Tithing

W.A. Criswell tells of an ambitious young man who told his pastor he'd promised God a tithe of his income. They prayed for God to bless his career. At that time he was making $40.00 per week and tithing $4.00. In a few years his income increased and he was tithing $500.00 per week. He called on the pastor to see if he could be released from his tithing promise, it was too costly now. The pastor replied, "I don't see how you can be released from your promise, but we can ask God to reduce your income to $40.00 a week, then you'd have no problem tithing $4.00."

W. A. Criswell, A Guidebook for Pastors

Matthew 23: 23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

1) Where did tithing begin?
   - Genesis 14: 13 – 20 Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.
   - This was not an act of law as this preceded the law. Thus the origins of tithing were an act of gratitude and not of law.
   - Genesis 28: 22 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God 22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."
   - Once again Jacob vowed to give a tenth back to God of everything that God gives him. No one told him to do that but he himself decided to do it.
   - Leviticus 27: 30 " `A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. 31 If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. 32 The entire tithe of the herd and flock--every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod--will be holy to the LORD. 33 He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.' "
     - This is the first instance in the law that a tithe is commanded.

2) Who is the tithe paid to and for what reason?
   - Levites
     - NU 18:21 "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting. 22 From now on the Israelites must not go near the Tent of Meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. 23 It is the Levites who are to do the work at the Tent of Meeting and bear the responsibility for offenses against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. 24 Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD. That is why I said concerning them: `They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.' "
   - Levites to pay their tithes to the priest
     - NU 18:25 The LORD said to Moses, 26 "Speak to the Levites and say to them: `When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD's offering. 27 Your offering will be reckoned

to you as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress. [28] In this way you also will present an offering to the LORD from all the tithes you receive from the Israelites. From these tithes you must give the LORD's portion to Aaron the priest. [29] You must present as the LORD's portion the best and holiest part of everything given to you.'

- To feed the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns.
  - DT 14:28 At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, [29] so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.
- Not to neglect the house of the Lord
  - NE 13:10 I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and singers responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields. [11] So I rebuked the officials and asked them, "Why is the house of God neglected?" Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.
  - Let us keep in mind that we are being built into a spiritual house

3) Are Christians liable to pay tithes?
   - We aren't under law but under grace
     - Does that mean we don't tithe because tithing is under law?
     - What about Abraham and Jacob? They tithed but not as under the law.
     - The law tells us not to steal or not to commit adultery so do we steal and commit adultery because we are under grace and not under law? By no means. On the contrary by grace we uphold the law. Thus it is not wrong to give our tithes but as under grace and not legalistically i.e. under law.
     - However the law is a tutor to lead us to Christ that in Him we can live by a higher standard – one of generosity and not of the law of tithing. Generosity goes beyond the law of tithing.
     - The story of the Pharisee and the "sinner" in Luke 18: 9 – 14. One point of pride for the Pharisee was that he gave a tenth of all he got. Jesus didn't commend him for that but condemned his pride.
     - If we tithe from a sense of pride or wanting to get something from God then we are doing it for the wrong reasons.
   - If we tithe we need to do it generously
     - [5] As soon as the order went out, the Israelites <u>generously</u> gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a <u>great amount, a tithe of everything</u>. [6] The men of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah also brought a tithe of their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things dedicated to the LORD their God, and they piled them in heaps
   - If we tithe we need to do it faithfully.
     - 2CH 31:11 Hezekiah gave orders to prepare storerooms in the temple of the LORD, and this was done. [12] Then they <u>faithfully</u> brought in the contributions, tithes and dedicated gifts
   - According to Scholars of Bible Numerics number 10 is "Perfection of Order". By giving a tithe we are merely recognizing the priority of God in our lives although all things belong to him, not only the tithe.

Tithing is good but the spirit of generosity is better.