less than a dollar per day, which is a very sad fact for a country that is solely dependent on agriculture. It is a big challenge to take the gospel from our rural churches to towns and cities.

This is why we still need support from the Western church. There is a cultural and geographical gap that needs to be bridged so we can meet the needs of the people and bring permanent change. As we begin a year-long discussion of generosity in 2020, I humbly ask my IPHC family to consider how you can help your brothers and sisters in Africa and other nations in the developing world:



1. WE NEED MISSIONARIES TO BE PARTNERS.

We are grateful for all the missionaries who began coming to Africa more than 200 years ago. For a long time the leadership pyramid in the church hierarchy has been handled by foreigners. In the beginning this was vital to train the local leaders, but now the church has matured. It is time for foreign missionaries to come alongside us as equal partners.

There have been times when missionaries from the West tried to control everything rather than releasing local leaders to take responsibility. This attitude has brought many hurts and divisions. However, when missionaries come to us with a servant mentality, to offer wisdom and other support as needed, we are greatly blessed. This is what we want from you.

2. WE WANT YOUR FRIENDSHIP, NOT JUST YOUR MONEY.

Many pastors in Malawi struggle to send their children to school and feed them throughout the year, since congregants only harvest crops once a year. A pastor's main source of income comes after farm produce is sold. So we face serious challenges.

It is true that our financial needs are great, but money alone does not solve every problem. The church in Malawi has lacked the type of father-and-son relationship that Paul had with Timothy. A church or leader should offer discipleship and fathering out of love, not simply to fulfill the obligation of an office.

When we talk about generosity, we must remember that we are called to give of our time and love, not just financial resources. It is indeed more blessed to give than receive; and when you give your hearts in true friendship, pastors and entire churches can be sustained through many challenges.

3. WE NEED MORE EDUCATION.

In Malawi, there has been a great deal of evangelism. Yet we lack discipleship. Many of our leaders, both laypeople and clergy, have a very shallow foundation in the Word,

especially in village churches.

We have taken a stand against spiritual ignorance, but many of our pastors cannot afford to attend Bible classes. In the past there was a program to sponsor the education of pastors, but that has been phased out. Please be generous with your resources so that leaders here can have deep spiritual roots and strong doctrinal foundations.

4. PARTNER WITH US LONG-TERM, NOT SPORADICALLY.

Sometimes in the West, missionary work is reduced to a "drive-by" approach. Mission teams come and go. Sometimes they come and never return. What we crave here in Malawi is a life-long relationship.


Fathers and mothers are committed to their children for life. This is what we need. Long-term partnership helps one to see the growth and fruit over time, something that a one-time gift or five-day mission trip cannot do. A long-term partner is able to become deeply involved with the Lord's work. Whether it through prayer, regular visits or financial support, please make it long-term.

5. HELP US BECOME FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT.

The early days of church planting created a dependence syndrome in the church in Malawi. The generosity of the missionaries taught the local church to see them as their source. But we cannot become spiritual adults unless we learn to make it on our own.

Most pastors and their members in small villages are dependent on agriculture. Perhaps you could help train them in new methods of farming or provide newer, more advanced equipment for irrigation? Perhaps you could support a church with an asset like a maize grinder. Or you could train church members in vocational skills.

The church in Malawi has enjoyed receiving handouts, but that is not sustainable. There is a popular adage that says: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." The Western Church has provided fish, but it has failed to teach us how to fish. The church does not need handouts at



“When we talk about generosity, we must remember that we are called to give of our time and love, not just financial resources.”

this time; we need empowerment so we they can be self-supporting.

6. WE NEED METHODS OF TRANSPORTATION.

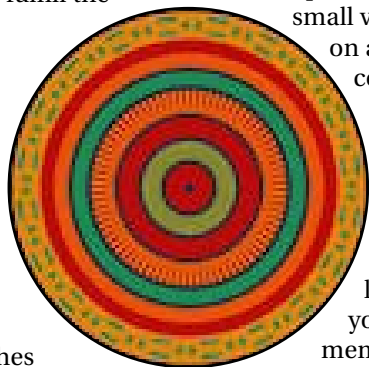
It can be quite challenging in Malawi for leaders to visit remote villages. Many roads are not good, and buses don't go to some areas where our churches are located. Many pastors use dangerous motorcycle taxis or ride in overcrowded pickup trucks. If these methods fail, they will even walk five to six hours to reach a community.

This makes our visits few, so the churches in the remote areas feel isolated from the rest of the church family. Supporting a pastor with a method of transport can ease the work of ministry. There have been times when my wife and I walked 15 hours to visit a church because we don't have transportation. This is very common for many pastors in Malawi.

7. SUPPORT OUR CONSTRUCTION WORK.

Even to this day many congregations in Malawi still worship in grass-thatched churches, and this is also the case for many pastors' houses. Weather conditions have become tougher, so mud-built structures are failing to stand the test of storms. If your church could support one of our congregations with iron sheets, cement or other building materials, we would rejoice!

Our work is still growing, and so is the need. There is a great harvest here, but many challenges. Africa needs your generosity. Please pray about how you can partner with us. □



You Can Know God's **TANGIBLE BLESSING**



You'll never understand God's desire to provide for you
if you don't understand His heart to bless.



BY GARRY
BRYANT

GARRY BRYANT is a native Virginian and the son of a Pentecostal Holiness minister. He has served as a senior pastor, Conference Christian Education Director, Redemption Ministries Conference Superintendent and National Field Director of ACTS2DAY Ministries. He is currently serving as Executive Director of Evangelism USA Ministries. Garry and his wife LaDawn live in Oklahoma City, and they have two adult children, Dreama and Garryt.

“We Prayerfully Value Generosity” is the driving theme across the IPHC for the year 2020. To properly engage and understand this important subject, we must begin with God. One of the greatest and most cherished characteristics of the Godhead is His demonstration of generosity.

Unfortunately, generosity and its place in our faith has been abused. The primary reason is that we have allowed generosity to be defined by a secular mindset and from self-serving agendas. We have drifted from the true root of generosity—which is the heart of God.

To gain God's perspective, let's reflect on one of the premier scriptural passages that defines heaven's generosity towards humanity. It is found in Numbers 6:22-24: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron and his sons, “This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace”’ (NIV).

These verses are often defined as the priestly blessing or the Aaronic blessing. The revelation they contain are more deserved than to be just a great source of declaration or benediction used in church services. These passages establish the foundation of God's intent as how He chooses to provide for His people.

God's message to Moses, which was passed through the high priest, Aaron, to the people, is filled with a broad demonstration of God's definition of generosity.

The undeniable message of this word from God was to communicate with the children of Israel His desire to serve them and give of Himself to them. Now that He has them to Himself, He is exposing that His heart for them goes far beyond the tangible, natural provisions that they sought after.

The Aaronic blessing is heaven's way of showing us that the greatest demonstration of generosity is not deliverance from Egypt, water from a rock, or manna from above. It is not seen primarily in His miracles or in the supply of His power and majesty. God's greatest demonstration of generosity is His desire and willingness to bless His people. He says: "Be reminded that this is how He said you are to bless the Israelites, 'The Lord bless you and keep you.'"

Fully understanding this declaration requires us to see God Himself in a place of generosity with a commitment to meet us where we are and serve us out of His capacity to provide for our needs. Following the text allows us to see God's intent:

HE WILL BLESS YOU.

The word "bless" in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word "barak"—which means "to kneel." It carries the connotation of bringing a gift on bended knee. It presents the idea of being strengthened in weakness, or being compensated with God's ability. It implies an empowerment from God to be able to do what is not within our capacity or capabilities.

The blessing of God simply means that He comes to us as if on bended knee and presents Himself even as a servant; offering us provision and heaven's supply based on His purpose, plan and will for our lives. It is as if He comes to you, kneels before you, looks you in the eyes and asks, "What can I do for you? What do you need? How can I serve you?"

This is an amazing portrait of a loving, caring, generous, and providing God! This is God expressing generosity in an unbelievably pure and unrestricted manner.

HE WILL KEEP YOU.

The emphasis of the word *shamar* in our text of consideration is taken from the relationship between the shepherd and his flock. The word "keep" in Numbers 6:24 is shepherding language. It describes the actions of a shepherd giving consistent and intentional care over his sheep.

The primary picture painted by this word is the daily activity of the shepherd leading his sheep in the wilderness to provide sustenance and care. Each day as necessary, the shepherd would gather thorn bushes and other available material to construct a corral or pen for the flock to stay in during the night. This would serve as a place of protection and safety from any predators and potential adversaries.

From this we see the watchful care of the shepherd on behalf of his sheep. The essential duties of the shepherd are to lead, feed, and protect. Caring for, watching over, tending to, preserving, and guarding are the shepherd's daily responsibilities.

The shepherd must faithfully carry out these shepherding activities. The shepherd/sheep relationship is one of the most

unique and endearing of all in regard to man and animals. It is through this language that Jehovah chose to communicate His care for His people. This was a determined part of His intent to bless, help, and serve those He was in relationship with.

He was saying through the priest to the people: "I am going to be your shepherd and I am going to take good care of you. I will keep you! My heart and action will be to guard, protect, preserve, and secure and watch with great care over you."

This is but a sampling of the multiple aspects of the priestly blessing at this evidence of God's desire to take care of His people. It provides clear proof that generosity begins with a heart to serve and the giving of oneself to another or others. The closing of Numbers 6:24 says:

"The Lord be gracious to you; the Lord make His face shine on you; the Lord be gracious to you; the Lord give you peace."

This theme is continual and amplified throughout the entirety of scripture. The essence of generosity resides in the willingness to give of oneself. The vulnerable Christ-child, the selfless life, of Christ, His commitment to serve and not to be served, His vicarious death on the cross--all of this validates clearly the reality of generosity we see in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can certainly discover this truth in the ministry of the early church, the lifestyle and teaching of the Apostles. They were a generous people in every way. 2 Corinthians 8:5 says:

"And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us" (NIV).

In the New Testament, generosity means so much more than giving financially. It is seen as a Christlike willingness to put others first. We can learn to be generous by studying the powerful "one another" passages found in the New Testament.

- Love one-another
- Serve one-another
- Be patient with one-another
- Submit to one-another
- Be kind to one-another
- Honor one-another
- Comfort one-another
- Be patient with one-another
- Forgive one-another
- Pray one for another

These Biblical passages are clear instructions for us to be generous in our actions and faith. Generosity begins with the heart, not with the hand!

Generosity is to be a valued aspect of our faith and lifestyle as Christ-followers. As we value generosity, let us be responsible in knowing that it is first a giving of ourselves, and then it is to be expressed in what we may have to offer.

We are blessed and privileged to follow God's example. We bless, we serve, and we give. May generosity be the mark and testimony of who we are and what we do! □

"God's greatest demonstration of generosity is His desire and willingness to bless His people."



SEVEN WAYS to Bridge the Generation Gap in Your Church

There's so much tension today between young and old.
Here's some help to ease the conflict.



BY J. LEE
GRADY

J. LEE GRADY is an author, traveling minister and former editor of *Charisma* magazine. Author of several books including *10 Lies the Church Tells Women* and *Set My Heart on Fire*, Lee leads The Mordecai Project—a missionary organization that focuses on bringing the healing of Christ to women who are abused and marginalized. Lee has been ordained in the IPHC since 2000, and he and his wife, Deborah, live in LaGrange, Georgia. You can learn more about his ministry at leegrady.com.

If you watched any of the Democratic Party's presidential debates in 2019, you'll know why San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro ended up dropping out of the race. He received poor marks from so many commentators and viewers in the September debate because he seemed to be attacking former Vice President Joe Biden for his age, implying that the 76-year-old candidate is losing his memory.

"Are you forgetting already what you said just two minutes ago?" Castro said to Biden during the televised event. The 45-year-old politician was upset that Biden didn't seem to remember what he had just said about his plans for a national health care system. (It didn't help when Biden suggested that low-income parents should "make sure you have the record player on" to encourage better education. He sounded old-fashioned and out-of-touch.)

Castro's comment during the debate revealed the obvious: There is a growing generation gap in American politics. Some younger politicians have even said that Biden, as well as Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren (who is 70) and New Hampshire Senator Bernie Sanders (he's 78), are too old to be president. And many of those same critics insist that Donald Trump should be replaced because he'll be 74 if he wins a second term in 2020.

This caustic "us versus them" mentality has become common in the church today. I constantly hear older Christians complaining about how "those young people" are forcing them to change the music or the dress code on Sunday mornings. Meanwhile I hear young people griping because the worship, preaching or attitudes at a particular church are not as hip as they require.

I know of a 36-year-old Bible college graduate in Alabama who was recently hired part-time to help an aging, declining congregation grow. But when the young

pastor met with the church's elders to suggest changes that needed to be made, none of the graying leaders were interested in his suggestions. They simply wanted him to be quiet and do what they asked.

"If you want to reach younger people," my young friend said, "you will need to change your music styles. And you will need to reach people who are outside of our current demographic, including African-American families." His suggestions were met with stony silence. The older church leaders were not interested in change.

In today's church climate, we've reached a generational impasse. We have marginalized each other. Is there any way we can bridge this gap? It won't be easy, but here are a few ways we could build a bridge:

1. DEAL WITH YOUR PREJUDICES.

Today we're super sensitive about confronting racism and sexism. Yet somehow we think it's OK to judge others because of age. When Jesus commanded us to "love one another" (John 13:34b), He didn't mean you should love only the people who are in your age demographic. He wants older Facebook users and younger Instagram users to get together instead of avoiding each another.

2. STOP WRITING PEOPLE OFF.

The New Testament also calls us to "accept one another" (Rom. 15:7a, NIV)—which means to be tolerant and patient toward those who aren't like us. That means older Christians shouldn't be offended by tattoos, piercings, technology or the clothing styles of Gen Xers. It also means younger people should try to learn something from an older person's "old-fashioned" attitudes instead of rolling their eyes at them.

3. LEARN TO SHOW HONOR.

I buried my brain-damaged father in 2018, and now my 91-year-old mother has dementia. I spend a lot of my time talking to nursing home residents these days, and they have taught me a lot about compassion. Their bodies and minds are worn out, but they are precious to God. We should honor the old, knowing that one day we will be in their condition. This will not be easy to do in a culture that worships youth, sexuality, and athleticism.

4. DON'T GET STUCK IN YOUR "ERA."

I don't understand older people who insist on "my way or the highway" when it comes to church styles. God is always moving forward. He is not stuck in the past, so why should I be?

Even though I'm 61, I don't mind if my pastor is half my age or if the music reflects today's styles. In fact, I try to make it my goal to stay current with social trends so I can relate to younger people. I want my church to reach youth, not just my generation. We must be flexible and willing to change.

5. ENCOURAGE MENTORING.

Today I spend most of my time discipling younger guys. Even though I'm old enough to be their dad, they enjoy spending time with me. They learn from my experiences, and I encourage them to achieve far more than I ever did.

I hear so many older Christians bashing Millennials and Gen X Christians for being hypersensitive "snowflakes," but that has not been my experience at all. Today's young Christians are passionate for God and totally teachable. Instead of criticizing them, reach out to younger people to provide support, affirmation, and encouragement.

6. BE OPEN TO "REVERSE MENTORING."

Even though I invest a lot of my time in discipling younger Christians, that doesn't mean I don't learn from them. My spiritual sons and daughters have taught me so much—they've trained me in technology, introduced me to new music and books, helped me adjust my attitudes, and even challenged me in physical fitness. I'm better off today because of the input I receive from younger people.

7. EMBRACE GOD'S GENERATIONAL MINDSET.

God is ageless, and He isn't locked into one generation's viewpoint. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He transcends time. He wants one generation to declare His praises to the next. He wants the mantle that rested on Elijah to be transferred to Elisha. Why is this concept so difficult for us to embrace? Churches that include all age brackets in their leadership teams will be able to encourage an inclusive mindset that honors all generations.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, Peter declared: "In the last days it shall be," says God, ... 'your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams'" (Acts 2:17, MEV). The Spirit wants to move across generational lines. He wants to speak through the young and the old. He wants to connect us, blend us, and use us together as one united body of Christ. □

"God wants one generation to declare His praises to the next. He wants the mantle that rested on Elijah to be transferred to Elisha."



Biblical Tithing, Generosity and the IPHC, **PART 1**

How do we respond to those who say that tithing
is no longer required by God in under the New Covenant?



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@DougBeacham](#).

The Fire-Baptized Holiness Church and the Pentecostal Holiness Church of North Carolina merged to form the IPHC on Tuesday, January 31, 1911, in Falcon, North Carolina. The delegates responded with worship and thanksgiving for the merger vote. As they sang and worshipped, the Holy Spirit moved on them to receive an impromptu love offering for Brother Edgerton, a man many of them knew “who had been sick for a long time.”

From our humble beginnings, a sensitivity to generosity and a care for others has been part of our spiritual DNA. In the very moment this church was founded, people reached into their pockets and gave.

Between 1911 and 1945, sermons and articles appealed to the biblical principle of tithing as the spiritual foundation for consistent giving and generosity. Then in 1945, the IPHC began to apply principles of tithing for all members and congregations consistently.

That decision at the 1945 General Conference, 75 years ago, remains part of the stance of the IPHC related to how individual Christians and IPHC congregations should give of their finances. Yet there are Christians today who hold that tithing was an Old Testament practice, is not required in the New Testament, and thus is not binding upon followers of Jesus. How do we answer those who insist that tithing is not an important part of the Christian journey?

The IPHC does not accept this interpretation of Scripture for several reasons. For the next few months, this series of articles in *Encourage* will address why the IPHC takes this stance and why tithing remains a source of blessing to those who will obey the Word of God.

A tithe is ten percent of something of value that one possesses. In biblical times it was often a tenth of a crop or a flock of animals. Many people today give a tenth of

their financial income. We tithe based on trusting God by faith and obeying His Word. Tithing is ultimately an expression of loving obedience and trust.

Tithing is first mentioned in connection with Abraham. The context is one of conflict and its aftermath. First, in Genesis 13, Abraham and his nephew Lot were conflicted over pastureland due to the size of their respective family groups. Lot moved to the then fertile plains of Sodom and Gomorrah, while Abraham remained in the high country of Judah, not far from Jerusalem.

Second, in Genesis 14, the Hebrew patriarch and his family found themselves in the whirlwind and aftermath of an international conflict. The conflict, in the ancient valley of Siddim, is the first international conflict described in the Bible. It described a revolt of five city/nation-states against four city/nation-states that had dominated them for twelve years. Sodom and Gomorrah were part of the rebellion, and thus Lot and his family were caught in the disaster.

The battle led to the defeat of the rebellion and the spoil of victory was carried into modern Syria (Genesis 14:10, 11, 15). Lot and his family, along with their possessions, were taken captive (14:12). In response, Abraham organized his family and workers into a militia that rescued Lot (14:14-16). Abraham then returned south towards Jerusalem from his successful rescue of Lot and the possessions.

As Abraham came to the King's Valley, he was met by the king of Sodom, who had managed to survive the first battle. They met near Jerusalem in an area known as the King's Valley (14:17). Once Abraham arrived in this area, he was met by the king of Jerusalem, a man named Melchizedek, king of Salem.

Melchizedek's name means "king of righteousness," and his kingdom means "peace." He was the priestly/kingly ruler of the ancient city that became

Jerusalem. His name is mentioned eleven times in Scripture (twice in Genesis, once in Psalm 110:4, and nine times in Hebrews).

Melchizedek brought "bread and wine," along with a blessing, to Abraham. In recognition of the superiority of Melchizedek (who is a type of Christ), Abraham paid tithes to him (see Genesis 14:20 and Hebrews 7:2).

The significance of Abraham tithing to Melchizedek is seen in the contrast of what the king of Sodom demanded of Abraham. The king said: "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself" (Genesis 14:21). Abraham, with no reservation, rejected the claim of the king of Sodom regarding the property (Genesis 14:22, 23).

The main points in this tithing narrative are evident:

1. When we tithe, we recognize there is one greater than us (see Hebrews 7:4). When

we tithe to our local church, we are actually tithing to the Lord—not to people or an institution.

2. Our tithe is an affirmation that we are dependent upon God as our source and our strength.

3. Our tithe is a rejection of the spirit of the world ("the king of Sodom"), which wants to be our source and strength.


4. The spirit of the world offers a compromise. The world says: You can be rich in things ("take the goods for yourself," Genesis 14:21), but it wants what is most precious, "the persons" (Genesis 14:21). By tithing we reject this evil deception.

5. Abraham tithed in faith.

Hebrews 7:4-10 makes it clear that when Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, he was acting in faith and not by demands of the law. The author of Hebrews reminds us that the law was not given to Moses until many years after Abraham met Melchizedek (see Hebrews 7:1-10).

As followers of Jesus, we do not tithe because the law demands it. Instead, we tithe because we acknowledge that God is our source. This act of obedience is based on faith, and it releases faith for what God seeks to accomplish through us for His glory.

We believe tithing is the foundational act of faith that releases heaven's blessings, as well as the spirit of generosity, into every area of life. It is Malachi 3:10 that promises us: "'Take me now in this,' says the Lord of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.'" □


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