

# Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

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BY DOUG BEACHAM



# What I Learned About **GENEROSITY** in My Early Years

God used key people during my seminary years to teach me the true meaning of giving.



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](#).

**I**n early January 1972, I drove from Franklin Springs, Georgia, to Richmond, Virginia, to attend Union Theological Seminary—a Presbyterian seminary that has since been named Union Presbyterian Seminary.

Although I had also been accepted at Duke Divinity School, I decided on Union for several reasons: 1) I had great respect for an uncle who was a Presbyterian lay elder; 2) I knew I could attend a very good church in Richmond, the Ray of Hope PHC led by Pastor Carl Campbell, that offered me an associate pastor position; 3) Union had a very strong Bible and Theology department; and 4) the Presbyterians gave me more scholarship money than the Methodists did!

I learned some lessons about generosity from the Presbyterian faculty members and classmates at Union. From the scholarships I learned they were generous in their kingdom thinking. Even though I was a young Pentecostal Holiness minister from an Arminian background, they didn't shy away from assisting me financially.

Their gifts were more than institutional funds; some came from a local Presbyterian congregation near Lexington, Virginia, the Monmouth Presbyterian Church, which invited me to preach as a way of expressing gratitude to the church for helping me.

I also learned more about generosity from Carl Campbell. Almost daily he poured his life into me on a personal and professional level. He unselfishly taught me how to be a pastor. He included me in almost all his ministerial duties and graciously shared his pulpit every week with me.

The seminary taught me about the generosity of learning. No one there mocked or ridiculed my evangelical/conservative/Pentecostal/Wesleyan heritage. They were patient with me as I learned theological systems that were foreign to me, and as I learned how to do Greek and Hebrew exegesis.

They also taught me new songs. At our chapel services we sang hymns I had never heard, but the words and melodies impacted my spirit. One of those songs continues to be especially meaningful to me. It is titled, "For All the Saints," and the opening lines are:

*For all the saints, who from their labors rest,  
who Thee by faith before the world confessed.  
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blessed.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

(You can hear a beautiful arrangement of this hymn [here](#).) I thought of this special hymn numerous times this past January. As of the writing of this column, there have been five IPHC families I personally know who have lost a loved one during January. I preached the funeral sermons for two of them, Rev. Edward Wood, Sr., and Mrs. Melvine Morgan.

The others I knew and either called by phone or sent a letter. But in each instance, I found myself grateful for the lives of these dear people. They shared the love of God generously with me and others.

Their families, friends, and colleagues gathered to generously share stories, hugs, comfort, and encouragement. In at least one instance, many gave generously on a Facebook page to help in the unexpected expenses faced by one family.

As I have reflected on the IPHC's core value of generosity, it has become increasingly clear to me that generosity is not limited to money. In the experiences and lives mentioned above I have experienced the generosity of hospitality, of encouragement, of shared knowledge, and of time.

Perhaps that is the greatest act of generosity that can be given to any of us: the time that someone gives us. In the two funerals where I preached, I was keenly aware that the surviving spouses had the joy of marriages that had lasted nearly sixty years. I knew that while they did not want their ill spouse to suffer, they nonetheless looked at their marriages with the sense that "it's never long enough."

I understand this more and more each day when I think of my wife, children, and grandchildren. I think of it in terms of what each of us are called to accomplish for Jesus Christ while we are on our sojourn on this earth.

The great hymn concludes with these verses:

*The golden evening brightens in the west.  
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest.  
Sweet is the calm of paradise blessed.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*But lo! There breaks a yet more glorious day;  
the saints triumphant rise in bright array.  
The King of glory passes on His way.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast;  
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host.  
Singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost:  
Alleluia, Alleluia! □*

# Encourage

**Place of Hope. People of Promise.**

February 2020

Vol. 7 No. 2

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*Encourage* is published monthly except in July and December by the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, P.O. Box 12609, Oklahoma City, OK 73157. Digital subscriptions are available free of charge by subscribing at [iphc.org/connect](http://iphc.org/connect). Images courtesy of [adobestock.com](http://adobestock.com) unless otherwise noted.



"Perhaps that is  
the greatest act  
of generosity that  
can be given to  
any of us: The  
time that someone  
gives us."





# Why the 'Prosperity Gospel' Is a **CHEAP MESSAGE**

Never appeal to greed when you take up an offering.  
Always inspire biblical generosity.



BY TERRY  
TRAMEL

**TERRY TRAMEL** is an ordained IPHC minister. He served for 15 years as a professor of Bible and Theology at Southwestern Christian University in Bethany, Oklahoma. In 2017 he assumed the role of Director of Outreach and Leadership Development for World Missions Ministries for the IPHC. He holds a B.S. in Pastoral Ministry from Mid-America Christian University in Oklahoma City, an M.A. in Theology from Southern Nazarene University in Bethany, Oklahoma, and a D. Min. in Pentecostal Leadership from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. He is the author of *The Beauty of the Balance: Toward an Evangelical/Pentecostal Theology*. He and his wife, Becky, live in Norman, Oklahoma. They have two adult children.

**W**e are never more like Jesus than when we give. Better stated, we are never more like Jesus than when we give *like He gave*. Giving was His language, His lifestyle, and His legacy. Never once did He give out of a selfish motive. His generosity flowed from His heart.

What a great surprise to encounter an additional beatitude from His lips even after we have finished reading the four gospels. The Apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders: "In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

The blessing of giving is not reserved for the wealthy; it is also the privilege of the poor. Everyone can do it, and no one is exempt from it.

In truth, one becomes rich by giving. Those who have meager resources, yet give often, are rich indeed. And yet those who have much and do not give, are poor. Likewise, one does not have to be rich to be greedy. An unholy love for money can ensnare anyone, regardless of what is in their bank account.

The New Testament has much to say about wealth, most of it in the form of a warning for believers to avoid. Jesus said it the most succinctly: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:19-20, Jesus said: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth..." (by hoarding them out of greed) "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (which happens by giving out of generosity).

Why does God favor His children with financial prosperity? Why would He bestow upon people more than they need? It is not so they can provide for adult children, nor to give them “peace of mind,” nor to elevate their standard of living. Rather, it is so they may give.

In Ephesians 4:28, Paul said: “Let him labor, working with his hands, that he may have to give to him who is in need.” Note the phrase “have to give.” The purpose of prosperity is not to hoard, nor even to have; instead it is having to give.

Proverbs 11:24-25 shows a contrast of two people, one motivated by greed and the other by generosity. “One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.” The irony in this text is that the one who freely gives gains the most, while the one who clings to his or her riches ends up losing.

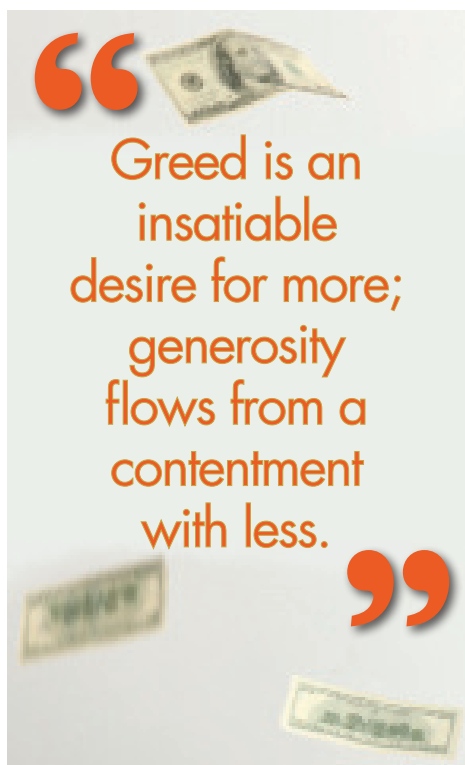
The so-called “prosperity gospel” has been popular in charismatic and Pentecostal circles for many years. It is fatally flawed in many ways. Chief among them is related to the motive with which people should give.

The emphasis of this pseudo-gospel is the idea that material possessions can be exchanged for greater financial or material blessings. Frequently, these “prophets for profit” will imply (or openly declare) that the more one gives, the more God will bless them financially. (Have you noticed that these leaders always want you to plant your seed in their soil? If the formula really works, shouldn't they be giving instead of receiving?)

One of the outcomes some of these teachers espouse is the “hundred-fold” heresy based on a flawed application of Mark 10:30. The formula suggests that if a person gives a dollar, they can expect \$100 back. If they give \$10, they can expect \$1,000. If they give \$1,000, they can expect \$100,000, and so on. When “giving to get” becomes the motivation, suddenly the offering basket becomes a slot machine.

This philosophy appeal to a carnal heart of greed more than a Christ-like spirit of generosity. It is a far cry from the words of Jesus, who instructed His followers to give to others “expecting nothing in return” (Luke 6:35).

Jesus promised those who practice



this that their “reward will be great.” The Master reminded His listeners of that same truth in another parable: “But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:13-14).

This kind of giving doesn't appeal to greedy people because they cannot realize any return on their investment in this life. However, for those motivated by generosity, a sure reward is promised in the end at “the resurrection of the just.”

As a minister, when you receive an offering you should acknowledge that the Bible does speak of the promise of rewards for giving to those in need. However, those “rewards” are not promised to be financial blessings or material possessions. Note the words of Jesus: “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life” (Luke 18:29-30).

Prosperity preachers like to jump on the phrase “in this time” and presume it is a reference to material gain in the present. However, the context reveals that the reward both now and in the future age to come is inclusion in the

new family of God, the community of Christ followers, which is greater than any material possession.

How can we tell what is the true motivation of our own hearts when it comes to giving? Consider these truths:

- \* Greed is always about getting; generosity is always about giving.
- \* Greed is always hoarding; generosity is always helping.
- \* Greed is always grabbing; generosity is always gracing.
- \* Greed is an insatiable desire for more; generosity flows from a contentment with less.
- \* Greed is a horrible master; generosity is a faithful servant.
- \* Greed holds possessions tightly; generosity holds possessions lightly.
- \* Greed never has enough; generosity is satisfied with enough.
- \* Greed is something you feel; gratitude is something you do.
- \* Greed filled Judas; gratitude followed Jesus.
- \* Greed motivated Zacchaeus before he met Jesus; generosity flowed from him after he met Christ.
- \* Greed and generosity cannot co-exist in the same vessel. To be filled with one is to be empty of the other. Generosity is the antidote for the wretched malady of greed.

For every pastor and leader receiving offerings and raising funds, the lesson is clear. We must not appeal to the greed that may be lurking in the heart of givers. Rather, we should target their gratitude, which best releases their gifts with great generosity. □



# We Serve a **GENEROUS GOD.** That's Why We Should Be Givers.

People who want to limit their giving  
don't understand the heart of our Savior.



BY TEODOR  
BULZAN

**TEODOR BULZAN** is the bishop of the IPHC in Romania and senior pastor of Bethany Christian Center in Oradea. During the days of communist rule in his country he was a church leader. But after the revolution in 1989 he began planting churches all over Romania. Since 1996 these churches have partnered with the IPHC, and the network has grown to 80 congregations. He and his wife, Sanda, have six children and seven grandchildren.

**G**enerosity is not only one of our core values in the IPHC; It is part of our spiritual DNA. We have always been a people of generous sacrifice. Generosity is a principle we value, share with others, for which we pray.

Man's generosity is rooted in God, and human beings cannot be generous without God. Yes, a man can give for his own benefit, or to boost his reputation or his ego. But Biblical generosity requires giving without expecting something in return.

The generosity of God is obvious in the way He deals with his creation, and especially with sinners. God loves, and He gives to us because He first loved us. That is His character! He gave His Son for the salvation of humankind. His merciful heart moved Him to redeem us. He paid the ultimate price for us! He sent the Holy Spirit to live in us, sanctify us, and make us generous people.

In fact, the Bible tells us a lot about God's generous character:

## **1. HE HAS A GENEROUS HEART.**

Ephesians 1:7-9 says: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he



lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ" (ESV).

Notice that he "lavished" His grace upon us. This means He is not stingy! He did not withhold anything when He forgave us. His love overflows. He generously offered all of His lovingkindness and mercy in the process of redemption.

## 2. GOD'S GENEROSITY IS OBVIOUS IN CREATION.

Psalms 65:9-13 says: "You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

"You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy" (ESV).

Look at the world around you and you will see that God did not spare anything when He made this world. The endless varieties of animals, the majestic waterfalls, the myriad colors of flowers, and the massive expanse of the ocean tells us that our God spared no expense to make this beautiful planet. And what is so wonderful is that God did not give up on this world when man perverted it with sin.

## 3. GOD'S GENEROSITY IS ALSO OBVIOUS IN HIS PROVIDENCE.

Acts 14:17 says: "Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (ESV). Yes, every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. All we have is from God.

Sinners do not recognize this, but we are all dependent on God's generous goodness. He blesses both saint and sinner alike with rain, freedom, protection, food, and relationships.

## 4. GOD'S GENEROSITY IS EXPERIENCED IN SALVATION.

Ephesians 2:5 says, "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, (He) made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved" (ESV). Yes, we were saved by grace, not by our deeds. We did not deserve this mercy. God generously gave everything for us to be saved. We did not have to pay for it; His salvation is a gift. He even gave His only Son so that we might have an abundant life on this earth.

## 5. GOD ALSO PROMISED US ETERNAL LIFE.

We all know the beautiful promise of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (ESV). This is the essence of all His promises: grace and mercy. How marvelous that our heavenly Father has chosen to provide mansions for us in His realms of glory. Jesus told us He has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us!

Our God is a generous Giver, and He calls us to imitate Him. Generosity is His standard. He told us in Matthew 5:48: "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

God knows we cannot be perfect—and especially we can't be perfect in our generosity. That is why He teaches us. The Law and the whole Old Testament are for our instruction.

In the Old Testament God taught the people to give a tithe of ten percent. That was a must because, as we know, when you teach a child you have to impose upon him until he understands that is something he should do freely.

The Old Testament was a tutor that led us to Christ. This is why we are not limited in the New Testament to simple tithing. We don't have anything imposed on us, because we are expected to be like our Savior—to be able to give everything.

It is important to observe the first disciples in the early church. We are told in Acts 4:34-35 that they were ready to give "all" they had: "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold, and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need" (ESV).

I don't want to say that selling everything is a model for us all, but I am sure that this Scripture is not included in the Bible by coincidence. We must learn from it. At the least, it is an answer for those who don't even give the tithe.

Some Christians today claim that the tithe is not mentioned in the New Testament. Of course it is not mentioned! In the days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it was expected that we would give more than the tithe. The Old Testament concept of giving only led us to the deeper concept of wholehearted generosity.

If we have a generous heart, surely we will give more than a tithe. We will give out of love, not obligation, and we will give with the potential to share everything with everyone! This should be our goal.

All this means more than money, of course. Today there are Christians who are giving their lives for the gospel in countries where it is illegal to be a Christian. They are giving everything! Let us, then, be generous like our God is with us. ■

"If we have a generous heart, surely we will give more than the tithe. And we will give out of love, not obligation."



# EIGHT WAYS

## Global Christianity Is Different from the American Church

We have so much we can give our brothers and sisters overseas. But they have so much to give us, too.



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](http://leegrady.com).

In February of this year I made my 138th international mission trip. I traveled to El Salvador with a Russian-speaking disciple who lives in the United States. We encouraged local Christians in two cities where many people struggle with poverty. I ate the local food (I love *papas*, which are Salvadoran tacos), visited many local churches and listened to the struggles of pastors, many of whom work full-time jobs in the marketplace to feed their families.

I try to see the world through their eyes.

My American friends often ask me how the church overseas is different from ours. Of course that depends on which part of the world I'm visiting. But I can say unequivocally that (1) most Americans have no idea how blessed we are, and (2) the global church struggles in ways we don't understand.

On a trip to Central Asia last year, during a bumpy van ride on a mountainous road, I asked my Slavic team members how the global church differs from the American church. Everyone on my team grew up in the former Soviet Union, and they came to America to flee religious persecution. Together we compiled this list of differences:

### 1. CHRISTIANITY HAS A HIGH COST.

In most countries of the world there are negative consequences for anyone who follows Jesus. Some lose jobs or are denied promotions. Some experience harassment, eviction, fines, or arrest. And a growing number of believers worldwide are martyred—mostly because Christianity is growing in hostile areas. Jesus' words in John 15:19 are so relevant to the majority



of Christians today: “But because you are not of the world ... the world hates you.”

In January of this year, for example, the president of the Christian Association of Nigeria was kidnapped by members of Boko Haram, an Islamic terrorist group that has been spreading violence all across northern Nigeria. His captors killed him a few days later.

## 2. BIBLES, CHRISTIAN BOOKS, AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION ARE RARE.

Americans have access to a treasure trove of spiritual resources. We have seminaries, Bible colleges, unrestricted Christian broadcasting, unlimited access to Christian books and music, and more Bibles than we can read. But in many of the countries I visit, one Christian book is treated like a prized commodity.

Are you thankful for your copy of the Scriptures? The nation of Turkmenistan didn't get a Bible in its native language until 2016—yet there are huge challenges to distributing it in a country that is closed to the gospel. Uzbekistan did not get access to the full Bible until 2018.

## 3. THE GLOBAL CHURCH DOESN'T RELY SO MUCH ON BUILDINGS.

I met a pastor from China who told me that he had to limit his congregation to 75 people because they had to meet in a small office. The government didn't allow him to build a sanctuary. But because so many people were being converted, he had to start a new church every four months. I have preached in churches that meet in apartments, stores, huts with thatched roofs, caves, front yards, warehouses, and on hillsides.

## 4. THERE ARE RESTRICTIONS ON WHAT CAN BE PREACHED.

In several countries I've visited recently, American preachers have been permanently banned because they said things from a pulpit that are offensive to other religions. In many countries, local governments monitor what is preached in churches. The next time you rant on social media to protest whatever you want, remember that most people in the world don't have that freedom. I hope you value your right of free speech.

## 5. ECONOMIC HARDSHIP MAKES MINISTRY DIFFICULT.

Many of my African pastor friends make less in one year than I make in a month. I know a pastor in Malawi who only gets the equivalent of 50 cents in his weekly church offering. In the United States, we base our church budgets on tithes from faithful donors. But how does a church in Uganda operate when members put chickens or bags of rice in the offering? Financial stress is one reason many pastors overseas suffer from burnout.

## 6. THERE IS A SERIOUS LACK OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.

In the United States we refer people in church to a variety of counseling resources. We have grief support, divorce care, family counseling, marriage counseling, and rehabilitation centers for addicts or domestic violence victims. Many of these programs are non-existent overseas. People simply survive—or die prematurely because healing isn't available.

“Don't live in a selfish bubble. Open your heart wide and look for ways to serve the international church.”

## 7. SPIRITUAL HUNGER IS INTENSE.

No matter where I go in the developing world, I find that people are desperate for God's presence. At one church I preached at in Barranquilla, Colombia, more than 1,000 people packed a church for a 6 a.m. service! When I preached at a church in rural Uganda, people who couldn't find a seat in the church put chairs outside the windows and sat in the hot sun to hear God's Word. That would never happen in our comfortable American church campuses that have padded chairs, coffee bars, and parking shuttles.

## 8. MOST GLOBAL CHURCHES RELY ON THE SUPERNATURAL POWER OF GOD.

No matter where I go overseas, Christians line up for prayer for healing. Miracles are common. And it's normal for someone to receive deliverance from a demon—with screaming—in a Sunday service. In the United States, we prefer strobe lights with wide screens and cool graphics instead of unscripted bursts of Pentecostal power. We have our schedule to follow. We want things to be neat and tidy. We don't want the sudden, messy interruptions of the Holy Spirit.

I'll always be an American, but I carry the global church in my heart. We have so much we can give them. But more than that, they have so much to teach us.

Jesus said in John 4:35: “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.’” As we seek to embrace true, biblical generosity in 2020, let's ask the Lord to open our eyes to see the mission opportunities He places all around us.

Don't live in a selfish bubble. Be willing to say, “Here I am, Lord, send me.” Open your heart wide and look for ways to serve the international church. □

# Biblical Tithing, Generosity and the IPHC, **PART 2**



Some Christians teach that tithing isn't required today.  
But tithing began before the Law of Moses was given.



BY DOUG  
BEACHAM

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Part 1 of this series, which appeared in the January issue of Encourage, established that the practice of tithing began in the Bible when Abraham tithed to Melchizedek (see Genesis 14:20). In that act, Abraham asserted his dependence upon one greater, Melchizedek, and his independence from the claims of the spirit of the age, symbolized in the demand of the king of Sodom.

The next reference to tithing is found in the life of Abraham's grandson, Jacob. Following his encounter with God at Bethel, Jacob freely proclaimed that he would give a tenth, or "tithe," to God (see Gen. 28:22). Several things emerge from this account in Genesis 28. First, the tithe is in response to covenant promises that God had made to Jacob, promises that were consistent with the covenant made to Abraham.

Second, while the Bible does not specifically say so, it is likely that Abraham had shared the covenant promise with his son Isaac, who in turn had shared it with Jacob. In Genesis 28, the revelation of the Lord made it personal and real to Jacob. In so sharing the promise and blessing, Abraham no doubt shared the covenant response of faith and tithing.

A further point related to the patriarchs and tithing is found in the New Testament in Hebrews 7. While the primary point of Hebrews 7 is Christological, related to Melchizedek being a type of Christ, tithing as an expression of submission runs throughout the discussion.

In fact, in relation to the law of Moses, tithing is described as having been established through Abraham and his seed, including Levi, the son of Jacob.

We are told in Hebrews: “Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him” (Heb. 7:9-10).

The importance of this New Testament insight is that tithing did not originate in the law of Moses. Rather, the law of Moses took an established covenant-based practice and made it applicable to the Israelites who were fulfilling the covenant as they entered the promised land.

The law of Moses described tithing in Leviticus 27, Numbers 18, and Deuteronomy 12, 14, and 26. From 2 Chronicles 31, Nehemiah 10, 12, 13, and Malachi 3, we know that tithing was the financial foundation for the support of the ministry in the house of the Lord throughout the Old Testament period.

The Malachi 3 passage is particularly instructive for us, and is often used today when we hear teaching and preaching about the subject of tithing. As the final book in the Old Testament, it reflects the times of Ezra and Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the temple following the Babylonian exile. This dates it somewhere in the 400s B.C.

It appears that the Israelites, who consistently failed to obey the covenant, had again failed to obey the portion of the covenant related to tithing. Malachi 3:8 used a strong metaphor to describe this particular failure, “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.”

Legally, there is a difference between robbery and theft. When we fail to tithe, we are not stealing from God, as if God is not home and doesn’t know that we took what is rightfully His. It’s actually far worse!

Robbery is a violent act. It is a personal act whereby something is taken from another person by threat of harm. When we fail to tithe, it is as if we are face to face with God, and we presume to have the power to take the tithe from Him. This is why God said in 3:9, “You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me.”

God’s judgement is not primarily about violating a portion of the law of Moses. His judgement is about our rejection of His divine claim, a claim that is actually for our own good. God reminded the Israelites, and us, in 3:10-11, that if we will respond to the covenant promises as Abraham did, He “will open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”

The language is powerful as God Himself makes His covenant promise an “if” clause that relates to His own integrity. God has committed Himself to bless us as we commit ourselves to this act of acknowledging His Lordship through the tithe of our material resources. Tithing is an act of submission to His will.

For us as Christians in the New Testament era, we stand in continuity with the covenant family of Israel and as inheritors of God’s promises further revealed in Jesus Christ. We believe God has

established tithing as the proper response of people of faith to His promises. We also believe that according to Malachi 3:10, God has committed Himself to be faithful to His promises as we respond in faithful obedience.

It is popular for some Christians today to claim that we have no obligation to tithe today, under the New Covenant, because tithing was part of the Old Testament law. But we in the IPHC believe that tithing actually originated with Abraham, before the Law was given. It is a fundamental and timeless truth. When we tithe, we not only acknowledge God’s full ownership of us, but we unlock the full provision and blessings He has promised to His people.

In Part 3 of this study, to be published in March, we will take these insights and view them in light of the New Testament and what this means for us in our life with Christ. □



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