

Offerings – Part Two

“What do we give? How much do we give?”

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By Jeanne Alley

1). Last week we laid a pretty solid biblical foundation regarding WHY God’s Word tells us that Christians should give away their “stuff,” i.e. money, food, clothes, etc. Basically, there are two main reasons why the giving away of our own personal property is important in God’s eyes:

i/ To meet another person’s physical needs, and

ii/ To keep ourselves from becoming conceited with, and being focused primarily on, the things of this present age; our hope needs to be focused firmly in and on heaven, particularly on *things that have to do with the future*.

a) These two reasons are actually intertwined, because when we meet another person’s physical needs, we are actually putting their needs above our own, thereby keeping our focus off of ourselves.

b) We also saw last week that when you give to someone to meet their physical needs, you are actually showing love for God, as well as a love for the brethren –

I John 3:17-18

17 But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

c) As this verse points out, meeting another’s physical needs says much about the heart of the giver, showing that “the love of God abides” in them.

d) The broad biblical concept of “giving” really focuses on the purpose of Christians parting with their things of monetary value, with very little emphasis put on the thing itself. It’s the giver of the gift that is important, specifically *the sanctification of the giver* that God is interested in.

2). We also noted last week that money and riches (tangible goods) – our “stuff” – isn’t inherently bad at all. In fact, it is what God uses to meet the physical needs of all of His children in the here and now – physical needs that He created when He gave us this body of flesh, body, and bone. The objects, though, aren’t important; it’s the placement of those objects in our individual priority lists that make them good or bad.

3). Another thing we talked about last week is that the giving away of our “stuff” isn’t a godly righteous act in and of itself. Rather, it’s the heart attitude, *the willingness* behind the act that God finds either acceptable and pleasing, or unacceptable and displeasing.

a) A person can give away their stuff, even to widows and orphans as the Lord directs, and it can NOT be “good” in God’s eyes. The outward form of an action doesn’t necessarily make something good: one has to be able to see what is emanating out of the heart in order to classify it as “good” or not.

b) Hence the caution not to judge another person by their acts of giving. We are not to judge another person on anything having to do with their material goods; it cannot serve as a barometer at all, because *it doesn’t serve as one to God*. As we saw in the example of the widow putting 2 coins into the treasury, she clearly gave a sacrifice, and Jesus commended her for that act of giving –

Luke 21:1-6

1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. 2 And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. 3 And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; 4 for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

c) And yet with the rich young ruler, no less than the giving away of ALL of his stuff (which would have been an enormous amount, no doubt) would serve to gain a commendation from the Lord. It’s not the *what* or the *how much*, it’s the willingness of the heart behind the gift.

d) However, 99.9% of the time we don’t have God’s commentary on an event as to whether He commends it or not as an acceptable act of giving, so we usually evaluate it with our own physical eyes. And unfortunately, most people would either just see an old cheap woman, or worse, two measly coins that can’t buy much stuff. OR, in the case of the rich young ruler, who followed the Law to a “T”, we would see a successful man who gives an appropriate amount into the treasury, according to the Law. This should give us pause whenever we dare to draw a conclusion regarding another person’s giving.

4) I also mentioned last week that it appears to me that the bulk of scripture presents the idea of “giving” in such a way as to imply a suggestion, rather than an out-and-out command. E.g. that “it may go well for you,” you will “receive a reward,” you will “be blessed,” or you will earn a “profit” on your faith, etc. You would be hard-pressed, I believe, to see any solid “list” of what to give (relative to material goods), or a

commandment to a Christian that he or she absolutely must give *so much of a certain thing*. Certainly there are many examples of giving in the New Testament, but the definitive MUST, or the “what” and “how much” of giving is not so presented.

a). But yet there are *commands to give* in Scripture. Probably no less than 500 times in the Old Testament we can read about God telling His people that they *must* give: whether it be tithing – both of land and animals, giving offerings – both of land and animals, giving sacrifices, giving gifts to widows and orphans, etc.

So am I contradicting myself to say that God doesn't *command* us to give our “stuff” away?

b) Let's go back to the Old Testament, specifically the Mosaic Law, because it is replete with lists of things that God's people, the nation of Israel, were to give. There are peace offerings, heave offerings, burnt offerings, tithings, sacrifices, freewill offerings, votive offerings, and firstling offerings, to name just a few that I could find. These were all considered gifts to be given by each individual (sometimes collectively, sometimes individually), and the Lord made sure to give a plethora of instructions concerning the how and what and how many of each of those things that was to be offered. There is no shortage of instructions in God's Word on exactly WHAT and HOW the Israelites were to give their stuff away.

c) Here's a sampling:

Leviticus 23:1

The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'The LORD'S appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations [literally, “something called out”]--My appointed times are these: 3 For six days work may be done; but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings. 4 'These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them.

d) God has just told Israel to give away some of their *time*, and He specifies how much time they are to give: 1/7th. Continuing—

5 'In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. 6 Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. 7 'On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. 8 'But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the

LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work."

e) Again, a specific reference to them parting with their *time* as well as *presenting an offering*.

9 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 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. 11 'And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

12 'Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD. 13 'Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a soothing aroma, with its libation, a fourth of a hin of wine. 14 'Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.

f) Here are specific commands given by the Lord that His people are to bring a sheaf of their firstfruits, and at the same time, give a male lamb as a burnt offering (a sacrifice). Additionally, the grain offering must be 2/10 of an ephah of flour mixed with oil, offered by fire. Again, God is very specific.

15 'You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. 16 'You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD. 17 'You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the LORD. 18 'Along with the bread, you shall present seven one year old male lambs without defect, and a bull of the herd, and two rams; they are to be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their libations, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. 19 'You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs one year old for a sacrifice of peace offerings. 20 'The priest shall then wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering with two lambs before the LORD; they are to be holy to the LORD for the priest.

g) Wow, where do we even start with this one? 50 days after the Sabbath that occurs after the Passover they were to present a grain offering of bread baked just so, and offer

that with 7 lambs, a bull, and 2 rams. Then add in 1 goat and 2 lambs for the peace offering.

h) And it goes on and on, with more specifics to be followed, and more sacrifices and offerings to be made... and then note this -

Leviticus 23:37

'These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the LORD--burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and libations, each day's matter on its own day-- 38 besides those of the sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts, and besides all your votive and freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

i) Give, give, give... and when you're done giving... give some more. Isn't that about it?

j). So if you were an Israelite, make darn sure that you don't get your offering of grain mixed up with your offering of animal sacrifices, or your tithing of the fruit of the land mixed up with the care-giving required for the orphans and the widows (which would undoubtedly require you to part with food and clothing, if not money).

5) Now, I want to specifically address this idea about "tithing," because most, if not all, of the Church believes that the Church is still supposed to "tithe," as in "give 10%." We'll get into this in more detail in a bit, but right now while we're focused on the Law, let's take a specific look at "tithing." Scripture explains that there were different types of tithing that the Israelites had to follow.

a) The "First Tithe" was that the first 10% of the *product of their land* was to be given away to the Levites for their maintenance (and even before they gave the tithe they had to bring them a little gift from their field as well).

b) And besides this continual giving of the yearly tithes/10%, each time an Israelite approached the place of Yahweh he was to bring an offering. This was in ADDITION to the tithing.

d) There was also another 10% that was to be contributed to the festivals that were held in Jerusalem (the 90% that was left after the 10% was given was to be consumed in Jerusalem, with 10% of *that* going to the festival itself), and perhaps even another 10% that was to go directly to the poor and the needy.

e) I'm also pretty sure that in ADDITION TO ALL OF THIS REQUIRED GIVING, there was also a levy TAX on anything additional that was received by victories in war. So

this was not really a command to give, but was a tax implemented by the Lord. And it still was a way that God got His children to part with their “stuff” –

Numbers 31:25-31

25 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 26 "You and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the fathers' households of the congregation take a count of the booty that was captured, both of man and of animal; 27 and divide the booty between the warriors who went out to battle and all the congregation. 28 "Levy a tax for the LORD from the men of war who went out to battle, one in five hundred of the persons and of the cattle and of the donkeys and of the sheep; 29 take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest, as an offering to the LORD. 30 "From the sons of Israel's half, you shall take one drawn out of every fifty of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys and of the sheep, from all the animals, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the LORD." 31 Moses and Eleazar the priest did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

f) You'll notice that the material goods in this case were plundered from their enemies – enemies that the Lord won the victory over *for them*... and instead of God requesting a portion of it as a gift, He considered it His to take. The purpose, though, is the same as when looked upon as a gift – it's for the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle. In other words, it's for the Lord's work amongst His chosen people (more on this next week).

g) As an aside, think for a minute how you'd feel if God commanded His servants to take stuff from you before even having an opportunity to give it yourself? Would your heart feel pretty good about that?

h) But honestly, all the talk about what and how much that was to be offered just jumbles together, and I really can't keep it all straight. YET, the nation of Israel was expected to keep it all straight. They were expected to follow this Law to the letter, with no deviation at all. But what does this mean for you and me?

6) I know you're already one step ahead of me, and that you're thinking, Hey, we're not under the Law anymore so we don't need to go through the details of it all. You don't have to keep it straight, right? But hang on a minute and hear me out, because the word “tithing” and the action of giving 10% is still PREVALENT among the church today, and we need to ask ourselves, “Why?”

a) And at this point we really need to ask WHY God would expect this intensity of giving from His people, particularly this newly formed nation (as the Law is given approximately 18 months from them leaving Egypt). Why all the laws and commands and specifics? We know now that God wanted to teach them (over the span of

millennia) that they were *unable* to keep the Law, that they were indeed sinful, and that they needed the new way that Jesus would bring – a way that would allow them to keep the Law in its REAL form, in heart rather than in form –

Galatians 3:21-25

21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Matthew 5:17

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill."

a) But there was something else as well. The newly formed nation out of Egypt, from its placement in the land and onwards, would find itself self-contained and self-governed (within a theocracy), separated unto God, but surrounded by nations that were pagan idol worshippers. Nations that offered their gifts and sacrificial offerings to the many gods they worshipped... and God knew that the temptation would be great for Israel to follow this same path. God knew that, as sinful human beings, they would begin to slip in their adoration of their Mighty God who took their forefathers out of Egypt through miraculous signs and wonders... this God who made amazing promises that were theirs by birthright. And if this temptation to stray was so prevalent among them, and God desired them to love Him with their whole heart and soul and mind and body and strength... the best thing He could do for them was to "force them" (I use that term loosely) to remember Him and honor Him and keep Him at the forefronts of their minds by implementing daily, weekly, monthly, and annually the numerous feasts, ordinances, rules, and expectations that would require them to not stray too far from Him. Through the doing of these Laws, God would be the focal point of their lives, and the temptation to stray would be lessened. He used these laws of giving – laws of giving that required them to part with much of their stuff continually – to teach them to keep their eyes on Him... their hearts on Him... to see God as the end all, be all, of everything. It was ingenious, really; quite *parental*.

b) But did it work? For some. There's always a remnant of God's people who truly remain faithful to what God desires; they "get it." There's always a remnant that matures through their faithful obedience and comes into the freedom and liberty that faith in an all-powerful Creator/Father/God brings. To mention a few: Joshua, Caleb,

Gideon, Boaz, Elijah, Samuel, David (and boy do we get a full-blown picture of his journey of growing up!), Daniel, the many prophets, Mary, Peter, John, James...and so on.

c) But still, what are *we* to get from all of this regarding what and how much we are to give?

7). Most Christians teach that tithing your stuff (meaning money, mostly) is a *command* and giving 10% of your income away is considered to be faithful obedience to God's Word. It is taught that this *command* still stands today because Abraham, who comes on the scene prior to any mention of the Law, gave 10% of all of his goods to Melchisedec, in response to the promises of God and in response to the faithfulness of God, who is the "Possessor of heaven and earth."

a) Therefore, it is taught, tithing has its roots in Scripture *before the Law*, so it is obviously still in effect today (meaning, it didn't cease when the Law ceased to be in effect). Tithing, then, should be seen as a proper response to our God, who is and will be faithful to His promises to us.

b) I disagree with this premise (mostly with the former part about it being in effect today, though not so much with responding to the faithfulness of our God). Here's why:

c) Yes, Abraham tithed to Melchisedec -

Hebrews 7:1-2

1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all...

d) Additionally, Jacob tithed (for the same reason, you'll note)-

Genesis 28:20-22

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, 21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. 22 "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

e) However, Abraham also gave sacrificial animal offerings to the Lord. He gave "burnt offerings" and he built the Lord altars on which to offer His gift. In fact, Noah sacrificed to the Lord as well, and offered burnt offerings on an altar that he built. And

even going further back, Cain and Abel gave offerings – Cain of the fruit of the land, Abel of the firstling from his flock.

f) If one takes the stance that *tithing* was and still is a biblical command because of its prevalence throughout the Scriptures, then, I believe, one must hold the same stance relative to animal sacrifices. Both were instituted way before Moses, and both were incorporated into the Mosaic Law. So, needless to say, that particular viewpoint of having to give 10% of your income away, in my opinion, just isn't substantiated.

g) Furthermore, there is the simple fact that there is no mention in the New Testament, either by command or suggestion, concerning the specific tithing (as in giving 10%) of your income or assets or whatever away. *No mention.*

8). So, since we know God wants us to give away some of our “stuff,” what exactly does God want you to give, and how much does He want you to part with? Does He want 10% as Abraham gave, or does He want 30% and more as is commanded in the Law? Or does He want ALL of your stuff as is practiced by many of the new church converts in the early days of the church? Does God want you to give the firstlings of your flock as Abel did? Or does He want you to give the firstfruits of your land, as he mentions in Leviticus? What does God want you to give, and how much?

a) We can pretty easily begin to answer this by seeing that since God wants us to give to others to meet their physical needs, it's pretty elementary that the WHAT we are to give is food, shelter, clothing, *material goods*, and/or money, because –

James 2:15-16

If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?"

b) We give whatever our brothers and sisters in need *need for their body*. In other words, we meet their physical needs. What does that look like? I think we'll see more of this picture next week as we discuss the TO WHOM of giving.

9) But what of tithings and offerings? What do we offer, and how much? *Pay much closer attention* to the following passages –

Mark 12:28-34

And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' 31 "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

32 And the scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher, You have truly stated that HE IS ONE; AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; 33 AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 And when Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

Matthew 23:10-23

10 "And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. 11 "But the greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 "And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. 13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you shall receive greater condemnation...

16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated.' 17 "You fools and blind men; which is more important, the gold, or the temple that sanctified the gold? 18 "And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering upon it, he is obligated.' 19 "You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering? 20 "Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it. 21 "And he who swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. 22 "And he who swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it. 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

Psalms 40:6-8

6 Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. 7 Then I said, "Behold, I

come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. 8 I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart."

Hosea 6:6

For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Psalms 51:14-19

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, That my mouth may declare Your praise. 16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. 18 By Your favor do good to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, In burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.

Proverbs 21:2-3

2 Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts. 3 To do righteousness and justice is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.

Matthew 9:13

"But go and learn what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 12:5-7

5 "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? 6 "But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. 7 "But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

Micah 6:6-8

6 With what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? 7 Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

a) God doesn't want sacrifice after sacrifice, but rather God wants obedience, loyalty, compassion, to love your neighbor as yourself, to love the Lord with all your heart and

soul and mind and strength, to be humble, to act mercifully and humbly and justly, to love kindness, to have a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. That's what God wants as *your sacrifice of giving*. And the "how much" of these things is without measure, for to give one requires you to give all. And what manifests out of this will be overflowing kindness and love and mercy and justice to others in whatever form is necessary - money, food, shelter, clothing, *time, energy, thoughts*, WHATEVER. Do you get that you can't start or stop at 10%?

b) God most certainly wants *sacrifice... He just doesn't want A sacrifice*. With obedience comes sacrifice - it's in the nature of the word. To put God's will in front of your own is sacrificial... it's presenting yourself a sacrifice to the Lord and pouring out your life/soul until the Spirit is fully the living force in you. It's THAT which God is after -

Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

c) And He showed us what the perfect sacrifice looks like, didn't He? It is the One who came to do God's will, not His own -

Luke 22:41-42

...and He knelt down and began to pray, 42 saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.

d) The One who acted absolutely according to what He taught, which was the Father's will -

John 12:49

"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.

e) The One who willingly gave His life up to the Lord -

John 10:17-18

"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

f) The One who fulfilled it all -

Hebrews 10:4-10

4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; 6 IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE. 7 "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'" 8 After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them" (which are offered according to the Law), 9 then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

10). And you know what? This last part is the key. What made Jesus the perfect sacrifice? The One *without blemish* who fulfilled all the Law in His sacrificial act? What made all of those animal sacrifices worthless, in and of themselves, compared to Him?

a) The answer? It's about the *willingness of the sacrifice*. When those animals were bound up, tied up by their feet and carried to the altar... were they willing participants in the sacrifice, or were they *unwilling*? Did they want to be the sacrifice, or were they being forced? The brazen altar had 4 bronze horns that were necessary in order to tie the animals' feet to so that they wouldn't run away. They most certainly DID NOT want to give their life.

b) In essence, each person who offered an animal was keeping the Law, yes, but they were partaking in an elementary lesson that God used to teach them what He truly wanted. He protected them through the simple daily acts of sacrifice by expecting them to keep their focus on Him... and as they matured He made it clear that He wanted much much more from them. He wanted their willful participation in the sacrificial act, and He wanted them to willingly offer whatever they had, He wanted them to show mercy, to act justly, and to walk humbly with Him. This is exactly what Jesus showed us, the perfect example and the perfect sacrifice, Who gave everything He had *willingly*.

c) God wants *our lives* to be a *willing sacrifice*. He doesn't want the material gift. He desires obedience; He desires compassion; He desires His will to be your own. He desires a broken and contrite heart. He doesn't care about the "stuff" you give, He cares about how and why you give it.

11) And so note Acts 5:1-11 -

Acts 5:1-11

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? 4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. 6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. 7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." 9 Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well." 10 And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.

a) Why were Ananias and Sapphira destroyed? Weren't they obedient? They sold their land and they contributed money into the coffers, didn't they? There was no rule or law in effect that they HAD to give every single penny from the sale to the Church, was there? No. But Peter tells them they "tested the Spirit" and they "lied to God" by keeping some of the price for themselves. Why? Is it that God wanted every penny of their stuff?

b) Look at v. 4. They "conceived this deed in their heart," and so they lied to God. And note this passage from last week -

I John 3:17-18

17 But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

c) Ananias and Sapphira had their hearts turned against their brothers in need, and they so lied because they didn't show love in *deed* and *truth*. Their sacrifice (their offering) was not a *willing* sacrifice, and therefore it did not please God.

12) Let's finish up today by reading some of the various New Testament passages that talk about giving, sharing, and parting with our "stuff." Again, please note that the word "tithing" does not show up in any of them -

Luke 3:9-11

9 "Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."

Galatians 6:6

The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

Philippians 2:17-18

17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. 18 You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

Philippians 4:14

Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.

Matthew 5:42

"Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

Matthew 6:2-3

"So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men... 3 "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."

Matthew 10:8

"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

Luke 6:30-38

30 "Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. 31 "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. 32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 "If you do good to those who do good to

you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 "If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. 35 "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. 36 "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. 38 "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

Philippians 4:3

Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel...

Hebrews 13:15-16

15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. 16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Acts 2:45

...and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

Acts 8:18-22

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

13) So I hope you see that I'm not saying that giving a "tithe" is bad; I'm also not saying that giving a tithe automatically makes your giving "good." If you're stuck on giving exactly 10% because you think that it is God's magic number, then I think you need to reevaluate some things. If you're giving 10% because it's a good number to settle on, then you probably should STILL evaluate *why*.

God isn't concerned with whether you give 10% or 90%, or whether you're giving money, time, both, or neither. He's concerned about what's happening on the inside of

you, and whether or not YOU are indeed focusing on the things your Father has for you, and whether or not YOU are indeed caring about and showing love for your brothers and sisters.

In other words, are YOU the sacrifice that you are giving?