

Honest With God



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 16:10; Leviticus 27:30; Genesis 22:1–12; Hebrews 12:2; Luke 11:42.

MEMORY VERSE: “And what is the seed that fell on the good ground? That is like [the same as] those [people] who hear God’s teaching with a good, honest heart. They obey God’s teaching and patiently [by being patient] produce good fruit [works]” (Luke 8:15, ICB).

WHAT IS AN HONEST HEART? And how is it shown? Many people today think it is OK to lie sometimes, as long as the lie is small and does not cause a lot of harm. Some people even believe that special times and places make lying the right thing to do. But the Bible does not teach this idea.

Truth and honesty cannot be separated. But we are not born with the desire to be honest. We must learn to tell the truth. We must be honest. Then we will be good managers of God’s gifts.

Good things happen when we are honest. Then we never need to worry about being caught in a lie or having to cover up a lie. So, honesty is an important part of the Christian life. Often, during difficult times, we feel the pressure to be dishonest. It is very easy at these times to lie. So, it is very important to be honest at all times.

In this week’s lesson, we will study the topic of being honest with our money and paying tithe. Paying tithe is giving to God 10% of all the money we get. We will study why paying tithe to God is very important to our work as managers of everything that God trusts us with.



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THE NEED FOR PERSONAL HONESTY (Luke 16:10)

How do you feel when someone lies to you? Do you enjoy it? Of course not! It is easy to see that people who lie have a problem. But it is hard to see this problem in ourselves. When we see it, we seem to excuse our lies or give reasons for telling lies to make our lying not seem so bad. We might say, *Oh, the lie I told is not that bad. After all, it is only a small lie. It is not really important.* We might fool ourselves that our lies are not that bad. But we do not fool God.

“Many members of our church say that they believe the truth. But they are not honest in what they say and do. Their lies cause them to be lukewarm in their spiritual lives. They are not connected to Christ. And so, they are tricking their own souls.”—Ellen G. White *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 4, page 310, adapted.

Read Luke 16:10. What important rule does Jesus give in this verse? How should that rule help us see how important it is to be honest, even in the “‘little things’ ” (Luke 16:10, NLV)?

God knows we easily can become dishonest when it comes to the things we own. So, He gives us a powerful “cure” to help us not to be dishonest and selfish. This “cure” is paying tithe. Paying tithe means giving to God 10% of all the money we get.

Read Leviticus 27:30 and Malachi 3:8. What do these verses teach us? How can this truth help us stay honest?

“God does not ask us to pay tithe because we feel unselfish. He does not ask us to pay tithe because we feel thankful to Him, either. Instead, we give 10% of our income to Him because this action is honest. After all, the tithe belongs to the Lord. He asks us to give back to Him the money that is His own. . . . Honesty is an important rule of doing business in life. In the same way, honesty should be a part of everything we do for God.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, pages 138, 139, adapted.

How can paying tithe help you remember who really owns all that you have? Why is it important never to forget who owns all that belongs to us?



God gives us a powerful “cure” to help us not to be dishonest and selfish. What does God ask us to do to guard against these sins? God asks us to pay tithe.

THE LIFE OF FAITH (Genesis 22:1–12)

Read the story in Genesis 22:1–12. What does this story tell us about how strong Abraham’s faith was?

The life of faith does not come from taking a stand for what we believe just one time. We do not prove we are loyal by sharing our faith in a powerful way only one time either.

Christians continue to be amazed by Abraham’s act of faith with Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22). But Abraham did not show faith only that one time in his life. No, Abraham lived a life of faith and obedience before his act of faith on Mount Moriah. (Most of the time, that is!) Abraham’s faith made it possible for him to do what he did on Mount Moriah. But what would have happened if Abraham had decided not to be loyal to God before God asked him to give up his son on Mount Moriah? Then Abraham never would have passed that test. But Abraham passed the test because he was a man of faith. Abraham also lived a life of faith after God proved Abraham’s loyalty on Mount Moriah.

What lesson does Abraham’s story teach us as God’s managers? We learn that we do not show our faith only one time, either. Over time, our faith will grow deeper and stronger. Or it will grow weaker. Everything depends on how we build on the faith we have.



Abraham’s faith made it possible for him to do what he did on Mount Moriah.

Read Hebrews 12:2. What does this verse tell us about where our faith comes from and how to have this faith?

We must be loyal managers of everything God gives us. The only way to do that is to “look only to Jesus. He is the one who began our faith, and he makes our faith perfect. Jesus suffered death on the cross. But he accepted the shame of the cross as if it were nothing. He did this because of the joy that God put before him. And now he is sitting at the right side of God’s throne” (Hebrews 12:2, ICB). The wording “makes our faith perfect” is used only in this one verse in the New Testament. This wording also can be written this way: “the One [Jesus] who makes us perfect.” That means that Jesus wants to help our faith to grow and become perfect and complete (Hebrews 6:1, 2). So, we must live the life of faith. Then we will grow stronger.

How has your faith grown and become stronger over time? Or maybe you feel your faith is weak. Why is it weak?

SHOWING OUR FAITH (Luke 11:42)

Yesterday, we learned that faith is an experience that continues to grow. Jesus helps our faith grow stronger and become complete. One way God “makes our faith perfect” (Hebrews 12:2, ICB) is by asking us to pay tithe. Paying tithe is giving to God 10% of all the money we get. We must understand how to pay tithe in the right way. Paying tithe is not about buying our way into heaven. Not at all! Instead, paying tithe is how we show our faith. Paying tithe shows what we believe in our hearts.

Anyone can say he or she has faith and believes in God and in Jesus. But we know that “the demons believe that, too!” (James 2:19, ICB). But faith is more than what we believe. Faith is what we do. So, we show our faith when we take 10% of our paychecks and give it back to God.

Read Luke 11:42. Why did Jesus say we must remember to pay tithe? How does paying tithe show that we are fair to others and that we love God?

Paying tithe shows we depend on God. Paying tithe also shows we trust in Jesus to save us. And paying tithe shows we believe that “God has given us every spiritual blessing [gift] in heaven” (Ephesians 1:3, ICB). Giving back tithe shows that we believe in God’s promise to give us more.

Read Genesis 28:14–22. As these verses show us, God made Jacob a promise. How did Jacob answer?

“God made the plan of paying tithe. It is a beautiful and simple plan. Everyone can follow it with faith and courage, because it comes from God. This plan combines what is simple with what is useful. We do not need to have special knowledge to understand the plan and follow it. Everyone can take part in the precious work of saving souls. Every man, woman, and youth may become a manager of money for the Lord. Each person can be a helper in meeting the needs of the church for money to do God’s work.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels [Advice] on Stewardship [Managing the gifts God gives us]*, page 73, adapted.

Have you experienced the rewards of paying tithe? If yes, how? How has paying tithe helped your faith to grow?



Faith is what we do. So, we show our faith when we take 10% of our paychecks and give it back to God.

“ “HOLY TO THE LORD” ’ ” (Leviticus 27:30, NLV)

God asks us to give Him tithe. Tithes is 10% of all the money we get. But how do we give God what He already owns?

Read Leviticus 27:30. What two important ideas about paying tithes are found in this verse?

“Tithes belongs to the Lord. So, it is holy. Tithes does not become holy because we promise to give it to God. Tithes does not become holy when we give it to Him, either. Instead, tithes is holy because it already belongs to the Lord. No one but God has a right to the tithes. No one can make tithes holy by giving it to the Lord. Why? Because tithes was never ours to begin with.”—Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *Stewardship [Managing the gifts God gives us] Roots [the cause of or reason for]* (Silver Spring, MD: Stewardship Ministries Department, 1994), page 52, adapted.

We do not make tithes holy. God does. Only He has that power. We are only His managers. Our duty is to give back to God what belongs to Him. We give tithes to God for a special work. Using the tithes for any other reason is not honest. Paying tithes is something we always should do.

In Hebrews 7:2–10, Paul says Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. How does Abraham show the true reason for paying tithes? To whom was Abraham really giving his tithes?



We give tithes to God for a special work. Using the tithes for any other reason is not honest.

Both the Sabbath and tithes are holy. The word “holy” means something that is “to be used only for God.” Both the Sabbath and tithes belong to God.

“God made the seventh day holy. He separated the Sabbath from other days. The Sabbath is as holy today as it was when God first rested on it after making the earth.

“A tithes must be separated from what we earn. Indeed, it is ‘holy to the Lord.’ The New Testament does not explain why we should pay tithes or honor the Sabbath. The reasons for doing both are clear. . . . We give to God the time He separated as His own. And we give back to Him that part of the money we earn that belongs to Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels [Advice] on Stewardship [Taking care of God’s gifts to us]*, page 66, adapted.

How can you always remember that your tithes is “holy”?

GIVING TO GOD LEADS TO NEW LIFE IN JESUS (Nehemiah 9:2, 3)

Hezekiah was a king of Judah. He ruled for a very long time. God blessed His people a lot during this time. In fact, the last time God blessed His people this much was during the time that David and Solomon ruled over all Israel. In 2 Chronicles 29–31, we read a story about Hezekiah. The story tells us about a special time of spiritual growth in Hezekiah's kingdom. "Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 29:2, NLV). Also, during this time worship in "the LORD's temple was started up again" (2 Chronicles 29:35, NIV; read also 2 Chronicles 30:5). "So there was great joy in Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 30:26, NLV). Statues of false gods and their altars were destroyed (2 Chronicles 31:1). New spiritual life woke up in the hearts and minds of the people. It caused them to give many gifts to God and to bring Him their tithes. Tithe is 10% of all the money a person gets.

In Nehemiah 9:2, 3, Nehemiah gives another example of the connection between a new spiritual life and giving tithe. As these verses show us, what did the new spiritual life mean? Now read Nehemiah 13 about how Nehemiah changed things for the better. He improved the temple of God (Nehemiah 13:4–9). Afterward, what did the people of Judah bring there? (Read Nehemiah 13:12 for the answer.)

"New life in Jesus and improving our spiritual lives are two different things. New life in Jesus shows we have a new spiritual life. New life in Jesus means the powers of our minds and hearts are given new life. New life in Jesus also means coming back to life from spiritual death. But improving our spiritual lives means a change in ideas and beliefs and a change in everything we do and in how we act."—Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, page 42, adapted.

There is a connection between a new spiritual life and paying tithe. What happens if we do not pay tithe? Then our experience of a new spiritual life becomes lukewarm. Our spiritual lives also will have no power. But God gives us new spiritual lives and improves the way we live. These changes are really His way of asking us to make a promise to change. Paying tithe is part of that promise. So, we cannot hold back from God our tithe. If we do, we cannot expect Him to give us the things we ask from Him.



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: God led in all the agreements with His people. He also took the lead in bringing His people into these agreements (Hebrews 8:10). God's Old and New Agreements include many promises. These promises show His loving-favor, mercy, and His desire to save us.

An agreement with God includes many things. It includes: (1) God; (2) those (God's people) who accept the agreement with God; (3) the rules of the agreement; (4) the accepting of the agreement by God and His people; (5) punishments for breaking the agreement; and (6) the many ways that God will bless His people when they honor His agreement with them.

In Malachi 3:9, 10, we find all six parts of an agreement in the teaching of paying tithe. Paying tithe is giving back to God 10% of all the money we get. Also, Malachi 3:9, 10 tells us again the special ways that God will bless His people for paying tithe. Paying tithe to God shows our faith in God. It shows we refuse to make riches the most important thing in our lives. Paying tithe also proves that something good can come from the heart of a sinner that God has made new.

"A selfish spirit stops men from giving back to God the gifts of money that belong to Him. God made a special agreement with men. He promised what He would do if they agreed always to give back to Him 10% of all the money they got. This money is meant to build up Jesus' kingdom. What happens when God's people separate this tithe money for Him from all the money they earn? Then God promises to bless them in a powerful way. He will give them so much that there will not be room for His gifts. But what if men hold back from God what belongs to Him? Then the Lord says clearly, 'A curse is on you because the whole nation has robbed me' [Malachi 3:9, ICB]."—Ellen G. White, *Counsels [Advice] on Stewardship [Taking care of the gifts God gives us]*, page 77, adapted.



Paying tithe to God shows our faith in God. It shows we refuse to make riches the most important thing in our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why is paying our tithe an important part of our faith?
- ② What advice would you have for someone who says, "I cannot afford to pay tithe?" What could you do to help this person?
- ③ Tithe is holy. How does this fact change the way you feel and think about paying it?