

## WORSHIPPING IN OUR GIVING

A few months ago, the Sr. Pastoral Team celebrated your faithfulness in giving financially to God's Mission. The United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) listed us among the top giving churches for the year 2023 (43 out of 100) putting us in the top 100 out of over 4,200 churches. That is pretty remarkable!

We don't give, however, for human rankings, but we give as a form of worship to the One we love and trust in – Jesus! Tithing first occurred under Abraham and Jacob whose relationship with God was founded in His promises to Abraham. It continued under the stewardship of the Law that was given to Moses for the people of Israel. Both Jesus and Paul confirmed it in the New Testament because we are members of this new covenant through our shared faith with Abraham in God's promises. When we tithe, God promises a blessing so great we cannot contain it.

When God incorporated tithes and offerings into the Law they provided for the priests and Levites, the Tabernacle and the temple, and other functional and social needs. The same applies today. They provide for those who feed and labor for you spiritually and for the upkeep of the church property, and the overall needs within the Kingdom of God. Giving also serves as an indicator of our hearts and our spiritual maturity. Where is our heart? In whom or what are we trusting? Are we greedy or generous? Do we give cheerfully or grudgingly? God promises blessings to those who trust him and obey him in this area of worship. Not just in the areas we pick and choose.

### **Malachi 3:6-12**

*I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed. Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. But you ask, 'How can we return when we have never gone away?' Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?' You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me.*

*Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you indeed will live in a delightful land," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.*

### **Matthew 23:23**

*What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but*

*you ignore the more important aspects of the law-- justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.*

**Luke 6:38**

*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.*

When we presented our 2023 UPCI giving status, we thanked you who are givers and encouraged you to prayerfully consider what God wants you to give now. It's good to reassess from time to time – keeping our hearts open before God. The tithe (tenth) is a set portion of your income, but your offerings are up to you. To those who are not giving consistently, we encouraged you to participate in God's financial plan for his kingdom of which you are a part. He wants to bless all of his people. You included!

We also clarified the acronym we refer to as TOM (tithes, offering, and missions). The missions category can be looked at as a designated portion of your offering. This helps us support ALL of our career missionaries who are taking the gospel to the whole world and other critical ministries outside of this local church.

<b>TITHES</b>	→	Tithes	→	Provides for the support of the ministry
<b>OFFERING</b>	↗	Offering	→	Property and needs of the church, etc.
	↘	Missions	→	Global Missions, North American Missions, Anything outside of church

As a church that refuses to participate in the deceptiveness of prosperity doctrine and one that firmly believes that people should be taught God's financial plan and left to "freely give," we have made a point of not pressing you for money. That doesn't mean that you should not be consistently giving according to the Word of God. All members of the body should. If you are not consistently giving, we ask that you prayerfully commit to growing in this area of worship.

Why not take God's Malachi 3:10 challenge? Multitudes have found Him faithful. And remember, blessings do not always come back as dollars and cents. Sometimes they are more valuable than mere money.

Thank you.

The Sr. Pastoral Team