

“Giving It Away, Really?”

Presentation Handout

The Power of Half

- It all began in 2006 at red light in Atlanta, GA.
- While waiting at a traffic light with her parents, Kevin and Joan, 14-year-old Hannah Salwen saw a black Mercedes coupe on one side their car and a homeless man begging for food on the other side.
- “Dad, if that man had a less nice car, that man there could have a meal,” Hannah protested.
- The light changed and they drove on, but Hannah was too young to be reasonable. She continued to pester her parents about the inequity, insisting that she wanted to do something.
- Finally out of desperation or maybe frustration her mom blurted, “What do you want to do? Sell our house?”
- Warning! Watch what you suggest to an idealistic teenager. Hannah seized upon the idea-suggestion of selling their luxurious family home and donating half the proceeds to charity, while using the other half to buy a more modest replacement home.
- And...eventually, that’s what the family did. The project—crazy, impetuous, and utterly inspiring all at the same time—is the power of half.
- Kevin & Joan Salwen always assumed their two kids would be better off in a bigger house. But after they downsized, there was much less space to retreat to, so the family members spent more time around each other. A smaller house unexpectedly turned out to be a more family-friendly home.
- “We essentially traded stuff for togetherness and connectedness,” Kevin Salwen mused, adding, “I can’t figure out why everybody wouldn’t want that deal.”
- The Salwens pledged \$800,000 to sponsor health, microfinancing, food and other programs for about 40 villages in Ghana through the *Hunger Project* relief organization.
- And their actions inspired others too. The people who sold them their new home were so impressed they committed \$100,000 to their family project. And one of Hannah’s closest friends pledged half of her baby-sitting savings to an environmental charity.
- In writing their book, *The Power of Half*, which chronicles their story, the Salwen’s aim wasn’t to get people to sell their homes. Rather, it was to encourage people to step off the treadmill of accumulation, to define themselves by what they give, not by what they possess.
- Finally, Kevin Salwen delighted with amazement, I’m thrilled that we can help others. [And] I’m blown away by how much it has helped us.”

{Adapted from a Nicholas D. Kristof, Op-Ed Columnist, article [New York Times | Jan 23, 2010]}

TAKE-AWAY: I [presenter: David] realize the suggestion to “give-away” hard-earned money in an era when many people have barely enough to make “ends-meet” is not a popular message! However, when one’s heart is captivated/captured by God’s love, he/she is not “giving-away” with the idea of “loosing,” but with the idea to bless and help others, actually it’s winning, just like the Salwen family experienced.

This kind of spiritual giving is how God’s gospel mission is accomplished, particularly through His Church, as His people individually and collectively give through the use of their time, spiritual gifts, talents, and finances

The Church & Its Mission

- **The Church’s existence, faith, and teachings are “built” on/in Christ Jesus, not humans** {*Matthew 16:13-19 (18); Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23b-24a, 25b, 27; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:5, 15; 1 Peter 2:4-10 (6-8);* } .
 - The confession statement by Peter in *Matthew 16:16* is the “rock”/foundational teaching the Church is built on, not Peter as the first pope or some other elite religious leader.
 - In the original Greek, the word “petra” refers to the “rock” confession statement by Peter, not Peter himself because Jesus uses another word “petros” for him.
 - ❖ The “rock”/foundation the Church is built on is “petra”—meaning Christ Jesus as the Messiah/the Son of God/God, not Peter (“petros”) as some elite religious leader/pope who is infallible.
 - ❖ Jesus is the Originator and ultimate Head/Leader of the Church, not some earthly leader(s), though they are commissioned by Jesus to lead as His representatives.
 - “Keys” of authority {*Matthew 16:19*}
 - This is not a special ecclesiastical power/authority that church leaders hold over the members.
 - ❖ Leaders’ attitudes should be humble, a spirit of humility and teachability, like little children—this is the attitude of heaven and Jesus {*Matthew 18:1-7,* } as well as gracious, kind, patient, and redemptive {*Matthew 18:10-17*}.
 - ❖ The literal reading from the original is: “shall have been bound in heaven” or “shall have been loosed in heaven.”
 - ✓ Thus the “binding” and “loosing” in Jesus’ name is based on what heaven has already approved or prohibited, not something human leaders make up on their own in opposition to what the Bible teaches.
 - ✓ Also, this “binding” and “loosing” is granted to the whole church, not just a few elite leaders {*Matthew 16:19; 18:17-18*}.
- **A called-out group/fellowship of people to be followers of Christ Jesus** {*Acts 2:38-47; 13:1; 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10*} .
 - Called out by the Holy Spirit from all ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, etc. {*Acts 2: 47 -> 5:12; Revelation 7:9a; 14:1, 4c, 6* } .
 - Every member in the Church is of equal value to God and each member should treat one another equally in value—no racism, social-economic discrimination, etc. is allowed in God’s eyes—no matter what the members’ culture might teach.

- ❖ This is why Jesus treated the Jews & Gentiles, men & women, outcasts, tax collectors, lepers, etc. with equal value, even if it meant breaking the cultural taboos of His day {*Matthew 4:18-22; 8:1-13; Mark 5:25-34; 7:24-30; Luke 5:27-32; John 4:1-26, 39-41*}!
- ❖ Paul also includes all ages in this gospel equality {*1 Timothy 4:12-16*}.
- ❖ Members should care equally for one another in love {*John 13:34-35; Acts 2:44-45*} .
- Called out from our sinful world/culture/lifestyle {*Acts 2:38-42, 47; 1 Peter 2:9-12*}.
 - The Holy Spirit calls out sinful human beings into a relationship with Jesus as well as into a fellowship of believers called the Church {*Acts 2:46-(47)*}.
 - ❖ He uses this environment/fellowship to help transform/grow them in Jesus and His truth found in the Bible {*Ephesian 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Peter 2:4-5*}.
- Called out to witness for the Godhead as Their ambassadors/“missionaries” through church organization {*2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 3:8-11 (10); 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10, 12*}
 - The Church is not an exclusive “country club” for the members but a witnessing fellowship that shows non-members Jesus’ love and salvation while providing a safe place to heal and grow!
 - The Holy Spirit equips the members with spiritual gifts and enhances their talents—preexisting natural abilities—for evangelism, ministry, and nurture {*Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11-16*} .
- The Church is called out to be an organized, unified community to accomplish its mission of evangelism, ministry, nurture, etc. with greater impact than individuals by themselves {*Acts 2:47; 13:1; 14:21-(23); 15:1-6, 13, 19-23; 18:22; 20:17, 28; Romans 16:1-5, 23; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:1-(4); 11:18; 12:12-14, 28; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Colossians 1:24; 4:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; James 5:14; Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18: 3:1, 7, 14*}.
 - With its God-ordained organization, the Holy Spirit has magnified the Church as very important—a place where God wants His people to be involved members!
 - The Holy Spirit wants believers to be connected in a spiritual, worshipping community with other believers so they can be encouraged, held accountable and do the same to help others!
 - Faith is not only personal but also corporate in nature in a community of believers.

TAKE-AWAY: Some may be wondering, *How does God’s Church have the funds to operate in this organizational structure with its mission to evangelize, minister, nurture, etc.?* God has instituted a faith-system of giving tithe and offerings to help fund the mission of His Church.

Funding the Church’s God-given Mission

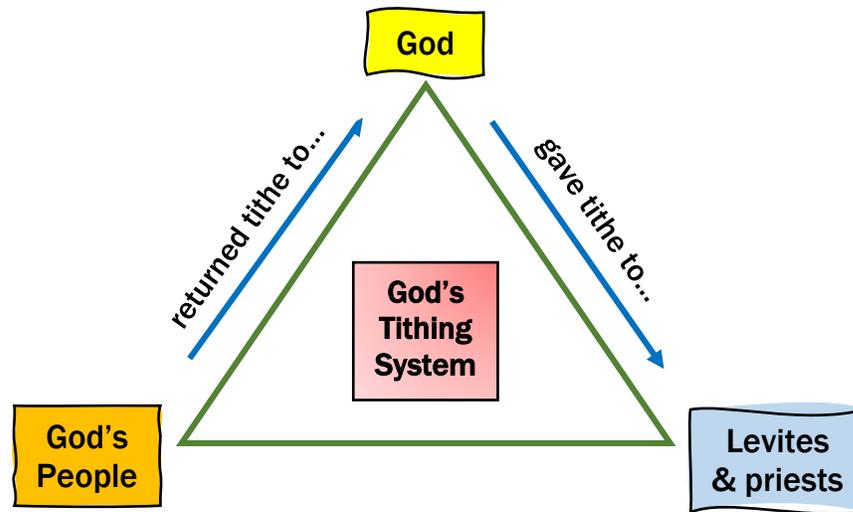
- All we have belongs to God {*Psalms 24:1-2; 1 Chronicles 29:10-11*}.
- This is where, the foundation, for giving to God and His Church’s mission begins.
 - Since God is owner of everything human beings own is really His, believer or non-believer. As a result believers are *only* managers of His possessions!

- This means believers will spend God’s money based on the biblical principles He shares in the Bible.
- **God gives the ability to gain wealth** {*Deuteronomy 8:18; 1 Chronicles 29:12*}.
 - The money someone has acquired is through the ability/strength/wisdom God has given them to acquire it.
 - This doesn’t mean God necessarily condones the way(s) individuals use to acquire/generate their wealth. They may have or may not have followed God’s biblical principles of fairness, honesty, transparency, etc.
 - However, what it does mean is: God has given all human beings the ability/strength to gain wealth—through faithful, hard work or the use of other talents they’ve developed.
- **The financial support given to God for His Church’s mission is His already** {*1 Chronicles 29:14, 16*}.
 - Wait this is mind boggling..., when one realizes what he/she returns to the Lord already belongs to Him.
 - An individual needs God’s grace-empowering as much to spiritually give to financially support His kingdom work as he/she needs it for salvation.
- **Giving financial support for God’s work is a spiritual, faith venture** {*1 Chronicles 29:17*}.
 - One’s financial giving to support God’s work reveals one’s faith or lack of it!
 - Billy Graham once said: “The checkbook (*in modern terms: financial statements, like credit cards, Cash App, etc.*) are a religious document.”
 - Here’s why? It doesn’t make human, financial sense to give away 10%, 20%, etc. to God for His Church’s mission when someone is trying to make “ends meet” on 100%!
 - ❖ If one’s budget is short when they’re using 100% of their monthly income, how will 80%-90% work any better?
 - ❖ It doesn’t! That’s why giving to financially support the Lord’s work is a faith, spiritual venture. It will never make human, financial sense!!
 - This is why one needs to trust God in faith as the Creator-Provider, who owns everything and willingly provides for His followers as they return financial support for His work. This is *only* way it will work!
 - ❖ One is only returning what already belongs to God that He has graciously and miraculously provided to bless His work and in “God-fashion” He blesses the giver. What a God!!

TAKE-AWAY: What specific plan has God instituted to support His work? The Bible clearly explains it for us.

- **Tithe**
 - Returning tithe reveals/witnesses to the fact that the giver recognizes/trusts God as their divine Creator-Provider who takes care of them {*Genesis 14:18-24 (20, 22-23)*}.
 - The tithe belongs to the Lord, not human beings {*Leviticus 27:30, 32-33*}.
 - Thus, human beings are not given permission by God to decide where it is to be given, how it is to be given, and/or how it’s to be used.
 - So, when one returns their tithe, they’re not returning it to human religious leaders but to God Himself.

- ❖ Thus the believer-giver is called to faithfulness in giving to God despite the challenges/misuses of God’s Church leaders.
 - ✓ Though this doesn’t excuse their abuses/misuses!
 - ✓ Instead, members should hold leaders accountable about concerns regarding abuses/misuses done by leadership. And then leave God to rectify the situation.
- Tithe = 10% of income/increase {*Leviticus 27:32; Numbers 18:26; Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12a*}
 - No matter what a person’s income is, God’s tithing system is fair for all—10%.
 - ❖ It’s simple to figure out – move the decimal one place to the left
 - ✓ \$1 = \$.10 | \$10 = \$1 | \$100 = \$10 | \$1,000 = \$100 | \$33.50 = \$3.35, etc.
 - ❖ This can be one’s income from paychecks, monetary birthday gifts, etc.
- God gave His tithe to the Levites for their personal support—income for the ministry work they did {*Numbers 18:8-14, 17-21*}.



- Thus, God’s tithe is holy and special for the work of ministry to support the Levites and priests.
 - ❖ The Levites included full-time “ministers” with varying responsibilities {*Holman Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1991, Holman Bible Publishers*}:
 - ✓ Participated in non-priestly duties—only Aaron & his sons, the priests, were allowed to offer sacrifices in the tabernacle {*Exodus 28; Leviticus 8-10; 2 Chronicles 23:13*}.
 - ✓ Until a permanent temple was built, they took down the tabernacle, transported it, set it up, and conducted worship at the tent where God dwelt {*Numbers 1:47-54; 3:14-39; 1 Chronicles 23:25-26*}.
 - ✓ Assisted the priests with their responsibilities {*Numbers 3:5-9; 16:9; 1 Chronicles 6:31-48; 9:22-28; 23:1-4, 13, 23-32; 25:1-6; 2 Chronicles 17:7-9; 29:12-19; Nehemiah 8:9-12*} by:
 - preparing grain offerings and the show bread
 - purifying all the holy instruments used in the Temple
 - singing praises to the Lord at the morning and evening offerings as well as being musicians
 - helping with burnt offerings on sabbaths and feast days

- being in charge of the Temple precinct and the chambers of the priests
- being keepers of the gates, judges, craftsmen, and overseers of the royal treasury
- teaching God's people His word
- ❖ The priests & Levites received the tithe from God because He did not give them a land inheritance—God was their inheritance in service for Him {*Numbers 18:20; 26:62; Deuteronomy 10:9; 18:1-2*}.
- ❖ Thus, tithe is not to be used for everyday Church expenses, like utilities, lawncare, etc., nor charities, no matter how good of a work they do.
 - ✓ These other expenses and ministries are to be funded/supported through additional “tithes”/offerings as we’ll discuss next.

TAKE-AWAY: To help support the additional non-priest/Levite ministry needs, He instructed His people to give additional “tithes”/offerings {*Deuteronomy 14:23-29; 26:12-13; 2 Kings 22:3-7; 2 Chronicles 31:5-6, 12; 34:8-13; Malachi 3:8*}.

▪ Offerings

- What were some of the non-priest/Levite “tithes”/offerings that supported the additional ministries:
 - An additional “tithe”/offering the Israelites could eat with their families, friends, and Levites at God’s sanctuary/tabernacle in joyous worship {*Deuteronomy 14:22-27*}.
 - ❖ Obviously, this was not God’s priest-Levite tithe that He gave to the priests and Levites exclusively, since this one could be used by His people instead.
 - A third-year “tithe”/offering (collected in addition to the above-mentioned “tithe”/offering or the reapportioning of it) that helped the Levites, the stranger/non-Israelite, fatherless, and/or widow {*Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 26:12-13*}.
 - ❖ Again, these valid needs were not covered by God’s priest-Levite tithe which He gave exclusively to them.
 - A freewill offering to help support the repairs of God’s dilapidated temple that resulted from the apostasy of God’s leaders & people {*2 Kings 22:3-7; 2 Chronicles 34:8-13*}.
 - The Old Testament sacrificial offerings offered:
 - ❖ Offerings like: burnt, grain, peace, sin, trespass, red heifer, etc.
 - ❖ None of these sacrificial offerings are labeled tithe.
 - ❖ These were *in addition* to God’s tithe that He gave to the priests & Levites for the ministry work they did.
 - Relief offering to help the Jerusalem Christians {*1 Corinthians 16:1; Acts 24:17*}.

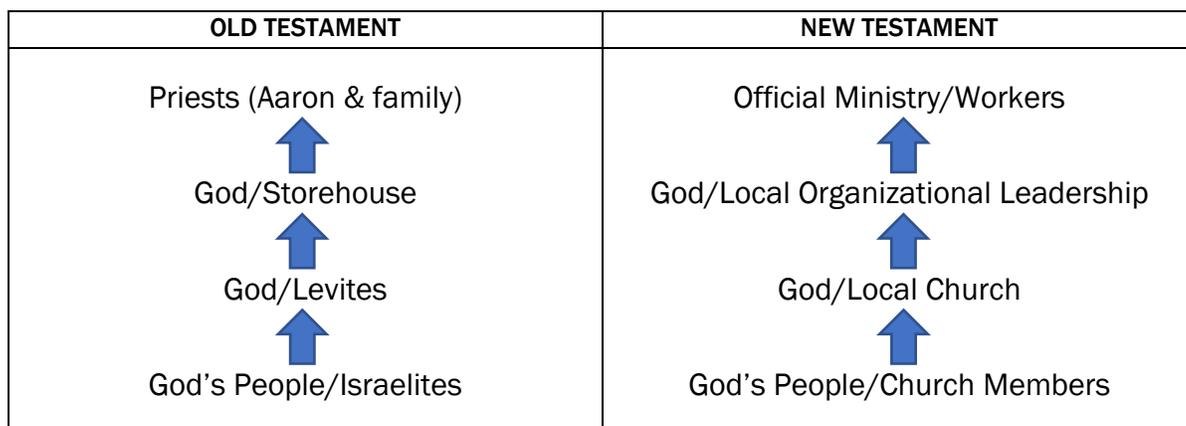
TAKE-AWAY: You may be feeling overwhelmed at this point or at least feeling your bank account(s) shrinking. I [presenter: David] understand. It seems God was always asking for money for some type of ministry need.

Especially when we realize as some Bible commentators think: the Israelites’ returned back to God in tithe and offerings somewhere between 33%-50% of their income. However, again it’s not a “money-grab” on God’s part, but an invitation to join Him on a faith journey to bless others with His gospel!!

So, where did all of these tithes and offerings go? And how were they returned?

The Church's Organizational Structure

- The Scary Backstory...
 - Again, I [presenter: David] realize this can be a painful/touchy subject for many especially with all the stories heard today of: abuses of power; sexual scandals and abuse; spiritual abuse; deceptive, hollow promises; prosperity gospel; etc.
 - I [presenter: David] don't blame someone for feeling this way. And I'm deeply sorry if you've personally experienced any of the above-mentioned spiritual atrocities with their pain! This should not happen in God's Church!!! And they need to stop!!
 - With this being said, not downplaying anyone's experience and pain, God has a plan for His Church's organization so it can complete the Gospel Commission He gave it {*Matthew 28:18-20*}.
- "Layers" of God-appointed leaders
 - This divine-ordained leadership structure is described throughout the Bible.
 - In these Old & New Testament descriptions of God's organizational structure one discovers an interlocking with returning back to Him, His tithe and offerings (see the chart below).



- ❖ Old Testament
 - ✓ God's people/Israelites returned their tithes & offerings to God, either through the:
 - Levites (*particularly when the people lived a distance from the sanctuary*) who then returned a 10% tithe to the temple/sanctuary {*Numbers 18:21-24, 30-31; Nehemiah 10:35-38 (37-38)*}, or
 - Directly themselves at the temple/sanctuary {*Malachi 3:8(10)*}
 - ✓ The Levites' gave their 10% tithe to the priests (Aaron/his descendants) at the temple/sanctuary {*Numbers 18:25-28; Nehemiah 10:35-38 (37-38)*}
 - The "storehouse" was the place where the tithes & offerings were stored in the temple/sanctuary {*2 Chronicles 31:5-12 (10-12); Nehemiah 10:38; 12:44; 13:10-13 (12-13); Malachi 3:10*}.
 - Thus, the people returned to God to His designated place—the temple/sanctuary.
- ❖ New Testament
 - ✓ The Church's structure was more loosely organized because the believers worshipped in house-churches because of the governments' and/or Jewish leadership limitations on them.

- ✓ God's people/church members returned their tithe & offerings to God through the local house "Churches" or when an official spiritual leader would come to their area {*1 Corinthians 16:1-4*}.
- ✓ The elders were the local spiritual leaders, more like pastors now {*Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17-19; Titus 1:5-6; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-5a*}.
- ✓ Monies were given to the apostles, like Paul, or other more full-time gospel workers, even some Elders who did more full-time gospel ministry {*1 Corinthians 16:3-4; 1 Timothy 5:17-19 (18)*}.

The Heart-Factor!

- The bottom line for returning tithe & offerings to God is:
 - Do we believe/trust God will take care of us as we return to Him.
 - It boils down to believing God cares about us and will be our Creator-Provider.
 - ❖ He stakes His very character and reputation on this fact-promise!
 - Human beings are self-centered by nature. Yet, as we give from a heart of love and obedience to God the Holy Spirit will transform our bent to one of care, self-giving, and sacrifice—the spirit of the Godhead and heaven!
 - As we now return tithe and offerings to God we're actually "partnering" with Him in His gospel work to save others in Christ because the glory and honor of God and the salvation of others has become our spiritual foundation/bent, not accumulating wealth for our own selfish pleasure.

LIVING CHOICE: Will you by God's grace, join Him in His gospel work to save others by the support of His gospel ministry through your spiritual giving of tithes and offerings?