



GRACE GROUPS

Living by God's grace is a paradigm shift for all of us and as a big shift, it involves study, practice, community, and the work of the Holy Spirit within each of us. All Grace Groups will share this common thread: learning to live by grace instead of proving ourselves all the time, or thinking we can do life alone. They are all focused on this, but allow for a wide variety of groups.



RESOURCES

[The Life We're Looking For: Reclaiming Relationship in a Technological World](#)
by Andy Crouch

[You Need a Budget](#)
A good budgeting app that can be used for adjusting to a tithing lifestyle.

[Economics of Grace](#)
Sermon on Mark 12:35-44.

PRACTICE TITHING

The best way to practice the firstfruits tithe nowadays in such a way that eliminates fees is to set up an automatic bill pay check. To give to All Souls this way, set up the check come to:

All Souls PO Box 16613
Seattle, WA 98116

To give online, visit
allsoulsseattle.org/give

Welcome + Opening Prayer

Grace Group: Finance is an exploration of Biblical words like "tithe" and "mammon" in search of how God's grace transforms the way we hold our finances towards freedom and generosity.

Why Discuss Finances in Advent?

While we are now at the *end* of the calendar year (fiscal year too, so says the IRS)... we also find ourselves at the *beginning* of the church year. This is a helpful reminder:

When we are at our end, God's grace is just beginning. However you are coming into this discussion about money, know that God in his graciousness is here to meet you where you are.

What is a tithe? Why tithe?

See back page.

Storytelling: Tithing in real life.

How did tithing become a practice your life?

What is a story that exemplifies to you the role of this practice in your relationship with God and others and your finances?

We'll hear from Deb Rhinehart and Andy Pelander.

Questions to Consider

- What is motivating me to want to tithe?
- What do I hope to get out of giving?
- Who is tithing for?
- What is one thing I learned today?
- What is one thing I want to do (or do differently) because of this time today?

What is a tithe?

מעשר (pronounced *mah-as-ayr*) is a Hebrew word meaning **tenth**.

Genesis 14:20— And Abram gave him a **tenth** of everything.

Leviticus 27:30— A **tenth** of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, is the Lord's, and is holy.

A tithe in the Bible is a specific amount (10% of your income) that you **give first** as you receive it. In agrarian speak: **firstfruits**.

Proverbs 3:9— Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the **firstfruits** of all your crops.

Firstfruits. Not left-overs. There was actually another way to give left-overs called gleaning (Leviticus 19:9-10). There were several kinds of offerings for special occasions but those were what you would give *beyond the tithe*.

In other words, the tithe functioned like an income tax on all we receive— yet this was considered not a tax, but a credit in **giving God the credit** for providing 100% of what we have received. And this credit gained practical, tangible expression when it was sent to the storehouses described in Deuteronomy. This is a very practical specification from God. God is a down-to-earth God, interested in his Kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven. So storehouses fed the local priesthood (responsible, remember for cultivating a priesthood of all the people) and for the local work of ministry and the care of the widows and the poor. That is why to this day, **the tithe corresponds specifically to local church giving** to support the local ministry of the church.

Why give the tithe to the local church?

God in his wisdom, has left to be his body, his hands and feet, on earth. An outpost of the hospitality of heaven and an invitation to trust in his abundance to provide.

How does local ministry happen in the place God has us?

The tithe.

What about supporting other non-profits and causes?

This is what offerings can be for. Offerings were a kind of giving that went *beyond* or *in addition to* the tithe. A tenth, or the tithe, going to the ministry of the local congregation is meant to be a floor, not a ceiling, for our generosity.

Is the practice of Tithe old and outdated, like the Old Testament it comes from?

Jesus affirms the Old Testament practice of tithing in the New Testament in discussion with the Pharisees in Matthew 23, a conversation in which he condemns the Pharisees way of tithing as a way to earn their righteousness. This is the complete opposite of what the tithe was intended to do. We do not give to prove ourselves, or earn God's love. Instead, giving is a response to what God has given us, a response of gratitude which God specifies he wants us to share with others. We are free to invest in others knowing God will take care of us.

Is the tithe simply personal finance or is there a larger relationship to economics?

God's love is tied to economics. Leviticus 25 describes the year of Jubilee, which was an economic policy designed to showcase that heaven is coming and we can count on God for it. The New Testament church in Acts shows forth Jubilee not every 49 years, but every day, because of the radical grace Jesus Christ had heralded into the world (see Acts 2:44-46).

Why tithe?

1. **Because God first loved us** (1 John 4:19).

Tithing is a celebration of grace: that our worth is not earned, but given by God. We recognize this by giving the firstfruits. The real measure of your wealth is how much you'd be worth if you lost all your money. Discover the freedom from money and possessions being your currency of worth. Tithing is a very down-to-earth, practical way to live into a trusting relationship with God and the church. As a church, we offer through our tithes a safety net so that each of us can trust we will not go hungry or be unhoused.

2. **So the city will rejoice** (Proverbs 11:10).

When the righteous prosper, it results in the good of the city. The priesthood of all believers is built up to together in down-to-earth ways, herald the coming Kingdom: Jesus quoting Isaiah in Luke 4 announces what he has come to begin: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free; and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Another word for the Year of the Lord's Favor is Jubilee. Tithing is about investing in a Kingdom-minded community development plan for your locality through the ministry of the local church.