



No.3 FINANCES IN THE BIBLE

The first fruits

The first fruits offering is an Old Testament concept and is nowhere to be found in the New Testament as a requirement for the Christian.

God told the Israelites the first fruits offering was to be given in thanks for the promised land.

Deuteronomy 6:10-11

Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied,

Exodus 23:19

“You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your God.”

Leviticus 23:10

“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest.’”

Deuteronomy 26:1-4

“Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground which you bring in from your land that the Lord your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to establish His name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘I declare this day to the Lord my God that I have entered the land which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.’ Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.”

We have established the first fruit’s offering is a law or ordinance of the Old Testament linked with the possession of the Promised Land by the Israelites. There is much more to consider, but in this instance we simply need to see that - together with tithing - the first fruits offering is not required in the New Testament at all. The Law has been replaced by grace; the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth.

The “Prosperity” Message

It is important to look at finances from God’s point of view. This will be a safeguard against wrong teaching related to money. The love of God does not give in order to receive. The “prosperity” message focuses only on money: it is out of balance and appeals to people’s greed instead of God’s love and compassion. God wants us first to prosper spiritually.

Appealing to people’s greed is ungodly and sets a trap for the believer. I have known many Christians who believed the “prosperity message” and were focused on giving to the church and other ministries (especially TV evangelists) in order to “create” wealth.

These preachers suggest you should have more money because God wants to bless you. This is true, but unfortunately, seeking to get wealth for yourself for the wrong motivation is not God’s way. Some go as far as to promise to guarantee someone’s salvation if you give money to their ministry.

I have seen some preachers manipulate Christians to get them to give to their ministry, prophesying that the givers would have the donation multiplied in return “within a month”.

1 Timothy 6:9-10

“but they that after giving the matter mature consideration desire to be wealthy, fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful cravings which are of such a nature as to drown men in destruction and perdition; ¹⁰ for a root of all the evils is the fondness for money, which certain ones, bending their every effort to grasp, have been led astray from the Faith and have pierced themselves through with many consuming griefs.”

This is why it is important we know what the Bible teaches about finances. The believer is to depend on God acknowledging that everything we are and have comes from His grace and mercy.

Are Christians to be poor?

Depending on the Holy Spirit and abiding by the Word of God leads us to God’s plan for each one of us. God has not planned for His people to be poor; we should trust God for enough supply of everything. In fact, we should desire more wealth for the sake of being able to bless our families and those around us. This is the right motivation for God’s steward and it pleases God. Contentment with what God has given us is essential, but our desire to bless others will bring eagerness to pray for more provision from God in order to be generous with others with the love of Jesus. A good steward will always be blessed by our Heavenly Father in every way. We should be generous with our money, time, expertise, etc. Remember, we are to seek first spiritual blessings, and as we do this, all the rest becomes God’s responsibility.

The Christian should support the Pastor of the church

1 Timothy 5:17-18

Let the elders that are ruling well be deemed deserving of double honor, especially those who are laboring with wearisome effort in the Word and in the teaching; for the scripture says, You should not muzzle an ox while he is treading out the corn, and, The worker is worthy of his pay.

Here at Life-Gate we don’t get a wage or salary. We are not just a church, we are a mission. In fact, for the first 20 years we did not have a church, we had the School and all other ministry areas. God is our provider and He has provided for this ministry and for our full time pastors. However, this scripture shows that it is God’s will for the believer to support the pastor financially.

We purposely don’t take tithes and offerings on a Sunday morning or during our School. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the one to lead the believers to give.

The church in the book of Acts

Acts 2:44-47

“And all those who believed were gathered together as a unit and were holding all things in joint-participation, and were selling their houses and lands and other possessions and kept on distributing them to all, according as anyone was having a need. And daily they continued to remain in the temple, in perfect unanimity, breaking bread at home, partaking of food together in gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having the good will of the people. And the Lord kept on adding to them daily those who were being saved.”

Note they shared in material things and also spiritually; this was the power of the Early Church. The love of God in action by the Holy Spirit. It does not imply we have to sell the house we live in. This Scripture does not mean the early believers lived as beggars on the streets after they sold their house. These were believers who would have had several houses, lands and other possessions and were in the position to sell them for the benefit of the church. This shows the caliber of the early Christians, totally dedicated to the Gospel, being generous and taking communion daily. **Here we can see that ten percent was not the norm!**