

# Foundations Course - Supplement

## STEWARDSHIP AND TITHING

The topics of stewardship and tithing are connected by the fact that God is the owner of everything.

Sometimes stewardship and tithing are seen to be the same, but stewardship goes beyond the giving of money. The paying of tithes is our acknowledgement that God is the owner of all things, and as stewards we administer, organize, oversee what God owns.

### Stewardship

Definition: A steward is "A person appointed to manage the domestic or business affairs of a large household or estate." Webster's Dictionary

A steward is "One to whose care is committed the management of a household."  
New Compact Bible Dictionary

### Some Old Testament Stewards

1. The first steward mentioned in the Bible was Adam. *Genesis 2:15; 1:28*  
God expected good stewardship to result in fruitfulness. Good stewardship is not a static thing. God has provided us with tremendous resources in both the physical and spiritual realms. He expects us to use them with wisdom, and respect (for him as the owner).
2. Abraham had a steward or servant who was entrusted with the task of finding a wife for Abraham's miracle son, Isaac. It was through Isaac that Abraham's promised descendants would come, so choice of a suitable wife was vital. In the course of his quest the steward was given some of his master's wealth in the form of gold and jewellery to offer the prospective bride and her family. The story in *Genesis 24* tells how the servant asked God for direction and demonstrated his desire to bless his master (*verse 12*).

As stewards we should display the same qualities: faithfulness with our Master's wealth and the desire for him to be blessed by the outcome of our actions.

3. The life of Joseph (*Genesis chapters 37-47*) is an amazing demonstration of good stewardship. Joseph chose to honour God by being a faithful steward in very difficult circumstances.

He became a faithful and fruitful steward in the home of the Egyptian, Potiphar (*chapter 39*). He was regarded with great trust and eventually was in charge of the whole household.

When Joseph was unjustly convicted and put in an Egyptian jail he also showed his faithfulness there. He lived his life in such a way that he honoured God and became respected by inmates and jailers – a sort of ‘trustee’. In such unfavourable circumstances God used him and there was fruitfulness in his life. *Genesis 39:20-23*

Joseph’s third area of stewardship was so fruitful that it saved a whole nation. From a prisoner he became the second in charge, under the Pharaoh. *Genesis 41:39-44*

With these resources Joseph saved the Hebrew nation from being wiped out by famine. He was only a teenager when he began a life of good stewardship and he progressed to more and more responsibility.

The life of Joseph demonstrates the two main characteristics of a good steward:

FAITHFULNESS (he had his master’s interests at heart)

FRUITFULNESS (he was effective in using what was given to him)

### New Testament Stewards

In the New Testament both Jesus and Paul liken God’s people to stewards.

A good steward:

- recognizes who the master is
- desires to benefit his master
- uses his master’s property for the most good (*Luke 19:13*)

In *Matthew 25:14-28* the parable shows that the owner expected his stewards to not only be faithful but to be fruitful. A steward who wisely uses small things for his master’s benefit will be trusted with bigger things. (*Verses 21,23*)

Jesus repeats the same thought in *Luke 16:10-12*:

*“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?”*

We are stewards of:

- God’s gifts

We are stewards of the gifts of grace God has entrusted to us. None of God’s gifts are for us to keep and hold to ourselves, but are for “the common good”. *1 Corinthians 12:7*

*“As each one has received a gift employ it for one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” 1 Peter 4:10 RSV*

- the good news

God has entrusted to us the ministry and message of reconciliation. *2 Corinthians 5:18,19; 1 Thessalonians 2:4*

- time  
*"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15,16 RSV*
- God's Word  
 In 2 *Timothy 2:15* we are told to handle the Word of God correctly, as workmen who are not ashamed.
- God's provision  
 For example: our homes – maintain and care; our jobs – wholehearted and honest approach; money – wise and honest use.  
*"...work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men..." Colossians 3:22-24*

## Tithing

As stewards we oversee what God owns; the tithe is paid to God to acknowledge his ownership. Tithe literally means 'tenth'.

### Old Testament

Early in the Old Testament there are examples of men of faith paying their tithes to God. There were no written laws about the matter at the time, but they paid their tithes to God, from the heart. It was their acknowledgement that all good things come from God and that he is the owner of all things. These truths came to them as a direct revelation from God.

Abram (later Abraham) tithed to the priest, Melchizedek. Both acknowledged God as the possessor of heaven and earth. *Genesis 14:18-20*

Jacob vowed to give the Lord a tenth of all he received. Jacob who was poor at the time later had plentiful provision. *Genesis 28:20-22*

Many hundreds of years after Abram and Melchizedek, God gave the written law to men (to demonstrate their sinfulness, because they no longer served him from the heart). This included details about paying the tithe also. This tithe was paid to the tribe set aside for priestly duties (Levites). Unlike all the other tribes of Israel the Levites had no land as an inheritance, so they had no means of income. They ministered to God on behalf of the people. *Numbers 18:20-24*

Read Malachi 3:7-12. Here God charges his people to bring their tithes into the storehouse. He says that they are robbing him if they neglect to do so and that they forfeit their blessing. In his book 'Discipleship and Commitment', Derek Prince suggests that the place to pay the tithe is the place where we get our spiritual 'food' and 'seed'.

The motivation to tithe should not be to seek blessing. The heart attitude here must be pure with a desire to honour God.

### New Testament

In *Hebrews 9:11* we are told that Jesus is our High Priest and is likened in *Hebrews 7:11 and 17*, to the priest Melchizedek to whom Abram paid his tithe. *Hebrews 7:1-3*

No precise details are given in the New Testament as to how Christians paid their tithes. The first Christians were converts from Judaism, so they already knew the principle of tithing.

Jesus mentions tithing when he addresses the Pharisees. He castigates them for some of their behaviour and particularly their motives. He says that justice, mercy and faithfulness cannot be replaced by carrying out all the

minute 'legalistic' requirements of tithing. However, Jesus does not suggest that they cease to pay their tithes. He says that they should both pay their tithes and clean up their attitudes. *Matthew 23:23,24*

Jesus taught that if we give we will also receive. This is a principle that applies beyond tithing to other kinds of giving. The Bible mentions offerings and the giving of alms (gifts for the poor and needy). *Luke 6:38*

It takes faith to tithe. God gives a challenge in *Malachi 3:10*:

*“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this’, says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it’.”*

Those who acknowledge God's ownership by paying the tithe can freely bring their needs to him.

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*“Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion,  
for God loves a cheerful giver.”  
*2 Corinthians 9:6, 7**

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