

Surprising Facts Series

25. World-wide Embezzlement Scandal!

It's true. It involves billions of people. And worse, the funds are being embezzled from God. "Come on!" you say. "Nobody would be bold enough to embezzle money from God!" But the urgent message from God's celestial newsroom is, **"Ye have robbed me." Malachi 3:8.** Official records show that billions of earth's people embezzle from God regularly. Amazing as it may seem, they use God's money to try to balance their own personal budgets. Many of these embezzlers are unaware of the fact that they are taking God's money. Let's look at the Bible facts concerning this international embezzlement scandal.

1. According to the Bible, what portion of our income belongs to the Lord?

"And all the tithe of the land ... is the Lord's." Leviticus 27:30.

Answer: The tithe belongs to God.

2. What is the "tithe"?

"I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance." "The tithes of the children of Israel ... I have given to the Levites to inherit." Numbers 18:21, 24.

Answer: The tithe is one-tenth of a person's income or increase. The word "tithe" literally means "tenth." The tithe belongs to God. It is His. I have no right to keep it. When I tithe, I am not making a gift; I am simply returning to God what is already His. Unless I am returning one-tenth of my income to God, I am not tithing. One tenth of a person's increase belongs to God.

3. Where does the Lord ask His people to bring the tithe?

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." Malachi 3:10.

Answer: He asks us to bring the tithe into His storehouse. The tithe is to be brought into God's storehouse, His work, or church.

4. To what does the Lord refer when He speaks of His storehouse?

"Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries." Nehemiah 13:12. (The marginal reference calls treasuries "storehouses.")

Answer: In Malachi 3:10, God refers to the storehouse as "mine house," which means His temple or church. Nehemiah 13:12 further points out that the tithe is to be brought to the temple treasury, which is God's storehouse. Other texts that refer to the storehouse as the temple treasuries, or chambers, include 1 Chronicles 9:26 (see margin); 2 Chronicles 31:11, 12 (see margin); and Nehemiah 10:37, 38. In Old Testament times, God's people brought 10 percent of all their increase, including crops and animals, to the storehouses.

5. Some have thought that tithing was part of Moses' system of rites and ceremonies that ended at the cross. How does the Bible help us understand that this is not so?

"And he [Abram] gave him tithes of all." Genesis 14:20. And in Genesis 28:22, Jacob said,

"And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Answer: These passages reveal that both Abraham and Jacob, who lived long before Moses' day, tithed their income. We can therefore conclude that God's plan of tithing preceded Moses' law.

6. But didn't Jesus abolish the plan of tithing?

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Matthew 23:23.

Answer: No! On the contrary, He endorsed it. Jesus was rebuking the Jews for omitting the more important matters of the law, "judgment, mercy, and faith" even though they were meticulous tithers. He then plainly told them they should continue tithing, but should also be just and merciful and faithful. Jesus explained to the Pharisees that although they should tithe, they must not neglect the more important matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

7. For what was tithe used in old Testament days?

"I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." Numbers 18:21.

Answer: The tithe in Old Testament days was used for the income of the priests. The tribe of Levi (the priests) received no portion of land for crop-growing and business operations, while the other 11 tribes did. The Levites worked full-time taking care of the temple and ministering to God's people. So God's plan was that the tithe support the priests and their families. In Old Testament days, the tithe was used to pay the priests.

8. Did God change His plan for tithe usage in New Testament days?

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." 1 Corinthians 9:13,14.

Answer: No! He continued it. His plan today is that tithe be used to support those who work solely in gospel ministry. If all people tithed and the tithe were used strictly for the support of gospel workers, there would be more than enough money to reach the entire earth very quickly with God's end-time gospel message. Today, tithe is to be used to pay the salaries of God's ministers and Bible workers.

9. What startling proposal does God make to people who feel uncertain about tithing?

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse ... and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Malachi 3:10.

Answer: He says, "Prove me now" and see if I will not "pour you out a blessing" too big to receive. This is the only time in the Bible that God makes such a proposal. He is saying, "Give it a try. It will work. I promise you." Hundreds of thousands of tithers the world over will gladly testify to the truth of God's tithing promise. They have all learned the truth of the words: "You

can't outgive God." God promises that faithful tithe payers will receive blessings so great that they will not have room enough to receive them.

10. When we tithe, who really receives our money?

"And here men that die receive tithes; but there he [Jesus] receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." Hebrews 7:8.

Answer: Jesus, our heavenly High Priest, receives our tithes.

11. What test did Adam and Eve fail, which all of us must pass if we would inherit His heavenly kingdom?

Answer: They took things that God said were not theirs. God gave Adam and Eve the fruit of all the trees in the garden of Eden except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16, 17). The fruit of that tree was not theirs to eat. They were to leave it alone. Eve said they were not even to touch it (Genesis 3:3). But they did not trust God. They ate the fruit and fell—and the long, horrendous, wrenching sojourn in sin began. To people today, God gives His riches, wisdom, and all of the other assets and blessings of heaven. Everything is ours, except one-tenth of our income, which is His (Leviticus 27:30). But as with Adam and Eve, He does not take it by force. He leaves it within our reach but warns, "Don't take that. It is holy. It is mine." When we knowingly take God's tithe and appropriate it for our own use, we repeat the sin of Adam and Eve and thus display a tragic lack of trust in our Redeemer. God does not need our money, but He deserves our loyalty and trust.

Make God Your Partner. When I return God's tithe, I make Him a partner in everything I undertake. What a fantastic, blessed privilege: God and I, partners! With Him as my partner, I have everything to gain and nothing to lose. It is an awesomely dangerous venture to take God's own money, which He has earmarked for the saving of souls, and use it for our own personal budgets. When I take God's tithe and use it for myself, I repeat the sin of Adam and Eve.

12. In addition to the tithe, which belongs to God, what else does God ask of His people?

"Bring an offering, and come into his courts." Psalm 96:8.

Answer: The Lord asks us to give offerings for His work as an expression of our love for Him and our thanksgiving for His blessings. God's people gladly give offerings as an expression of their love for Him.

13. How much shall I give to God as offerings?

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7.

Answer: The Bible does not specify a set amount for offerings. Each person decides (as God impresses) how much to give and then gives it cheerfully.

14. What additional Bible principles does God share with us regarding giving?

Answer: A. My first priority should be to give myself to the Lord. **"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." 2**

Corinthians 8:5.

B. I should give God my very best. **“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:” Proverbs 3:9.**

C. God blesses the generous giver. **“There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” Proverbs 11:24, 25.**

D. It is more blessed to give than to receive. **“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35.**

E. When stingy, I am not rightly using my God-given blessings. (Luke 12:16-21).

F. God returns more than I give. **“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” Luke 6:38.**

G. I should give in proportion to how God has prospered and blessed me. **“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” 1 Corinthians 16:2.**

H. I should give as I am able. **“Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there.” Deuteronomy 16:17.**

We return tithe to God, to whom it already belongs. We give offerings. Offerings are voluntary and should be given joyously. Giving ourselves to the Lord should be our first priority.

16. How does the Lord refer to people who do not return His 10 percent and give offerings?

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.” Malachi 3:8.

Answer: He refers to them as robbers. Can you imagine people stealing from God? God considers people robbers who do not tithe and give offerings.

15. What does the Lord own?

Answer:

A. All the silver and gold in the world (Haggai 2:8).

B. The earth and all its people (Psalm 24:1).

C. The Lord owns the world and everything in it (Psalm 50:10-12). But He permits people to use His great riches. He also gives them the wisdom and power to prosper and to accumulate wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18). In return for furnishing everything, all God asks is that we return to Him 10 percent as our acknowledgement of His great investment in our business affairs, plus offerings as an expression of our love and gratitude.

17. What does God say will happen to those who knowingly continue to rob Him in tithes and offerings?

**"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." Malachi 3:9.
"Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Corinthians 6:10.**

Answer: The curse of God will rest upon them. They will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Those who rob God by withholding tithes and offerings will not be permitted to enter heaven.

18. God warns us against covetousness. Why is it so extremely dangerous?

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Luke 12:34.

Answer: Because our hearts follow our investments. If my focus is on accumulating more and more money, my heart becomes covetous, grasping, and proud. But if my focus is on sharing and helping others and blessing God's work, then my heart becomes caring, loving, liberal, and humble. Covetousness is one of the 20 terrible sins of the last days that will shut people out of heaven (2 Timothy 3:1-7).

19. How does Jesus feel when we rob Him of His sacred tithe and love offerings?

"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart." Hebrews 3:10.

Answer: He probably feels much as a parent whose child steals money from him. The money itself is not the big thing. It is the child's lack of integrity, love, and trust that is deeply disappointing. To steal from Jesus grieves Him much.

20. What thrilling points does Paul stress about the stewardship of the believers in Macedonia?

Answer: Paul had written the churches in Macedonia asking them to please lay aside some funds for God's people in Jerusalem, who were suffering terribly from an extended famine. He told them he would pick up these gifts when he came to their cities on his next visit. The thrilling response from the churches in Macedonia, described in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, is most heartening:

- A. Verse 5-As a first step, they rededicated their lives to Jesus Christ.
- B. Verses 2, 3-Though in "deep poverty" themselves, they gave "beyond their power" to give.
- C. Verse 4 -They urged Paul to come and pick up their gifts.
- D. Verse 9 -Their gifts followed the sacrificial example of Jesus.

Note: If we truly love Jesus, giving sacrificially for His work will never be a burden, but rather a glorious privilege that we will perform with great joy and satisfaction.

Love caused God's people in Macedonia to give very liberally to the famine-stricken Christians in Jerusalem.

21. What does God promise to do for those who are faithful in returning tithes and giving offerings?

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall

your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts." Malachi 3:10-12.

Answer: God promises to prosper His faithful financial stewards, and they will be a blessing to those around them.

Consider the Following Ways God Blesses:

A. God promises that your nine-tenths will go further with His blessing than your total income would go without it. If you doubt this, ask any faithful tither.

B. Blessings are not always financial. They may include health, peace of mind, answered prayers, protection, a closeknit and loving family, added physical strength, ability to make wise decisions, a spirit of thankfulness, a closer relationship with Jesus, success in soulwinning, an old car kept running longer, etc.

C. He becomes your partner in everything. No one except God could ever structure a plan so utterly fantastic. When a person tithes, God stretches the remaining nine-tenths so there is always enough.

22. Are you willing to begin tithing your income and giving offerings to demonstrate your love and thankfulness? Your Answer: _____

Your Thought Questions Answered.

1. I don't tithe because I don't like the way my church is using God's money.

ANSWER: Tithing is a command of God. Tithe is holy money that belongs to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30). When you tithe, you tithe to Him. God is big enough to take care of the money you give for His church. Your responsibility is to tithe. Leave it to God to deal with those who misuse His funds.

2. I am frustrated because financial difficulties have made it impossible for me to give more than a very small amount beyond my tithe. With gospel needs so great, I feel guilty.

ANSWER: The size of your gift is not important if you are doing the best you can. Jesus said that the poor widow of Mark 12:41-44, who gave only a pittance (two mites), gave more "than all they which have cast into the treasury" because the others gave "of their abundance; but she ... did cast in all that she had." The Lord measures our gifts by the amount of sacrifice we make and by the attitude or spirit with which we give. Jesus counts your gift very big. Give it with joy and know that Jesus is pleased. Read 2 Corinthians 8:12 for encouragement.

3. Doesn't stewardship involve more than the proper handling of my money?

ANSWER: Yes, stewardship involves the proper handling of every talent and blessing that I receive from God, who gives me everything (Acts 17:24, 25). In fact, it involves my very life! Faithful stewardship of God's gifts to me also includes my time spent:

A. Doing the work that God has assigned me (Mark 13:34).

B. Actively witnessing for Christ (Acts 1:8).

C. Studying the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15).

D. Praying (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

E. Helping those in need (Matthew 25:31-46).

F. Daily surrendering my life anew to Jesus (Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 15:31).

4. Don't you feel that some preachers are paid too much money?

ANSWER: Yes, without doubt. The seemingly arrogant flaunting of riches by some clergymen today is reducing the influence of all ministers. It brings reproach upon the name of Jesus. It causes hundreds of thousands to turn away in disgust from the church and its ministry. Such leaders will face an awful day of reckoning in the judgment.

However, no minister in God's end-time, remnant church is overpaid. After internship, all ministers receive virtually the same salary (varying only a few dollars monthly) regardless of their job title or the size of their church. In many cases, spouses work in the public marketplace to supplement the pastors' incomes.

5. What if I cannot afford to pay tithe?

God says if we put Him first, He will see to it that our needs are all met (Matthew 6:33). His mathematics often work just opposite to human conception. Under His plan, what we have left after tithing will go further than all of it would without His blessing. Actually, we cannot afford not to tithe!

Summary Sheet. Place a check beside the correct answers.

1. The word "tithe" actually means "tenth."

Yes. No.

2. Tithing is the same as giving.

True. False.

3. I am not tithing unless I return one-tenth of my income to God.

True. False.

4. Jesus endorsed paying tithe.

Yes. No.

5. Which of the following are Bible guidelines and principles for freewill giving?

Give if you have anything left.

Give cheerfully.

Give liberally.

Give so you will feel good.

Give as God has prospered you.

Giving is more blessed than receiving.

God will return more than you give.

Give if you feel like it.

Give so people won't think you are stingy.

6. According to the Bible, the source of income for gospel ministers should be:

Bingo games.

White elephant sales.

Tithe.

Bake sales.

Raffles.

7. What Old Testament patriarchs who paid tithe before Moses' day are mentioned in this lesson?

Adam.

Jacob.

Noah.

Isaac.

Abraham.

Methuselah.

8. According to Malachi 3:8, of what sin are people guilty who do not tithe and give offerings?

Idolatry.

Breaking the Sabbath.

Murder.

Robbery.

9. According to the book of Hebrews, who really receives our money when we tithe?

The pastor.

The needy.

Jesus, our heavenly High Priest.

10. According to 2 Timothy 3:1-7, one of the 20 sins of the very last days that will shut people out of God's kingdom is covetousness.

Yes. No.

11. Bringing the tithe into God's storehouse means.

Using it to buy spiritual books for myself.

Spending it for any spiritual cause.

Giving it to the treasury of God's church.

12. What does God promise the faithful tither in Malachi 3:10?

He will never get sick.

He will never lose his job.

He will receive more blessings than he can handle.

13. God gave Adam and Eve a test regarding eating a piece of fruit. What similar test does He give His people today?

Reading the Bible daily.

Witnessing.

Returning tithe.

Praying.

14. Tithing was a part of Moses' law, which ended at the cross.

Yes. No.

15. How does God measure my gifts to Him?

By how much I give.

By the amount of sacrifice.

By the attitude with which I give.

16. Faithful stewardship involves not only my proper handling of money, but also the amount of time I spend in activities such as prayer, witnessing, study of the Scripture, and helping others.

Yes. No.

17. I am willing to begin tithing and giving offerings.

Yes. No.