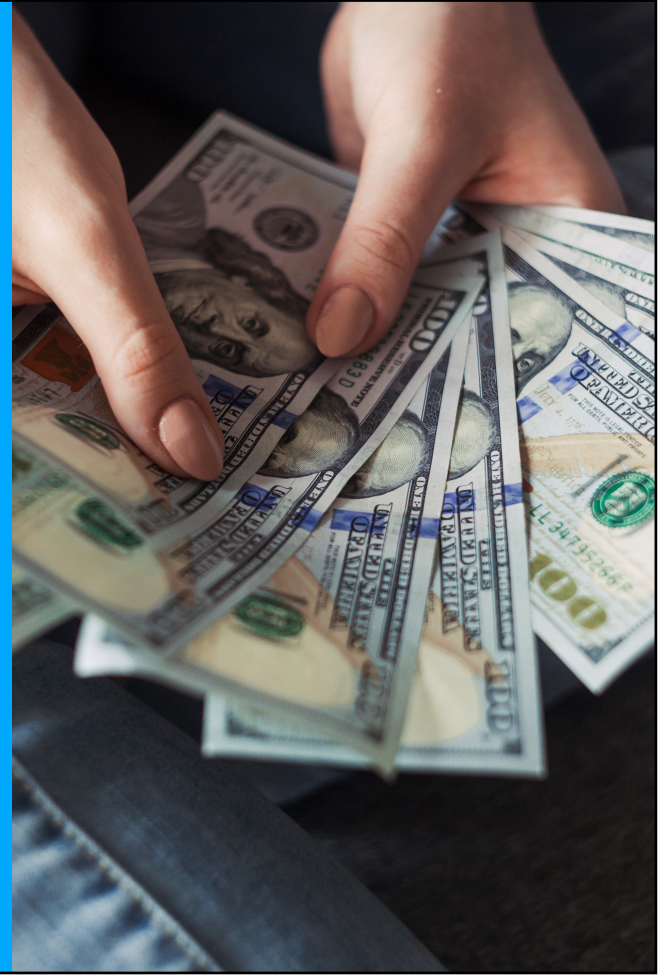


2 Myths and 3 Truths About Giving in the Church



**Myth 1:
We
Want
Your
10%**



Three Tithes in Torah

Three Tithes in Torah

1. For the Levites



Numbers 18:21



I have given all the one-tenth portions in Israel to the Levites as an inheritance. They are a reward for performing their service in the meeting tent.

Three Tithes in Torah

1. For the
Levites

2. For the Poor



Deuteronomy 14:28-29



Every third year you must bring the tenth part of your produce from that year and leave it at your city gates. 29 Then the Levites, who have no designated inheritance like you do, along with the immigrants, orphans, and widows who live in your cities, will come and feast until they are full.

Three Tithes in Torah

1. For the
Levites

2. For the Poor

3. For the
Festivals



Deuteronomy 14:24-26



But if the trip is too long...then you can convert it to money. Take the money with you and go to the location the Lord your God selects. 26 Then you can use the money for anything you want: cattle, sheep, wine, liquor, or whatever else you might like. Then you should feast there and celebrate in the presence of the Lord your God, along with your entire household.

Which, like, how many sermons have you heard telling you to save 10% of your income for an epic rager?

So, let's do some math on this. At The Table, we've had around 160 or so people or households give to us in the past. Let's say those households gave 10% on the median income in D.C.

**160
People/Families
Tithing on DC
Median Income**

**\$1.8 million for staff
and ministry**

\$1.8 million for parties

**\$600,000 for
compassion**

\$4,200,000

Total

I mean, that sounds fun. And, we should remember, churches and religious organizations that **are harmful** DO have this kind of money.

But also completely unnecessary. At least for now.

This local church does not need to be the clearing house of your charitable giving.

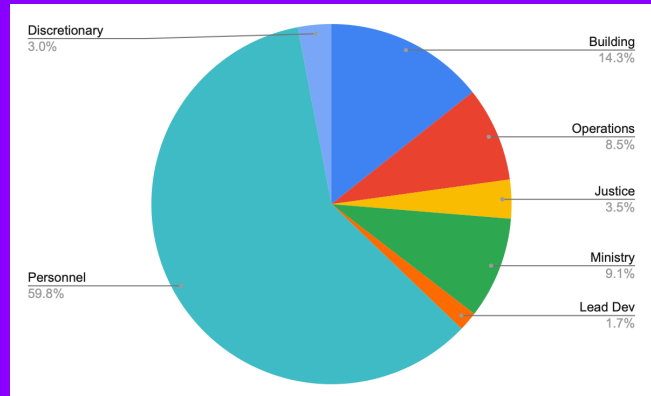
The Table's Budget

± \$400,000

60% Staff (2 full-time pastors, 1/2 time admin)

23% Building and Operations

17% Ministry, Justice+Compassion



**Myth 2:
Tithing
Is A
Button
For
Blessing**



Malachi 3:10

Bring the whole tenth-part to the storage house so there might be food in my house. Please test me in this, says the Lord of heavenly forces. See whether I do not open all the windows of the heavens for you and empty out a blessing until there is enough. Entire theologies have been built on this. However:

- Context is about the Jerusalem temple being rebuilt in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

- We know that the tithe was about providing for sacrifices, the priesthood, and the poor. We're not paying a priesthood anymore. We don't need to make sacrifices. And rarely are televangelists asking for money to take care of the poor. Unless they're using those private jets in unexpected ways.

- The Hebrew Bible often presents a very karma-esque world view—if you do right by God, God will do right by you. You scratch his divine back, he'll scratch yours.

- But this is just as often challenged in the Hebrew Bible; and eventually completely shut down by the teaching of Jesus, who Christians believe was the ultimate revelation of God's character. God is always working for people's good and healing, always "showering down blessing," regardless of if they're tithing or not.

I know that most of the folks know this. Yes, I also know that we can often fall into these sort of mind games. Maybe if I had been more generous, God would have blessed me more. That is theological b.s.

Truth 1: Wealth Is Risky



There's this paradoxical reality that the more times the Bible speaks against something, the less likely some folks (white, American evangelicals) are to take it seriously; and the fewer times it references something, the more likely they are to build an entire theology of it.

Examples: limiting women in pastoral or leadership roles. There are like 2-4 possible verses. Or condemning LGBTQ folks. Maybe 6 passages that some people think condemn LGBTQ people (They're wrong).

But then we look at the number of passages that critique violence and wealth? If I were to read you the number of verses, we'd be here all night. Here's just one example:

James 5:1-6

Come now, you rich people,
weep and wail for the miseries
that are coming to you. 2 Your
riches have rotted, and your
clothes are moth-eaten. 3 Your
gold and silver have rusted,
and their rust will be
evidence against you, and it
will eat your flesh like fire.
You have laid up treasure
during the last days.

James 5:1-6

4 Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. 5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.

Or another

1 Timothy 6:9-10

People who are trying to get rich fall into temptation. They are trapped by many stupid and harmful passions that plunge people into ruin and destruction. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some have wandered away from the faith and have impaled themselves with a lot of pain because they made money their goal. There was a foundational understanding in the early church and in the Hebrew prophets that wealth was toxic. It corroded people from the inside out.



christina
@floozyesq



me: it's okay to be a person struggling
with productivity during a prolonged
crisis

my brain: not u though

me: not me though

3:06 am · 8/10/20 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

I think about this Tweet a
lot.

I think it works in both
directions. We can be harsher
on ourselves than we ever
would be to someone else:

me: people deserve rest and relaxation, and to not always have to be productive.

my brain: not u though

me: not me though

maryland drivers: people really should use their turn signals when they're changing lanes.

maryland drivers' brains: not u though

maryland drivers: not me though

2:59 PM · Nov 11, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Or we can self-deceive ourselves into thinking we deserve all the benefit of the doubt and no one else deserves it.

me: people who get rich tend to become more self-centered and use their money for harm

my brain, entering the powerball: not u though

me: not me though

3:00 PM · Nov 11, 2022 · Twitter Web App

So, how do we inoculate ourselves against the corrosive effects of wealth?

Truth 2: We Must Learn the Skill of Generosity

Has anybody here ever taken a spiritual gifts assessment? One of the possible gifts you can get assigned is "Giving." Basically what those assessments were (excuse me as I let my cynicism flag fly for a second), were a way to flag to church staff "Who in this church has money that I could specifically ask for donations from?" 😬

But generosity isn't a spiritual gift. It's a skill that we can learn. And that takes practice. Because here's the fact of the matter:

Most People Aren't Generous On Accident

Oops, I accidentally gave away too much money this year.

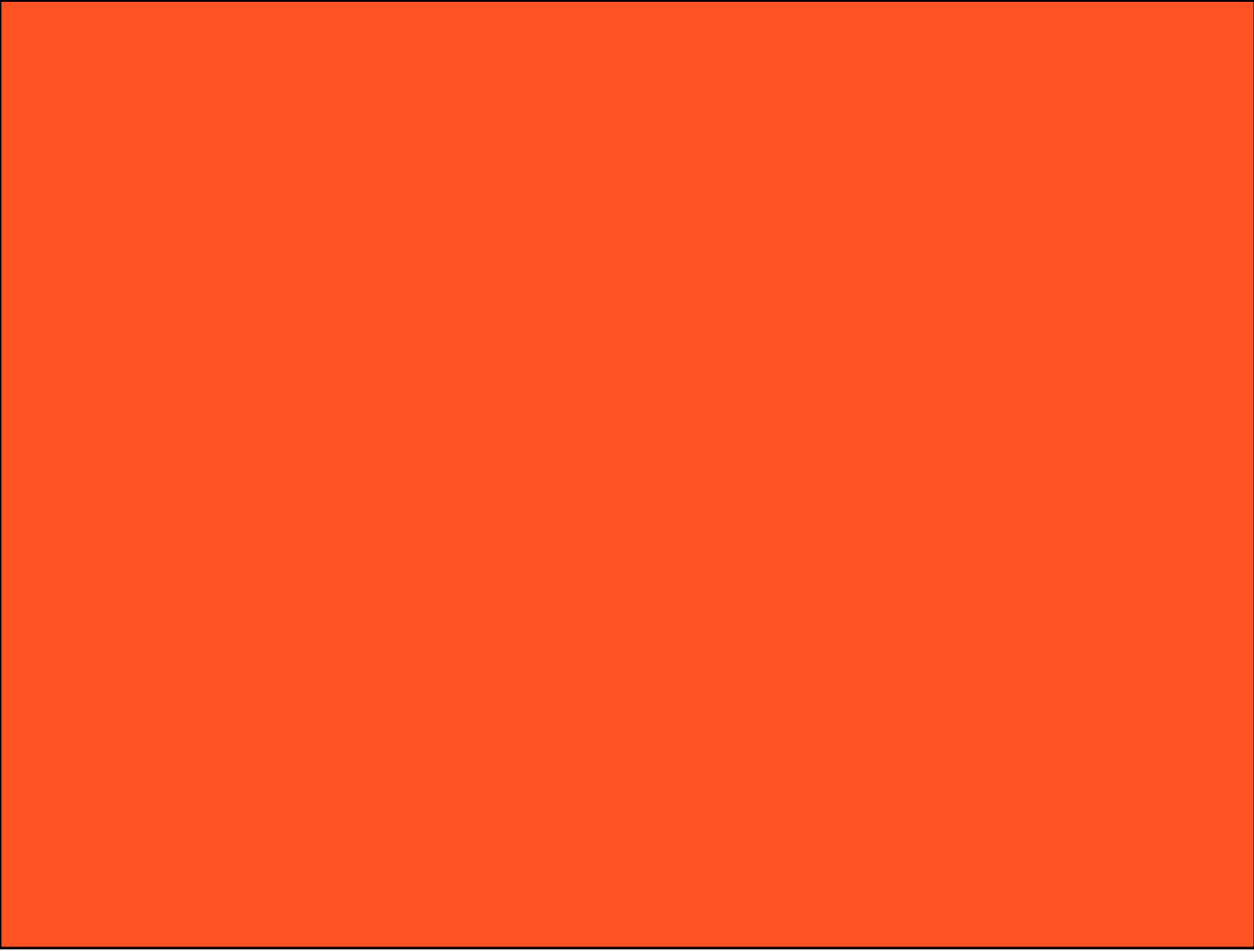
Most people give money out of guilt, without a plan, or without thinking through the intentions of their giving.

People who make under \$100,000 give away a larger percentage of their income than folks who make between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000.

**Generosity
Can't Be
Compulsory**

Tertuillian, 2nd Century

Even if there is a treasury of a sort, it is not made up of money paid in initiation fees, as if religion were a matter of contract. Every man once a month brings some modest contribution— or whatever he wishes, and only if he does wish, and if he can; for nobody is compelled; it is a voluntary offering...to feed the poor and to bury them, for boys and girls who lack property and parents, and then for slaves grown old..



**So we, who are united in
mind and soul, have no
hesitation about sharing
property. All is common
among us.**

So generosity can't be
forced. But

But Generosity Can Be Planned

- How much do I want to give?
- A certain amount? A percentage? More than last year? Less?
- Local, national, international.
- Also, I want to highlight that giving to political change or policymakers is also important. Why? Because charity will only ever go so far. Economic systems cannot be transformed solely by charity. Total charitable giving (not including religious or education) in the U.S. is around \$240 billion.

**\$240
billion
total U.S.
charitable
giving**

**\$1,000
billion
Federal
and State
welfare
spending**

excluding religious and education giving

So it's a fantasy to think that merely charity will do the trick to offer food, shelter, and care for everyone in our society.

- Let me be clear: if you're unable to keep up with bills, can't afford basic necessities – you still need a plan for your money. But the first part of that plan is probably not charitable giving. Even to (or especially to) a church.
- On the other hand, some people feel empowered to still be able to give generously, even when their finances are strapped. So giving away some amount of money gives you a sense of autonomy and power of your life, who am I stop you?
- But please, never let a religious leader guilt you into giving if you're struggling to get food on the table. If you even have a table to put it on.

All that say, generosity requires planning. Intention.

Also, because wealth is risky, generosity does something formational within us as well:

**Generosity is a
preventative
against the side
effects of being
rich**

1 Timothy 6:18- 18

Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical and not to place their hope on their finances, which are uncertain. Instead, they need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others.

Andy Stanley

"Generosity isn't just something you do when you have more. It's something you practice constantly so you'll know what to do when you have more. It's part of a plan, not just an overflow of the heart. It's a preventative against the side effects of being rich."

**Truth 3:
Churches
can't exist
without
money**