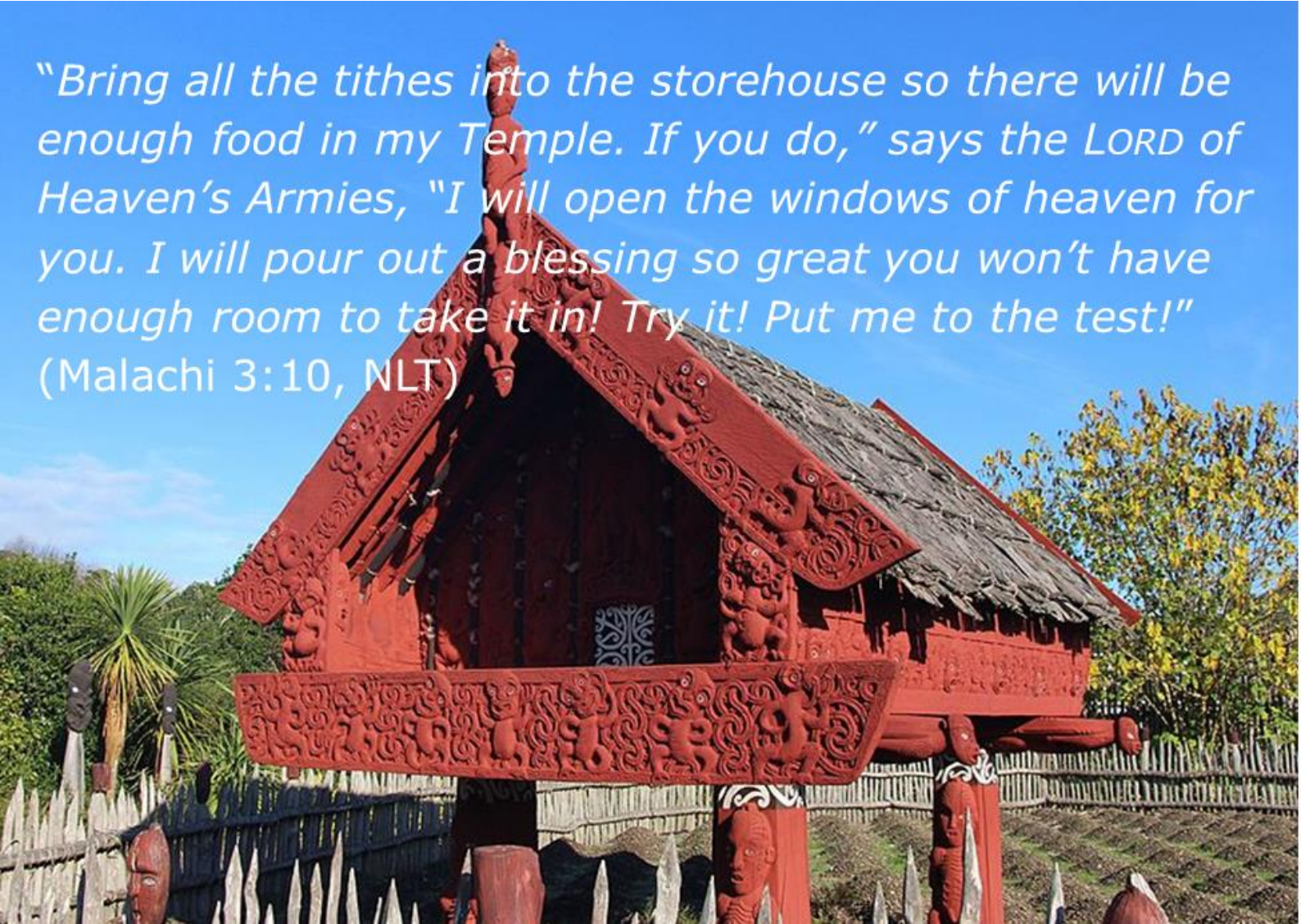


Encouraging giving growth

A Resource for Ministers

“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!”
(Malachi 3:10, NLT)



As Wesleyan Methodists we recognise the importance of “giving due consideration to the Biblical principle of tithing into the work of the Lord.”¹

Many of our churches are reporting increased giving (tithes & offerings). What are they doing that is successful? They ...

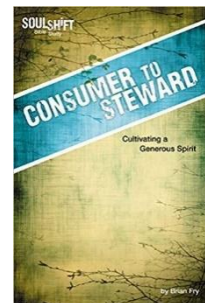
1. Teach / Preach Biblical Giving Principles

It’s been said that when it comes to preaching / teaching on giving there are 2 types of churches – those who preach “too much” on giving, and those who preach “too little” on giving. Let’s be a 3rd type – the church that preaches and teaches on giving at just the right frequency and for the right amount of time.

How do you know what the right frequency and time is? How do you know what approach to take? Follow the Holy Spirit’s prompting. God knows what his people need to hear, when and how – trust him.

Consider

- A regular giving / stewardship series.
- Preaching on the biblical principle of tithing.
- Stewardship campaigns.
- Integrating giving / tithing into sermons on other topics.
- Teaching children and youth.
- Teaching on God’s promises around giving (use real life examples where you can).
- A Tithing / Giving Bible Study.
- Including it in your discipleship and partnership processes (see below).



2. Make it easy to give

Nearly 90% of New Zealanders do not use cash on a daily basis.² For many churches that is seen in less cash in the weekly offerings. In today’s digital world consider providing other ways that people can give their tithes & offerings.

Consider offering

- Automatic Payment (AP).
- Online Giving
- Internet banking.
- Through your website.

¹ WMCNZ, “National Constitution of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of New Zealand” (Wesleyan Methodist Church of New Zealand, November 11, 2017) para 134 (4).

² “The Future of Cash Use - Te Whakamahinga Moni Anamata - Reserve Bank of New Zealand,” accessed November 8, 2019, <https://www.rbnz.govt.nz/notes-and-coins/future-of-cash/issues-paper-the-future-of-cash>.

- Giving app.
- Payroll giving – a service offered by IRD for giving directly from salary & wages.
- EFTPOS (Debit cards NOT Credit Cards).

Don't forget those who like to give using cash or cheque though. *Consider*

- Weekly offering opportunities (can be the traditional "pass the offering bag" during the service, an offering box placed where people know they can drop their giving in etc.).
- Special offerings e.g. an annual thanksgiving offering.
- Fun ways for children to give during worship service.



And let people know (advertise) how you accept tithe's & offerings – in your worship services, on your website, in your weekly bulletin etc.

Thank
You

3. Encourage and thank people

Thanking people is a good thing to do all the time - after all who amongst us does not like to be thanked for what we do. The same is true when we give. We may be giving because we know that is what God requires of us but a thank you for doing so makes us feel good and encourages us to keep on giving.

Saying thank you also provides you with the opportunity to encourage people to give as God calls them to give.

Consider thanking people

- A regular thank you and encouragement letter. You might (at different times possibly – not in every letter necessarily although you could)
- Thank people for what they have given.
- Update them individually on what they've given so far this year (This is a good way to check that what they have given has been recorded correctly).
- Provide an opportunity to top up their giving or even give more in addition to what they had planned to give.
- Remind them of the donation tax rebate (a 33.33% tax credit for all giving to your church if it is registered as a charity).
- Provide an update on overall church finances – see below.
- A general thank you during your worship service, in your church bulletin, newsletter etc.

Consider encouraging people

- Remind them to give.
- Follow up on stewardship pledges.

- Providing regular updates and feedback (be transparent) on overall church finances including:
 - Tithes & offerings (overall not individuals).
 - How the money has been spent.
 - The church's financial situation.

during your worship service, in your church bulletin, in your newsletter etc. Bulletin

- Regularly ask people to review their giving. Their income changes – whether up or down - so too should their tithe. It is particularly important to do this for those who give by AP as it's easy to “forget” how much they are giving.

4. **Make giving obvious (clear) in Discipleship and Partnership processes**

Giving to God is part of being a Christ-like disciple.

Consider

- Including tithing / giving in your teaching of how to be a good disciple just as you do such things as studying the Bible, prayer, mission activity etc.
- Teaching on it as part of your Partnership classes. It is after all a requirement for being a partner in a Wesleyan church.³



5. **Bathe giving in prayer**

Another one that is a good thing to do all the time with everything. So, don't leave tithing / giving out. Pray about it – appropriately and at the right time. How will you know how and when to pray? Again, listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He will guide you so that you don't pray inappropriately – either too long or too short but rather just the right amount.

Consider

- Prayer before you take up your weekly offering. Be careful that you don't use this to manipulate people into giving (you know what I mean 😊).
- Prayer before you take up your weekly offering. This is a good time to seek God's blessing on what has been given that day and throughout the week directly into the church's bank account. It's also a good time to pray God will fulfil his promise to bless those who give.
- Encouraging people to pray and seek God's guidance on what they should give.

6. **Celebrate**

³ WMCNZ, “WMCNZ Constitution” para 134 (4).

8. **Grow the kingdom – and so grow their church**

We don't grow the church to increase giving but it is an outcome when a church grows in numbers – provided we help our new disciples see it is part of discipleship, that we teach on it etc.



9. **Provide budgeting / training on personal finance management**

Whilst God requires that we tithe and he knows that that is possible for everyone no matter what their income level is, there is no doubt that people find it hard to give if they struggle to pay their own bills.

Consider

- Running personal finance / budgeting courses.
- Developing a relationship with a provider of finance / budgeting courses who you can encourage people to go to.
- Providing budgeting advice services.

This feast of ideas is provided for you to choose from as you follow God's command to disciple people. As with any feast you can take and use as much or as little as you wish. What do you do that is not on this list? Let the National Secretary know so they can share it with your fellow Ministers.

Resources

1. **Teach / Preach Biblical Giving Principles**

Verses and passages on tithing, giving and giving to those in need

Prov. 3:9, Mal. 3:10; Matt. 23:53; 25:34-40; Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17

Message series



MORE

3-Week Series on John Wesley's Teachings About Money
(From: 12Stone Church – made available for free use)

"**MORE**" answers the question: What do you do with envy? This 3-week series explores the teachings of John Wesley on the topic of finances. He teaches us to save more, earn more, and give more.

Week 1: "**What Is The More?**"

Scripture: Exodus 32-33, Matthew 6

Main Idea: God is not the treasure map. He is the treasure.

Week 2: "**Save More**"

Scripture: Luke 12:15-21

Main Idea: Sharing breaks the power of greed over our lives.

Week 3: "**Earn More**"

Scripture: 2 Samuel 11-12, Philippians 4

Main Idea: God makes work & wealth possible, but we need to learn to be content. We must pay attention to how blessed we really are!

3. Encourage and thank people

(Example from The Well – links with "More" Message Series)

90-Day Trust Test - Letter

Dear Name,

Our "**MORE**" series is challenging all of us to ask questions like, "*What do we do with envy?*" "*Do I really view God as the ultimate treasure in life?*" And, "*Are we living by God's principles for a profitable life?*" Alongside this series is a practical expression of faith, a 90-Day Trust Test. Since it is unfamiliar to many of you, allow me to bring you 'in the know'. Then you can decide.

This year I sensed a God prompt for us to collectively reflect upon our giving heart and habits to consider what it means to honour God as the owner and giver of all we enjoy. One expression of this is our **90-Day Trust Test** starting this Sunday, 20 August until 18 November 2017. It's an **invitation** for all those who regularly worship at The Well Church to put God first in your finances during these 90 Days. For some, this means starting or returning to tithing (see explanation on the reverse side). This is an invitation, not an obligation. The choice is yours. For many, this is a major breakthrough in trust, for "*blessed is the one who puts their trust in you, God!*" (Psalm 84).

Tithing is not an issue of money, it is an issue of trust. God knows the most difficult area for us to turn over to Him is our finances.

Malachi 3:10 says, "*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.*"

So, when God says, “test me in this...” we say, “why not?!”

In response, you are invited to put God first in your finances for 90-Days starting this Sunday (20 August – 18 November 2017). We have prepared a card for you to sign as a way of making your faith practical and actionable and will receive them during a special moment in worship this Sunday, 20 August 2017.

I, along with our Servant Leaders, will pray specifically for you over these 90-Days that you might experience the “MORE” of God in your life.

Our giving not only honours God and makes deposits in our eternal account (*Matthew 6*), but it funds the mission to change lives. So, we celebrate with all of heaven for every soul that finds new life in Christ. We are blessed to serve our city and community through compassion ministry and our ongoing commitment to give the first ten percent of every offering outside the walls of The Well. In the four short years of opening the doors of The Well, God has led us on a remarkable journey of seeing people come to Christ, grow deeper in Christ, and share life in Christ with others in a growing community. God is entrusting much to us for His Kingdom’s sake. May we be a blessing for God and good in Christchurch and beyond. What a ride! (*And remember, 90-Day Trust Test is a “Get To” not a ‘got to!’ Give willingly / cheerfully / hilariously or not at all! 2 Corinthians 9:6-7*).

Grateful,

(Insert Signature)

About the 90-Day Trust Test

The Well Church

What Is This?

First and foremost, it is *your choice*, a personal decision to rightfully honour God as the giver (owner) of all good things, a personal decision to share in the continuance of The Well and the great things God is building in our faith, our families and our future.

What Is The 90-Day Trust Test?

It is an **invitation** for all those who regularly worship at The Well to put God first in your family finances. For some this means starting, or returning to the practice of tithing (10% of gross household income.)

Tithing is not an issue of money, it is an issue of trust. God knows the most difficult area for us to turn over to Him is our finances.

Malachi 3:10 says, “*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.”*

So, when God says, “test me in this...” we say, “why not?!”

This Sunday, 20 August we will have a special time during worship for you to sign up in commitment to this 90-Day Trust Test.

What Is A Tithe?

God's Word clearly teaches that we are "stewards" of the resources God has entrusted. A 'benchmark' in the practice of systematic, proportionate giving is the 'tithe'. Tithe is a mathematical term that means "a tenth or 1/10". It is giving 10% of your income back to the Lord.

Example:

\$52,000 gross annual income divided by 52 weeks = \$1,000.00 weekly

\$1,000 weekly x 10% = \$100.00. A weekly tithe would be \$100.00.

(Benevolence & Missions are beyond the basic tithe.)

What If I Won't Be In Church This Sunday?

If you cannot attend church this weekend, please exercise one of these options: (a) Mail in your card to the church office; (b) Drop your card in the offering basket when you come next. And, you can start giving online via Internet Banking – perhaps you might setup an AP:

The Well Church <Bank account>

What If I'm Already Tithing?

We praise God for the faithfulness of those who are already tithing. The lives that have been changed as a result of new faith and growth, as well as your own, are an eternal investment. We also encourage you to seek God's leading for how He might call you to trust Him with MORE during these 90-Days. Remember, Jesus' teaches us in the NT that love always requires MORE.

What If I Feel Absolutely Unable to Tithe?

We would ask that you give consistently with God's leading. If you feel absolutely unable to tithe, check your feelings. Be sure they are consistent with the Lord's leading. Please mark the section on the card: *"not a representative of my tithe"*. We desire to be financially wise managers of The Well's financial resources and this is one process that informs us.

For an example of a 90 Day Trust Test Pledge card email Clint clint@thewellnz.org

7. Lead by Example

Values, beliefs, & practice statement - (Example from cession | community)

cession | community & Giving

The New Testament Pattern

We express our commitment to Christ and each other through regular, planned sacrificial giving. The joyful and sacrificial commitment of our financial resources to the worship and purposes of God is in line with the biblical impulse for giving found in the New Testament:

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9: 7, 8

Giving is:

- Personal
- Planned
- Worship rather than duty or religious obligation
- Participation rather than peer-pressured
- Joyful

The Tithe or 10%

The Old Testament pattern of giving establishes the principle of the tithe (or “tenth”) where our “first fruits” giving belongs to God. This is giving “off the top” rather than giving what is “left over”. *cession | community* holds the tithing **principle** as part of the biblically ordained pattern for giving to the mission of the church but we are no longer bound by the tithe as religious duty:

“A tithe of everything from the land [a tithe of everything you produce] whether grain or soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.” Leviticus 27:30

For many people this has a practical implication: they will assess a 10% tithe on their income as part of their decision-making on giving. It’s about gaining a ballpark understanding of what a tithe looks like relative to your salary, income or benefit. For many, the tithe is a starting point.

The rhythm of giving was also a major feature of Old Testament giving with religious festivals often coinciding with farming rhythms and harvests.

In a cash economy regular giving that is tied to salary rhythms gives us the best chance to offer “first fruits” off the top (many do this by AP) and to also respond to the church’s practical need to pay its costs including building rent, fixed monthly expenses and staff salaries. The rhythm of outgoings is kept healthy by a regular pattern of income. Irregular givers typically overestimate how much they are giving – unless people give systematically, they rarely give substantially.

Jesus implicitly affirms the continuing importance of the tithing principle:

“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.” Matthew 23:23

Jesus was clear that giving is a matter of the heart and not a way to earn favour with God or other people – but he didn't let people off the hook either asking for actions and heart to line up.

The Heart

We see this connection of heart and action in the story of a widow Jesus commended in Luke 21:

"As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ² He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³ 'Truly I tell you,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴ All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.'

The woman was living out her faith in Christ in giving sacrificially out of what she had rather than what she did not have. Our giving is in large part about how we learn to surrender to God not about how much our contribution affects the overall budget of the church. We have some great examples of this in many of our children who tithe from their pocket money.

Low Incomes and Giving

There's a very real tension here when we live in a low-income situation. On the one hand, we should not allow religious duty to lead us to deprive our family of basic needs; on the other hand we should not allow our circumstances to dictate to us how we will worship God. Instead, we surrender to God and choose how we will express our worship to God through giving. It's very much a matter of conscience as to how much we might give in these situations, but Jesus' words above suggest that heart worship would lead us to give even 2 small copper coins (bummer they did away with those!)

Freeing God to Provide

We're not a church that believes that in order to be blessed by God you must first get your giving habits in order. In fact, we don't generally think we can earn God's blessing.

Yet many will give testimony to the freedom that comes from reliance on God including where giving really costs us. It has been a joy and blessing for many to discover God's provision in a fresh and dynamic way as they worship him through giving.

Giving Beyond the Church

We also need to consider giving beyond the offering we make as part of our worship in a local congregation. There are many other occasions for sacrificial generosity and we should plan to be involved in these – for many this means making a regular additional commitment as occurs with:

- Aid work through child sponsorship, gift for life or project support (Tear Fund; World Hope New Zealand)
- Missionary support – local and global and including the work of organisations like Young Life (youth ministry) and SIM (Global Missions)

- Supporting advocacy work e.g. Anti-trafficking

while keeping funds aside to respond to spontaneous needs as they arise.

Wise Living & Stewardship

For some families the commitment to giving generously involves completely overhauling how they spend and live so that they can offer more to others. This reflects an overarching approach to stewarding what God has given to us and wise financial decision-making and practices. This might mean living more simply, living with a conscious sense of our consumer practices, challenging greed and materialism within our lives and managing debt responsibly.

Worship & Surrender

Wherever you are at on the journey with giving – remember it's mostly about worshipping God and learning to surrender what we have to Him. While this has a practical reality for the church's ability to invest in collective mission it's important to stay on the journey with Christ and to continue to allow God to challenge our hearts and actions in all that we are.