

**LOVE**  
*Love*  
**GIVES**  
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**PASTOR JONATHAN BROZOG**

# **Love Gives**

**Jonathan Brozozog**

I love my church. Not just a little, but a lot. When I say I love my church, I don't mean the building; I mean the people. By the people, I mean you! I love each and every one of you with a passion that burns deep inside of me and compels me to do everything in my power to help you grow in your knowledge of God and His will for your life.

One area where I – and God – want to see you grow is with generosity. When we love, we give. Generosity is a natural response to love. The attitude and action of generosity will change everything for you.

Many people have misconceptions and even fears about giving when it relates to churches and money, tithes and offerings. In this booklet, I want to clear up those misconceptions and give you a clear picture of why we give at Creative Church. If you put one dollar in an offering envelope, I want you to understand Biblically why you did it. I want you to know what you believe and why you believe it. We need to understand God's Word and make intelligent decisions about our finances.

If we want to understand life's best, let's look to the generous God who created us. This booklet will share God's design for Biblical generosity, from why we give and what the Bible says about giving, to what you can expect when you become a giver.

I pray that after you finish reading this booklet, three things will happen. First, you will understand how God has created us to be like Him – givers at heart. Second, I pray you will see a foundation for Biblical generosity in Scripture. Third, I pray you will become so excited about God's desire to move in your life and in others through generosity, that you will be jumping at the first opportunity to give and live the generous life. Understanding Biblical generosity has transformed my life for the better, and I believe it will forever change yours as well.

## Why We Give

I can tell where a person's heart is by looking at their checkbook or receipts or credit card statement. Is that surprising? It's actually pretty logical if you think about it. A person who loves sports probably has receipts from sporting events or sports equipment or sports jerseys. A person who loves to eat probably has lots of receipts from restaurants or grocery stores. A person who loves music may have receipts from iTunes or concerts or music stores. We spend our money on what we love.

Jesus talked about this same idea in Matthew 6:21 when He said, *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* When we truly love something, we want to give to it. That includes our time, energy, resources and finances. Love manifests itself in giving. Just think about the people you love the most. There's probably nothing you wouldn't give to them if it was within your power to do so.

Generosity is a core belief at Creative. As Christians, we are called to be a generous people – generous with our talents, our time, our love, and our resources. As a church, we practice and model Biblical generosity whenever possible. As you learn God's Word concerning tithes and offerings, you'll begin to open up your heart to His kind of generosity. And the result? Just watch how God will demonstrate His faithfulness to you in your finances and in your life overall.

## **If You Love, You Will Give**

God is a giver. Giving is part of His nature. Giving is a demonstration of love; it is love in action. Whether it was to address a need or simply to demonstrate His goodness on earth, God found reasons to give. One of the most famous scriptures, John 3:16, says:

*For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

Giving reflects the condition of our hearts. If we say we love something but we don't give to it, we aren't being honest with ourselves. Giving is a natural response to love. God loved mankind so much that He was willing to allow his only Son to die on a cross, even while knowing that some would still reject the greatest gift ever given. That is true love in action.

We are made in God's image and are called to be givers as well. God wants to provide us with more, not so that we can spend it all on ourselves, but so that He can work through us to get resources to His children. What we do with the money He puts in our hands will show Him if we are people who can be trusted to carry out His work.

## Is Money Evil?

If I had a twenty-dollar bill, I could choose to do something great with it. I could buy someone lunch, pay someone's bill, or buy some groceries for a single mom. But I could also choose to use that same twenty dollars to buy drugs or pornography. The money itself is not evil; it's what we do with the money that is good or bad.

1 Timothy 6:10 is possibly one of the most misquoted verses in Scripture. Think of how many times you've heard, "*Money is the root of all evil.*" But that is absolutely not what that verse says. There are four critical words that come first that entirely change the meaning and that many people ignorantly omit.

Let's take a look. The verse actually reads, "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*" There is a huge difference between these two statements. One statement is made about a natural material we use as a form of exchange. The other statement is about people's *attitude toward* that resource.

Money itself is a wonderful tool and resource that God has given you to manage. However, if you love your money, it can be what manages you. Do you have money or does your money have you? P.T. Barnum, founder of the Barnum and Bailey Circus says, "Money is, in some respects, life's fire: it is a very excellent servant, but a terrible master." The love of money causes evil when you work for your money instead of using money as a tool to work for you. When in the proper relationship, money is a resource that can be used to further the cause of Christ in amazing ways.

## Why Does the Church Want My Money?

Let me just say that the church doesn't need your money. The church wants your obedience to God's Word, to see the needs of those in our congregation, community, and world met, and to see blessings poured out in your life.

And that's what God wants too. When you bring your tithe and offerings, you're not just giving money. You're showing God where your heart truly is and what you really treasure. Jesus gave us a perfect teaching about treasure. In Matthew 6:19-24, Jesus says:

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

Listen to what Jesus says. Your treasure doesn't follow your heart. Your heart follows after where you put your treasure. If you want your heart to be in the Kingdom, then you should put your treasure there. You can always tell where someone's heart is by looking at where they spend their time, energy, and money. So it's not a matter of **if** you will tithe, it's a matter of to **whom** will you tithe. Everyone tithes to whomever their god really is. For some, it's a boat or a house. For others, it's clothing, golf clubs, or shoes. Regardless of who and where, people will always spend money and give to what they love the most.

What or who do you love the most? Could someone tell that by looking at your finances? You put your money where you want your heart to be. One way we can further connect our heart to God's, and to stir up a deeper love for Him, is simply to begin to give.

So does the church want your money? The short answer? Yes. But a better question is why does the church want your money?

There are four reasons. First, when you give, we know your heart is connecting in a powerful way with God and you're beginning to trust Him on a whole new level. Second, that crazy love and trust opens you up to

hearing God's voice. You better believe He's going to lead you into exciting new places. Third, your obedience proves to God you're someone He can trust. When you trust someone, you naturally give them more responsibility and resources. Fourth, the finances you give at Creative allow us all, as a church family, to do phenomenal things to impact our community and world.

## What Is Tithing?

When people talk about giving, frequently you hear the word “tithe.” So what is tithing?

The word *tithe* literally means tenth. It existed before the Old Testament law of Moses was given and first appeared in the book of Genesis. Tithing existed *before* the law, is talked about *in* the law, and is still found in the New Testament *after* the law. It is the practice of bringing the first ten percent of your income to Jesus through your local church. Tithing isn't a *have-to*; it's a *get-to*. A tithe is God's portion which we lovingly return to the One who gave us everything.

What do you do when you get your paycheck? Some people pay their bills first - honoring Visa. God has a better idea. He invites us to thank and honor Him by bringing the first of our increase to His house – the church – which gives Him an open invitation to provide blessing in our lives.

Tithing first appears in the Bible with the great patriarch of our faith, Abraham. Abraham had just won the victory in a major battle. He not only rescued his brother Lot, who had been taken captive but took all of the goods of those he had defeated. He and his household of 318 men had just defeated the armies of four kings! It was a miraculous victory. Abraham took the spoils to the king and high priest at that time, Melchizedek. Genesis 14:18-20 describes the scene:

*“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he [Abraham] gave him a tithe of all.”*

Hebrews chapter seven (in the New Testament) talks about Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek. Abraham is an example of tithing before the law and we are to follow this tithing practice with Jesus after the fulfillment of the law. In Hebrews 7:17, the author talks about Jesus, who under the new covenant, is also King and High Priest under the order of Melchizedek, *“You are a priest forever; according to the order of Melchizedek.”*

Jesus is the one that we worship and call our High Priest. We demonstrate our love, trust, and faith in Him through the bringing of our tithe. The difference from the Old Testament is that now it's not a debt we owe; it's an expression of our love and worship towards Him.

Some argue that tithing is purely based on Old Testament law practice and is no longer applicable to Christians today. The argument hangs on the idea that with Christ the law has been fulfilled, so there is no longer any need to tithe. But Jesus did not *cancel* the law; He *fulfilled* it. He said, *“Do not think I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo but to complete and fulfill them”* (Matthew 5:17 AMP). He fulfilled the law through love; through the giving of Himself.

The apostle Paul brings clarity to how love fulfilled the law when he said, *“Love does no wrong to one’s neighbor [it never hurts anybody]. Therefore love meets all the requirements and is the fulfilling of the Law”* (Romans 13:10 AMP). I’m not tithing because it’s a law; I’m tithing because I love God and the church. This rings true with everything. The reason I don’t commit adultery isn’t because it’s a law, but because I love my wife, Joanne. It’s my love for her that fulfills that commandment. Similarly, it was Jesus’ love for us and the gift of the cross that fulfilled the law, so we now respond out of love.

Another great teaching about tithing in the New Testament was given by Jesus, Himself. In Matthew 23, Jesus began to address many topics with the scribes and Pharisees, one of which was tithing. Jesus understood that tithing was important but a sincere heart should be involved. That’s why He said:

*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others”* (Matthew 23:23).

In this passage, Jesus reaffirms that tithing is a good thing which should be combined with justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Tithing can and should be used to bless all believers. Tithing done only out of obligation or routine misses the main point. We give because we love.

Sometimes I hear, “Well, I love my friend, and I want to give my tithe to him because he really needs it!” Or, “I have this great cause I’d love to support. Can’t I just give them my tithe?”

Here’s the short and simple answer: the tithe belongs to God, not to us and not to anyone else. In Malachi 3:8 the Bible says:

*“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.”*

That's why you can't "bless" others with your tithe because it's like giving them stolen property. Nor can you be blessed by giving it to someone else, because it's not yours to give. The tithe belongs to God. In faithfully bringing the tithe as God directed, you'll find your provision.

## **What Are Offerings?**

Some people want to give to a cause or event that tugs at their heart, or perhaps to a friend or family member in need or a charity organization. These are all great and noble causes. These gifts go by a different name; these are called offerings. This is not your tithe.

The tithe is a set percentage that is to be given to the church and it reveals our heart attitude in terms of obedience and trusting God. So what is an offering? Offerings can be any amount given to any cause, and reveal our heart attitude in terms of how strongly we feel toward a need or a ministry opportunity. Offerings also demonstrate our willingness to listen to and trust God. Offerings encourage us to express our love freely and liberally in our own unique way.

Since offerings are a free-will choice, they often bring a deep sense of joy. It's fun to give to something we believe strongly in or to someone we see who we want to help. Both tithes and offerings make our hearts happy. Both tithes and offerings focus on the heart, but they are expressed in different ways, which allow us to develop a fuller understanding of the joy of giving.

## Obedience

I remember being in my early twenties and struggling with tithing. I grew up in the church...I was serving in the church...I knew what to do, I just couldn't seem to do it. So I get that it can be a challenge. When I started tithing I was broke, so I figured I didn't have anything to lose. It became harder as the amount increased, but I learned obedience to God's Word by tithing. It proved to be a source of blessing in my life and ultimately in the life of this church.

Let me illustrate. What if I asked my son Nicolas to clean up his room, and after a few hours, he came out with a Lego masterpiece that he built for me to play with? Although his Lego masterpiece was thoughtful, what I actually wanted was obedience: for him to simply do what I had asked him to do.

Our obedience keeps us from robbing God. Not only can we rob Him of the tithe, which is His money, but we can also rob Him by denying Him the opportunity to bless us. Imagine I brought home a special toy for my kids and walked in the door with it hidden behind my back and announced, "Daddy's home! And I've got something for any boys or girls who've been making great choices! Is there anyone here like that?" If my wife, Joanne, exclaimed, "No! They have all been behaving terribly!" I would feel bummed out and totally robbed because their disobedience to their mom kept me from being able to give them a blessing.

When we are obedient to bring our tithe to the church, we give God the opportunity to bless us and to bless those that are served by the local church. In Malachi 3:10-12 the Bible says:

*"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.'"*

When each member of the church responds out of love, in obedience to God's Word, it empowers us all to do the work of the ministry. When you give, you're not spending money; you are investing into the body of Christ and causing it to grow. Malachi challenged the Israelites to bring the tithe "into the storehouse" so that the local church could do the work of the ministry and invest in those in their spiritual family.

As a master designer and architect, God never designed anything to consistently operate from a position of lack. Think about what Jesus spoke in John chapter 10. He said, *“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”* (John 10:10b). If this applies to every individual, then it applies to the whole church. God wants the local church to operate from a place of abundance. God’s larger plan is to ensure that every church that impacts the lives of His people is filled with the necessary resources.

When you make an investment, the quality of your return is based on the quality of your investment. This is also true in giving. Some would argue that this is worldly, but it’s not. It’s a Biblical principle taught over and over again. Jesus said, “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full – pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” (Luke 6:38)

One major principle of generosity is the importance of giving cheerfully. God is thrilled when he sees us giving with a cheerful heart and can’t wait to bless our socks off. He shares our joy and excitement. How would you feel if you gave your child a small bag of M&M’s and watched your child happily share with others? You would smile and want to give him an abundance of treats! You would enjoy giving to that child more often. Contrast this with a selfish child who complains or refuses to share. People who give grudgingly tend to do the minimum and make excuses to give even less. This is definitely not giving their best.

## What Happens When I Practice Biblical Generosity?

Practicing Biblical generosity gives God the opportunity to bless your life. When you make the decision to obey God's Word and become a faithful steward over the resources He's given you, you position yourself to receive the blessings that come from being in relationship with God.

Malachi 3:10 says God will *"open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."* If that's not enough, continue reading Malachi 3:11-12:

*"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sake, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field, says the Lord of hosts. And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land, says the Lord of hosts."*

In other words, God is saying, I will give you a blessing that will rock you and set you up for generations to come. You will be in the right place at the right time. Someone who is more qualified than you will apply for the same job as you, but you'll get the job because of God's favor. He will give you wise ideas on how to manage the money you have and how to create more increase. This is the covenant or agreement between you and God that happens when you tithe. He said He would protect our possessions so we would always be able to produce.

Just as a farmer's harvest depends on what he plants, when we faithfully sow into good soil, we can be sure we will eventually reap a harvest. Paul speaks about sowing and reaping in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11:

*"But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: 'He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.' Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your*

*righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.”*

God’s generosity goes beyond blessing financially. People who invest in the Kingdom can expect spiritual growth and a heavenly return of far greater value.

## **Tithing Seems Like a Big Risk: Can God be Trusted?**

God loves you. He has incredible plans for you and your future. But in order to fully run after God and receive all that He has for you, you must trust Him in every area of your life.

And yes, faith is a risk. That's what faith is. It's saying: I choose to believe that God will do what He said He will do, even though I have no way of seeing the physical proof with my eyes. We are not in a relationship with a contract or a robot or a machine or a company. We are in a relationship with the living, breathing God of the universe - the God who created us then chased after us and promised that if we let Him, He will forever be faithful to us and take care of us.

When a person gets married, that person is taking a risk. They are choosing to believe, in faith, that this other person will love them and stay with them for the rest of their lives. Trust in the other person's love is what gives them the confidence to say yes. While people cannot always be trusted, God most certainly can.

I've met people who live their lives according to their own knowledge and those who choose to lean on God. Usually, the first battle we each face is with trusting God for our provisions. Are we willing to trust Him to provide for our needs or will we insist on doing it our own way? We are often tempted to hold onto our finances because money offers us security and seems linked with our identity. Choosing to serve God and give our financial resources is a major step in walking out His plan for our lives. This is significant because it's one of the strongest outward signs that reveals our trust in Him and Him alone.

God knows that even though we want to believe, sometimes it's hard, so He gives us this promise to help our hearts:

*"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it" (Malachi 3:10).*

God is worthy of your trust.

## Your Giving In Action

People who give financially play a huge role in helping the church reach more people with the good news of the Gospel and the love of Christ. This is ultimately how the church grows!

As new believers learn God's Word and then begin to live God's Word, they begin to support the church financially and empower the church to reach even more people. Each dollar given to the church is multiplied both financially and spiritually as more lives are impacted for Christ. Wow, you can't beat that return on investment!

On top of that, as a church body, we all grow together in our faith and love as we practice loving and obeying God. Remember Ephesians 4:16 says, *"when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."*

So let's get really practical for a minute. If you're like me, you want to know what the church does with what you give. You want to make sure that as you give to God, you can trust the hands of the people you are entrusting God's money to. I can't wait to tell you.

Your tithes and offerings at Creative Church go directly into making God famous and reaching the lost at any cost. Most of the things we do on Sunday at Creative are provided for free – the kids' services, youth resources, online services, multiple facilities for services, booklets and resources for prayer and discipleship, etc. It's because of your giving we are able to produce amazing large-scale outreach events and productions that bring people to Creative who might not otherwise be willing to step inside a church door. In fact, many of you came to Creative through one of these special events. It's what Jesus did in John 6 when He fed 5,000 people. Before He taught the people, He fed them; He touched their humanity. Every year at Creative, thousands of people get saved, hundreds get baptized, hundreds get new Bibles at a discipleship class, hundreds of teens are set free from addiction, prisoners are ministered to, lives are transformed, etc. This is how you empower the church and create provision in God's house. The more resources the church has available, the more we can invest toward reaching people for the glory of God!

Creative Church is meeting not only the spiritual needs of our community and world but also showing God's love by meeting people's

direct physical needs, just as Jesus did. We gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to support orphans and build homes for orphans in Guatemala. We started our Free Ultrasound Bus ministry, and Prison ministry over the last few years. Every time you give, you get to be a part of changing the lives of those around you.

We receive many testimonies of lives being impacted by the ministry at Creative. Thousands of people listen to our Kingdom messages in over 90 nations around the world. To bring this home, thousands of people are making life-changing decisions for Christ while attending our local services. People are finding forgiveness, healing, hope, purpose, and a place to belong. Marriages are being strengthened and restored. Parents are encouraged and given the wisdom to handle the overwhelming issues of life. Teens are finding answers to life's difficult questions. Children are genuinely excited to come to church every Sunday. Promising relationships with other people and the Lord are taking root.

Your giving makes all of this happen. Your obedience to God and love for God expressed by giving financially is making a difference. You empower the church to reach the lost at any cost. We are making an impact on the Twin Cities for the cause of Christ!

If you already entrust Creative with your tithes and offerings, I want to say a huge THANK YOU. We are honored by the gifts you give. We pledge to be transparent, authentic and strive to honor God with our finances.

If you've never given, let me encourage you to take the plunge! Read Malachi 3:10 one more time, and hear God speak directly to you in this verse:

*"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."*

[If you've never tithed before. START HERE for all the details on how: CREATIVECHURCH.COM/GIVE](https://creativechurch.com/give)

When we love God and remember all He has given to us, generosity becomes such a natural part of our lives. Simply put, God gave and He invites us to give as well. That's what love does. Love gives.

