



# Yucca Breeze

THE UNITED CHURCHES, HOT SPRINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA

## **Pastor's Pulpit:**

### **To Tithe ... or Not to Tithe**

Since coming to Christ, Bernice and I have always been a part of a church family that we loved and supported. Tithing for us was something we began early in our Christian lives and we continue to tithe today. But I do understand that it is really up to individuals to decide when, and if, tithing should be a part of their own Christian experience. For my article this month, I would like to take the opportunity to share with our beloved congregation a really good article by R.C. Sproul (my mentor) on Christian Tithing.

### **What Does The Bible Say About Tithing? — R. C. Sproul**

A widespread cynicism toward giving exists in our culture. Some nonprofit organizations have mismanaged funds. Thus, many people are reluctant to support these organizations with their donations. But the cynicism extends even to the Christian community. Some unscrupulous televangelists have given tithing a bad name, so many believers do not contribute to the work of the church. This, I believe, is a significant error, for the Bible commands Christians to be good stewards of their resources for the sake of the kingdom of God.

The whole concept of stewardship begins with creation. Creation is celebrated not only in Genesis but throughout Scripture, especially in the Psalms, where Israel celebrated God's ownership of the whole universe. *"The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein"* (Ps. 24:1). God is the author of all things, the Creator of all things, and the owner of all things. Whatever God makes, He owns. What we own, we own as stewards who have been given gifts from God Himself. God has the ultimate ownership of all of our "possessions." He has loaned these things to us and expects us to manage them in a way that will honor and glorify Him.

The steward in the ancient culture was not the owner of the house. He was hired by the owner to manage his house affairs. He managed the property and was responsible to allocate the resources of the home. The steward's job was to make sure that the cupboards were filled with food, the money was taken care of, the lawn was tended, and the house was kept in good repair.

Humankind's stewardship began in the Garden of Eden, where God gave Adam and Eve full dominion over the entire creation. Adam and Eve were not given ownership of the world; they were given the responsibility of managing it. They were to ensure that the garden was tilled and cultivated and not abused or exploited, and that the goods God provided were neither spoiled nor wasted.

In our own households, we learn that if we spend fifty dollars on clothes, that's fifty dollars we no longer have for other purposes. Everyone, even billionaires, functions with limited resources. Every time we use a resource, we make a decision, and that decision reveals what kind of stewards we are. That's where God holds us accountable. He held Adam and Eve accountable for how they took care of the garden. God is interested in how we take care of our ministries, personal lives, homes—every aspect of life. All of these areas deal with managing and allocating resources.

At the center of the biblical concept of stewardship is the tithe, which first appears in the Old Testament. The word *tithe* means “tenth.” The basic principle was that every person was to return one-tenth of his increase to the Lord on an annual basis.

“The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein”  
(Ps. 24:1).

The beauty of the tithe is that it precluded class warfare and the politics of envy. It prohibited unequal taxes from being imposed wherein one group of people paid a higher percentage than another. When that happens, economics becomes politicized, and it creates vested interest groups where justice is ignored for the sake of power.

In Israel, everyone gave the same percentage but not the same amount. In this structure, a person who makes \$10,000 per year returns \$1,000 in tithe. The person who makes \$1 million per year returns \$100,000. The rich person returns far more money, but it is the same percentage that the poor person pays. Trouble developed in the Old Testament when the people held out on their tithes. They were not obedient to God's law. Malachi 3:8–10 tells us: *Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, "How have we robbed you?" In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*

This means that if the tithe principle is still in effect, we systematically rob God when we don't tithe. Let me repeat that. Malachi's teaching indicates that when we fail to tithe, we are not merely robbing the church, the clergy, or Christian educators—we are robbing God Himself. But note that God had words not only of condemnation for the people but also a promise of prosperity were they to change their ways. God challenged them to be faithful, giving His own promise that He would open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings upon them.

Why did God institute the tithe in the first place? In order to support the Levites, who had no tribal allocation of land. The Levites were set apart to take care of the spiritual and educational responsibilities of the nation, and their work and physical necessities were paid for by the tithe (Num. 18). Under the new covenant, the tithe continues to support the work of building up people in the truth of God and reaching sinners with the gospel. Christ works through churches, seminaries, parachurch organizations, missionaries, and many others to build and grow His kingdom.

When we don't tithe, we reduce the ministry of Christ. One of the greatest barriers to expanding the kingdom of Christ in this world is financial. Christian ministry depends upon Christian giving. That giving always and everywhere limits the work of ministry.

Of course, my argument assumes that the tithe continues in this new covenant era. Some deny that the tithe continues today, but that's not what the earliest Christians believed. In the *Didache*, written at the end of the first century or early in the second, there is a significant amount of material on the question of supporting the work of the kingdom. The tithe principle is clearly communicated in this work, showing us that the primitive Christian community continued the practice of the tithe. Also, there is in the *Didache* a prudential warning given to the Christian, saying, "Let your donation sweat in your hand before you give it." An interesting metaphor, isn't it? The injunction is not for your hand to squeeze the money so hard that you never give it. That's not the point. The point is to be very careful, very discerning where you give your donation.

That brings up a controversial question with respect to financing the kingdom. Again, in Malachi 3:10 God says, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house." In the Old Testament, the tithe, either in animals or produce, was brought to a central location, the storehouse, which was managed by the Levites. The whole tithe from the whole nation was brought into this single receiving place, and it was then distributed by the Levites according to the needs of the people.

Some people believe that the local church is the storehouse, and is, therefore, the only appropriate place for us to give our tithes. But nothing in the New Testament equates the local church with the Old Testament storehouse. It is simply not biblical to require people to give their entire tithe to their local church. I do believe that the lion's share of it should go to the local church, but I also think that the principle of letting your donation "sweat in your hand before you give it" implies not only discernment but also liberty in giving so that your giving may include a seminary, a Christian college, and other worthy ministries.

**"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"  
(Matt. 6:33).**

The most important investment we can ever make is in the kingdom of God, because it has eternal returns. These returns are not just for us but also for our family, our children, our grandchildren. This generation of Christians must invest in the things of God for the sake of the next

generation. This follows Jesus' admonition: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).

I honestly believe that if you invest in the kingdom of God, you won't lose anything in the final analysis. Tithe from the top, and learn to do that as early as you can in life. If your child gets a dollar allowance, make sure that the first ten cents goes into the collection plate on Sunday, so the child learns the principle early. We know we cannot spend the tax the government takes out of our paycheck. We must live on our "take home" pay. Our obligation to God takes precedence over our obligation to government. God should get paid first, "from the top." If you want to know how serious you are about investing in God's kingdom, look at your checkbook. It is an objective, concrete record of where your treasure is and where your heart is.

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I hope this article blessed you as much as it blessed me, and reminded me of what a wonderful gift tithing is.

Blessings, *Pastor David*



## FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

22 Claude & Karen Bent

- 5 Carla Richmond
- 14 Karen Bent
- 26 Lynn Mason
- 26 Jon Schuchardt
- 26 Lynn Mason
- 27 Sheryl Brost

*If your name is not included on the Birthdays and Anniversaries list and you would like it to be added, please contact the church office by email: [uc@gwtc.net](mailto:uc@gwtc.net) or call 745-5640.*

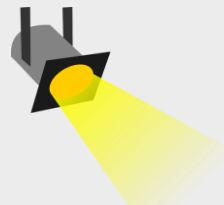
### THIS AND THAT

#### **FOOD PANTRY CLIENT PROFILE:**

Number of Active Clients (Visited the pantry in 2022)=393; Single=181; Family=212; Veterans (included in single family count)=91; New Sign-Ups (since Jan 1, 2023) =123 Average Days Open Each Month=16.

#### **UNITED WOMEN:**

The United Women will next meet on **Tuesday, March 19th** at 1:30 pm in the Fireside Room. They are currently studying the video teaching series ***The Great Disappearance by Dr. David Jeremiah***. Women are invited to join this great study.



#### ***THE UNITED CHURCHES SPOTLIGHT***

This year are again spotlighting each of our three denominations:

**BAPTIST ... METHODIST ... PRESBYTERIAN**

**Who we are ... What we believe ... What we do ... How to join.**

If you are not already a member of our church, we would like you to become one, but we want you to make an informed decision. In the upcoming weeks, we will continue spotlighting our three denominations. Information on each denomination will be available as handouts in the Sunday bulletins. There are also information booklets on the table in the Bethany Room. Please explore who each are, what each believe, what each does, and how to join.

When you have decided which denomination the Lord may want you to join, and in light of which one best fits you, let the Pastor know. ***After the Worship Service on Palm Sunday, March 24th at 11:15 am, there will be a new member's class in the Fireside Room*** where you can come and ask any questions you may have about the differences in each of the denominations, or anything else that may need some final clarification. On ***Easter Sunday, March 31st, we will receive you into membership!***



# Month of February Mission Emphasis **OYATE HOPE ACADEMY**

## **WHO WE ARE:**

We are the Oyate Larks; ones who inspire hope, a reflection of the hope we have in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## **MISSION:**

Oyate Hope Academy meets the educational and social-emotional needs of Lakota students through a rigorous academic program that unites the mind, heart, and spirit.

## **VISION:**

To see students awakening to their God-given potential and embracing their capabilities to positively impact themselves, their families, and their communities.

## **CORE VALUES:**

- Affirmation
- Confidence
- Purpose

**Our Mission Emphasis Sunday will be February 11th. The Loose Change offering will be gathered on that day and will go toward Oyate Hope Academy. If using an offering envelope, please write "Oyate Hope Academy" on the line designated for missions.**



## ***WEDNESDAY SOUP LUNCHEONS*** ***12:00-1:00 PM / in the Fellowship Hall*** ***At The United Churches***

**February 21   February 28**  
**March 6   March 13   March 20**

## ***WEDNESDAY EVENING LENTEN WORSHIP SERVICES*** ***6:45-7:30 / IN THE CHURCH SANCTUARY***

**February 14th - Ash Wednesday**  
**February 21 - Lent: Week 1**  
**February 28 - Lent: Week 2**  
**March 6th - Lent: Week 3**  
**March 13th - Lent: Week 4**  
**March 20th - Lent: Week 5**





# CEF

## CHILD EVANGELISM FELLOWSHIP®

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**CHILD EVANGELISM FELLOWSHIP  
OF SOUTH DAKOTA**



### Winter Quest

February 16-18, 2024  
Byron Bible Camp

Come to grow in your relationship with God, to connect with teenagers across SD, and to learn about Christian Youth In Action. Grades 6-12

**A fun weekend of games, hearing great messages and meeting new people. Connect with a community of teens who are on fire to share the story of Jesus!**

**Who: Students 6th grade and up**

**Where: Byron Bible Camp, Huron, SD**

**When: February 15-18, 2024**

**For more information contact Maris Smith: 605-431-5480**



**AFTER SCHOOL  
TEEN YOUTH PROGRAM  
at  
The United Churches**

**NEW DAY ... NEW TIMES!!!!**

**WEDNESDAYS / 4:00 pm—5:30 pm  
(Beginning Wednesday, February 7th)**