

If your neighbours were known thieves you would lock your doors and windows – and that is just what God does when we rob him of our tithes, says **Bruce Atkinson** in the last of his series on tithing



Above
Bruce Atkinson
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Tithing is the key to unlock God's storehouse of blessings

We know beyond question that we should tithe, but how should it be administrated? Can we give it to whoever we want? Where does our tithe belong?

'I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting' (Numbers 18:21). Because the Levites were not given any of the promised land to live off, the tithe was to support the priests' work in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. In other words, tithes were to go to the service of God's work.

'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house' (Malachi 3:10).

Sometimes people think that they can give their tithes

to whoever and whatever they like. Some want to give it to the poor; others to charities; still others to family abroad. But Malachi makes it clear that the entire tithe belongs in the storehouse of the Lord. It is for the provision of the ministry in the house of God.

You cannot split your tithe up and give it to different ministries – it must be brought whole and complete. Bring all the tithe into the storehouse, the Scripture says, not just some of it. The word 'storehouse' is singular, not plural; one tithe for one storehouse.

'And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord' (Leviticus 27:30). In this verse we see that the tithe is 'holy

to the Lord'. That means that the tithe should go directly and only into the storehouse and the service of God. After we have tithed we then should think about giving to other ministries and charities.

God tells us to bring the whole tithe into his storehouse. In the ancient world the storehouse was a supply depot or a warehouse for the storage of government supplies, such as food, treasures and military equipment. The storehouse was a place from which to take resources in order to run the kingdom or local administrative area. God's storehouse is the resource from which the work of the local church is funded.

Your local church is where the tithe belongs. It is the place that supplies you from the king-



dom of God. It is the place from where you draw your primary spiritual resources. Your local church is the storehouse that provides resources for the Gospel and thus must be itself properly resourced by the tithes of its members.

So, who should administrate the tithe? Many Christians today would answer, 'It's my tithe. I earned it, I can give it to who I like!' This is incorrect. We do not give tithes as an offering; we pay or owe tithes to God. He considers 10 per cent of our income his own. In a similar way, the government claims tax from us. We earn a gross salary but part of it the government claims as its own. We don't tell the government how to use our taxes because they are not ours to administrate. God

'Tithing unlocks the windows and God can then trust you with the blessings of his spiritual abundance'

states that when we don't give our tithes it is actually robbing from him (Malachi 3:8)! God therefore owns 10 per cent of our income; if we don't give it to him, he sees it as thieving.

How you distribute your tithe is not at your discretion, because it's not your money in the first place! I have known of some very wealthy people having a problem in laying the tithe down whole at the feet of the local church leadership. Perhaps because they were successful business people they felt they knew better how their large tithe should be used and administrated. But the moment you determine how your tithe is used it is no longer regarded by God as a tithe. You must relinquish control over your tithe.

Imagine that I lent you £10,

and that when it was time to return the £10 to me you said, 'OK, Bruce, here is the £10 I owe you. I'd like you to use £2 to buy some chocolates for your daughter, £5 for some flowers for your wife, and £3 on whatever you want.' I think I'd tell you to mind your own business! It's my money, not yours to spend! You can't split the tithe up and decide where portions of it go, or tell your local church that you want it used for missions or for the children's work. You have no authority over your tithe.

It is also common for people to misunderstand the difference between tithes and offerings. The tithe is given to the local church for the leaders to administrate. Offerings after you have tithed are totally different. You never 'owe' an offering. Offerings are always at the discretion of the giver; they are your money. You are given responsibility over 90 per cent of your income. I tithe, but I also give offerings. My tithe is given whole each month to my church Kensington Temple, but I have chosen other aspects of the church that I want to give offerings to. I also give regularly to other charities.

Malachi says that when we bring in the whole tithe to the local storehouse God will open the windows of heaven and pour out his blessing. The tithe is the key that unlocks God's heavenly storehouse of blessing.

God can bless without you tithing, but you can only get the blessings that come with tithing if you tithe! The windows of heaven were locked in Malachi's day because the people were withholding the tithe and robbing from God.

If your neighbours were known thieves, the first thing you would do is to lock your doors and windows. That is what God did. Tithing unlocks the windows and God can then trust you with the blessings of his spiritual abundance.