

Tithing: Opening the Windows of Heaven

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The windows of heaven open in many ways. Trust in the Lord's timing; the blessings always come.

While I was in South America recently, Brother Roger Parra from Venezuela shared the following experience with me:

“In 2019 Venezuela was shaken by problems that caused a power blackout for five days.

“Chaos and anarchy reigned in the streets, and many desperate people did not have sufficient food.

“Some began looting food businesses, destroying everything in their path.

“As the owner of a small bakery, I was very worried about our business. As a family, we decided to give away all the food in our bakery to people in need.

“Through one very dark night riots were everywhere. My only concern was for the safety of my beloved wife and children.

“At dawn I went to our bakery. Sadly, every nearby food business had been destroyed by looters, but to my great astonishment, our bakery was intact. Nothing had been destroyed. I humbly thanked my Heavenly Father.

“Arriving home, I told my family of God's blessing and protection.

“They were all so grateful.

“My oldest son, Rogelio, only 12 years old, said, ‘Papa! I know why our store was protected. You and Mama always pay your tithes.’”

Brother Parra concluded: “The words of Malachi came into my mind. ‘I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground’ [Malachi 3:11]. We knelt down and gratefully thanked our Heavenly Father for His miracle.”¹

Prove Me Now Herewith

All that we have and all that we are comes from God. As disciples of Christ, we willingly share with those around us.

With all the Lord gives to us, He has asked us to return to Him and His kingdom on earth 10 percent of our increase. He has promised us that as we are honest in our tithes, He will “open ... the windows of heaven, and pour ... out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”² He has promised us that He will protect us from evil.³ These promises are so certain,⁴ the Lord declares, “Prove me now herewith,”⁵ a phrase found nowhere else in the scriptures but when quoting Malachi.

The windows of heaven open in many ways. Some are temporal, but many are spiritual. Some are subtle and easy to overlook. Trust in the Lord’s timing; the blessings always come.

We sorrow with those who struggle to have the necessities of life. The Church recently donated 54 million US dollars to provide relief to vulnerable children and mothers across the world.⁶ And with the offerings from your monthly fast, our good bishops help thousands each week who temporarily need food on their tables, clothes on their backs, and shelter over their heads. The only permanent solution to the poverty of this world is the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁷

A Matter of Faith

The Apostle Paul warned that the wisdom of men understands the things of men but has difficulty understanding the things of God.⁸ The world speaks of tithing in terms of our money, but the sacred law of tithing is principally a matter of our faith. Being honest in our tithes is one way we show our willingness to put the Lord first in our lives, above our own cares and interest. I promise you that as you trust in the Lord, the blessings of heaven will follow.

Jesus said to give “unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”⁹ The resurrected Savior asked the Nephites to write into their record His promises found in Malachi.¹⁰ In our day, the Lord reconfirmed the divine law of tithing, declaring: “This shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people. And [they] shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever.”¹¹

The Lord clearly directed how tithing should be disbursed, saying, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse,”¹² meaning bring the tithes into His restored kingdom, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹³ He directed that the use of these sacred tithes would be prayerfully considered by a council of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Presiding Bishopric, “and by mine own voice unto them, saith the Lord.”¹⁴

The Lord’s Sacred Funds

These sacred funds do not belong to the leaders of the Church. They belong to the Lord. His servants are painstakingly aware of the sacred nature of their stewardship.

President Gordon B. Hinckley recounted this childhood experience: “When I was a boy I raised a question with my father ... concerning the expenditure of Church funds. He reminded me that mine is the God-given obligation to pay my tithes and offerings. When I do so, [my father said,] that which I give is no longer mine. It belongs to the Lord to whom I consecrate it.” His father

added: “What the authorities of the Church do with it need not concern [you, Gordon]. They are answerable to the Lord, who will require an accounting at their hands.”¹⁵

We deeply feel the weight of being “answerable to the Lord.”

Your Generous Tithes and Offerings

From the generous tithes and offerings you have consecrated to the Lord, last year more than a billion US dollars were used to bless those in need.¹⁶

In our momentous responsibility to take the restored gospel across the world, we have more than 71,000 missionaries serving in 414 missions.¹⁷ Because of your tithes and offerings, missionaries, regardless of their family financial situation, are able to serve.

Temples are being built across the world in unprecedented numbers. Currently, 177 temples are in operation, 59 are currently under construction or renovation, and 79 more are in planning and design.¹⁸ Your tithes are allowing the blessings of the temple to be in places only the Lord could foresee.

There are more than 30,000 congregations housed in thousands of chapels and other facilities in 195 countries and territories.¹⁹ Because of your faithful tithes, the Church is being established in faraway places you may never visit among righteous Saints you may never know.

The Church currently sponsors five institutions of higher learning.²⁰ These serve more than 145,000 students. One hundred and ten thousand classes are being taught each week in our seminaries and institutes.²¹

These blessings and so many more come in large measure from the young and old of every economic circumstance who pay an honest tithe.

The spiritual power of the divine law of tithing is not measured by the amount of money contributed, for both the prosperous and the poor are commanded by the Lord to contribute 10 percent of their income.²² The power comes from placing our trust in the Lord.²³

The added abundance of the Lord conveyed through your generous tithes has strengthened the reserves of the Church, providing opportunities to advance the Lord’s work beyond anything we have yet experienced. All is known by the Lord, and in time, we will see His sacred purposes fulfilled.²⁴

Blessings Come in Many Ways

The blessings of tithing come in many ways. In 1998 I accompanied then-Elder Henry B. Eyring to a large Church meeting in the Utah area now known as Silicon Slopes, a community of great innovation in technology. It was a time of growing prosperity, and Elder Eyring cautioned the Saints about comparing what they had with others and wanting more. I will always remember his promise that as they paid an honest tithe, their desire for more material possessions would diminish. Within two years, the technology bubble burst. Many lost their jobs, and companies

struggled during this time of financial adjustment. Those who followed the counsel of Elder Eyring were blessed.

His promise reminded me of another experience. I met 12-year-old Charlotte Hlimi near Carcassonne, France, in 1990 while serving as a mission president. The Hlimis were a faithful family living in an apartment with eight children. They had a picture of the Savior and of the prophet on the wall. In the interview for her patriarchal blessing, I asked Charlotte if she paid an honest tithe. She responded, “Yes, President Andersen. My mother has taught me that there are temporal blessings and spiritual blessings that come from paying our tithing. My mother taught me that if we always pay our tithing, we will want for nothing. And President Andersen, we want for nothing.”

In giving me permission to share her story, Charlotte, now 45 and sealed in the temple, commented: “My testimony of tithing was very real at the time, and it is even stronger now. I am deeply grateful for this commandment. As I live it I continue to be abundantly blessed.”²⁵

One day each of us will finish our earthly journey. Twenty-five years ago, just days before my mother-in-law, Martha Williams, died of cancer, she received a small check in the mail. She immediately asked my wife, Kathy, for her checkbook to pay her tithing. As her mother was so weakened that she could scarcely write, Kathy asked if she could write the check for her. Her mother responded, “No, Kathy. I want to do it myself.” And then she quietly added, “I want to be right before the Lord.” One of the final things Kathy did for her mother was to hand her tithing envelope to her bishop.

God’s Important Work

My brothers and sisters, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “out of obscurity,”²⁶ bringing remarkable blessings across the earth. There will be those who cheer us forward and those who do not. I have thought of the words of the wise Gamaliel, who, upon hearing of the miracles of the Apostles Peter and John, warned the council in Jerusalem:

“Let [these men] alone: for if ... this work be of men, it will come to nought:

“But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest ... ye be found even to fight against God.”²⁷

You and I are part of God’s important work upon the earth. It will not come to naught but will continue to move across the world, preparing the way for the Savior’s return. I testify to the words of President Russell M. Nelson: “In coming days, we will see the *greatest* manifestations of the Savior’s power that the world has *ever* seen. Between now and the time He returns ... , He will bestow countless privileges, blessings, and miracles upon the faithful.”²⁸

This is my witness. Jesus is the Christ. This is His holy work. He will come again. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Personal correspondence from Roger Parra, Aug. 4, 2023.
2. Malachi 3:10.

3. See Malachi 3:11. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: “In my life, for example, I have seen God’s promise fulfilled that He would ‘rebuke the devourer for [my sake]’ [Malachi 3:11]. That blessing of protection against evil has been poured out upon me and on my loved ones beyond any capacity I have to adequately acknowledge. But I believe that divine safety has come, at least in part, because of our determination, individually and as a family, to pay tithing” (“Like a Watered Garden,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 34; *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 38).
4. “*The Lord will open the windows of heaven according to our need, and not according to our greed.* If we are paying tithing to get rich, we are doing it for the wrong reason. ... The blessing to the giver ... may not be always in the form of financial or material benefit” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 657).
5. Malachi 3:10; 3 Nephi 24:10.
6. See “The Church of Jesus Christ Is Helping Alleviate Global Malnutrition,” Aug. 11, 2023, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also “How the Church of Jesus Christ and UNICEF Are Keeping Mothers and Children Healthy and Safe,” Aug. 17, 2023, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
7. “And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18).
8. See 1 Corinthians 2:14. The logic of man does not always align with the wisdom of God. In Malachi’s day, many had become distant from the Lord. The Lord implored His covenant people, “Return unto me, and I will return unto you.” What follows this tender invitation is a deeply important question for each of us: “But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” (Malachi 3:7). Or in other words, “What am I to change? How do I draw closer to Thee?” The Lord answers by teaching the importance of tithing, not simply as a financial law but a tangible way to turn the desires of our hearts to Him.

We observed this in our own family. Kathy’s mother joined the Church at age 22. Martha and Bernard Williams attended church for a brief period, but after a move to another state, they became less active. Bernard received a military deployment overseas, and Martha moved home to Tampa, Florida, where she accepted the generous invitation to live with her aunt and uncle, who were opposed to the Church. While living in very humble circumstances, expecting her first child and not attending church, Martha Williams made the decision to start sending her tithing check to the bishop. Later in her life, when asked why, she said that she remembered something the missionaries had taught her about tithing and God’s blessings: “We desperately needed God’s blessings in our lives, and so I began sending our tithing check to the bishop.” Martha and Bernard Williams returned to the Church. Their greatest blessing—six generations have been blessed because of her decision to pay her tithing when she had nothing but faith in God and hope in His promises.
9. Matthew 22:21.
10. See 3 Nephi 24.

11. Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4. “Tithing is the donation of one-tenth of one’s income to God’s Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4; *interest* is understood to mean income). All members who have income should pay tithing” (*General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 34.3.1, Gospel Library).
12. Malachi 3:10.
13. “We pay tithing, as the Savior taught, by bringing the tithes ‘into the storehouse’ [Malachi 3:10; 3 Nephi 24:10]. We do this by paying our tithing to our bishop or branch president. We do not pay tithing by contributing to our favorite charities. The contributions we should make to charities come from our own funds, not from the tithes we are commanded to pay to the storehouse of the Lord” (Dallin H. Oaks, “Tithing,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 35).
14. Doctrine and Covenants 120:1.
15. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rise to a Larger Vision of the Work,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 96.
16. See “The 2022 Report on How the Church of Jesus Christ Cared for Those in Need,” Mar. 22, 2023, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
17. Received via email from the Missionary Department, Sept. 14, 2023.
18. See “Temple List,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org/temples/list.
19. Received via email from Member and Statistical Records, July 28, 2023.
20. This includes Brigham Young University, Brigham Young University–Idaho, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, Ensign College, and BYU–Pathway Worldwide.
21. Received via email from Seminaries and Institutes, July 28, 2023.
22. See *General Handbook*, 34.3.1.
23. President Dallin H. Oaks shared this story about trusting in the Lord: “My widowed mother supported her three young children on a [meager] salary. ... I asked my mother why she paid so much of her salary as tithing. I have never forgotten her explanation: ‘Dallin, there might be some people who can get along without paying tithing, but we can’t. The Lord has chosen to take your father and leave me to raise you children. I cannot do that without the blessings of the Lord, and I obtain those blessings by paying an honest tithing’” (“Tithing,” 33).
24. “That through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world” (Doctrine and Covenants 78:14).
25. Personal correspondence from Charlotte Hlimi Martin, Aug. 30, 2023.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
27. Acts 5:38–39.

28. Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 95.