

# **CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL**

## **DEPARTMENT OF LAY MINISTRY OF THE CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**



## **PROGRAM OF STUDY**

**NOVEMBER 2006**

### **“TITHING: LET’S GET PERSONAL”**

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## INTRODUCTION

**Why should Christian believers tithe? Because it is Biblical! Everything, therefore, that we earn, possess, and/or own, belongs to God! It is up to every Christian to show “*personal*” gratitude for God’s goodness by returning no less than one-tenth of his/her earnings or gain to meet the needs of the church and its ministries.**

**Prior to being elected the 52<sup>nd</sup> Bishop of the CME Church and while still laboring as Pastor of Carter Temple CME Church, in Chicago, IL, Bishop Henry M. Williamson, Sr. stated, “*Tithing is the voluntary, systematic contribution of financial support to our church. Voluntary is giving out of love and gratitude for all God gives us. Systematic giving is a predetermined portion of your income as you receive it. Tithing symbolizes and helps express our commitment to Christ and the church.*”**

**Thus: (1) tithing should not hinge on whether one likes or dislikes the pastor, - rather true tithing should reflect ones love for God and the church; (2) tithing is *not* something that one should do during times of prosperity, and hedge on during times of financial strife; (3) tithing is *not* simply a state of mind for the believer, it is a way of life that grows out of faith and a *personal* commitment; (4) rewards for tithing do not come from the compliments and accolades that may be showered on us by man, but satisfaction is found when we continuously experience God’s promise, his blessings, and the truth of his word! Hallelujah!**

**In the August 20, 2006 Sunday School Lesson, entitled, Reason’s For Giving, the writer stated that, “People give gifts to the church for many reasons.” Some, he said, give to receive recognition, but as Jesus said about the hypocrites in the synagogues who gave so that they might be praised by others, “*They have already received their reward.*” (Matthew 6:2). He went on to say that, “The best reason to give is simply out of love for God, as a loving response and *witness* to our experience of grace as we share God’s blessings.”**

**The November 2006 Program of Study will offer a brief list of Do’s and Don’ts that believers should consider when committing to or reaffirming *the personal* practice of being a tither. - Tithing may sometimes end with a *public act*, but it begins with a “*personal act*” of commitment.**

**TITHING – LET’S GET PERSONAL:  
~DO’S AND DON’TS~**

**DO PRAY FOR GUIDANCE AND A FIRM COMMITMENT.** – One of the fundamental activities of Christian living is and should be prayer. It should, therefore, come as a natural act for the believer to give *personal* thanks to God for all that He provides and to seek prayerful guidance and strength in giving. Lack of faith to believe that God will sustain us and provide all of our needs, can hinder us in making a firm commitment to becoming a tither.

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**DON’T WAIT TO SEE WHAT YOUR FRIEND, NEIGHBOR, OR FAMILY MEMBER IS GOING TO DO.** – Discussing the *personal* and joint challenges of tithing with our significant others is important. If you, however, know what needs to be done, don’t spend a lot of time looking to the right or to the left. Be a leader and move forward with a made-up mind!

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**DO GIVE AND FORGET.** – After the act of giving, there should be a mental state of mind that allows us to give over to God any concerns that are present concerning what has been given. *Personal* commitment does not always mean personal involvement in the spending and distribution of our gifts. For one to be truly fulfilled, there must be a sense of letting go and letting God.

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**DON'T RATIONALIZE YOUR WAY OUT OF TITHING.** – If one is attempting to make a decision, particularly a *personal* decision, many times the “glass is seen as half empty, rather than half full.” Try not to dwell on or deal in “what if” when giving back to God.

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**DO MANAGE WHAT IS LEFT AFTER THE TITHE.** – “For every dollar that we earn, God only ask for a dime in return. Many times it is not what we give that becomes a problem; it is the decision(s) of *what to do with what is left* that becomes a challenge! In living with the realities of *personal* and family responsibilities, wants, and needs, - we must be good stewards of the 90% that remains after the tithe.

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**DON'T BLAME FINANCIAL PROBLEMS ON THE *DECISION NOT TO TITHE*.** – One may ask the question, “How can individuals not consider their *personal* financial picture when moving toward being or not being consistent in tithing?” The response is, they shouldn't. *If one waits, however, until financial concerns do not exist*, blessings are delayed and becoming a tither may soon be viewed as - adding to the problem rather than being a key to the solution!

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**DO ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO TITHE (START WITH OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS).** - It is and can be a wonderful feeling when our faith is shared and others become blessed as a result of our example. Don't badger the non-tither, but set a *personal example* of consistency and be quick to share a sincere and honest testimony about the results of your faithfulness.

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**DON'T JUDGE.** – Remember that we are all wretches undone. Also, remember the challenges and/or obstacles that come with **personal** commitment. Thus, let us be careful not to discourage those who are wrestling with moving *from sometime* to *all the time and transforming themselves into* true tithers.”

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**DO STUDY AND SEEK A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING AND COMMITMENT.** – One of the four beliefs that surround our Lay Emblem is that of STUDYING. The more we seek **personal** knowledge and understanding about God’s plan for our lives, the more we will find that “success will seek us out, and minister to us in every aspect of our lives.” **To know Him, is to love Him and to Love him is to keep his commandments. The Bible says that we must be workman, rightly, dividing the word of truth. Hence, as we better understand our duty in giving, we place ourselves in the position of being enveloped by his love and the blessing that come from consistent giving.**

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**DON'T DOUBT GOD’S PROMISE AND THE TRUTH OF HIS WORD.** – In our **personal** quest to move from “Good To Great”, in where we are in our faith to where we should or want to be, - doubt can creep in and delay our progress. God’s word is true and if we can muster up the faith along with the physical energy to trust Him completely in our giving, He will open the windows of Heaven, supplying us with more than we can ever imagine. Stay faithful and trust Him!! Hallelujah for the last time!!

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## **HELPFUL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES**

- Genesis 14: 20
- Genesis 28: 22
- Leviticus 27: 30-33
- Numbers 18: 26
- Deuteronomy 14: 28
- Deuteronomy 26: 1-15
- Nehemiah 13: 5, 12
- Proverbs 3: 9-10;
- Malachi 3: 8-10
- Matthew 6: 2
- Matthew 23: 23
- Luke 6: 38
- Luke 18: 9-14

### **HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY:**

***Watley, PhD, William D. Less Than Tipping: Questions and Answers About Tithing. New Seasons Press.***

***Crutchfield, Dr. Carmichael D., A Trifolded Understanding of Giving. The Board of Christian Education, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, 2005***