

Devotional - 1

Giving Beginnings

At the very beginning, God gave. He gave breath to beasts, sun to plants, plants to the land, stars to the sky, man to woman, and woman to man. Though we sinned and selfishly over-indulged in His Creation, He gave again. He gave us a way back to Him, through sacrifice. But that wasn't enough for our giving God. He then gave up perfect relationship with His perfect Son, so He could give us life forever with Him. When Jesus came, He gave His words, His wisdom, His ways, and then His life. When He left, He promised another gift, the Holy Spirit. Today, the Holy Spirit gives His gifts generously to all believers.

Giving is what God does because giving is who God is.

This entire way of life, this following Jesus, it's *for* giving and *by* giving. Our faith is in a God who gives up His rights for our rights, who gives up His way of life to make a way for our lives. Giving is what God does because giving is who God is. Our only rational response is to give our lives, our time, our resources, our service, our affections, our attention back to Him.

One small thing we return to God is the first portion of our income. The Bible calls it a tithe, which means a tenth. God is our provider, and we return this small gift back to His Church. Jesus didn't make a big deal out of it, likely because it was a cultural given. Besides, He didn't just ask the disciples for a tenth of their income; He asked them to lay down their nets—their entire source of income—and follow Him. But Jesus did remind us not to neglect the tithe in Matthew 23:23. In the same verse, He also reminded us not to forget justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Again, Jesus wants our whole life.

God started giving at the beginning, and the tithe is all about beginnings. It's the beginning of your income. It's the beginning of your generosity. It's the first dime in a dollar. It's given at the beginning of your budget period. It's a new seed you plant that's the beginning of a powerful work through the Church.

Tithing is just the beginning. Generosity is not something we do once or twice a month. You were made in God's image and remade by Christ. Giving is what we do, yes, this is what we do, but it's because *generous is who we are*.

Ask yourself: Is generous who I am? If I begin to tithe, what might God begin in my heart and life? If I'm already tithing, what new giving does God want to begin with me?

Bible Verses

Genesis 1:26-30

John 3:16

Malachi 3:10

Matthew 23:23

Proverbs 3:9

Matthew 4:19-20