



3 questions often asked about the offering as worship

This past January I was privileged to present the opening paper at the first [Stewardship Summit](#). Papers presented at that event can be accessed [here](#). The format we followed expected audience participants to read the material first so that the presenter could provide further background or build upon what they had written before an extensive Q&A session.

My paper was titled [If the church is a body, then the offering is breath](#), growing from the extensive work a number of us have done on the offering as an act of worship. This presentation gave me opportunity to speak about the three questions I am asked most frequently after I speak on the subject. Here are those three questions and a brief summation of the response.

1. Is the tithe required of the Christian? *Response: The tithe is certainly not prohibited. Most likely it has been transcended or expanded as opposed to limited. New Testament language emphasizes firstfruits rather than tithe. Jesus is described as the firstfruits of the resurrection. Christians are called the firstfruits of God's people. Each use of the word implies a down payment on what is to come, always facilitating a next gift rather than the completion of obligatory payment. Perhaps instead of asking whether Christians are obligated to give 10%, they should ask if their lives are organized for God to spend.*

2. Is the institutional church deserving of these gifts? *Response: Many ministry leaders are singularly focused on raising annual budgets, or worse, have decided their small arena of ministry is the Kingdom of God entire. What they should be fostering is the context of worship and community where giving is brought, a continuing faith is pledged, and the purpose of the giving is distribution (as opposed to collection). This helps the church and its ministries to function as a living and continuing organism rather than as a dying institution.*

3. Is the offering as worship realistic? *Response: Each time I hear this question I want to blurt out that the burden of proof rests on the person asking the question, not on me. My next impulse is to ask the person why they are resisting. If I hold my tongue long enough I can give a more responsible answer: rising to giving as a continuing act of worship, what many consider to be the highest form of giving, does not happen without an invitation. Do we want more people who in loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength offer to God their first and best as cheerful and worshipful givers, offering gifts without strings and conditions? Then we have to create the opportunity. What is not realistic is going after ever smaller, ever richer pools of people who give from their estates, as competition with other ministries, and continuing to lower the bar of expectation that generosity marks the Christian life.*

-mark / vincent

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