

possessions

extra thought and discussion

• Tithing

Tithing goes back to Abraham who gave a tenth of his belongings (Gen 14:17-20, Heb 7:1-10) and the vow of Jacob at Bethel to return a tenth of all that God gave to him (Gen 28:20-22).

Each year the Israelites were to give a tenth of their crops and animals but this could be converted into money in certain circumstances (Lev 27:30-33, Deut 14:22-27). It was to be brought to Jerusalem with feasting before the Lord or shared with the Levites and the poor in their own towns (Deut 14:28-29). The Levites received the tithes of the people in return for their service to God and they in turn tithed to the priests (Num 18:21-32). As well as tithes there were freewill offerings and first fruits.

Jesus did not condemn the principle of tithing, but its abuse and the ritual observance of petty rules (Matt 23:23-24). Many Christians tithe their income to the work of God in their local church believing that it is a God-ordained level of giving in much the same way that taking one day off in seven is a God-ordained level of resting.

• Use of church money

• **The poor** — Jesus and his disciples had a joint fund which was used for the poor (John 12:4-6, 13:29) and after his death Christians continued to give to the poor (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-37, 6:1-3).

• **Local pastors** — Those who devote themselves to the service of God should be well supported (1 Tim 5:17-18).

• **Travelling ministers** — Finance is required for missionaries and those who travel preaching the gospel (Phil 4:14-18).

• **Giving to other churches** — Rich churches can sometimes support poorer churches (Acts 11:27-30, Rom 15:25-26, 2 Cor 8:1-9:15).

• **Projects** — Money and possessions were given for the building of the tabernacle and temple (Ex 35:4-29, 1 Chron 29:1-9). Christian projects can be supported in a similar way today.

• Lending and borrowing

Although lending and borrowing is permitted in the Bible, it is generally seen as a great disadvantage to be a borrower (Prov 22:7). Debts are best avoided in the first place and should be paid off as quickly as possible (Rom 13:8). We should avoid putting up security for the debts of others (Prov 11:15).

Lenders are to be compassionate and not take advantage of their position (Deut 15:7-8, Matt 5:42). Vital items should not be kept as security for debts (Ex 22:26-27, Deut 24:6). Israelites were not permitted to charge interest to each other but could from foreigners (Deut 23:19-20). Every seven years

all debts were to be cancelled (Deut 15:1-11). Every 50 years (Jubilee) all land was returned to its original owners (Lev 25). It is better to give than to lend (Luke 6:34-35). It is worth considering how these Biblical principles can be applied in the church and the world today.

• “Egyptian Gold”

When the Israelites left the slavery of Egypt, they took with them a lot of gold from the Egyptians (Ex 12:35-36). Later this gold was used in the construction of the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant etc (Ex 25:1-9). This begs the question whether it is right to use the systems and wealth of the world to fund the work of the kingdom of God. Note that Israelites were permitted to gain interest from loans to outsiders (Deut 23:20). The parables of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) and the shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-15) may also be relevant.

• Gambling

Gambling such as casinos, lotteries, raffles, pools, prize draws, betting etc are not mentioned in the Bible. Many Christians object to gambling because:

- It is poor stewardship of God's resources.
- It can be a very wasteful, addictive and destructive habit leading to poverty and degradation.
- The concept of 'luck' is not relevant to Christians.
- It appeals to greed and covetousness.
- Money should be obtained by work and other proper means.

It is worth considering whether competitions where no money or effort is invested should be considered as gambling. Also, is investment in the stock market a form of gambling?

• Insurance, savings, pensions

Christians vary in their attitudes to insurance policies. Some would argue that they represent trust in riches and that we should trust in the provision of God if trouble comes. Others see the value in contributing to a joint fund which then can help those who suffer loss.

Some Christians do not save and others object to their resources being invested in financial institutions which may be taking advantage of poor countries or fund unwholesome activities through share holding.

• Treasure

Is it appropriate for Christians to hoard expensive goods or collectors' items? Jesus said that your heart is where your treasure is (Matt 6:19-21). Your treasure in heaven is your own eternal life and that of those whom you help to faith in Jesus Christ (Phil 4:1). Store up treasure in heaven.

• Rich and poor in the Bible

• **Rich** — Abraham, Solomon, Job, Zaccheus, Joseph of Arimathea, Cornelius.

• **Poor people** — Jesus (Matt 8:20, 2 Cor 8:9), Paul (2 Cor 6:10), apostles (Acts 3:6).

possessions

● The true owner

* **Psalm 24:1** Who is the true owner of everything? _____

* Deuteronomy 8:17-18

What should we remember about our possessions?

* 1 Chronicles 29:10-16

This is David's prayer after a very generous offering of materials to build the temple.

Have you ever realised that all your possessions really belong to God and that you are only a temporary steward? How can this change the way you live?



● Rich and poor

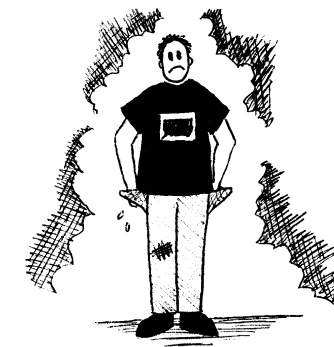
How to get rich!



- Prov 3:9-10 _____
- Prov 3:13-16 _____
- Prov 10:4 _____
- Prov 10:22 _____
- Prov 22:4 _____
- Deut 11:13-15 _____

How to become poor!

- Prov 14:23 _____
- Prov 21:5 _____
- Prov 21:17 _____
- Prov 22:16 _____
- Prov 28:22 _____
- Deut 11:16-17 _____



Wealth can be a reward from God for sensible and righteous living and poverty the result of foolishness and neglect of God. However it is not always as simple as this and sometimes the wicked prosper (*Job 21:4-16, Ps 73, Jer 12:1-2*) and godly people endure poverty (*Luke 16:19-31*).

● Attitudes to possessions

* Proverbs 30:7-9

What is a snare of the rich? _____

What is a snare of the poor? _____

* 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19

What should we be content with? _____

What are the snares of greed? _____

What is a root of all kinds of evil? _____

What should the rich not do? _____

What should the rich do? _____

* Mark 10:17-31

Why was it so hard to follow Jesus?

* Luke 12:13-21

Why was this rich man a fool?

Riches are temporary. When we die they will be passed on to others who will use them as they wish (*Psalms 39:6, Eccles 2:18-19*).

* James 2:1-7 How should we treat rich and poor? _____

* James 5:1-6 What have these wicked rich people done?

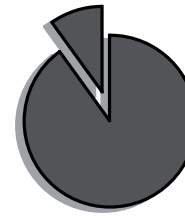
- _____ (v 3)
- _____ (v 4)
- _____ (v 5)

* Revelation 3:14-22 A rich church can have problems too!!

* Eccles 5:8-20 Reflect on this passage.

What about you? Is your main aim to get rich? Do you trust in your possessions? Are you proud of them? Do you worship them? Are they a snare to you? Are you greedy and covetous? How can you lay up treasure in heaven?

Heartsearch



● Giving

* Leviticus 27:30-33

* 2 Chronicles 31:4-6

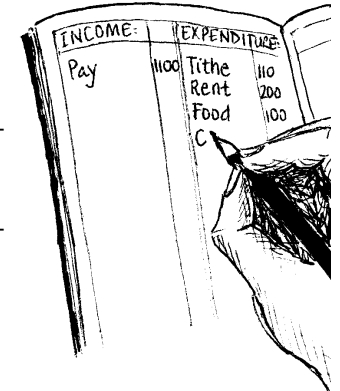
What fraction is a tithe? _____

In the Old Testament, first fruits and tithes were considered to be God's and were given to the Levites and the poor.

* Malachi 3:7-10

How were these people robbing God?

What was promised if they began to give?



● How to give (complete the words)

S _ _ _ **r** _ _ _ _ (Matt 6:1-4)

R _ _ **u** _ _ _ _ (1 Cor 16:2)

G _ _ _ **r** _ _ _ _ (Ps 37:21,26)

C _ _ _ **f** _ _ _ _ (2 Cor 9:7)

S _ **c** _ _ **f** _ _ **i** _ _ _ _ (2 Cor 8:1-5, Lk 21:1-4)

C _ _ **p** _ _ _ **i** _ _ _ **t** _ _ _ _ (1 John 3:17, Matt 25:35, Deut 15:11)

Heartsearch

How do you fare with the above list? Do you give to the work of God and to the poor? What is your level of giving in relation to your income?

☐ 1% ☐ 2% ☐ 5% ☐ 10% ☐ 15%

Can you make any changes?

● Integrity in managing possessions and money

What practices should be avoided? How do you fare?

Ex 18:21 _____ Deut 16:19 _____

Ps 37:21 _____ Eccles 7:7 _____

Prov 20:17 _____ Rom 13:6-7 _____

Ezek 18:8 _____