

2014

Incorporating giving as an integral part of worship at Blessed Harvest Institute of Charlotte, North Carolina

Brian Gerard Fite
Gardner-Webb University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/divinity_etd



Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fite, Brian Gerard, "Incorporating giving as an integral part of worship at Blessed Harvest Institute of Charlotte, North Carolina" (2014). *Divinity Projects*. 3.
https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/divinity_etd/3

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Divinity at Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Divinity Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. For more information, please see [Copyright and Publishing Info](#).

INCORPORATING GIVING AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF WORSHIP
AT BLESSED HARVEST INSTITUTE OF CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

A PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE M. CHRISTOPHER WHITE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY
BOILING SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
BRIAN GERARD FITE

MAY 12, 2014

APPROVAL FORM

INCORPORATING GIVING AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF WORSHIP
AT BLESSED HARVEST INSTITUTE OF CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

BRIAN GERARD FITE

Approved by:

_____ (Faculty advisor)

_____ (Field Supervisor)

_____ (D.Min. Director)

Date: _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All thanks and praise belong to God for guiding me to the M. Christopher White School of Divinity of Gardner-Webb University to have this experience and be nurtured to offer this project to the Church universal. Many thanks to the faculty especially Drs. Danny West, Gerald Keown, Douglas Dickens, and Robert Canoy for their investment in me through the seminar experience. I am also thankful to Lisa Hollifield for making sure that I had the information and material needed to stay on track: Your service to the student community is greatly needed and appreciated. My deepest gratitude to Guy Sayles, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, North Carolina, for setting me free from the bondage of being a servant of God to remembering that I am a son of God first then a servant. My ministry to fellow ministers will forever be impacted by my experience in the two semesters of field supervision. Additionally, I would like to thank my Peer Group: Bruce Caldwell, Hunter Duncan, Spencer Hardaway, Linda Jones, Todd Lowe, and Ernesto Robledo. Sincere thanks to Dr. Larry George for guiding and challenging me to have integrity to stay true to the scripture and face the project that would inform and strengthen Blessed Harvest Institute: Your sacrifice and diligence has been of great value throughout this experience.

Thank you to Blessed Harvest Institute of Charlotte, North Carolina for your continuing support and willingness to question the familiar to see if it agrees with scripture. Your openness allowed me to implement the project to enhance our church. Moreover, I would like to offer special thanks to the focus group members for sharing

your experiences and insights, which shaped this project. I am blessed to serve as senior pastor for this great congregation.

All of this was made possible because of the support and encouragement that I received from my wife, Barbara: You are my gift from God, and I appreciate your partnership in this journey of life. Thank you to my friends for pushing me to endure, especially Yvonne Nesbit and J. Michael Jones for proofreading and the challenging questions that broadened my view of this project: We will be friends until the end. I would like to offer special thanks to our children and their spouses Jerret (Andrea) and Jeanay (Torey) for your unwavering support and prayers. Thank you to our grandsons, Jeremiah, Hezekiah, Elijah and Aaron, for being patient with me for three years. I have many thanks to my brothers, Yusef, John, Jason, and Mel and Solomon for sticking with me, especially Yusef for walking this journey with me. I would also like to thank my managers, Gregory Morris, David Dew and Leigh Ferrante, and teammates in Wire Transfer at Wells Fargo Bank for their support in my pursuit of this degree while maintaining my employment.

I dedicate this project to my parents, the late Robert and Mary Fite, and pastors, Derrick Anderson, the late Pastors Alfonso Whitfield, and Cyril Larmond, whose investment has molded me into the man and minister that I am and will continually strive to be. Above all others, I thank God for opening my eyes and blessing me to serve the Gospel in ministry. I am your son and servant in excellence without compromise.

ABSTRACT

Giving is one of the most effective forms of worship we have available to us, but it has become the most exploitive and misunderstood element of the worship service. The methods and language used to frame giving within worship have led to exploitation resulting in unwillingness to wholeheartedly participate in giving as an element of worship. The literature addressing giving and the biblical interpretations are lacking in accurately speaking to the issues that arise in applying Old and New Testament scripture to address giving as an element of worship. There are a growing number of articles attempting to address the covetous nature involved in the methods and language used in inviting people to give to God. This work evaluated the giving practice in Blessed Harvest Institute by evaluating some Old and New Testament scriptures and determining how the interpretations are to be applied in the methods and language used to frame the giving experience in the worship service. Leviticus 27:30-33, Deuteronomy 14:22-29, Malachi 3, Acts 3-5, 2 Corinthians 8-9, and other scriptures were used to understand the methods and language of giving biblically. Giving is to be a freewill expression of worship executed in an environment of liberty. It is necessary to reframe the concept of tithing not to be an obligation but a personal choice to express worship to God. Any prompting will remove worship from giving. Worship is a free expression that must be voluntary; therefore, giving must be voluntarily expressed, not grudgingly, by compulsion or of necessity, in order to be an element of worship.

CONTEXT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	1
Setting and Statement of Problem	1
Methodology	4
Expected Opposition	4
CHAPTER TWO	
DETAILED PROJECT	
Project Goal	11
Project Foundation	12
Personal Rationale	14
CHAPTER THREE	
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	
Literature Review	21
Biblical Rationale	27
A Life of Worship	36
Critique of Contemporary Perspective	38
Theological Appropriateness	39
CHAPTER FOUR	
CRITICAL EVALUATION	
Detailed Project Description	45
The Pre-Survey (Focus Group)	46
The Pre-Survey (Control Group)	51
The Post-Survey (Focus Group)	53
The Post-Survey (Control Group)	55
Journal Journey	56
Evaluation Plan	74
Project Evaluation	78
CHAPTER FIVE	
CONCLUSIONS	80
General Application for the Christian Church	81

Specific Application for Blessed Harvest Institute	83
Action Steps	83
Personal Evaluation	86
APPENDIX	
A. Covenant Agreement	89
B. Pre-Project Survey Form	91
C. Post-Project Survey Form	94
D. Evaluation Form	97
E. Bible Study Lessons	
Lesson 1 – Worship & Giving	100
Lesson 2 – Agrarian vs. Monetary	102
Lesson 3 – Tithing	104
Lesson 4 – Tithing (part 2)	106
Lesson 5 – New Testament Giving	108
Lesson 6 – How is giving incorporated as an element of worship?	110
F. Project Journal Format	112
G. Focus Group Age/Income Data	113
H. Focus Group Data Comparison with Graphs	114
I. Control Group Data Comparison with Graphs	140
J. Lesson 7 – How to Give in Worship	163
K. Journal Entries	
Responses 1.1	166
Responses 2.1	177
Responses 2.2	180
Responses 2.3	181
Responses 2.4	184
Responses 2.5	186
Responses 3.1	188
Responses 3.2	191
Responses 3.3	193
Responses 3.4	195
Responses 3.5	197
Responses 4.1	199
Responses 4.2	201
Responses 4.3	203
Responses 4.4	205

Responses 4.5	207
Responses 5.1	208
Responses 5.2	211
Responses 5.3	213
Responses 5.4	214
Responses 5.5	216
Responses 6.1	218
Responses 6.2	220
Responses 6.3	222
Responses 6.4	223
Responses 6.5	225
Responses 7.1	227
Responses 7.2	229
Responses 7.3	230
Responses 7.4	232
Responses 7.5	233
L. Questions and Answers from Journal Entries	236
M. Giving Envelope	242
N, Commitment Card	243
O. Project Evaluation Responses	244
BIBLIOGRAPHY	249

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Setting and Statement of Problem

Blessed Harvest Institute (BHI) is a Christian Church established in 2001. The mission for BHI is to prepare disciples for the work of ministry, through training and application of gifts, to bear fruit for the kingdom of God. BHI has focused on minimizing the methods of offering within worship while challenging the overemphasis of the concept of tithing to the extent that we may believe that ten percent is the optimum level of giving. Therefore, we must evaluate our current practices and prepare teaching material to educate disciples in the biblical principles of stewardship, which will lead to giving, and not merely tithing.

Charlotte, North Carolina has a population of 731,424, according to the 2010 census. BHI has primarily attracted African Americans, but it is our intention to diversify the congregation. African Americans make up thirty-five percent of the population of Charlotte, North Carolina. The percentage of the population twenty-five years old and over with a bachelor's degree or higher is almost forty percent (39.6%) from 2007–2011.¹ Within the zip code (28269) of our current location, the population is 71,048, according to the 2010 census. According to this census, the population in the area is not elderly, only six percent is sixty-five years old or older. The percentage of African Americans is approximately forty-three percent (43.3%).² In this younger, more educated community, we

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, accessed January 12, 2013, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/3712000.html>.

² U.S. Census Bureau, accessed January 12, 2013, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1.

seek to appeal to their desire to understand God's word and see it implemented in the practice of worship.

In the first year of Blessed Harvest Institute (2001), we made a conscious decision to deemphasize giving in our worship by placing baskets in the rear of the sanctuary, for those desiring to place their gifts in the basket at any time. The congregation has embraced this practice, and we do not have any issues meeting our annual budget. Blessed Harvest Institute does not fundraise; the church is financed solely based on tithes and freewill offerings. A person cannot receive anything in exchange for their contributions to Blessed Harvest Institute; for example, all media products are provided free of charge.

BHI is a predominately African American congregation of approximately 120 people, a diverse congregation in the areas of income and education with a strong interest in learning the meaning and application of God's word. A growing number of people have come to BHI because of the liberty of giving. This project sought to evaluate the current method of giving by placing baskets in the sanctuary near the entrance and not mentioning giving in the worship. This evaluation offered material that taught and informed the congregation of the role of giving in our worship expression to God. This evaluation sought to determine if the current method of collection was appropriate to express giving as an element of worship.

Is it possible to have an environment of freewill giving and celebrate the expression of giving in worship? It is essential to offer an environment in which people do not get the impression that worship is a cover for the church merely to get money. In my experience in churches and based on the journal responses recorded during this project it is clear that people are concluding that worship is just to raise money. This

impression has been expressed by many people that have shared in worship with BHI because our de-emphasis becomes very noticeable for them because of the impression and experience they have had. In order to determine how and if this can be accomplished, I will have to define worship and giving, and then determine if they should be joined, and if so, how can they be joined without impacting the current environment of liberty we have created?

The problem is that our method of giving may not be considered an act of worship by the giver. In addition, we needed to verify that the givers understood and utilized the biblical types of giving that are applicable in this post-Resurrection era. Worshippers must be clear and informed on the freedom that is necessary in the execution of giving to express worship.

This project evaluated how giving was perceived in worship and how to educate Blessed Harvest Institute on the significance of giving as an element of the worship experience. The project sought to identify the elements of giving and the method that would be used to express giving as worship. In order to identify a method for the execution of giving in the worship service, it was necessary for me to document some of the options being used in churches today. I needed to note that there is a distinct difference between worship and the worship service. Worship is executed as we live in every moment of every day. Believers must seek to live a life of worship. Within a life of worship, there must be a time for corporate or collective worship as well. This is what I call the worship service. A worship service is the agreed time and location when people come together to express worship to God. The scope and focus of this project was to determine the placement and execution of giving in this worship context. The intent of

this project was to impact the understanding of giving as an element of worship, expanding the setting of giving beyond the worship service.

Methodology

A Focus Group and Control Group were used to evaluate the effect of the Bible Study material presented. The Focus Group was directly exposed to the Bible Study material. The Control Group was not prohibited from attending the lessons. The Focus Group and Control Group took a survey before and after the Bible Study material was presented. The Focus Group also responded to a series of journal questions to record their experience with the material. The journal entries sought to capture the thought, feelings, and questions of the Focus Group as they experienced the material.

Expected Opposition

There were a number of possible points of opposition to the questions raised and the application of scripture. Our church had been using the method of placing the baskets at the entrance without making mention of giving to collect financial gifts in worship for more than ten years. The first point of conflict could have been with the concept of determining the amount of a financial gift based on a tithe, one tenth of gross income. Another possible point of conflict might have been in changing the method used to execute the offering in worship. The baskets and the placement of giving in the order of worship may be changed to ensure there is a clear understanding of giving as a component of worship.

To address these potential points of conflict it was important to recognize and remember that change can be met with a level of resistance just because of the change. When the possible change questions accepted traditions based on accepted biblical interpretations, it is very likely that the resistance can be intense. While the fundamental

question of this project was to determine whether the current method of collecting offerings were perceived as worship, the parallel findings on tithing caused the congregation to become distracted from addressing the primary issue. In order to understand the biblical information, it was necessary to understand and provide information on what the Bible suggests for believers of this age to know and do in regard to giving to God in worship. According to William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker, in *Interpersonal Conflict*, in order to manage conflict steps need to be considered in the framing and presentation of the information.

First, within their discussion of styles and tactics, they state one of the initial decisions is to engage or avoid. This decision was made at different stages in this project; however, I just focused on the two major phases: initiation and implementation. Obviously, I have chosen to engage by initiating this project, but I need to explain this for others that may determine it is prudent to avoid this matter. There are two fundamental ways that people understand God: (1) The Bible, and (2) The World. Allow me to clarify. The World includes events, experiences, relationships, and everything that has an effect on us directly or indirectly during life. There is a bi-directional relationship between how we understand the information we have. At times, the Bible influences our understanding of the World, and at other times, the World influences our understanding of the Bible. Usually, it is hard to determine which is occurring but both do occur.

The project was a conflict in that the congregation accepted because it was a requirement for completion of this degree, but implementation is an entirely different phase. Just because these questions have been asked did not mean that we had to implement the findings. This is where the conflict between the biblical information and our traditional method became intense because it meant that norms and patterns are

changing. Some will add right or wrong to the process. This can cause some to become defensive and protective. To address these possibilities this project has been designed as collaboration. The surveys and journal are to allow the participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and understandings so that everyone's perspective is valued. Wilmot and Hocker suggest, "Collaboration demands the most constructive engagement of any of the conflict styles. Collaboration shows a high level of concern for one's goals, the goals of others, the successful solution of the problem, and the enhancement of the relationship."³ As the information was presented by me in the Bible Study sessions there were two relationships being drawn into this process: our relationship with each other as a congregation and our relationship with God. To control our impulse to satisfy self it was necessary for everyone to be mindful of the presence of our relationship with God as we considered the information.

The level of conflict that a change causes is based on the emotions that the change generates. We have emotional responses to all change; therefore, it was important to manage the emotions by offering the participants the opportunity to identify and address their emotions during the project. Questions are one way to offer participants the opportunity to get clarity, however, some people will not take the opportunity to express what they think or feel in a group setting. The journal was key in documenting the feelings and impacts of the information. In the initial meeting with the Focus Group, I informed them that a seventh lesson would be added to the presentation to reflect the findings of the Focus Group. This allowed the participants to see how their input shaped the implementation of a solution. The lessons had been structured so that conflict was not

³ William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker, *Interpersonal Conflict* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2011), 168.

heightened until lesson three. This allowed for two foundational lessons that I did not believe would cause extreme emotions. Lesson three addressed the foundations of the concept of tithing as an applicable process of giving in worship. I assumed that by this point the participants would be familiar with journaling and ready to document any thoughts or feelings that they needed to express. Managing the fear associated with a change can prevent it from becoming anger. The more participants experienced positive emotions the more they emitted positive emotions. This allowed for collaborative resolution of the conflict that had arisen within the participants.

The Church represents a good environment for the application of systems theory. In this and almost any evaluation initiated in a church setting, it is imperative to have a clear, honest understanding of the systems involved in the organization; the systems at work impact and influence communication and behavior. Wilmot and Hocker observe: “Systems theory helps us answer the question, ‘How does this work?’ Conflicts are seldom managed productively by attention to blame and causality. If you tag someone with the ‘fault’ label, you have not managed the conflict; you have only created an enemy.”⁴

The systems at work in BHI are powerful, distinct, and unintended. The one that is of most concern to me is an apparent unwillingness to disagree with me. I have noticed this unintended system in many areas of our church. In addition to being the founder of this church, I am also a strong willed individual who enjoys dialog and debate. I believe options are identified during the exchange of ideas and opinions; therefore, I work to establish opportunities for people to express their thoughts and feelings. I find people are

⁴ Wilmot and Hocker, *Interpersonal Conflict*, 218.

very uncomfortable with this approach. I have been the pastor of three predominately African-American congregations. I have found this system in every church where I have served. This could be because of how the pastor is perceived in the African-American culture, my personality, or a combination of both. I had to be mindful of this in my approach and communication with the Focus Group to ensure they did not form conclusions based on what they may have perceived I considered a logical conclusion to this study.

To combat this system I reinforced the principle that the Focus Group would inform the conclusions. Journaling was included to give the Focus Group the opportunity to document their thoughts and feelings. This gave me the opportunity to compare the journal comments with the survey and evaluation responses to determine if the data was consistent. If the congregation concluded they had no voice or opinion in the decision-making they would have disengaged, complied, and eventually left the congregation. Most of the congregation has been transplanted from a Christian congregation, thus many of the systems that existed in their previous church have come with them. This was evident in some of the information we received which conveyed a desire to change this to be more like their church experience. The first journal entry became very important to this evaluation because it documented the participant's understanding and experience with giving in church. This allowed for an understanding of what each person brought to this evaluation even if that information came from me. Within the context of each lesson, I had to be mindful to reiterate that the Focus Group would inform the conclusions. I hoped that this would reinforce their importance and independence to be honest and forthcoming.

At times, people seek for right or wrong in order to determine the approach to implement. In light of the strong and challenging biblical information in the study material, it was important for the Focus Group participants to know that there is no right or wrong response. The conclusions must be based on their evaluation of the information presented to determine how giving can be executed in our worship to convey that it is an integral component of our worship service. Again, I relied on the journal entries to reveal how the information and presentation was perceived.

Another system, which must be mentioned, is the strong reliance on the Bible we have intentionally established. A principle we attempt to embed is to strive to implement what God has said through scripture when it has clearly been revealed. This principle is undergirded with the discipline of exegesis to ensure we are not being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Scripture must be evaluated contextually before an interpretation is implemented. A majority of our congregation has been acclimated to tithe and generally to give in order to receive more from God. This material challenged us to review and evaluate our process of giving based on a fresh understanding of worship; then allow this to inform our understanding and approach to giving. In this area of systems theory, there was another system involved in this evaluation, that is, scripture versus tradition. Within the evaluation of scriptures we will inevitably impact tradition; therefore, it is necessary to evaluate and understand the circumstances that led to the traditions the church (universal) has elected to perpetuate. Challenging tradition may be the most difficult system to engage, in that some may become defensive so as not to conclude that they are ignorant or have been misled (intentionally or unintentionally). Once a participant becomes defensive for reasons outside of the information presented conflict can ensue.

Negotiation was a key component in my interaction with the Focus Group. Wilmot and Hocker state, “Negotiation simply means to settle by discussion and mutual agreement. Negotiation provides a process of problem solving with the topic, context, or substantive issues rise in importance. The relationship, identity, and process issues remain present and always influence how negotiation proceeds, but the product of negotiation is (a) problem resolution or (b) impasse.”⁵ While the true negotiation occurred at the end of the project when the journal entries and responses were considered to inform the conclusions, it was necessary to make the Focus Group aware that they were on a balanced playing field. As Wilmot and Hocker have stated there are two products of negotiation, problem resolution, or impasse. When one party feels that they have nothing to negotiate, they could resort to avoidance. On the other hand, if a party has all of the influence and is not willing to allow the other party to have a meaningful voice at the table this is domination. Avoidance and domination defeat negotiation.

With the fore-mentioned system of perceiving pastoral authority and/or correctness, it was very important to establish a level field of negotiation to allow the Focus Group to provide honest sincere information with the expectation of having their thoughts, feelings, and concepts considered as valid and relevant regardless to how their thoughts, feelings, and concepts have been formulated. In each session, the Focus Group had to be reinforced to know that their comments would inform the conclusions. If the participants started to avoid the negotiation the findings would have been invalid, they would have become either overly agreeable or disagreeable.

⁵ Wilmot and Hocker, *Interpersonal Conflict*, 244.

CHAPTER TWO

DETAILED PROJECT

Project Goal

The goal of this project was to identify how giving could be incorporated into the worship at Blessed Harvest Institute. As stated in the Project Setting section, some in BHI may not recognize giving as an element of our worship. It was possible that the believers did not understand the significance of giving because of the process that we had developed. It was necessary for the believers to understand what God desires in our giving so that this element of worship could be executed with God as the focus and worship as the intent.

Giving is more than just pulling out some money to place it in a basket. Through this project, the Focus Group was exposed to information in anticipation of developing a personal strategy for giving that would express worship to God. The giver learned the importance of giving as a reflection of relationship and commitment to God. The giver should consider and prepare for the time when worship is expressed by what is given.

This project sought to identify the process and form the giving event would have in our worship. This aspect had to be accomplished without introducing any prompting. Based on the research I have completed, our current understanding of giving had to change by eliminating the concept of tithing from our teaching. If liberty is going to be our standard for giving, tithing had to be removed to allow for the gift to be solely based on our relationship with God.

Project Foundation

Christian worship can never be divorced from the sacrifice of giving. Our giving is a form of our expression of sacrifice. In *The Worshipgiver*, Talmage Williams quotes Franklin M. Segler (*Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice*) to express the importance of a time of giving within a worship service, Williams points out: “In the practice of public worship the concrete, objective offering is essential for the conscious enforcement of the meaning of spiritual worship. Jesus Christ as God’s sacrificial offering is the basis for man’s [sic] response in making an offering to God.”⁶

Robert Rayburn observes: “Worship is not to be considered chiefly as getting from God; worship is giving. Worship is offering.”⁷ The mere act of giving cannot be considered worship because it is possible to give without focusing on God; however, the converse is the true approach to worship; worship is giving. To worship God every element or action must be a precious gift to our Creator God. As one ponders the concept of sacrifice, self must be at the top of the list. Salvation is a surrender of self into the hands of our loving God. Then, God has the authority to guide us by The Holy Spirit into the worship experience. Every component of worship must be sacrificial and not merely about money.

According to Talmage Williams in *The Worshipgiver*, Worship is “to ascribe worth, to glorify, to bow down, to prostrate oneself.”⁸ He continues:

⁶ Talmage Williams, *The Worshipgiver: One Who Gives as an Expression of Worship* (SBC Stewardship Commission, 1995), 10.

⁷ Robert G Rayburn, *O Come Let Us Worship: Corporate Worship in the Evangelical Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 132-133.

⁸ Williams, *The Worshipgiver*, 2-3.

Worshipping God is more than participating in worship activities, worship services, and worship experiences; it is the recognition and affirmation with our whole being that God really is sovereign God. Genuine worship of the true God involves the submitting of our minds, bodies, emotions, and spirits to God's sovereign lordship. Our faith in God expresses itself in awe, adoration, and praise to the Eternal God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.⁹

Williams defines Giving in the following way:

Giving grows out of who we are; Christian giving is an expression of our redeemed nature. If we are selfish and stingy, we will give grudgingly and sparingly. If we are loving and caring, we will give generously and graciously.¹⁰

Giving as an element of worship is an opportunity to express our relationship with God along with others who love and appreciate God as sovereign Lord. Based on the responses received from the Focus Group giving has been disassociated from worship while being presented during what is called worship. It is necessary to offer the New Testament believer a New Testament approach that allows giving to be a demonstration of love, not a means to satisfy church expenses or a debt that is owed to God. Worship includes our entire being so to overemphasize money is to miss the sincere, personal essence of worship. The Bible documents three general forms of giving: tithes, offerings, and alms. There are many variations and types of offerings in the Bible, but I did not address this level of detail. The rationale for this project was based on 2 Corinthians 9:7. BHI sought to understand and implement a giving strategy that maintains the principle of liberty (free will) and to educate disciples of the significance of giving as a worship instrument. There are not very many approaches to giving in the Christian Church, but there are a number of different processes used to motivate giving. With the growing

⁹ Williams, *The Worshipgiver*, 3.

¹⁰ Williams, *The Worshipgiver*, 4.

popularity of prosperity doctrine, it is important to document the biblical principles that BHI will utilize and the processes that will be used to execute this information. We must avoid teaching that we give to get. 2 Corinthians 9:10-15 can be misapplied to believe that the giver will receive more because they gave.

This project has addressed the misapplication of some scriptures that have impacted the understanding of giving. These include Malachi 3:8-10 and Luke 6:38. Acts chapters 1-5 were used as examples of how giving was understood in the New Testament church based on the priesthood of believers. This information was compared and contrasted with the Old Testament understanding of giving.

Personal Rationale

Giving has always been a difficult part of worship for me. I have always understood offering as a means of expressing love to God. My first pastor, Alfonso Whitfield, never emphasized giving as something we must do. He never appeared to be pressured about the church budget, and the church always met budget. When we would visit other churches, I would notice the difference in how giving was addressed. The contrast was noticeable and uncomfortable for me, but as I continued to experience this difference, I started to believe that there was something wrong with us because everyone else was talking about receiving a blessing based on what was given.

In my years of pastoral ministry, I have heard a recurring chorus of people saying the church is too concerned about money. I noticed that people did not recognize what was happening in the church as giving. They were experiencing the collection of money. Therefore, when God led me to establish BHI, it was important to me that we not become another church that overemphasized money.

Based merely on what I had been taught in church I wanted to achieve tithing. Even as a pastor the goal of giving ten percent of my gross income seemed to be an unachievable standard based on my financial mismanagement and circumstances. In 2005, after teaching and preaching on tithing for almost eighteen years, I arrived at what I thought was the pinnacle of giving. I gave ten percent of my gross income to the church. My stewardship was improving so I finally could give according to what God wanted. By 2007, I was giving but unfulfilled, something was missing. I started to pray and ask God what I was missing in giving. God revealed to me that giving, because my relationship with God is because of the blood of Yeshua (Jesus), should never be based on a legal obligation. I did not understand what this had to do with giving until I was reading 1 Corinthians 2, and it came to me that only the Spirit of God knows what God desires from me. I started seeking the Spirit of God for direction to determine what I should give. God knows what God has entrusted me with, and God knows our relationship so whatever God wants from me I will give it. The first year was tough. I did not believe I could afford the amount I was instructed to give by God. I trusted God and gave it. I feel free now because giving is a reflection of my relationship with God.

The form of giving during our worship service is so impersonal that no one is aware of the great opportunity we have in giving. Giving, in any form, is the only tangible expression of love humans have to God; everything else can be just lip service. This project was a means by which people could be informed of why we give so that we could determine how giving should be incorporated into worship.

I anticipated that the congregation would embrace the power to communicate their love to God that giving offers. Giving is not an effort to pay or bargain with God; it is an opportunity for expression. God knows what we have been entrusted with so only

God knows our sincere expressions of love. I understand now that the time of giving in worship has been corrupted because we are not aware of the intimacy giving offers. It is not about the money; rather, it is about my love and thanksgiving to an awesome, loving God. Our congregation cannot go lacking and ignorant any longer. This project offered us the chance to have a sincere moment with God by expressing our love in our giving. This giving is the surrendering of me to God; time, talent, resources, and everything God has entrusted to me can be given back to God to express love and thanksgiving.

There are a growing number of children and teenagers at BHI; therefore, it is important for us to address this issue so that we made sure we were teaching and practicing giving in an appropriate fashion. I did not want to misinform anyone, nor did I want to condition the congregation (especially children and youth) to a form of giving that did not allow them to understand and express the significance of giving. I look forward to the time when the offering is an intimate moment of worship to express love through monetary giving, just as the invitation to discipleship is an intimate surrender of my life to God. Every aspect of worship is just a different form of intimate expression, not just the offering of time. All of worship is an offering of love to God.

The first seminar I experienced at Gardner Webb University was the Ministry of Life Long Learning. In this seminar, we had to establish a Ministry Covenant. My number one area for development was to develop a broader view of scripture. To me this should be the desire of every believer never to think that we understand God completely. If the church is God's bridge back to creation, then we, the church, have a responsibility to revisit our traditions to establish that they are indeed the truth. When we get to the place that we believe that our traditions are truth, we limit God's ability to reveal what we have missed or overlooked. Will this engagement cause conflict? Probably, but

church leaders have a responsibility to validate the interpretations and practices that inform The World.

Serving in a church that has sought to rely on our best efforts to understand the scripture, it was refreshing to engage in dialog that would challenge my perspectives as I sought to expand. I decided to attend Gardner-Webb University (GWU) for two reasons:

- 1) It had a different composition than my previous academic and church experience.
- 2) I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Danny West before deciding to come to GWU, in the meeting he emphasized their interest and focus on improving and expanding the importance of sound scripture interpretation in the work done through the M. Christopher White School of Divinity.

These two factors became the motivation for me to pursue doctoral studies at GWU. The interpretation of scripture is not an exact science, and I have learned to qualify my interpretations by stating this is what I can determine based on the information available currently. I have learned to allow God to inform me as I pursue God's heart of love and truth. The foundation of Christian faith is irrefutable; Yeshua is the risen savior for all of humankind, everything else has to be open for evaluation. Tradition should inform us of God's truth, but tradition should never become the foundation for God's truth. When this occurs, the church responds by saying, "We have always done it this way." This must inform us that there is a system at work that must be evaluated for its impact on our ability and willingness to ask questions of scripture and tradition.

From a broader context, it is interesting how this project concept had been received and evaluated by the body of Christ. I invited two friends to share in the pre-work of this concept and approach during my second semester of Supervision in order to get a preview of how this information may be perceived. In addition, the dialog and feedback I received in the Project Proposal Workshop and my peer group in Supervision has allowed me to see the working of this system in a broad and general way.

I have been a pastor for twenty years, including nearly nine years in the AME Zion church and have always managed the financial aspect of ministry without the inclusion of fundraising. The two churches that I have had the privilege to pastor have operated with a surplus and did not partake in any fundraising activities. In my experience, the traditional African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church has three forms of giving. In the 1996 Book of Discipline,¹¹ the Order of Worship states Ministry of Kindness (this is the benevolence offering), Tithes, and Offerings. These are documented as occurring after the sermon, but there is a note that states these can be collected before the sermon. Within the AMEZ Church, the method of collection varies, including: passing the plate row-by-row, or marching to the front of the sanctuary to give. In some churches, both methods are applied: the Ministry of Kindness is received by passing the plate, and tithes and offering are brought to the front of the church during the offering portion of the worship service. These practices are not exclusive to the AMEZ Church and are used in many churches.

I have experienced the process of receiving tithes and offerings separately. Those who are tithing will be asked to stand, a special prayer is offered for them before they give. After the tithing is completed, the non-tithing givers are invited to bring their offerings.

To some there is a philosophy behind collecting before or after the sermon. Some believe the sermon prepares for giving, and people will give more after the sermon. Others believe it is important to give before the sermon and invitation so the sermon and invitation are the last elements experienced in the worship service.

¹¹ Cecil Bishop, *The Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*, Commission on Discipline Codification, (Charlotte: AME Zion Publishing House, 1996), 32-33.

Grace Community Church in North Liberty, Iowa posted an article “Why We Stopped Passing The Offering Plate” by Dennis Sawyer on their website under What We Believe.¹² The article explains the process and experience of placing collection boxes at each exit of the sanctuary to receive the giving for the worship service. At the conclusion of this article, 2 Corinthians 9:7 is quoted. Sawyer explains how this process allows for cheerful giving in his opinion.

In looking at the various explanations of the methods of collection, it appears some are focused on making sure no one believes the church is only after money (like I was), and others are concerned with the amount collected. Rarely do we start looking at the method of collection to identify what may be important theologically. This project has forced me to consider God above every other motive. If some believe the Church is only concerned with money, we must invest in educating them about the importance of giving as an expression of a personal relationship with God. For others who will conclude the element of giving has been removed from the worship service, they too must be educated to understand the liberty that God wants everyone to have in their relationship with God.

This project contributed to my growth in that it challenged me to evaluate our giving practices and how we had implemented the biblical teaching. This project contributed to the growth of our church in that it informed us of the biblical teaching and motivated us to look at giving as an expression of worship. Disciples need to plan for giving so that there is no need for prompting to inspire giving. In an effort to create an atmosphere of liberty in giving, tithing may be a restrictive principle that is not applicable in a monetary system.

¹² Dennis Sawyer, “Why We Stopped Passing The Offering Plate,” *What We Believe*, accessed May 15, 2013, <http://www.graceb3.org/aboutus/believe/why-we-stopped-passing-the-offering-plate>.

My giving experience in worship has been filled with misinformation and coercion. The Christian community must speak for God to inform the vulnerable and gullible to protect them from the vultures whose only intention is to get their money. Many have totally abandoned participating in the giving event of worship because the information given has little to do with worship and everything to do with expenses and possessions. The Christian Church has become numb to worship being an act of love to and for our loving God. Giving has nothing to do with expenses, but this has never been expressed any other way in my experience.

Before I became a Pastor, I had been conditioned to give out of obligation either based on tithing or the instructions of the person generating the offering. Giving became the time in worship that I started to dread. I did not anticipate it or appreciate it. I just wanted it to be over, but it consumed so much of the worship time that I started to believe it was the only reason we needed to come together. When I became Pastor and responsible for the worship flow, I was intent on setting the people free from the bondage of giving. Over the past twenty years, I have progressively and aggressively moved to combat the process of giving in worship without evaluating the impact of these actions. This project was my opportunity to evaluate what God wants according to the Bible and to restore giving to its place in worship while maintaining the liberty that God requires. For our worship to be biblically based, I had to take this journey bringing these two vital principles together: giving and liberty.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Literature Review

The literature on giving as an element of worship varies from waving envelopes in order to express excitement to eliminating giving as a part of the worship service. Most of the traditional literature seems to focus on the need for money in the church instead of on the heart of the believer to use all available elements of worship to express love and thanks to God as Creator, Redeemer, and Father.

In *Celebrating the Offering*, Melvin and James Amerson seek to revitalize the spirit of generosity by offering simple ways to incorporate the offering into the deepest fibers of the worship experience. Their insights are very practical, seeking to make the offering a literal celebration that allows everyone to acknowledge that everything comes from and by God. They address the following topics: (1) The Offering in the Old Testament, (2) The Offering in the New Testament, (3) Setting the Tone for Celebrating the Offering, (4) The Offering Today, (5) Clergy's Role in Celebrating the Offering, (6) Laity's Role in Celebrating the Offering, and (7) Children and Youth Celebrating the Offering.

While this work is well intended, it ignores the intent of worship giving in place of a cosmetic, contrived corporate activity that may generate larger amounts. Will it birth a sincere worship expression to God? They have focused more on existing precedents than to examine the subject of giving in scripture. Addressing the subject of electronic giving, the Amersons suggest: "Further, encourage all members to place a five or ten dollar bill in the offering plate on the Sundays they are not giving electronically. This gives excellent witness and example to children and youth on giving as an act of worship,

as well as helping develop the next generation of generous givers.”¹³ This line of thinking isolates worship to what is done in the church building. The question can be raised: Is it necessary to give monetarily in every worship service? Identifying an amount is removing the givers’ opportunity to determine an expression (amount) that represents their relationship with God. They continue: “The offering is still an awesome act of worship unto the Lord. The presentation of God’s tithes and offerings should be a time of great celebration. Giving in response to God’s grace is cause for all Christians to give enthusiastically and cheerfully.”¹⁴ While I agree with the concept they present, the Amersons continue by offering a number of suggestions to enhance the celebration of the offering by including a mention of giving in every element of the worship service including, but not limited to, a sermonette at least once or twice a quarter to encourage the congregation to maintain reverence in giving.¹⁵

In *Plain Talk about Churches and Money*, Hoge, McNamara, and Zech take a very different approach to the act of giving. They admit that this book was not produced from a theological perspective but from a psychological perspective. In this, they have offered many good insights into why people give and how churches address giving and stewardship. The book is based on surveying 600 churches and 11,000 laypersons. This work presents questions like: (1) Why are pastors uneasy about money? (2) How do other churches approach financial stewardship? And, (3) Doesn’t stewardship really boil down to fundraising?

¹³ Melvin Amerson and James Amerson, *Celebrating The Offering* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007), 41.

¹⁴ Amerson and Amerson, *Celebrating The Offering*, 41.

¹⁵ Amerson and Amerson, *Celebrating The Offering*, 42-59.

The other prevailing question in this work is: What motivates people to give? This analysis focused on motives over faith based on the theoretical work of Kenneth Boulding. In addressing the motives of giving, Hoge, McNamara, and Zech state: “Most voluntary gift giving is not really gift giving at all. The money is given in order to *obtain* something the giver wants. Put differently, a gift giver is usually hoping to buy something.”¹⁶ They offer four motives for Church giving: (1) reciprocity with social group, (2) reciprocity with God, (3) giving to the extensions of the self, and (4) thankfulness. It is very displeasing for me to agree with Hoge, McNamara, and Zech. The focus and drive for worship giving has become giving in order to get. The giver is trying to buy something. These findings do not lead to an environment or attitude of worship. As they discussed the tension between stewardship and fund raising, I could not help concluding that the church has no choice but to return to the New Testament biblical model of spirit-led giving. All of the gimmicks and forms have to be removed in order to allow the giver to seek sincerely guidance from the Holy Spirit for what to give.

Hoge, McNamara, and Zech also discuss the need for money in order to meet expenses and to fund ministry work. Is the church focused on money because of the motives of the giver or the need for money to execute ministry? Church leaders must accept that God is the provider. It is God’s church, so let us learn to let God address the needs. This will allow the giver room and time to learn how to give based on a relationship with God instead of based on a self-fulfilling motive. Giving is an opportunity to express love and thanksgiving to God. Giving is an act of worship, just like singing or praying. If the leaders are more concerned about having the money than

¹⁶ Dean Hoge and Patrick McNamara and Charles Zeck, *Plain Talk about Churches and Money* (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 1997), 37.

developing worship givers, then this type of giving cycle will not be broken. The motives of the giver will always support or demand that the church uses these motives in order to justify the methods used in worship to collect and/or generate money.

Many of the believers in BHI struggle with wanting to honor the word of God and embrace the grace that Jesus makes available. Prince Emanuel Burroughs presents this same struggle in *The Grace of Giving*. This work is based on 2 Corinthians 8-9, as Burroughs takes a clear look at how Paul associates grace with giving. He also supports tithing as an applicable form of giving. It was very interesting to see how he used the Old Testament and the New Testament information we have from Jesus and Paul. This is the very balance that I had attempted to teach and maintain in BHI. Burroughs says:

Giving is a grace. Paul puts it in the same class with other graces, such as faith, knowledge, and love. Graces such as these cannot be accurately or finally measured. It was here that the Scribes of our Lord's day made their fatal mistake. In their effort to apply mechanical tests and to use hard and fast standards, they missed the weightier matters and received the scathing denunciation of Jesus. It is needless to say that we are to be at pains to avoid their error.¹⁷

Burroughs recognizes that the grace of giving is based on the liberty to offer to God, but later in the book, he defends the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament Church, stating the Old Testament was the only Bible Jesus and Paul had. Burroughs says:

The law of the tithe was deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. It was accepted and undoubtedly quite generally obeyed. In many instances, as we have pointed out, it was over-emphasized. Perhaps we would better say that the letter of the law was obeyed while its spirit was neglected. As we have seen, the principle which the law was designed to present and on which the law was based was ignored and forgotten.¹⁸

¹⁷ Prince Emanuel Burroughs, *The Grace of Giving* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1934), 31.

¹⁸ Burroughs, *The Grace of Giving*, 75.

Burroughs concludes that giving is a grace when it is not to address expenses or fill depleted church treasuries.

Frank Viola and George Barna take a broad view of the origins of some Christian practices in *Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of our Church Practices*. In chapter 8, they address Tithing and Clergy Salaries: Sore Spots on the Wallet. They address the errant use of Malachi 3 and the misapplication of tithing to the New Testament Church. Viola and Barna explain: “God commanded Israel to give 23.3 percent of their income every year, not 10 percent. These tithes consisted of the produce of the land—which included the seed of the land, the fruit of the land, and the herd or the flock. It was the product of the land, not money.”¹⁹ This point is a significant one in understanding biblical giving. First, does giving ten percent of income equate to ten percent of the herd or flock? The fruit and grain died every year, so it was easy to determine a tenth of this, but the herd or flock generally grew so for those who want to make tithing applicable should the tenth be given based on what we carry over to the next year including savings and investments? Second, the festivals, which were supported by the tithe, were eliminated at the resurrection; further, we have been instructed not to sacrifice animals anymore because Jesus the Christ died to atone for our sin. How then can we maintain the system of tithing in this time of grace? Viola and Barna conclude: “With the death of Jesus, all ceremonial codes that belonged to the Jews were nailed to Christ’s cross and buried, never to be used again to condemn us. For this reason, we never see Christians tithing in

¹⁹ Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of our Church Practices* (Carol Stream: BarnaBooks, 2008), 173.

the New Testament, just as we don't see them sacrificing goats and bulls to cover their sins."²⁰

Viola and Barna turn their attention to what giving should be in the New Testament Church by stating, "Tithing belonged exclusively to Israel under the Law, when it comes to financial stewardship, we see the first-century Christians giving cheerfully according to their ability—not dutifully out of a command. Giving in the early church was voluntary. Those who benefited from it were the poor, orphans, widows, sick, prisoners, and strangers."²¹ The typical approach to worship giving has very little to do with God or God's plans. The focus must be returned to giving as a reflection of love for God instead of obligation to the Church. Giving based on love is worship, giving based on obligation is not.

In order to evaluate giving as an element of worship, it is essential to have a clear understanding of what worship is. Stake defines worship as: "... ascribing worth to God. What we do in worship represents an awareness of the relationship between ourselves and God. So we worship God, affirming our faith in God as the ultimate value in life."²² Worship is corporate and private. The corporate setting reinforces our private relationship. It also serves to allow each of us to learn from observation. Imitation is a component of learning; therefore, it is necessary for people to be able to observe the expressions of a relationship with God in order to understand and develop their own expressions. Creation concluded with a Sabbath, and then a primary element of the next

²⁰ Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, 173.

²¹ Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, 174.

²² Donald Wilson Stake, *The ABCs of Worship: A Concise Dictionary* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 187-188.

two stories is sacrifice. Moreover, God sacrifices an animal in order to cover naked humankind. Then Cain and Abel bring offerings to God. There is no instruction for them to do this. It appears they wanted to give to the Creator. With the absence of guidelines, God accepted one and rejected the other. This can lead us to believe that God does not desire to tell us how to express love and appreciation but will not just accept anything that we bring as an offering. Our offerings to God must be a sacrifice according to God's knowledge of our situation. We do not get to determine what is sacrificial; God does this.

Biblical Rationale

There are many scriptures used to distort the concept of giving in the context of worship; however, I will focus on three. A tradition has been built on the misapplication of Leviticus 27:30-33, Deuteronomy 14:22-29, and Malachi 3. In order to determine how giving can be an integral part of worship, we must first address the misinformation communicated in the Christian Church.

Leviticus 27:30-33 states:

All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the LORD's; they are holy to the LORD. If persons wish to redeem any of their tithes, they must add one-fifth to them. All tithes of herd and flock, every tenth one that passes under the shepherd's staff, shall be holy to the LORD. Let no one inquire whether it is good or bad, or make substitution for it; if one makes substitution for it, then both it and the substitute shall be holy and cannot be redeemed. NRSV²³

Leviticus 27 contains instructions on how to "redeem" the tithe. This chapter begins with redeeming human beings that have been given as a tithe. We do not sacrifice humans or any of the animals, or produce discussed in this chapter. Based on vv. 30-33, some teach

²³ Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 162 OT.

that a twenty percent penalty is to be paid when you miss paying a tithe. There are various calculations for how this twenty percent is to be determined. Within the context, it is very easy to understand this process, but in order to do so we must understand what is meant by redeem.

Redeeming the tithe means that the giver wants the item back. Within this chapter, almost everything given can be redeemed, meaning it will not be sacrificed to God, and it will be returned to the giver. In vv. 30-33, the giver has to pay the value of the produce plus a twenty percent penalty in order to redeem their tithe. It is interesting that God placed in the law that the giver could get their tithe back. It appears that God wanted giving to be a freewill experience and not an obligation; however, this is not how the tithe is predominantly presented today.

Addressing Leviticus 27:32-33, Jacob Milgrom determines that the animal tithe was never intended to be a universal mandate on all of Israel. Milgrom notes: “That the other law codes omit it, as does Nehemiah, only indicates that the animal tithe was a theoretical system, which may have been practiced *voluntarily* by well-to-do ranchers, but never became a universal and annual mandatory obligation followed by all of Israel.”²⁴

Lloyd Bailey in *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary* takes a different perspective, focusing on the importance of not making a vow based on a situation. Vows should be kept and there is a requirement of leadership to understand the accountability that comes along with managing the vows that have been given. Bailey observes, “At the same time, modern congregational and denominational leaders must earn the kind of respect and

²⁴ Jacob Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible: Leviticus 23-27*. Vol. 3B. (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 2398.

trust that the priests in ancient Israel apparently were accorded (in setting evaluations, etc.). Such trust is undermined when modern leaders evidence arrogant attitudes in accountability, accept excessive salaries, and ‘sell out’ traditional values in the pursuit of current (and often secular) trends. Sometimes, withholding financial support is the only weapon that the congregation has!”²⁵

Deuteronomy 14:22-29 states:

Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field. In the presence of the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose as a dwelling for his name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. But if, when the LORD your God has blessed you, the distance is so great that you are unable to transport it, because the place where the LORD your God will choose to set his name is too far away from you, then you may turn it into money. With the money secure in hand, go to the place that the LORD your God will choose; spend the money for whatever you wish—oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire. And you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your household rejoicing together. As for the Levites resident in your towns, do not neglect them, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you. Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake. NRSV²⁶

This text clearly makes provision for the Levites because they did not get an allotment of land since they are to be committed to God; however, there are two key points of this text that are overlooked in the application of giving in the Church. Vv. 22-27 plainly instructs the giver to have a celebration with the tithe as thanksgiving to God. This portion of the tithe is not for the priest or the house of God; it is for the giver. The only way this can be

²⁵ Lloyd R Bailey, *Leviticus - Numbers* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 324.

²⁶ Metzger and Murphy, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 237-238 OT.

applied to the church today is for there to be an annual celebration with the tithes that have been given. In addition, these tithes were given annually based on the harvest. Most have assumed this to refer to every payday in today's church. If this is the case, the celebration should be every payday. This text is further misapplied in regards to the provisions for the priest. God does instruct Israel to provide for the Levites because they did not get an allotment of land, but according to this text, the portion for the Levites was given every three years, again based on the harvest. Even if we accept the most liberal interpretation of this text, I cannot see how we can apply these instructions to the practice of tithing today.

The joy and excitement of giving is generally overlooked in order to enforce the obligation of giving. The Church loses the awesome intention of giving that may be the essence of this text that can be transported into every worship setting. Mark Biddle states:

Obviously, Deuteronomy does not understand 'tithing' as a transfer of goods to YHWH, neither in an attempt to appease him for one's sins, nor even as a gift to the temple treasury to finance the temple budget. Contrary to popular Christian understanding, the Old Testament concept of tithes, offerings, and sacrifices has virtually nothing to do with appeasing the deity for one's sins. Nor was ancient Israel's religion as bureaucratic as even the most decentralized modern Protestant denomination. What need has YHWH of the bounty he has bestowed as a blessing? Instead, after a symbolic portion has been burnt on the altar, the worshipper, together with all his household and certain invited guests, consumes the tithe in a festive and joyful celebration of YHWH's benevolence. In this interpretation, Sabbath transcends mere cessation of labor and far exceeds a mere passivity. Sabbath is the celebration of the fruits of one's labor and YHWH's blessing. Sabbath means rejoicing!²⁷

Malachi 3:8-10 states:

Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, 'How are we robbing you?' In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD

²⁷ Mark E Biddle, *Deuteronomy* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2003), 254.

of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. NRSV ²⁸

This is the premiere tithing text. People are led to believe they are robbing God if they do not tithe. Giving is not an element of worship if the act is an obligation. Applying Malachi 3 starting in v. 8 is the first flaw of many. Reading the entire context will show that God has instructed the people to return and then presents the question that is on their mind, how shall we return? In v. 8, God informs the priests how to begin to return to a righteous relationship by reestablishing the practices they were given in the law. These very practices are not applicable to the New Testament Church.

The next mistake is the interpretation of storehouse as the church. The issue in the book of Malachi is that the priest, not the people, accepted animals that God had instructed them to reject. The people are not on trial here; the priests are. By only presenting vv. 8-10, people have been convinced that God will bless them if they tithe. God wants their hearts; the priests want the animals because this is their provision. God wanted the priest to trust God and not the people. The storehouse was the place in each city where the tithe was stored for the priest in the city. The Temple was not designed to be a storehouse.

Mark 12:38-44 is generally used to teach believers to give based on the widow who gave everything she had. Given in the context of Jesus' condemnation of the religious leaders; however, Jesus is speaking about the scribes who "devour widows' houses," then Jesus points out a widow not just a poor person.²⁹ The intent here could be

²⁸ Metzger and Murphy, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1236 OT.

²⁹ Bob Lotich, "The Story of the Widow's Mite," Christian Personal Finance, accessed February 18, 2013. <http://christianpf.com/the-story-of-the-widows-mite>.

to show how the church should have been caring for her instead of receiving her last. The New Testament basis for giving is care for the community of believers.

The Apostles were chosen to lead believers back into relationship with God. Jesus invested in teaching them so that they could reform the church based on the grace that the Father has given through Jesus the Christ. In communion with the Holy Spirit, their sole responsibility was the implementation of the teachings of Jesus to reestablish a people of God. This people would not be based on ethnic origin but simply a commitment to God through Jesus led by the Holy Spirit.

The book of The Acts of the Apostles is a partial record of how the Holy Spirit led them to implement the teachings of Jesus. The Book of Acts offers us a perspective of how they perceived Jesus' teaching on giving because of the things they did. Within the first seven chapters of Acts, we have four distinct pieces of information to assist us with understanding giving to God in worship.

The first occurrences of the Apostles' understanding of giving are found in Acts 2:43-47 and Acts 4:32-37. In both texts, we are informed that the Disciples sold their possessions and held all things in common. They used these resources to care for everyone in the community of believers. This was not a requirement. These texts tell us this was done when led by the Holy Spirit. God desires believers to seek for their instructions on giving from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God knows God's will and plan for us so in order to know what God desires to receive from us we must be informed by the Holy Spirit. There are two lessons on giving here: (1) believers are to give based on the instruction of the Holy Spirit and love they have for God. (2) The primary purpose of our offering is to care for the community of believers.

Immediately, following the introduction of Barnabas in Acts 4:32-37 as a man would give everything and laid the proceeds at the Apostles' feet, we have the third occurrence of giving in Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-5 who misrepresented their gift. Laying the proceeds at their feet was to inform the Apostles' he was now dependent on the community resources for his provisions. One of the central messages of the first seven chapters of the Book of Acts is the importance of the community of believers in the sacrifices that are made for the community. The opening section of Acts 5 is to emphasize the importance of integrity in giving. The information about Barnabas is needed so that we understand the issue that Ananias and Sapphira created in their giving. In both events land was sold and the proceeds were laid at the feet of the Apostles. None of the Apostles inquired about Barnabas' offering because he had given everything. We learn the issue that Ananias and Sapphira created by the inquiry Peter has with them separately. They did not have to give everything; however, the offering was presented in a fashion that intended to give this impression. They could have given any portion of the proceeds, but Peter knew they had not given it all. This is to teach us that we are not to misrepresent being led by the Holy Spirit and that it is important to maintain integrity in the church. Ananias and Sapphira died, this signals how significant truth is among believers.

The fourth occurrence of giving information is found in Acts 6 as the Apostles are informed of an issue with the daily distribution of food for the widows. The Greek widows are not receiving the same share in the food distribution. This text offers a transition to the expansion of the application of the Gospel to all people not just Jews, but for this purpose we will focus on what we are taught about giving. In discussing the Acts 2 and 4 texts, I mentioned that our offerings are to take care of the community of

believers. The Apostles had to be good stewards in order to have enough to feed everyone, and the Disciples had to be committed and focused to share the Gospel so that the Holy Spirit could impact people to surrender and give so the community would have provisions. Trust was imperative in the community of believers so the Apostles instructed the Disciples to choose seven people of good character, wisdom and led by the Holy Spirit to manage the distribution of food to the widows. One of the chief concerns and complaints related to giving is that leaders and the people handling the money cannot be trusted. People struggle with being obedient to the Holy Spirit in giving because they do not trust the people making the decisions. If the church is going to get back to giving freely based on the instruction of the Holy Spirit integrity must be restored in leadership as it relates to money management and reporting. What would happen if leaders were selected based on this criterion: good character, wisdom and led by the Holy Spirit? Would we be able to find seven, especially to manage the financial resources?

In 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul addresses the church about a pledge offering to assist the church in Jerusalem. Some in the Corinthian Church felt that Paul wanted the money for himself, so they were hesitant to complete the offering. The wording and approach that Paul uses to address their concerns offer a framework for addressing skeptical people. Some of the disciples of BHI have been exploited and misinformed about giving, so it is important for us to bring healing while upholding biblical truth. Paul's situation offers a clear parallel. In 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul continues to use the term grace.

Paul's conversation with the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 8-9 is a direct communication about giving. In addition to the information in Acts 1-6, we can gather an understanding of the concept of giving in the New Testament Church. In her commentary on 2 Corinthians, Mitzi Minor clarifies the context so that giving is not seen as a means to

get more from God or an obligation that believers have no choice. The balance Paul offers to the Corinthians is the prototype for how church leaders should approach giving. Paul defines giving as a grace. Minor says, “The rhetoric of grace can be tricky. It can easily sound like *quid pro quo*—God did this so the Corinthians ought to respond thusly. But grace is not about *quid pro quo*. In addition, Paul’s words might be construed as justifying a self-centered perspective on giving: if the Corinthians give a lot, then God will bless them more. Their focus then would not be on what they give but on what *they get* from giving.”³⁰ Our giving is not for our benefit; it is to express our relationship with God in love and thanksgiving.” Minor continues, “But any attempt to read Paul’s words as ‘give more to get more’ is undone by the end of the verse (9:8): the result of God’s grace abounding to the Corinthians is that they will then abound in all good work. An authentic awareness and reception of grace leads to greater graciousness, never to self-centeredness. For Paul, God’s grace is the source of our sufficiency, and our sufficiency enables us to be glad givers.”³¹

1 Peter 2:9 calls the community of believers a priesthood. In the Old Testament, one purpose for giving was care for the priest by expanding the priesthood to all believers. Peter is instructing the community to provide for one another so that the work of ministry is their primary focus. This would explain the believers being led by the Spirit to share all things in common. Giving is simply the worshippers’ way of expressing the strength of their relationship with God through Jesus the Christ. To assign any other purpose to giving is to diminish this essential expression of worship.

³⁰ Mitzi L Minor, *2 Corinthians* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2009), 175.

³¹ Minor, *2 Corinthians*, 175.

The application of stewardship was not in the scope of this project; therefore, I will only make brief mention of it. Giving is founded or birthed from sound stewardship. Givers have been manipulated to respond to the fallacy that God wants us to give whether we have it or not. This is not the concept that Jesus presented. Management (stewardship) is what Jesus taught.³² A sound giving strategy must include a commitment to stewardship.

A Life of Worship

The foundation of giving, according to Talmage Williams, is based on a committed relationship with God. Giving grows out of who we are. Until I have surrendered myself to God's sovereign Lordship giving will always be a struggle. Before I can give of my material possessions, I must give God me. A life of worship begins with allowing God to be Lord over my life. There are two profound biblical examples that can aid us in understanding giving as a response or display of our commitment to God.

In Judges 6 Israel is being oppressed by Midian, the angel of the Lord comes to Gideon to inform him that he will deliver Israel from this oppression. Gideon views himself as the weakest person in the weakest tribe, the weakest of the weak. The angel of the Lord responds I will be with you, and you will strike down the Midianites, every one of them (v. 16). What Gideon says and does next defines his acceptance of this assignment and his alignment with the sovereign Lord. V. 18 says, Do not depart from here until I have come to you, and bring out my present (gift or offering), and set it before you. Gideon's personal or internal sacrifice is expressed in giving this present to God. God does not ask for a present, nor does God refuse the present. Gideon wants God to

³² See The Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30.

have this present even though he is going to need more reassuring in order to execute this commission. Gideon is not ready for the commission but he is willing to display his commitment and love to God through giving. In the process of giving himself Gideon knew that he had to include open expressions of love through the possessions he has been given by God.

God has just spoken who Gideon was according to God's plan. This plan looked very foreign to Gideon and he struggles with this view and understanding of who he is, but if he is willing to trust God to do what Gideon cannot see he is going to have to start surrendering to this new understanding as a warrior instead of the weakest of the weak. Many Christians have made verbal commitments but do not seek to understand the correlation between giving myself and releasing possessions. The release of possessions to God is a logical action following the release of self to God but just as the release of self has to be in response to God not people so also must be the release of possessions. It cannot be requested or prompted it must be a natural outpouring of love to God.

God reveals to Gideon that the issue is not that God has left Israel (v. 13) but that Israel has left God. Next Gideon is instructed to destroy the symbols of idolatry, an altar to Baal and sacred poles that the nation and his Dad have embraced. Before God will return to provide for them as Father the commitment and love for other gods must be dealt with. Gideon had to display to God that nothing was held back when he accepted God's commission. Giving informs God of the internal commitment that has been made and the acceptance of God's plan. When material possessions are withheld from expressing love to God we are telling God you can have some of me but not all of me. Giving informs God that every aspect of me is surrendered to God's sovereign Lordship.

1 Kings 19:19-21 tells us Elisha sacrificed twelve yoke of oxen when Elijah threw the mantle on him. Why did Elisha return to sacrifice twelve yoke of oxen that did not belong to him? Just like Gideon this is an expression of acceptance of his calling, but also it is realigning his allegiance. Elisha knew how to respect and serve his Dad but this relationship had to be realigned after his commitment to God, so sacrificing the twelve yoke of oxen was to let God and his family know that his first allegiance is to God. In developing a life of worship we must be clear, internally and externally, on who our allegiance is to, God or the earth. Giving remains one of the most powerful tools we have to display our commitment and allegiance to God. This is why in v. 20 Elijah says what have I done to you. Elisha is seeking permission from Elijah, but he must be committed to God not man. The sacrifice was to establish Elisha's commitment to God's calling not Elijah's mantle.

The question must now be; do we know who and whose we are? Giving grows out of who we are so if we do not fully know who or whose we are then we will struggle to understand the importance of giving. Has my life been fully or partially purchased by the blood of Christ? Giving is not the sole way to express that my life is realigned with God as the head, but it is one of the ways that a life commitment can be displayed. Giving cannot be eliminated as an expression or it will establish a stronghold in our growth process with God and our calling.

Critique of Contemporary Perspective

With the growing focus on "Prosperity," believers are confronted with an understanding that God responds to giving (seed sowing). Paul's position on giving was that God gives seed to the sower for sowing (2 Corinthians 9:10). Paul is not saying that believers should give in order to get. Paul is saying that God will give to those who have

a heart to give to God. Receiving is based on a willingness to give, not a willingness to get more. As Cathleen Falsani writes, in a *Washington Post* article entitled, “The Worst Ideas of the Decade: The Prosperity Gospel:”

Few theological ideas ring more dissonant with the harmony of orthodox Christianity than a focus on storing up treasures on Earth as a primary goal of faithful living. The gospel of prosperity turns Christianity into a vapid bless-me club, with a doctrine that amounts to little more than spiritual magical thinking: If you pray the right way, God will make you rich.

But if you're not rich, then what? Are the poor cursed by God because of their unfaithfulness? And if God were so concerned about 401(k)s and Mercedes, why would God's son have been born into poverty?

Nowhere has the prosperity gospel flourished more than among the poor and the working class. Told that wealth is a sign of God's grace and favor, followers strive for trappings of luxury they can little afford in an effort to prove that they are blessed spiritually.³³

This invasion of materialism has allowed the church to benefit from the selfishness and greed of people. If you give and God does not send increase, then you must be out of God's will in some way, usually this means that you did not give enough. This “theology” has created a major shift in the focus of some Christians. Jesus and Paul were cultivating generosity in the community of believers; now the focus is on the person anointed to bring increase for the minister. I have heard quite a few ministers explain that Jesus was rich; therefore, He wants us to be rich.

Theological Appropriateness

According to Millard J. Erickson in *Christian Theology*—theology is “that discipline which strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian

³³ Cathleen Falsani, “The Worst Ideas of the Decade: The Prosperity Gospel,” accessed January 17, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/opinions/outlook/worst-ideas/prosperity-gospel.html>.

faith, based primarily upon the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life.”³⁴

Theological appropriateness is pivotal to Incorporating Giving as an Integral Part of Worship, in that, it unifies the principles of this project with the historical understanding of the relationship between God and humankind in the area of giving as an expression of worship. In light of the fact that some will dismiss this question and/or biblical interpretation because of customary practices of the church theological appropriateness demonstrates the very reason for and importance of this question to the Christian Church. In my opinion, dismissing or avoiding this question would be to dismiss or avoid God. Erickson clarifies that theology is biblical, systematic, and must be contemporary while also relating to the issues of general culture and learning. Bibliology (the study of the Bible) is the foundation of theological appropriateness; however, since biblical information has been provided in previous sections, I will simply state that the Bible is the source document for Christian faith and relationship with God; therefore, any reasonably sound exegesis of scripture should be implemented by the church if we agree with the doctrine of bibliology.

Christology

The usual methods of giving in worship and the scripture interpretations used to support these methods may have believers misunderstanding the life and ministry of Jesus. Consider the application of Malachi 3:8-10 to motivate giving in worship. V. 9 says, “You are curse with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you!” Some have concluded if tithes and offerings are not given in worship the non-giver is

³⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*: Unabridged One-Volume Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 21.

cursed? How long is the curse? Why does the scripture say the whole nation but this is applied to individuals? There is a list of questions that can be asked of this text but let us look at this in the context of Christ. As the savior and redeemer of humankind Christology teaches the death of Jesus covered the debt of sin, therefore if we were cursed salvation freed us from the curse. The concept of sacrifice in offerings is to love and obey God. Jesus is the sacrifice that pleases God so a relationship with God through Jesus Christ is what pleases God. This does not mean that we should not give because Jesus paid it all, but it does mean that my giving is liberated from the Law. Now I have the opportunity to appreciate God just as Abram and Jacob did when they decided what they would give without a legal standard. In Luke 4:16-20, Jesus read Isaiah 61 to announce there will be an exchange of negative for positive, or in other words liberty instead of captivity. When giving in worship becomes bondage or something we feel obligated or compelled to do we have denied the power of Jesus' resurrection. Luke 4:18 says 'release' in the NRSV and 'liberty' in the KJV. All of worship is to be in an atmosphere of liberty or to allow the worshippers to become liberated; this is the ministry of Christ, it is inappropriate to create an environment or practice of bondage in an effort to ensure the expenses are adequately addressed. The Church must be willing to ask if the congregation considers the methods of expressing giving in worship oppressive.

Pneumatology

In the study of the Holy Spirit, we learn that God sent The Spirit to keep us in the relationship that Jesus restored because in the flesh we are not willing to pursue God as our sole priority. The most basic and agreed upon understanding of the Holy Spirit is to guide or keep in the will of God. Every believer should be striving to be led by the Holy Spirit, but let us apply this to the Church. Do leaders rely on the Holy Spirit to provide

for the plans that are attributed to God or do they establish an environment of guilt and obligation in order to persuade people to give? On the other hand, are the people just giving to satisfy leadership or are we willing to seek the Holy Spirit to be led to give according to what God desires? At times it seems the Holy Spirit has been reduced to the assistant in a magic trick as spiritual language is being invoked in order to achieve or receive what we want. The Spirit has not been sent into the earth to follow or obey us, we are to follow and obey him. Giving as an expression of worship can only be accomplished by allowing the Spirit to inform us of God's desire. Only God knows what has been planned and given to us so only the presence of God in the earth realm can inform us of what is expected of us from God. An appropriate application of Pneumatology can only result in pursuing an environment of giving that removes the standards and expectations of people for the liberty to follow the Holy Spirit to be willing to love God the way God desires to be loved.

Soteriology

Salvation is the result of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ; therefore, we must have a clear understanding of the impact of salvation in the life of the believer. Salvation impacts our giving, in that, our applications of some Old Testament scripture should be modified based on the atonement offered through Christ. It is clear that the sacrificial system was voided at the Cross. Jesus became the sacrifice for sin. Romans 3:22-26 says:

But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins

previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.³⁵

The application of Malachi 3:9 to giving in worship is interesting if Jesus is the atonement for all sin effective through faith. How can believers be curse with a curse if we have been freed through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? Additionally, Leviticus 27 makes reference to redeeming people that have been given as an offering. Is the Christian Church saying that Jesus paid it all except when we want or need money? It is not appropriate or good theology to utilize scripture or traditions out of context.

Jesus came to give liberty to the captive so if salvation is the vehicle by which freedom is granted to those who have faith in Jesus why would we make giving an obligation based on what the church needs? Giving must be an opportunity in worship to freely express my love and thanksgiving to God for the greatest gift ever given, Jesus the Christ. When giving is forced to be anything other than a free expression of love it is not worship. Salvation must be allowed to claim its full and complete application over the life of believers. This means that everyone must be allowed to love or not love God. Before we can discuss the merits of giving as a form of worship we must implement the opportunity to love God or not equally in the Christian worship setting. Only then will believers be able to understand and implement giving in order to worship God. If salvation freed us then giving must be freed also.

These three doctrines establish a clear foundation to approach the significance of giving as an expression of worship, in that, Christianity is based on God giving salvation to creation as an expression of love. Based on God's gift to creation believers should

³⁵ Metzger and Murphy, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 213 NT.

desire to give everything back to God, this can only be accomplished through surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Christology establishes freedom for believers, Pneumatology establishes the existence and importance of the Holy Spirit, and Soteriology establishes the forgiving grace of God that results in salvation to be a believer. Therefore, giving becomes a natural response to the grace of God that offers salvation to creation to be led by the Holy Spirit to give God what God desires, which is love and worship.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Detailed Project Description

Several months before the initial meeting with the Focus Group we announced that the project needed Focus Group participants. People were allowed to sign-up to indicate their interest in participating as part of the Focus Group. The list was used to schedule a meeting with all interested parties to inform them of their responsibility and my responsibility. At this point anyone that was willing to make the commitment to be a Focus Group participant was asked to sign a Covenant Agreement.³⁶ Twenty-Three people made a Covenant Agreement to participate in the Focus Group.

The Focus Group participants were sent status emails informing them of the progress of the proposal so that they would be reminded of the schedule. Two weeks before the Initial Session they were sent a final reminder email. In the Initial Session each participant randomly selected a number then was informed this number was to be used on all documents related to the project, their name was not to be used on anything. In addition, no email or text communications related to the documents were permissible so that there was no way to identify them with their responses.

There was a brief period for questions. Once everyone understood they completed the Pre-Project Survey Form³⁷ and were issued their Project Journal.³⁸ They were instructed to complete their first journal entry before the first lesson, which would be four days later.

³⁶ Appendix A.

³⁷ Appendix B.

³⁸ Appendix F.

The first journal entry was to record their experience with giving in worship. This entry had to be documented before the lessons started so that the information in the lessons would not influence the baseline information in the first journal entry. The participants received their Bible Study Book³⁹ on the first night of study. The Focus Group participants were asked if they had completed their first journal entry, but they were not informed that any participant that did not complete this first entry prior to the first Bible Study would be excluded from the Focus Group. The Bible Study was open to everyone.

The congregation was asked to complete a Pre-Survey for two reasons: first, to allow for a comparison between the Focus Group response to see if the Focus Group is a representative sample of the congregation, and secondly to compare to the results of the Post-Survey the congregation would take to identify how the information from the Bible Study may be informally communicated through the congregation. Two questions have been added to the Post-Project Survey Form⁴⁰ that were not included in the Pre-Project Survey Form⁴¹ to facilitate these comparisons.

The Pre-Survey (Focus Group)

The discoveries of the surveys were enlightening and informative. The Focus Group reflects the congregation of BHI (Male – 39%, Female – 61%).⁴² Ninety-two percent of the focus group is employed in some capacity. This is higher than the percentage in the congregation but should be helpful for the project. Generally, people

³⁹ Appendix E.

⁴⁰ Appendix C.

⁴¹ Appendix B.

⁴² Appendix H.

struggle with giving when they are unemployed. The educational composition of the Focus Group is reflective of the Charlotte population; seventy-eight percent of the Focus Group has some secondary education experience, of these thirteen percent have an Associate's Degree, twenty-six percent have a Bachelor's Degree, and thirteen percent have a Graduate or Professional Degree. The assumption is that with secondary education experience the Focus Group should be able to appreciate the logical. This could be offset by the high number of years of church experience. It is possible that the Focus Group has been extensively exposed to the traditional application of these scriptures that they may not be able to conceive a drastic change in the motives for giving. BHI has existed for twelve years therefore most of the Focus Group has more experience in other churches.

The Per Capita Personal Income for North Carolina in 2010 was \$35,638 while it was \$40,584 in the United States.⁴³ Sixty-six percent of the Focus Group has a household income over \$50,000. It is important to know the difference between disposable and discretionary income. Disposable income is: "The amount of money that households have available for spending and saving after income taxes have been accounted for."⁴⁴ Discretionary income is the percentage of income left after necessities. There are a number of different calculations used to determine discretionary income. As the article from INC, below, explains there is a correlation between age and discretionary income. The segment of people 50–60 years old should have the highest percentage of

⁴³ "Per Capita Personal Income By State," *Infoplease*, accessed December 10, 2013, <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0104652.html>.

⁴⁴ "Disposable Income," *Investopedia*, accessed December 10, 2013, <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/disposableincome.asp>.

discretionary income. This would mean they would have the largest percentage of income for giving. An excerpt from an article on Inc.com entitled “*Discretionary income*”:

Discretionary income is a widely used but imprecise definition of that portion of personal income not spent on actual or perceived necessities. Thus discretionary income also includes savings. Perhaps because the definition of "necessities" vary from person to person, the U.S. Census Bureau (which collects such data) and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS—which publishes the Consumer Expenditure Survey) no longer use the term, but the components from which it can be constructed are available.

Discretionary incomes of people in certain age groups are of particular value to business and marketing specialists. For example, those over the age of 50 have half of the total amount of discretionary income in their control, making the 50-plus age category the wealthiest group in the nation. This group also corners three-quarters of the bank deposits in the nation, and accounts for 80 percent of all savings accounts. In short, the "over 50s" have enormous financial clout. Similarly, teenage and young adult consumers have considerable sums of discretionary income—and are thus highly valued by companies—because they are more likely to have their living costs absorbed by other individuals (typically parents) and they are less likely to be in a position where they have to devote resources to support a family.⁴⁵

Of the twelve people that are in the age range 45–65 years old, ten of them have a household income in the range of \$50,000–\$99,999. The highest income percentage of the focus group is in the age range that should have the highest percentage of discretionary income (43%). This would mean that they would have the most money to access and the highest percentage to give. This should make them most likely to gravitate towards giving in an environment of liberty.⁴⁶

Seventy percent of the focus group sees a direct correlation between church attendance and worship. This same percentage also has a direct relationship between giving and worship, but the percentage drops to fifty-seven percent when asked if tithing

⁴⁵ “Discretionary Income,” *Inc.*, accessed December 10, 2013, <http://www.inc.com/encyclopedia/discretionary-income.html>.

⁴⁶ Appendix G.

should be a required element of worship. While fifty-seven percent is a strong percentage, it is interesting that thirteen percent may not see tithing as a form of worship. It is possible that monetary giving has been associated with the expenses of church and ministry instead of an expression of worship. Lloyd Bailey, in *Leviticus – Number Commentary*,⁴⁷ alludes to the current reality that church leaders are not focused on God being worshipped or celebrated in our giving, excessive salaries, and even secular standards have infiltrated the worship at the time of giving. This percentage decrease of thirteen percent could be an indicator that these participants want to see giving addressed as solely an expression of worship.

Sixty-five percent of the focus group believes their giving is based on the Bible, and fifty-seven percent believe tithing should be a required element of worship. This could explain the difficulty the Focus Group had with the information. Thirty-five percent state that they used the tithe concept to determine their giving. I will assume that those who make this determination based on earnings, gross, and net are referring to the tithe concept also, this means at the beginning of this project fifty-seven percent also state they are tithing. This matches the percentage that believes tithing should be required. This leaves a very high percentage that is giving based on means, seventeen percent. The remaining participants used prayer, or the Bible, and two (nine percent) did not respond to this question. The diversity in these responses confirms there is a misunderstanding of giving as an expression of worship and that love many not be a consideration in the execution of giving. Thirteen percent based this decision on prayer while thirteen percent

⁴⁷ Lloyd R Bailey, *Leviticus - Numbers* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 324.

(finances plus what I have left after bills) are giving based on what they have after other expenses.

Reviewing how the Focus Group participants perceive themselves personally, as worshipers who understand what they believe God expects, the responses indicate that most participants do not believe they are meeting the expectations of God, which was expected. The fourth range (Group – Self Motivated) was an intentional change in the flow of the question to see if the respondents would recognize that group influence might keep us from a true expression of love and worship to God. The distinct shift in the responses to this range shows the participants recognized or, at least, struggled with identifying themselves as group motivated. Worship is intended to be a group activity, but the motivation that produces worship must be self-motivated. While we may need to imitate in order to learn, we must pursue a personal relationship and expression of this relationship.

Every Focus Group participant, except one, believes that God definitely wants him or her to be generous, joyous, and responsible. The one responded almost, so it can be concluded, believe that God wants believers to be generous, joyous, and responsible. Notice that when it comes to Group – Self Motivation, ten of the participants move away from this definite position, with six of these shifting to God wanting them to be definitely self-motivated.

The overwhelming majority of the Focus Group perceives themselves as almost or definitely generous, joyous, and responsible in their personal life; however, when the context changes to worship the confidence decreases. This would support an assumption of inadequacy as we approach God and the things of God. In this age of grace and forgiveness, how is it that such a prevailing number of participants are confident of what

God wants from them in the areas of generosity, joy, and responsibility, but do not perceive themselves as being allowed to obtain these standards through grace and forgiveness. This perception can affect how they understand and execute giving. If I see myself as inadequate, then I may see my gift as inadequate. It is my hope that they will learn that God does not want us to give what we do not have, God wants us to give based on what we have. The Church struggles with forgiveness just as the Disciples did in Luke 17, but if believers cannot forgive how can we comprehend God's desire to forgive each of us.

The Pre-Survey (Control Group)

The Control Group is comprised of people attending worship who are not part of the Focus Group. The Control Group is used to compare the responses of the Focus Group to those that will not feel any direct responsibility to this project, which may be present in the Focus Group. The Control Group will also offer a baseline to establish the impact the Bible Study has on the Focus Group and if the Focus Group has shared the material or experience with people in the congregation who are not part of the Focus Group. In order for the information to be effectively disseminated through the congregation, it will be important for the Focus Group to communicate with others. To initiate and maintain a cultural change in how giving is perceived it will be necessary for a positive message to be communicated from the Focus Group to the rest of the congregation.

The Control Group appeared to be willing to respond openly to the questions. In response to Question 9 – Are you a biblical giver, fifty-four percent of the Control Group said no. While this same sample, seventy-one percent believes that tithing should be a required element of worship. The system of perceived pastoral authority and correctness

did not affect the Control Group in Pre-Project Survey as it may have affected the Focus Group. The Control Group consistently reinforced the general situation of giving in worship. Tithing is required, but I do not do it. The Control Group understands what God desires, but they are not presenting what God desires. As in Question 10 – Is your giving a reflection of your relationship with God? Fifty-seven percent said no. In comparison, seventy percent of the Focus Group said yes.⁴⁸

Seventy-nine percent of the Control Group does not attend Bible Study (fifty percent said not often, and twenty-nine percent said they do not attend). Thirteen percent of the Focus Group did not attend Bible Study. This may suggest that because the project was implemented through Bible Study it attracted those willing to attend Bible Study for six weeks. This may have established a Focus Group that was restricted and not representative of the people that worship at BHI.

Seventy-five percent of the Control Group supported our method of giving as being an element of worship. This is in-line with the seventy-four percent of the Focus Group. This reflects an overwhelming appreciation for the method of giving that we used. It will be interesting to see what the Control Group responses are to the Post-Project Survey. In light of the fact that so many of the Control Group respondents do not attend Bible Study, I do not see how the information is going to get to them. If there is a change in the responses of the Control Group, it will be because of communication based on personal relationships with Focus Group participants.

⁴⁸ Appendix H.

The Post-Survey (Focus Group)

Twenty-three participants completed the pre-project survey; twenty-one participants completed the post-project survey. There are twenty-two journals, Participant 7 submitted a journal but did not submit the other post-project documents. Eighty-six percent of the Focus Group completing the post-project survey attended all six lessons. Since two participants did not complete these documents, this should be seventy-eight percent.⁴⁹

In order to determine if the project material was successful in assisting the participants to understand giving as an expression of love and to relieve the obligation from the giving opportunity in worship I will be looking for changes in the responses. I did not expect any noticeable changes in the demographic data over the six-week study. These questions were included to verify the participants would give the same information.

There is a significant change in the percentage of participants who use the tithing concept to determine what they will give. This percentage dropped from thirty-five percent in the pre-project survey to fourteen percent in the post-project survey. One participant responded based on a standard. If this standard were tithing, then this percentage would increase to nineteen percent, still a significant change from thirty-five percent. The responses to question nine on the post-project survey also display an effort by the participants to apply the language and information given during the study. A follow-up survey would be beneficial to see if the participants actually have invested in considering giving as a reflection of their love and thanksgiving to God.

⁴⁹ Appendix H.

Question 11 of the post-project survey clearly reveals the struggle the Focus Group had with the information presented. Fifty-seven percent believed tithing should be a required element of worship in the pre-project survey, and while this number did drop to forty-eight percent in the post-project survey, this drop is not significant. The responses to questions 9 and 11 display the conflict this information caused the Focus Group. While I believe they understood the information and its application to worship giving, I also believe old habits die hard, and there has been prolonged teaching on giving and the impact of that consistent stream of information is evidenced in the Journal Entry 1 responses (below). Question 9 shows willingness to expand the understanding of giving in worship, but question 11 shows that tithing needs to remain an option. This project was not intended to eliminate the tithing option; the intent was to remove the obligation or requirement to tithe. I must invest in clarifying this point and refrain from giving the impression that giving ten percent is not an option. It is an option just not out of obligation.

There was no significant change to the responses of biblical giving, sixty-five percent pre-project and sixty-seven percent post-project. The significant change is reflected in when asked is your giving a reflection of your relationship with God: pre-project seventy percent of the Focus Group felt their giving was a reflection of their relationship with God. This percentage dropped to fifty-seven percent post-project. In the journal entries, I learned a number of participants had not considered giving as a vehicle to express love to God. This shift may indicate that the participants will start to consider and plan to develop offerings that reflect their love for God.

There is another noteworthy shift in the results for the question on giving being required to worship God. Seventy percent believed that giving should be required to

worship in the pre-project survey, while ninety-five percent believed giving should be required to worship in the post-project survey. This was unexpected and striking, in that, it appears the information did assist the participants to have a better understanding of the importance of giving as an element of worship. This is very encouraging because they recognize post-project that giving is not to be taken lightly when approaching the worship experience. Giving is one of the most significant vehicles to express love, thanksgiving, and commitment to God.

I was anticipating a change in the self-evaluation section of the post-project survey but the results were roughly the same. The participants appear to need time to implement stewardship strategies to generate the resources to give; this will allow the participants to see if they will release the increase to God. The New Testament contrast of Barnabas with Ananias and Sapphira appears not to have had an immediate impact. There appears to be an impact reflected in the journal entries but not in the survey responses.

The Post-Survey (Control Group)

The Control Group sample size for the Post-Project Survey was significantly smaller than the sample size in the Pre-Project Survey. This is partial due to low attendance on the Sunday when we executed the Post-Project Survey, but I think that some people may have participated in the Pre-Project Control Group Survey did not see the need to complete what appeared to be the same survey again. In hindsight, it may have been more effective to use a different color paper to differentiate between the two survey documents. The information and instructions may not have been clearly understood so some people did not participate in the second Control Group survey. Sixty percent of this group stated this was their first survey, which supports the contention that some people may have opted not to take the survey again. Two of the respondents

attended some of the lessons, and one respondent said they were part of the Focus Group.⁵⁰

The responses to the Post-Project Survey were very similar to the Pre-Project Survey of the Control Group. Seventy-five percent still believe tithing should be required but eighty percent state that their giving is reflective of their relationship with God. The shift is in Church attendance, ninety percent of this group state that they attend church weekly or multiple times a week. Only forty-three percent of the Pre-Project Control Group attended weekly or multiple times a week. This response is impacted by the lower than usual attendance on the Sunday when the survey was executed so the regular attendees became the participants in the Control Group. In light of the fact that the Post-Project Control Group sample is so small and that it appears to have a significantly different composition from the Pre-Project Control Group, I cannot draw definitive conclusions from this sample.

Journal Journey

In order to chronicle the impact of the information provided to the Focus Group, each participant was asked to journal his or her exposure to the Bible Study. The first journal entry was to document their understanding and experience with giving as an element of worship. The first journal entry is important for a few reasons: (1) it allowed each participant to consider the understanding they come to the project with about giving; (2) it showed how their understanding and experience has shaped or impacted their giving; (3) it allowed the readers to understand the predisposition of the participants; (4) it allowed the participants and the readers a documented starting point to refer back to as

⁵⁰ Appendix I.

the information in the study is presented. Each participant has a unique experience with giving as an element of worship. The participants were instructed to complete the first journal entry before receiving the study guide in the first Bible Study session. This is a very important component for this project. The information recorded overwhelmingly shows a disconnect between giving and worship.⁵¹

There are some common thoughts and feelings about the experience of giving in worship. The prevailing attitude is negative about the methods that are employed to execute giving in worship. The church has effectively convinced a number of participants that tithing is not a choice or an act of worship. It has been presented as an obligation or a mandate that can bring access to financial blessings or cause God to withhold provisions from those who do not give. The general consensus appears to be frustration with giving. Of the twenty-two participants that submitted journals: ten used language that appears to express frustration with how they have experienced giving through a church; nine participants used language that appears to support giving as an obligation. While the tone of these initial journal entries supports my assumption that people have come to BHI with baggage from other church experiences; we have implemented practices to address the negative experiences people have encountered in the church.

The research of Wilmot and Hocker proved to be invaluable in preparing me for the resistance to change that was encountered almost from the outset. It was important to continually reinforce the importance of the Focus Group so that they would be willing to share their true feelings and know this information would help to inform the conclusions. The struggle, small and great, were necessary to establish I was not just interested in a

⁵¹ Appendix K – Responses 1.1.

right or wrong answer but concerned about the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the participants. It was difficult not to respond to questions as an authority when I had designed all of the material. At times they sought to position me as the authority to find out what they should conclude. I avoided these maneuvers to reinforce the importance of their role in this process. Looking at the results, I am thankful that I stayed true to an environment of collaboration and negotiation. This allowed the Focus Group participants to connect with all of their feelings honestly.

Journal Entries 2 – 7: After each Bible Study Session the participants were asked to document their experience with the information by answering six questions:

- 1) What are your thoughts concerning the information you received on giving?
- 2) How did this information make you feel?
- 3) How did this information conflict or support your current understanding of giving?
- 4) Do you agree with the information? Please explain
- 5) Will this information change your approach to giving? Please explain
- 6) What questions do you have in reference to the information you have received?

(The questions presented in response to journal question six will be documented and addressed in the conclusions).

Bible Study 1 corresponds with Journal Entry 2 – Worship and Giving. The first lesson was to define worship and giving so that a bridge could be established to unite these concepts. My expectation was that the participants were aware of the importance of giving as an element of worship. This lesson was to reiterate what they, at least, intuitively knew. The disconnect between worship and giving is evident in the responds

to question one, for example, Participant 1 states “I never related worship and giving together.”⁵²

This first lesson was not intended to influence the participants in an adverse fashion. I did not expect this foundational information to illicit an emotional response, positive or negative. The responses to question two in journal entry two further substantiated that this information was more than just a foundation. Eleven participants expressed some form of negative feeling based on the information provided. At this early stage, it appears the participants developed an adverse opinion of the material.⁵³

The third question in the journal is to determine if the information conflicts or supports their current understanding of giving. I am most concerned with making sure that the participants have the opportunity to voice any disagreement with the information. With the unexpected responses to questions one and two, I was very interested to see how the participants respond. Participant 7⁵⁴ referred to a statement that was made during the lesson that I would like to share more detail about. Some people make decisions without considering their giving. If we learn to structure our agreement with our giving at the forefront, we stand a better chance of sticking with the plan the Holy Spirit has given to us. Some believers are torn between paying their obligations and giving to God. God never intended for giving to be a struggle. In order for giving to become the joyous, liberating experience God desires it to be, we must consider our giving in every decision, commitment, and agreement we make.⁵⁵

⁵² Appendix K – Responses 2.1 – Participant 1.

⁵³ Appendix K – Responses 2.2.

⁵⁴ Appendix K – Responses 2.3 – Participant 7.

⁵⁵ Appendix K – Responses 2.2.

The fourth question is an opportunity to see if the participant agrees with the information. The distinction between questions four and five is that one can agree with something but still decide not to implement it. Question four gives the participant a clear opportunity to disagree with anything that was presented in the lesson. In light of the concern that some people will struggle with disagreeing with me, the responses to question four will give me a view as to the openness of the participants to share their thoughts and feelings not what they perceive is expected.⁵⁶

Participant 2⁵⁷ is referring to a segment of the lesson that discussed the numerous objectives we attempt to satisfy during worship service that may conflict with the objective of worshipping God. Some people believe salvation is the objective of worship so they invite unbelievers to worship so they can be informed of God and experience God in hopes they will surrender to God. I presented to the class if this is the objective of worship service when does God receive worship. Simply put, if worship is to be sincere one must believe what is being worshipped; therefore, an unbeliever cannot and does not desire to worship a God that he or she does not believe. When believers gather with the objective of worship the unbeliever can be a distraction. Our worship service has many objectives, which are an issue, but the foremost issue is that worship may not always be our primary objective. In my opinion, there should be a distinction between worship services and evangelism services. The objective for the service should be clearly defined so that everyone knows how to prepare and what to expect. At times, the praise is a distraction to the unbeliever or seeker because they want to learn of God. Further, the

⁵⁶ Appendix K – Responses 2.4.

⁵⁷ Appendix K – Responses 2.4 – Participant 2.

focus on providing information does not allow for praise and adoration. Evangelism is a daily function of faith and commitment to God. The result is that once a week all believers come together to worship God whether the person has believed for ten minutes or ten years.

For the most part, it appears that the participants are not seeking to avoid disagreement. They are expressing their thoughts and opinions about the information. I am concerned about the tone of the responses. It appears that the information is bringing some struggles with giving to light, and the participants are trying to deal with these issues as we take this journey.

Question five sought to see if the participant was willing to implement the information. This further illuminated where the participants were in this journey. Unwillingness to implement the information at this point gives the opportunity to see the development as the lessons continued.⁵⁸

During this lesson, a number of participants attempted to bring tithing into the discussion as the basis for worship giving. I avoided responding to the comments so as not to offer information related to lessons three and four on tithing. As noted in the responses to question five, some of the participants see the relationship between giving and stewardship. At this point, the participants appear relieved to have the option to give out of love not obligation and while a number of them are expressing a commitment to make their giving an expression of love, there is still the issue of having the discretionary money to give. As the study continues to unfold, I hope this enthusiasm continues or even increases.

⁵⁸ Appendix K – Responses 2.5.

Bible Study 2 corresponds with Journal Entry 3 – Agrarian vs. Monetary. The intent of lesson two is to establish the difficulty in applying scripture based on an agrarian system in a monetary system. The sacrifice of giving a firstling may not easily equate to giving a dollar. In many of the Old Testament texts, particularly with regard to scriptures related to giving, the people were giving from their herds and harvest. Many times, we simply assign a one-for-one application, and the value of the biblical context and sacrifice is being diminished.

This lesson served as a foundation for the next two lessons directly addressing tithing and a reinforcement of the definitions established in lesson one, which will carry us through the entire six lessons. At the end of lesson one many of the participants were ready and eager to implement changes to express their love for God through giving. As we started to question some of the applications of scripture related to giving, it was necessary to see if the enthusiasm increases, decreases, or remains the same.⁵⁹

While this lesson was intended to be a bridge to reinforce the definitions provided in lesson one and to prepare the participants for the two lessons coming on tithing, the impact is more than I anticipated. The lack of information or the misrepresentation of information on giving as an element of worship is causing these foundational lessons to be very impactful. While it is great that the participants are making every effort to take this journey, it is unfortunate that more has not been done to inform pastors, leaders, and believers about the context and application of scripture.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Appendix K – Responses 3.1.

⁶⁰ Appendix K – Responses 3.2.

I am one of the pastors that misinformed people on this subject of giving. This journey was very sobering for me because it revealed the error in the information that I have taught and believed for many years. I only looked at the scripture for what I had been told and not for what it was saying. We need people to give so the expenses are covered, and the plans we have for God are funded. We have great intentions, but while I knew giving was worship, I never treated it that way. I understand what the participants are going through, and I know this journey must continue not only to liberate this Focus Group and BHI but also to provide this information to the Church so that pastors can consider how the methods and language used for giving can be leading God's people away from worship giving, and believers can identify with these participants and start their own journey to liberation in giving.⁶¹

These responses have taught me that I cannot assume believers understand giving because they participate in it. I was aware of the frustration with the overemphasis on collecting money in other churches; this is why we implemented the method of giving that we currently have. To learn the lack of understanding in the significance and importance of giving as an expression of worship will require me to incorporate information about giving as we acclimate new disciples.⁶²

With the continued focus and dependence on tithing as the fundamental form of worship giving and the impact of lessons one and two, I am excited and apprehensive about lesson three. Lesson four addresses the heart of the misinformation that many of the participants have. It was my hope that lesson three would cushion the impact coming

⁶¹ Appendix K – Responses 3.3.

⁶² Appendix K – Responses 3.4.

in lesson four, but now I am very concerned the information is so fresh that the project may achieve a great objective not the one we set out to achieve.⁶³

The information in lesson three was the most difficult for me to embrace. This lesson destroyed everything I knew and believed about tithing. As a pastor/teacher, it was very unsettling to know that I had not evaluated the context; I merely passed on the understanding that was given to me. In my opinion, it is one thing to be misinformed; it is very different to misinform others. People entrusted me to exegete the meaning and application of scripture. Can I teach this information and acknowledge to this congregation that I had given them incorrect information? How will this impact the financial position of BHI? Will the remaining lessons repair what could happen based on this lesson? How do I resolve these conflicts and be a person of integrity and faith? Many pastors and church leaders will stand at this same bridge, and they will consider what to do with this information. During my ordination service, I remember Bishop George Walker quoting the lyrics to “A Charge To Keep I Have,” by Charles Wesley:

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
Who gave His Son my soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill:
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master's will!

Arm me with jealous care,
As in Thy sight to live;
And O Thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give!

⁶³ Appendix K – Responses 3.5.

Help me to watch and pray,
 And on Thyself rely,
 Assured, if I my trust betray,
 I shall for ever die.⁶⁴

While the information is challenging I did not intend to misinform people. When I taught that tithing was the primary form of giving and all but made it the gold standard of giving, I was trying to keep my commitment to the calling for my life. Now with the same vigor and care for the Church and my calling, I must proceed across this bridge onto an uncharted path for me. Many others have already crossed this bridge. There are congregations that have digested this information many years ago and moved forward to respect and honor giving as a liberated part of worship. It is this journey that I must take and trust that God who called me is charting this course even if I am unaware of my destination.⁶⁵

The responses to journal entry 4 question 1 must be related to the responses to question 2, how the participants are feeling after this lesson is important to evaluate their willingness to receive any more information; this may have been the straw that broke the camel's back.⁶⁶

A number of concerns have been raised by this lesson. Two primary issues needed to be explored. Some of the participants raised the question of how this information will impact the financial health of our church. If people already struggle to give believing there is a commandment instructing believers to give what happens when there is no commandment, giving will decrease of course. Coupled with this issue is the confusion of

⁶⁴ Charles Wesley, "A Charge To Keep I Have," accessed November 29, 2013, http://www.allthelyrics.com/lyrics/charles_wesley/a_charge_to_keep_i_have-lyrics-1129014.html.

⁶⁵ Appendix K – Responses 4.1.

⁶⁶ Appendix K – Responses 4.2.

how to determine what amount to give. As Participant 23 stated, it is easier to give a set percentage or amount that God has commanded than to consider my love for God and express it in my giving.⁶⁷

So many believers have never been allowed the liberty to explore a personal relationship with God. It is convenient to allow the church to define and maintain a relationship with God and tell the people what God wants, and the people respond accordingly. The Christian Church has been commissioned by Jesus to make disciples. We struggle with this because we are not disciples; we are church members almost puppets to the will of those called to represent God to us. Have you ever wondered why God would place a tree in The Garden that would allow humankind to reject their Creator and Provider? The answer is in the liberty, the choice to accept or reject, and to love or ignore. Love must be freely expressed and offered based on a desire to be committed and pleased with the relationship. The Church has recognized that people do not want to invest the energy to consider how to love God personally and intimately so let us offer the next best thing. I will tell you what God says and wants, and you believe me because I represent God. The uniqueness of the Bible is that it chronicles many different personal relationships with God. God wants to appreciate each person's uniqueness, but this can only be accomplished through a personal and intimate relationship with the Creator. God made me and knows my uniqueness, it is in the intimacy that we experience worship. Gathered in a corporate worship setting we each connect with God intimately. The Church has missed the commission to make disciples because we do not have enough faith to believe people will ultimately love God. For those who give in an atmosphere of

⁶⁷ Appendix K – Responses 4.3.

pressure or obligation if granted liberty and some stop giving, this would mean they were not the Church in the first place. Have we become more concerned about budgets and attendance over discipleship?⁶⁸

As the definitions from lesson one are reinforced and repeated, it appears the Focus Group is starting to see that liberty is removing everything and everybody that attempts to define love expressions for those who desire to give to God. As Participant 24 stated, my giving is between God and me. Giving becomes an open expression of a personal relationship with God. Faith, trust, dependence, assurance, appreciation, stewardship and love are all interwoven in the act of giving. This one act of worship can evidence the magnitude of commitment and surrender to God. In the secret of the heart the release of my gift affirms faithfulness, and trustworthiness that will not let anyone or anything separate us from the love of God.⁶⁹

Lesson 4 will define the context of God's conversation with the priest of Israel through Malachi. Some of the participants have used this text as the basis for their understanding and execution of giving in worship. It is interesting how the Church proclaims deliverance for the curse of sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus but when it comes to giving Malachi 3:9 is used. How can we be free and cursed at the same time? Either we have been freed or we are cursed. Some will say we are cursed only if we do not tithe; however, even the simplest reading of Malachi 3:9-10 will reveal that the audience of these statements is already cursed and instructed to bring the full tithe. The

⁶⁸ Appendix K – Responses 4.4.

⁶⁹ Appendix K – Responses 4.5.

people have allowed the Church to minister liberty while establishing a concept of bondage in order to give.⁷⁰

Some of the participants are getting focused on the fact that they did not get this understanding in personal study. It is important for everyone to remember that God is limited to what we will consider. If we believe we already know the meaning, then we are less likely to raise questions on a scripture. It is the critical evaluation that will confirm or birth truth. We will rarely question those things that are universally accepted.⁷¹

Many participants are disappointed or frustrated with the pastor/teacher for not revealing this information to the congregation, but where is the material from the academic community sounding the battle cry to rectify flawed interpretations and practices? The market is not being flooded with material on the subject of giving except from those that want to be millionaires so they promise wealth for money. It is interesting that faith is typically invoked in order to get people to give, but we will not have the faith to share this concept of liberty in giving because this may affect our financial well-being. Where is our faith?

In response to the question, “should we continue to tithe?” I responded, NO, in an attempt to challenge the participants to consider the information on tithing seriously. At this time, I was not aware of their journal entries; therefore, I did not know the information had already affected them negatively. This response took their struggle to a new height. The journal responses to question three may reflect their reactions.⁷²

⁷⁰ Appendix K – Responses 5.1.

⁷¹ Appendix K – Responses 5.2.

⁷² Appendix K – Responses 5.3.

With all of the challenges the participants have had thus far in this Bible Study, it is interesting that in response to question 4, two participants had no response and two participants disagreed with some portion or all of the information presented. All of the other participants agreed with the information. After reviewing the content of the responses, I believe the agreement is earnest because of the content of the responses.⁷³

After two lessons focused on the concept of tithing, the question of implementation is key to determining if the information was clear and understood. Five participants either needed to think about it or wanted to continue with their current practice. All of the other participants were willing to give the information a test run to see how giving will change based on a relationship of love and thanksgiving over and above an obligation.⁷⁴

Lesson 5 moves us to the New Testament with the objective of establishing a motive for giving that will satisfy God and keep believers focused on giving as an important expression of worship. With the information presented thus far some have no basis to determine what to give so how it will be given in worship may be too far away for the participants to address. Lesson 5 is intended to establish salvation and relationship as the continual motive for giving. As we worship we should always reflect on the love of God to redeem creation from the punishment of sin through the atoning sacrifice of Yeshua. This lesson will be giving self to God. The contrast between a Levite of Cyprus named Joseph (Barnabas) and Ananias and Sapphira. This contrast will be based on understanding the act of laying the offering at the Apostle's feet. In both scenes their

⁷³ Appendix K – Responses 5.4.

⁷⁴ Appendix K – Responses 5.5.

offering was laid at the Apostle's feet. What is the application of this act? The act of laying the money at the Apostle's feet is not the method by which we should give. This method was to inform the Apostles that the person is dependent on them for sustenance and committed to represent God every day. This is not a requirement, but it is a calling and commitment. Ananias and Sapphira wanted the Apostles to believe they were "all in" while holding on to a portion of the proceeds in case they needed something. In Peter's questioning, I conclude he is saying they could have given an offering for the community, but they should not have laid it all at the Apostle's feet because this meant they were depending on the Apostles for everything.

Incorporating the questions Peter asked Ananias and Sapphira will establish that the issue with their offering was that they misrepresented their relationship and motive for giving. There is no requirement to release everything to serve the Lord in Acts chapters 2 and 4; this was an instruction from the Holy Spirit. Each believer must seek the Holy Spirit for the role and commitment God has for them. Then giving will "grow out of who we are" as Talmage Williams has established in our definition from lesson 1. Who are you; as a believer you are a born again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. All worship begins from this perspective. Worship must begin from this loving act of the Father to redeem creation from sin. I belong to God therefore everything I am and have is at God's disposal to use for the work of ministry.

There are three objectives for this lesson: (1) the first offering to God is the surrender of self, (2) giving should be led by the Holy Spirit, (3) motives can lead to misrepresentation of a relationship and commitment to God. Learning that the Holy Spirit should lead our giving has started the struggle again, but this time the context of the struggle is a question of loving God, which is an intended response to the material. As

confessed followers of Jesus, our love for God must be the motive for everything we do. Our giving must be a reflection of our love and thanksgiving to God for the eternal relationship we have been freely given through salvation.⁷⁵

Participants 6 and 9⁷⁶ give us a glimpse of how this information is affecting the Focus Group. Participant 6 feels guilty and unworthy of any blessings from God, while Participant 9 is simultaneously liberated, excited, and frightened. To have the restrictions removed and now have to opportunity to love God openly with our giving is liberating, exciting and frightening; will we regress to selfish and unfaithful behavior or will we selflessly celebrate the opportunity to give as an expression of worship?⁷⁷

Question three reaffirms the struggle is alive and well. Participant 4 offers clear responses to this support or conflict question, “it supports my new understanding, but conflicts with my current habits.” Participant 15 acknowledges movement towards a change of view, while Participant 18 is still in conflict about tithing.⁷⁸

There are a number of points that have been misunderstood. I attempted to address them in the class but these attempts are not reflected in the journal entries. While it appears the fundamental point, to be led by the Holy Spirit in giving, was received; a number of participants equate an expression of love with a large amount of offering because they love God so much. This is not the point. God wants consistent percentage based giving that is executed freely. It is seemly possible that based on the combination of information that has been received the participants may have already concluded tithing

⁷⁵ Appendix K – Responses 6.1.

⁷⁶ Appendix K – Responses 6.2 – Participant 6 and 9.

⁷⁷ Appendix K – Responses 6.2.

⁷⁸ Appendix K – Responses 6.3 – Participant 4, 15, and 18.

is not required, and I do not have a large amount to give so I am not going to give anything.

God is fully aware of our situations so our giving should first reflect that we are consistently appreciating the opportunity to express love through giving. Some participants have recognized that stewardship is key to bridging the gap between love for God, and the amount we have to express this love. Believers must learn to put money where it grows, in the financial markets. This cannot become gambling. Believers should seek for balanced investing risk should always be offset with conservative investing. It is going to take multiple solutions in order to rectify the issues that hinder worship giving.

The sixth lesson was intended to address how giving can be incorporated as an integral part of worship. This lesson focused on 2 Corinthians 9 and the language Paul uses in this letter. Paul does three fundamental things in this chapter. First, he uses the less fortunate Macedonians generosity as an example to the Corinthians. Second, he reminds them that they agreed to this a year ago and should have been working on it. Third, after appearing in the first two things to be compelling them to give, almost to the point of embarrassing them to give, he makes it clear and plain that whatever they do must be a voluntary gift not as an extortion (v. 5). Then he says each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (v. 7).

The objective of this lesson was to lead the participants to conclude if giving in worship can be an expression of love and worship if it is not allowed to be voluntary. Giving has been so misrepresented in worship that a few participants did not know that giving was worship. The money given has been viewed as bill paying, and meeting the needs of the church but not as an expression of love through worship.

I acknowledge that I did consider including information about how the gifts were handled in the Temple, but I determined this information would have been misleading. The gifts were presented first, but this may have been because they did not take animals into the inner court. In addition, Temple worship was centered on giving. I also considered including 2 Samuel 24:24, which Participant 14 included in Journal Entry 3. I elected not to include this information because I did not want to limit the options the participants would consider. I wanted them to see when all of the standards and boundaries are removed do we love God enough to give based on a loving relationship with our Creator God. Lesson 6 is to bring all of the proceeding information together to be used to form conclusions.

All of the responses in the last journal entry confirmed the participants are still in conflict and struggling to apply the understanding birthed in this Bible Study. While most appreciate the journey and are looking forward to how this information will impact their giving and BHI, many of the participants are still expressing negative feelings based on not learning or recognizing this information before now in their life with God through Jesus Christ. None of the participants addressed the fundamental question should the method of executing giving in BHI be changed or remain the same so that giving will be an element of worship.⁷⁹

After reviewing the journal information and the questions documented in the journals at the end of each lesson, it is necessary to clarify some of the information shared and to correct some things this journal journey has revealed to me. In Appendix

⁷⁹ Appendix K – Responses 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5.

L,⁸⁰ I have summarized the questions submitted in response to question 6 in the journal. This information offers a view into how the participants were processing the information during the Bible Study and how my understanding and applications have been developed during this journey.⁸¹

Evaluation Plan

BHI was established using the Purpose Driven model. We did not adhere to every tenet strictly, but we used the concept and material as a foundation for this church. In Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, he uses the Five Circles of Commitment. Within the worship setting, there will be five distinct types of people: "Community (Unchurched), Crowd (Regular Attenders), Congregation (Members), Committed (Mature Members), Core (Lay Ministers)."⁸² BHI differs in terminology in that we do not have "members;" we refer to the committed as disciples. The reason for this terminology change is that our focus is to prepare people to serve God in some capacity. The committed people in the Gospels, who were being prepared for ministry (service), were called Disciples. Unlike Warren's model, we are not merely seeking to develop a commitment to our church; rather, we are seeking to develop a commitment to God's kingdom community of believers. We understand that this creates a fluid environment in which people are encouraged to move according to God's prompting. This means that we have a number of people who are prepared by BHI and then become "members" of another church. Some would conclude that these people are a part of the

⁸⁰ Appendix L.

⁸¹ Appendix L.

⁸² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 130.

“Crowd,” but the distinction between the Crowd and the Congregation is the commitment made through Discipleship 101 (Class 101 in *The Purpose Driven Church*).

This information is important to this project because the focus group was comprised of believers who commit to participate in the project experience, which consists of the six lessons. This project, while based on the specific situation within BHI, must be useable in any situation or context. To restrict the focus group to only those currently attending BHI will limit the evaluation of the information that will be shared about giving as an element of any worship setting. In order for this project to be able to determine the impact of the approach of liberated giving within the celebration of God in worship, I needed to include a sample of each of these groups that are part of BHI. The primary criteria for this focus group should be people that are experiencing BHI worship as it currently functions. The people in our worship experience are not just the Congregation. Rick Warren states:

Having more attenders than members means the church is being effective in attracting the unchurched and building a pool for evangelism. A good indicator of a church's evangelistic effectiveness is when you have at least 25 percent more people attending as part of the crowd than you have members in the congregation. For example, if you have 200 members, you ought to have at least 250 in average attendance. If you don't, it means almost no one in your church is inviting unbelievers to come with them.⁸³

The focus group was limited to people that worship or study at BHI, but some of these participants are not part of the congregation. BHI does not use the terminology member or membership; we focus on disciples and discipleship. Our approach is to make people comfortable whether they make a commitment to our church or not. The most important

⁸³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 133.

commitment is to God. We have people in our Bible Study classes who have attended since our beginning, but they worship regularly at another church.

A Survey was administered to the Focus Group before the lessons being taught to document their understanding and experience with giving in worship. The survey instrument explored their understanding of giving as an expression of worship and the difference between giving and tithing. This first survey established the baseline for the Focus Group. This survey also collected demographic information on each participant. The congregation of BHI was surveyed before the lessons were taught to create a baseline to compare the Focus Group. The Control Group was comprised of the congregation that gathered for worship on September 22, 2013.

A journal was used by the Focus Group to document their understanding and experience with giving before being exposed to the lessons. This allowed me to identify the impact of the information on each participant. This first journal entry allowed each Focus Group participants to take an informed look at their understanding and experience with giving before their involvement in this project.

The Focus group was exposed to the study guide for six Bible Study lessons. The lessons were:

Week 1 – Worship & Giving

Week 2 – Agrarian vs. Monetary

Week 3 – Tithing (Part 1)

Week 4 – Tithing (Part 2)

Week 5 – New Testament Giving

Week 6 – How is giving incorporated as an element of worship?

The Focus Group did journal entries after each of these six lessons in order to document their experience during the lessons. This allowed the Focus Group to address the impact of the information in a private and personal way.

The Focus group was surveyed after the six lessons to see how their understanding and approach to giving as an element of worship had been impacted. This survey was compared to the first Focus Group survey to identify changes and similarities. The survey findings were also compared with the journal entries to confirm consistency between these instruments.

This project was executed during our Wednesday Bible Studies, at Noon and 7:00 PM; there are quite a few people that are part of the Community and Crowd that attend these Bible Studies. While they were not all included in the Focus Group, one of the things I had to document were they in the control group. Their attendance might have impacted the post survey of the Control Group.

The congregation was surveyed after the lessons to see if their baseline had changed. This survey asked if they were exposed in any way to the information the Focus Group received by attending the lessons or in conversation with someone who attended. This allowed me to determine if any changes are due to a stimulus other than the lessons.

The Focus group completed an evaluation on the environment, teacher, teaching, and other conditions that may have had an influence on them during this process. This allowed the participants to share any information about the conditions and presentation of the lessons that might have affected their experience.

In view of the fact that this project was largely based on attitudes, I used a survey instrument that is a combination of a Semantic Differential Scale and a Likert Scale. These tools allowed for qualitative analysis. One of the issues influencing quantitative

analysis of attitudes is social desirability. Respondents may not disclose their true attitudes, but answer in a way that they feel is socially acceptable. Dummy questions were included so that the respondents do not know which questions will be analyzed.

Project Evaluation

The Focus Group completed an Evaluation Form.⁸⁴ This form is to evaluate the following areas: learning sessions, learning environment, instructor, teaching method, and any additional comments they may have to offer.

The participants were pleased with the sessions, environment, instructor and method. The area that appears to have been an issue was journaling. Some of the participants would like to see the journal removed from the project. One of the participants commented that the ground rules should have been clearer on respecting everyone's opinion and only one person speaking at a time. Overall, the participants were comfortable with the environment, language and methods employed during the project. Participants offered some good suggestions about the length of the sessions. The Agrarian vs. Monetary lesson and the sessions on tithing seem to be the most impactful sessions according to the participants. One of the participants asked how and when this information would be implemented into our worship. We have implemented all of the action steps documented in the conclusions. We are working to identify a way to share this study material with new disciples that come to worship with BHI.

The participants were also given four questions to offer additional information about the project and material. This information gives a much clearer view of how they evaluated the project and material. The participants were not asked to provide their

⁸⁴ Appendix D.

participant number on the Evaluation form so this information will not be provided with these responses.⁸⁵ The participant evaluations were very positive and appreciative of the experience with this material. They realize that the journey ahead is going to be challenging but they are willing to work together to identify the best path forward based on the biblical information. The responses were very encouraging and I am confident that this method of Focus Group investigation will continue to be used to solidify our practices and traditions.

⁸⁵ Appendix O.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

The project was designed to focus on the method of giving but one of the best results of this experience was the revealing of the information on tithing. In this age of grace it is wonderful to know that our terminology must be transformed along with our method of giving. The Focus Group had a difficult time with this transition but appeared to appreciate the information. It will take time to adjust to being led by the Holy Spirit in giving and to improve stewardship in order to produce an offering that is representative of love. We will continue to reinforce this principle in the acknowledgement of giving in every worship service.

The Focus Group expressed distrust and feelings of being taken advantage of through the teachings and practices of giving in their church experience, therefore I acknowledge healing is necessary in order for this journey to enhance the understand and practice of giving. The environment of liberty will assist in the healing process, but being consistent in the way we discuss giving must reinforce this. Giving must always be referenced as an expression of love to God. We must be conscious of not associating giving with the budget and expenses. The congregation must encourage open and continual dialog so that everyone has the opportunity to reshape their perspective of giving in worship.

This project has taught me to always be willing to evaluate beliefs and processes to ensure God is the author and objective of everything we believe and do. The journey of life must be to draw as close to God as I can get. This journey is for truth not validation. Some things will be validated along the way, and some will be reshaped, others will need to be discarded in order to continue to progress to God by truth. This process is why I

pursued being a doctor of ministry. As a pastor it is my responsibility to evaluate and be informed of the thoughts and needs of the congregation, so that we can assist, even at times, guide the congregation closer to God. The only time we will not present questions is when we do not want answers.

Giving should be expressed in every worship opportunity but stewardship allows the opportunity to invest in order to increase the monetary amount of the love expression. The concept of giving in every worship service does not allow for the amount to be reflective of love and thanksgiving. It is my position that it is not just the act of giving but the amount of the gift that should reflect trust and dependence on God which makes it worship.

General Application for the Christian Church

This project was implemented at Blessed Harvest Institute of Charlotte, but the implications are universal. The lack of resources addressing this subject from a biblical perspective and the overwhelming number of resources that avoid or misrepresent the biblical context leads me to conclude that the Christian Church has become consumed with obtaining monetary gain and glorifying itself. The Pharisees have returned to lead God's people according to selfish and material motivations by distorting or ignoring the simple truths about giving as an expression of love and worship. There are churches where the pastors and leaders think solely about the budget and revenue of the church instead of embracing the yoke of the Gospel to make disciples. There are also churches where giving is not coerced and believers are allowed the freedom to love God in their giving. The Church must seek to ensure that everyone in the worship service clearly understands that they are free to express love or not. The Church must stop mandating how and when love is expressed in order to guarantee that when it is expressed the intent

of the expression is authentic. When God is allowed to control the believer, God controls their giving. The gimmicks that are being touted as worship celebrations are no more than methods to guilt or shame people into giving because they do not want to be left out or perceived as not having enough to give. The church must ensure the congregation understands giving as an element of worship by teaching this information. The church can no longer be a prison camp where liberty has been both consciously and subconsciously stripped away for the benefit of financial gain. In the case where this information is known we must continue to communicate and reinforce these biblical truths. Giving has always been the human method to express love and thanksgiving to God. It was never intended to be the vehicle to meet budgets. The methods being taught and executed have deprived many from participating in the genuine surrender to express trust and dependence in God. The Christian Church has abandoned its responsibility to remain true to God's intent of expressing love through giving thus corrupting the presentation of the truth creating a false worship experience. Plainly stated, any stimulus employed to impact giving removes it from being worship. God wants worship, money may be collected or the budget may be met but God is being deprived of worship. Many of the methods are successful and the people are compliant actually accepting the methods for various reasons, but if anyone feels required to give or extorted in the giving method it must be stopped. Just because most understand or even appreciate the methods being employed in most churches this does not make the methods right. Giving is an element of worship, I have learned through this project that we should not attempt to ignore this or apologize to the world for it; we have a responsibility as the church to communicate, uphold and practice these biblical truths. Some will embrace these truths about giving and determine, as I have, that they misinformed and misled the church

unintentionally. This is the purpose for grace to repent and redirect. Whether intentional or unintentional the key is to recognize and be willing to invest in allowing giving to line up with the grace and liberty God has given the world through Yeshua.

Specific Application for Blessed Harvest Institute

I embarked on this project because of a question presented to me about the placement of our offering baskets and the method in which giving was executed in our worship. Our process established an environment of liberty but it ignored the importance of giving. I will institute an acknowledgement and blessing of the offering in our worship service just before the greeting of the visitors. The acknowledgement will inform the worshippers that giving is an element of worship to express our love and thanksgiving to God and we want giving to be cheerfully and liberally expressed therefore we will make every effort to ensure the execution of giving is voluntary and not in an environment of extortion. In an effort to accomplish these objectives, baskets will be placed within the sanctuary at the entrance for you to offer every gift that you want God to receive. Then the gifts will be blessed in prayer and the congregation will be instructed to give at any time during the worship service by dropping the gift in the basket. I will also incorporate this information within our discipleship classes to ensure all BHI disciples clearly understand these biblical truths and that they are free to express love or not. Now with a revised Bible Study, which will be added to our Discipleship classes, and a process that acknowledges that giving is worship we will honor God in our method and gifts out of love and trust.

Action Steps

The most meaningful finding of this project was to learn there is a disconnect between worship and giving. As I addressed earlier some of the Focus Group participants

did not associate giving as an element of worship. In addition, some have been conditioned to give just to receive from God. With the impact of the tithing information coupled with the disassociation of worship and giving; and the motive of giving to get; I have determined that a seventh lesson needs to be added to the Study Guide.⁸⁶ This seventh lesson, based on John 3:16-21, is to assist the students in completing the study with a defined focus. Lesson six left the information open-ended, intentionally, to allow the Focus Group to determine the direction the information would take. The Focus Group was unable to return to the premise of the study therefore the thesis question was not answered.

While this project did not accomplish the intended goal it did accomplish a greater and much needed purpose in reframing the concept of giving. Now the Focus Group is clear on the purpose and motive for giving during worship. I was not able to get enough data to determine if our method of giving during worship contributes to the misunderstanding of giving as an element of worship. Some of the participants clearly stated that our method of giving does not need to change but it was not enough for me to conclude that it should change. A question should have been added to the Journal and Survey II that directly asked if the method of giving should be changed. This question was asked in the Study Book, and I instructed the Focus Group to address this question in his or her final journal entry but every participant ignored this instruction. This could have been because it was not included in the journal so they forgot. I believe based on the responses the Focus Group was so concerned about the information on giving as worship, tithing, and receiving not being a motive for giving, they were not concerned about the

⁸⁶ Appendix J.

process in which giving is executed during worship. For these reasons, I must conclude the project failed. The design of the material was to directly associate giving as an act of worship in an environment of liberty. I determined it was necessary to identify and remove any belief or practice that obstructed having an environment of liberty. This objective was achieved but at the cost of the primary question.

Since the Focus Group is a random sample of the congregation of BHI the following steps will be taken based on the information received from this project.

- 1) The Giving Envelope has been redesigned to remove the terms tithe and offering. This terminology has been replaced with 'My love expression to God'. This money will be used to fund the Annual Budget of BHI.⁸⁷
- 2) Based on 2 Corinthians 9:7 a commitment process will be implemented allowing the givers to plan what they will give for the year. This will aid in the development of good stewardship by allowing the giver to consider what they are going to give during the year. The Commitment Card offers each Disciple the opportunity to support the church in three ways: financial support for the Annual Budget, financial support for the new worship facility we will be constructing, and most importantly a commitment to discipleship. This line reflects the number of people they will lead to make a commitment to serve God through BHI.⁸⁸
- 3) The Bible Study Booklet (seven lessons)⁸⁹ will be shared with all new Disciples (members) with a Commitment Card during our Discipleship 101 class.

I have determined it is possible to have an environment of freewill and celebrate God in worship. The issue is the understanding of celebrating. Melvin and James Amerson identified the celebration in active waving and marching with singing and dancing. I

⁸⁷ Appendix M.

⁸⁸ Appendix N.

⁸⁹ Appendix J.

agree that these expressions can be included in celebrating God, but I have a concern with celebrating the offering. The offering should not be the focus of celebrating in worship it should be one of the components that celebrate God. It is possible to celebrate God and have an environment of freewill giving. It is not appropriate to celebrate the giving opportunity. God is to be celebrated with our lives and in every component of worship.⁹⁰

Personal Evaluation

I made a number of assumptions based on my research and understanding of the subject matter which cause me to believe that the Focus Group was going to be able to respond to the thesis question in the last journal entry. A direct question should have been included in the journal to collect this information instead of placing this question in the Bible Study book, which was not returned to me.

This project process has informed me of how to structure and evaluate data and information to implement solutions to issues that influence ministry. This project will also be used to evaluate new methods before implementation. Questions must be direct and more information about the behaviors of the participants should be collected, such as: would you consider yourself a tither.

Free form responses are problematic in evaluating data. It became difficult to understand and categorize the free form responses. All responses should be categorized to control the possible responses. The environment influenced the project, in that, it limited the Focus Group to the people that would attend Bible Study. It would have been better to perform this project in worship service without advanced notice so that the responses would have been free flowing and the system of pastoral influence would have been

⁹⁰ Amerson and Amerson, *Celebrating The Offering*, 42-59.

minimized with the congregation as the Focus Group. This would have eliminated some of the controls I believed were necessary to get the information, especially in journal form, but what I may have lost in journal information I would have gained a clearer picture of the true position and beliefs of the congregation.

I had no idea giving and worship were so disassociated in our congregation so the structure of the information and the approach used to deliver the information caused an unanticipated impact to the Focus Group before it was intended. The first two lessons were intended to be just information before the difficult two lessons on tithing. This assumption backfired because there was no foundation of giving as an expression of worship for a majority of the Focus Group.

While there is an overwhelming appreciation for the method of execution we use for giving, it appears many of the people in BHI have not fully embraced being part of BHI. Many appear to be still dealing with prior church experiences and longing to see their former church changed so they can return to it instead of embracing BHI as their church home. It appears that our atmosphere of liberty and openness has caused a lack of ownership and commitment in the congregation. I am not sure how to cultivate ownership and commitment while maintaining an environment of liberty.

For this project, the Journal was the best part of this experience. It allowed me to get information that I do not believe I would have received in any other form. It allowed me to share the experience and struggle of each participant as it unfolded. The Focus Group Surveys did not capture this information. The participants used the journals effectively and were willing to express how they were processing the information being shared. The continued use of the term “new information” reinforced that the Focus Group had not been exposed to giving in this context, while most all of the Focus Group has

been giving few had been exposed to giving in this context. Even for those who had felt this was what God intended they too did have the biblical support to enhance the practices of the church.

This project would have been a success if it would have focused on establishing giving as an element of worship instead of how giving should be executed in worship. Now that I know there is a disconnect between giving and worship I will seek to make sure all believers that come in contact with BHI understand giving is an expression of love and worship to God and this is what we are doing whenever we give. I do believe this project has confirmed or revealed the traditions of the church have misinformed believers about giving as an integral part of worship and this experience has started the re-educating process for everyone that will experience it.

APPENDIX

A, Covenant Agreement

DSDM 590 Doctor Of Ministry – Project Covenant

Project Topic: Incorporating Giving as an Integral Part of Worship at Blessed Harvest Institute

Thank you for assisting with this project initiative. Your participation will add value and enhance this experience. Please complete the contact information and sign the participant portion of this covenant below.

Contact Information:

Name	
Address	
E-mail	
Phone	

Part I: Project Covenant – Doctoral Student

I, Brian G. Fite, consent to the following for the duration of this project:

- Respect the time commitment of each participant by being punctual and adhering to the schedule
- Provide all materials needed to successfully complete the project
- Maintain the integrity of the responses by using a numeric system to categorize the information and a moderator to assist in the administration of the focus group participants.

Sign: Brian G. Fite
(Doctoral Student Signature)

Date: 02/17/2013

Part II: Project Covenant – Focus Group Participant

I, _____ consent to partner with Brian G. Fite and the project

(Printed Participant's Name)

team as a willing participant by committing to do the following:

- Complete 2 surveys (***one at the beginning of the project and one at the end of the project***)
- Participate in 6 bible study sessions
- Engage in the dialog during the study sessions
- Maintain a journal throughout the project experience
- Complete an evaluation and turn in the completed journal at the conclusion of the project

Sign: _____ **Date:** _____
(Participant's Signature)

B. Pre-Project Survey Form

DSDM 590 DOCTOR OF MINISTRY – PROJECT SURVEY I

Project Topic: Incorporating Giving as an Integral Part of Worship at Blessed Harvest Institute

Part I: Personal Information:

Participant Number: _____ Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Church Experience (*# of years*): _____

Are you Saved: ☐ Yes ☐ No If so, How long? (*# of years*): _____

What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18 years
- ☐ 18 to 24 years
- ☐ 25 to 34 years
- ☐ 35 to 44 years
- ☐ 45 to 54 years
- ☐ 55 to 64 years
- ☐ Age 65 or older

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ High school graduate (includes equivalency)
- ☐ Some college, no degree
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Ph.D.
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree

Employment Status:

- ☐ Employed for wages
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Out of work and looking for work
- ☐ Out of work but not currently looking for work
- ☐ A homemaker
- ☐ A student
- ☐ Military
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Unable to work

What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000 to \$34,999
- ☐ \$35,000 to \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 to \$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000 or more

Part II: Answer the following questions:

1. How often do you attend church?
2. Is there a relationship between attending church and worshipping God?
☐Yes ☐No
3. Is giving required to worship God
☐Yes ☐No
4. How often do you attend Bible Study?
5. How do you determine what you will give God?
6. How do you determine when you attend church?
7. Should tithing be a required element of worship?
☐Yes ☐No
8. Are you a biblical giver (Is your giving based on scripture)?
☐Yes ☐No
9. Is your giving a reflection of your relationship with God?
☐Yes ☐No
10. Where do you give to God?
11. How do you give to God?
12. Can you serve God without attending church?
☐Yes ☐No

C. Post-Project Survey Form

DSDM 590 DOCTOR OF MINISTRY – PROJECT SURVEY II

Project Topic: Incorporating Giving as an Integral Part of Worship at Blessed Harvest Institute

Part I: Personal Information:

Participant Number: _____ Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Church Experience (# of years): _____

Are you Saved: ☐ Yes ☐ No If so, How long? (# of years): _____

What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18 years
- ☐ 18 to 24 years
- ☐ 25 to 34 years
- ☐ 35 to 44 years
- ☐ 45 to 54 years
- ☐ 55 to 64 years
- ☐ Age 65 or older

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ High school graduate (includes equivalency)
- ☐ Some college, no degree
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Ph.D.
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree

Employment Status:

- ☐ Employed for wages
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Out of work and looking for work
- ☐ Out of work but not currently looking for work
- ☐ A homemaker
- ☐ A student
- ☐ Military
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Unable to work

What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000 to \$34,999
- ☐ \$35,000 to \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 to \$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000 or more

Part II: Answer the following questions:

1. Is this your second survey during the project experience?
☐Yes ☐No
2. Did you attend all six lessons? If no, please put the number of lessons you attended in the space beside the answer "No".
☐Yes ☐No _____
3. Were you a part of the focus group?
☐Yes ☐No
4. How often do you attend church?
5. Is there a relationship between attending church and worshipping God?
☐Yes ☐No
6. Is giving required to worship God
☐Yes ☐No
7. How often do you attend Bible Study?
8. How do you determine what you will give God?
9. How do you determine when you attend church?
10. Should tithing be a required element of worship?
☐Yes ☐No
11. Are you a biblical giver (Is your giving based on scripture)?
☐Yes ☐No
12. Is your giving a reflection of your relationship with God?
☐Yes ☐No
13. Where do you give to God?
14. How do you give to God?

15. Can you serve God without attending church?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Part III: Rate yourself below – For each pair of adjectives check the box between them which reflects the extent to which you believe the adjectives best describes you.

3 = Definitely the adjective in Column 1
Column 3

-3 = Definitely the adjective in

2 = Almost the adjective in Column 1
Column 2

-2 = Almost the adjective in

1 = Somewhat the adjective in Column 1
Column 2

-1 = Somewhat the adjective in

[illegible]

D. Evaluation Form

DSDM 590 DOCTOR OF MINISTRY – PROJECT EVALUATION

Project Topic: Incorporating Giving as an Integral Part of Worship at Blessed Harvest Institute

Thank you for your investment in this project initiative. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Please take a few moments to evaluate your project experience. For each statement please indicate if you agree with the statement, disagree with the statement or neither.

Evaluate the learning sessions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Subject learning objectives were clear.					
The learning sessions were well organized.					
The information presented was difficult for me to comprehend					
The topic stimulated my interest to learn more.					
The information was relevant to my spiritual growth					
My understanding of giving and worship has been enhanced as a result of participating in this project.					
The information presented was based on opinion and not biblical facts					
The overall quality of the learning sessions was a positive experience.					
Evaluate the learning environment	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The atmosphere was conducive to a liberated learning environment					
I was comfortable to share my thoughts on the information					
I felt awkward during the session discussions					

The environment was positive for learning and involvement					
I was distracted by the ambiance of the room					
Overall, the environment enhanced my learning experience					
Evaluate the Instructor	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The instructor was knowledgeable of the session topic.					
Maintained a good pace.					
Expressed ideas clearly and					
Encouraged the focus group to take an active part in the sessions					
Provided relevant examples to illustrate the concepts					
The instructor's enthusiasm enriched my experience					
Overall, the instructor contributed to my learning.					
Teaching Methods	Not at all Effective	Generally Ineffective	Neutral	Generally Effective	Very Effective
Delivery of the information					
Thought provoking questions to demonstrate the information					
Focus group discussions					
Journals					

- What were the best parts of the project?

-
- What part(s) of the project would you like to see improved or removed?
-

-
- How has your experience with this project enhanced or impaired your understanding of giving and worshipping God?
-

-
- Other comments:
-
-

E. Bible Study Lessons

Lesson 1 – Worship & Giving

Giving to God is a great opportunity and a point of exploitation. This study will seek to clear away the fog in order for giving to claim its rightful place and significance in worship. There are a few definitions that are foundational for this study. What are worship, giving, and stewardship? This study will seek to define giving for our New Testament generation. I firmly believe the Old Testament is not to be shunned or abandoned. It is the foundation upon which the New Testament has been established. There are provisions in the Old Testament that are not applicable now because of changes in systems and practices. Some would say this is true for the entire Old Testament but we must avoid selectively eliminating those things that we are not comfortable with.

The focal scripture for this study is 2 Corinthians 9. We will be focusing on how giving is ultimately intended to be an element of worship. How can this be accomplished and communicated to the church?

Let us begin by defining a couple of key terms to establish the foundation for this journey we will take together.

The first term is Worship. According to Talmage Williams in *The Worshipgiver: One Who Gives as an Expression of Worship*; Worship is: “to ascribe worth, to glorify, to bow down, to prostrate oneself.”⁹¹ He continues:

Worshiping God is more than participating in worship activities, worship services, and worship experiences; it is the recognition and affirmation with our whole being that God really is sovereign God. Genuine worship of the true God involves the submitting of our minds, bodies, emotions, and spirits to God’s sovereign lordship. Our faith in God expresses itself in awe, adoration, and praise to the Eternal God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.⁹²

The second term is Giving. Williams defined Giving in the following way:

Giving grows out of who we are; Christian giving is an expression of our redeemed nature. If we are selfish and stingy, we will give grudgingly and sparingly. If we are loving and caring, we will give generously and graciously.⁹³

⁹¹ Talmage Williams, *Worshipgiver: One Who Gives as an Expression of Worship*, 2-3.

⁹² Williams, *Worshipgiver*, 4.

⁹³ Williams, *Worshipgiver*, 13.

Going through all of the information, we have in the Bible there are two fundamental reasons for giving: (1) expression of love and relationship, and (2) atonement for not maintaining love and relationship. The forms of giving which are related directly to the church are to provide for God's servants. So, in general, giving has to do with love, relationship and provision for those committed to God's service (ministry).

- Abraham's tithe was to a priest (Genesis 14:17-24)
- Tithing was instituted to provide for the priest (Leviticus 27:30-33 and Deuteronomy 14:22-29)
- David and the people gave for the Temple (1 Chronicles 29)

Questions

- 1) When it comes to Worship are you an attendee or a worshipper? Please refer to the definition.
- 2) Is tithing an objective that you are trying to reach or maintain?
- 3) Would you say that your giving is a reflection of love, relationship or provision for the church? You can only select the one that best fits your giving.
- 4) Take a moment to consider your giving in light of what worship is. Would you say that your giving is an element of worship?

Lesson 2 – Agrarian vs. Monetary

The Old Testament society was agrarian during the time the Laws of Moses were given, therefore God established the giving system based on the system they were in, and based on the relationship they had with God at the time. A key understanding on this journey is the difference in relationship between them and us.

In the Old Testament, love and atonement were expressed by: killing animals, burning grain, wheat, barley and the like. These practices are not applicable to our relationship with God. We are restored to God through Jesus Christ so the blood of animals is not needed for our atonement. Additionally, we are in a monetary system; therefore, the application of grain, wheat, barley and the like are not applicable to our system of commerce.

Then what are we to do with all of the Old Testament scripture that addresses giving based on a system that is not comparable to the system we have today? Can this information be transported into our worship setting in order to establish what giving is as an element of worship?

Picking up where lesson 1 left off we must first recognize that worship is not based on when we gather together. Too many believers restrict the concept of worship giving to worship activities or experiences. Worship is the response to having the relationship with God, it is “submitting to God’s sovereign lordship.” To use the name of the church Pastor Ricky Beatty is Senior Pastor of, we should have a “Life of Worship.” Our relationship with God is perpetual and not restricted to the established meeting times of The Church. Based on this if giving is an expression of a relationship with God then making giving an expression of worship cannot be restricted to just a moment in Church. Giving as an element of worship goes beyond the institution of The Church. At this point, it is clear to me that giving definitely has nothing to do with receiving anything from God. Giving to get from God would cause the giving not to be an element of worship.

With that being said we can clear up two scriptures that have been misinterpreted; Luke 6:38 and 2 Corinthians 9:10-11:

Luke 6:38 – give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap for the measure you give will be the measure you get back (NRSV).

This scripture has been used to convey to people that God will give to us based on what you give to God.

First, notice that if the text was addressing monetary giving it is offering a one for one; whatever you give you get back. That would mean if I give ten dollars I

would get back ten dollars. So, if I am only getting back what I gave, why give it? Why not just keep what you started with.

Secondly, if we would just note the context of this statement we would see the entire sixth chapter of Luke is dealing with forgiveness. More specifically look at verse 37, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.” The “it” in verse 38 is referring to forgiveness from verse 37. The same measure of forgiveness you give you will receive, one for one.

2 Corinthians 9:10-11 – He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us (NRSV).

This text clearly says ‘multiply your seed’, but the context says two powerful things to guide the understanding of the meaning. First, the multiplication is for sowing. Sowing in this chapter is to assist the community of believers. At best this is saying God will increase you so that you can give more. The increase is not for the giver it is for the community of believers. That would conclude that giving would prompt God to increase you to give more. Secondly, the increase is specifically for “the harvest of righteousness.” Righteousness is the lifestyle believers have as a reflection of our relationship with God; therefore, giving is the reflection of a believer’s relationship with God in worship. None of these components leads to giving to get more.

Questions

- 1) Is your giving a reflection of your love for God or based on obedience to the Law? Only select one, not both.
- 2) Now that the agrarian standards do not fit a monetary system, how will you determine what to give monetarily?
- 3) Since giving is not done to get, why should we give?

Lesson 3 – Tithing

Tithing has been presented as the foundation of the giving strategy of our church; but, has this position been evaluated against the Bible or has it been implied based on traditional practices?

The first occurrence of tithing (giving a tenth) is found in Genesis 14:17-20. Abram gave a tenth part to King Melchizedek of Salem who was a priest of God Most High. The first key to this story is what was the tenth based on? Abram has returned from defeating the Chedorlaomer with the kings of Sodom and Salem who fought with him. The king of Salem, Melchizedek, blessed Abram and in return Abram gave him a tenth of the property taken in battle. In order to understand Abram's reasoning we must go further in the text. Genesis 14:21-24 states that after Abram blessed the king of Salem, the king of Sodom says give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself. Abram responds, "I have sworn to the Lord, God Most High, maker of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal-thong or anything that is yours, so that you might not say, I have made Abram rich." The only portion Abram wanted was what his men ate and a share for the men who went with him. While we have focused on Melchizedek as a priest he was also the king of Salem. At the end of this chapter Abram has given everything away that was received from the battle. This tithe, if it can be called this, was based on the spoils of a battle. It was not based on Abram's personal possessions or property.

The next reference to a tenth being given is found in Genesis 28:18-22 when Jacob commits to give a tenth to God.

The key texts that we must look at are the Mosaic Law texts where a tithe is required to be given to God, Leviticus 27:30-33 and Deuteronomy 14:22-29. While these texts are generally similar, because of distinct differences we will address them separately.

Leviticus 27:30-33, the point of this chapter is redeeming offerings that have been committed to God. God is not requiring a tithe; the text says that the person has decided to give a portion to God. To redeem means the person wants or needs it back. In this section, we have always struggled with understanding the one-fifth penalty. The reason we have struggled is because we have tried to make this text a requirement to tithe so we concluded the penalty was to be assessed for not tithing. The penalty is added based on the value of the item the person wants back. The penalty is access because they want the item back. For example, a basket of fruit valued at ten dollars (\$10) is given, and then if the person wants the basket of fruit back they must give the priest twelve dollars (\$12), the value plus a twenty percent penalty. Basically, attempting to equate money to this process does not work. One reason is that money is used in this text to determine the value of the item being redeemed. Our economic system has changed therefore we cannot transport this concept into our system, and in order to transport it we must ignore the

beginning of the chapter which speaks to sacrificing people. If Christ has canceled this system, then all of it must be cancelled.

Deuteronomy 14:22-29, this text instructs the people to eat the tithe but every three years make the tithe available to the priest (Levites) because they did not get an allotment. If we attempt to transport this text, tithing is an element of worship in that the people celebrate God in a feast of what is being given. It is a means of provision every third year to the priest not the church. How might this be transported to the church today? Use the “tithes” to have a celebration meal every week to give God thanks for the provisions and every third year set the “tithe” aside for the priests. This would mean that none of the tithe could be used for expenses it must be used for a celebration for the people giving it.

Questions

- 1) What is the difference between giving tithes and being a giver?
- 2) Since tithing, as we know it, is not biblically applicable to worship how can we determine what to give to God?
- 3) If Jesus came that the Law would be fulfilled through Him, why have we based our giving primarily on tithing?

Lesson 4 – Tithing (part 2)

The book of Malachi will be addressed in this lesson. At times we use Malachi 3:8-10 as a support for tithing to the church.

Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.

The book of Malachi is a rebuke of the priest for not upholding the law and standards of God that they were set apart for. The priests were more concerned about their well being than the standards of God. They received blemished and lame animals, which was against God’s law and standards. Malachi 2:3 says, “I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and I will put you out of my presence.” Based on their selfish disregard for God the priests were rejected by God.

When we arrive at the third chapter of Malachi God shifts the discussion to restoration, offering the Temple a means to return to God. This is not a rebuke of the people. It is a continuation of the rebuke to the priests, who are responsible for the Temple. In order to understand verses 8-10 we must understand verses 6 and 7.

For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished. Ever since the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’

The question at the beginning of verse 8 is in response to the question in verse 7. God, speaking of a coming messenger, instructs the Temple to return, but then God offers the response to the question that is on the mind of the nation, how shall we return? God reverts back to the discussion of tithes and offerings because this was the reason given in chapter one for the priest being rebuked by God. The discussion in chapter three is in the context of restoration not as an instruction for giving.

How are they robbing God, in their tithes and offerings? We already understand that tithing is not applicable after Christ’s resurrection but offerings are included here. In this section, God informs the nation they are cursed. Verse 10 is in response to the question in verse 7, how shall we return. God informs the nation that before a reunion is considered the full tithe must be brought to the storehouse.

There were no storehouses at the Temple. Remember according to the Mosaic Law the tithe was to be given to the priest every third year in the city where the people lived not at the Temple site. Storehouses, built by Hezekiah at the Temple site, caused a problem because the priest at the Temple site could not consume all that was brought. The Church is not the storehouse. It has never been the storehouse. So bringing my tithe to the Church is not what this text intends.

The priests were rebuked because they were concerned about their provisions because the people were not doing what the Mosaic Law instructed them to do. The storehouse was the location in each city where the tithe for the priests was stored every third year. The Church has generalized this chapter in order to bring in money. In order for this text to apply we would have to accept that we are cursed and in need of restoration. With the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and a belief and commitment by us we are not cursed, therefore this text is not applicable to a redeemed body of believers seeking to worship God in spirit and truth.

The end of chapter 3 continues the theme of restoration. These verses have been used to take advantage of material desires by leading people to believe giving will prompt God to give back more. God is not saying bring tithes and offerings and you will receive these things. In these verses, God is reaffirming the promises that have already been made. These verses are a reminder of what is being forfeited by remaining away from God. This is to prompt them to return to God.

Questions

- 1) Are you worshipping God in a cursed Church or a restored Church?
- 2) Should our giving be based on deliverance from a curse or relationship with the Savior?
- 3) If we are not supposed to give in order to get something, why should we give to God?

Lesson 5 – New Testament Giving

At this juncture in our study some would conclude that we should not give to God. This would be extremely erroneous. Giving is a primary element of expressing worship to God; therefore, we must reshape our concept of giving in order to understand it as an element of worship.

The power struggle of the Old Testament is between self-control and God-control. God desires to lead humankind according to a love relationship. Humankind continually elects to make their decisions ignoring God. As we move into the New Testament notice that there is a progression of giving.

Our first and primary gift to God is our self. Humankind will never understand the power and blessing of giving until we surrender self-control for God-control. In order to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ we must surrender our will for God's will. In 2 Corinthians 8:5, Paul uses the believers in Macedonia as an example of giving by stating "they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us." As the definition in lesson one says: "Giving grows out of who we are; Christian giving is an expression of our redeemed nature." Only believers can give to God in worship. The relationship governs the elements. The elements cannot govern the relationship. We can never get to the place where we think we have a relationship with God because we gave. Our giving must be a reflection of the relationship God has freely granted us through grace. Once we are under God-control every element of our being is controlled by God's will. Satisfying God is our primary objective in everything we do as believers in Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches the fundamental strategy for giving is built on stewardship, the management of what we have. Stewardship produces the means to give to God.

There is a theme of giving embedded in Acts chapters one through five. At the end of chapters two and four we are informed that the believers were lead by the Spirit to sell their possessions to care for the community. Remember one of the reasons for giving in the Old Testament was provision for the priests. In the New Testament the priesthood is expanded to all believers so this giving concept is to provide for everyone in the community so that everyone will be able to surrender to God-controlled living.

In Acts 4:32-37 we are informed of a Levite, a native of Cyprus, named Joseph who the Apostles gave the name Barnabas. He sold a field and laid the money at the Apostle's feet. This information is to display Barnabas' surrender to God and then to the Apostles. Laying the money at the Apostle's feet is a display of surrender and dependence on the community for provision.

Immediately after this story, we are informed about Ananias and Sapphira. They also sold a piece of property but they withheld part of the proceeds, as well as laid a portion of the proceeds at the Apostle Peter's feet. The issue was that they misrepresented their

intentions. They were not seeking to surrender or depend on the community because they kept part of the proceeds. They were being governed by self-control not God-control therefore they died.

This embedded theme shows that God wants giving to be governed by the Spirit. Once the tithe is not applicable to our situation of grace we must seek to apply the concept of giving in this time of grace. Once we surrender to God-control, we will not be defined by what we possess. New Testament giving is based on surrendering all that is I for all that is God. As a God-controlled Disciple we are provided for according to the Spirit from within the community of believers.

Questions

- 1) Do you prefer being told what to give or being led in what to give?
- 2) Are you willing to surrender to God-control in your life, which will impact your giving?
- 3) Since giving is a reflection of our relationship with God, is a tenth of what you have too much or too little to give to God?

Read 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 before the next lesson

Lesson 6 – How is giving incorporated as an element of worship?

As stated in lesson one and two our life is worship therefore the element of giving must be a component of our life not just a part of a worship service. Giving to God, as reflected in the New Testament, is expressed in surrendering to provide for the community of believers.

In the book of Acts and in Second Corinthians, we find that the key element in giving is liberty. In 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul uses the terms voluntarily and freely to describe the attitude and atmosphere of giving. In order for giving to be an element of worship there must be an atmosphere of liberty. If giving is a reflection of a personal love relationship with God, there must be the opportunity to refuse to give. In order for giving to be worship, it cannot be compelled or recognized. If, in any regard, giving is used as a form of recognition or acceptance, it is no longer an element of worship but the result of self-gratification.

The gifts that are freely given as part of worship must be publicly and reverently offered to God. In Acts, this is accomplished by laying the gift at the Apostle's feet. Few are living in communities like this; therefore, the point is not to imitate them but to learn from the reverent sincerity of their expression.

The focus of giving can no longer be the physical building and expenses related to it, New Testament giving placed the believers before the location of worship. Our intent and focus must change to release according to the direction of the Holy Spirit not based on any prompting to address the needs of our worship community so that believers can be free to be God-controlled. The mature are God-controlled so that others can follow to become God-controlled.

Paul speaks of abundance in 2 Corinthians 9 in the form of bountifully. His concept is that each must give what they want to give but not to receive more. Paul informs the Corinthians that God will multiple your seed for sowing. Paul's concept is that God gives abundance for sharing not for hoarding. Giving as an element of worship strengthens the community of believers to expand the will of God.

The intention and motivation make giving an element of worship not the form or process of collection. We must be mindful that the form and process of collection establishes an environment of liberty so that everyone giving does so cheerfully, liberally, and freely.

Questions

- 1) Review the way you have been giving, or not giving, is it God-controlled or self-controlled?

- 2) What would it take to have an environment of liberty and present the gifts reverently to God?
- 3) Have you viewed increase as God giving you more to give back to God? Explain why or why not.

F. Project Journal Format

DSDM 590 DOCTOR OF MINISTRY – PROJECT JOURNAL

Project Topic: Incorporating Giving as an Integral Part of Worship at Blessed Harvest Institute

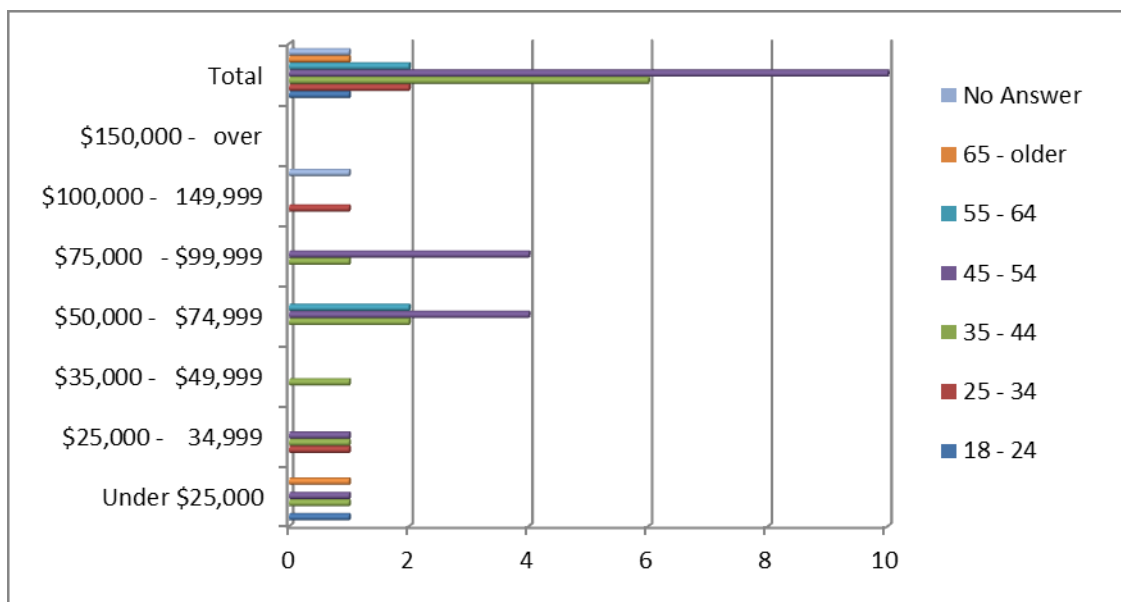
Journal Entry I – Document your experiences with giving prior to your participation in this project. Please include your understanding, attitude, thoughts and feelings.

Journal Entry II through VII – Now that you have completed the Bible Study Session please answer each of the following questions with clear and candid responses. Remember, your responses are anonymous. To identify any behavioral modifications and attitude adjustments the questions will be the same for journal entries II through VII.

- 1) What are your thoughts concerning the information you received on giving?
- 2) How did this information make you feel?
- 3) How did this information conflict or support your current understanding of giving?
- 4) Do you agree with the information? Please explain
- 5) Will this information changed your approach to giving? Please explain
- 6) What questions do you have in reference to the information you have received?

G. Focus Group Age/Income Data

Age Range	Under \$25,000	\$25,000 - 34,999	\$35,000 - 49,999	\$50,000 - 74,999	\$75,000 - 99,999	\$100,000 - 149,999	\$150,000 - over	Total	
18 - 24	1							1	4%
25 - 34		1				1		2	9%
35 - 44	1	1	1	2	1			6	26%
45 - 54	1	1		4	4			10	43%
55 - 64				2				2	9%
65 - older	1							1	4%
No Answer						1		1	4%
Total	4	3	1	8	5	2		23	
	17%	13%	4%	35%	22%	9%			



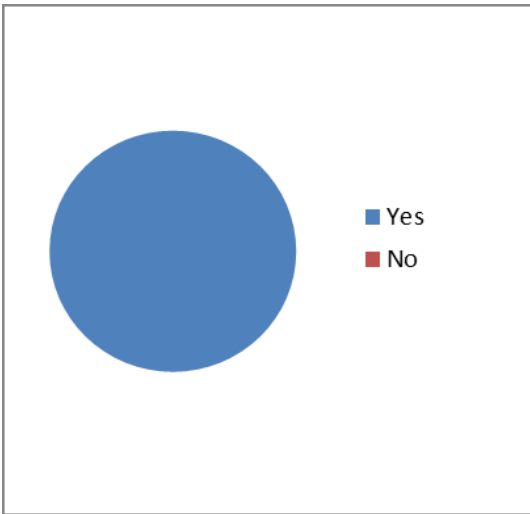
H. Focus Group Data Comparison with Graphs

Pre-Project Focus Group

Salvation

How Many answered

Yes	23	100%
No	0	0
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

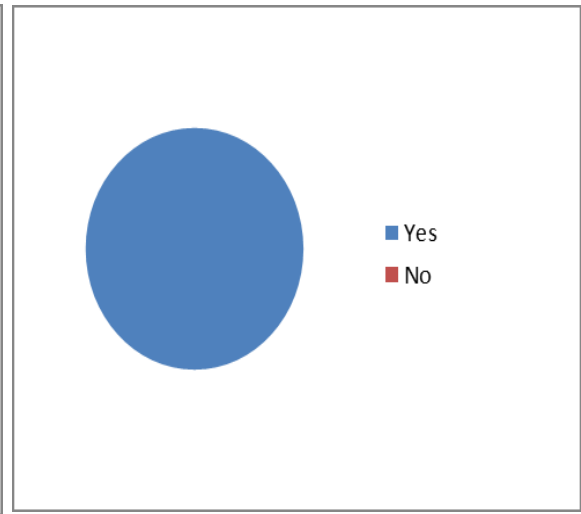


Post-Project Focus Group

Salvation

How Many answered

Yes	21	100%
No	0	0
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>

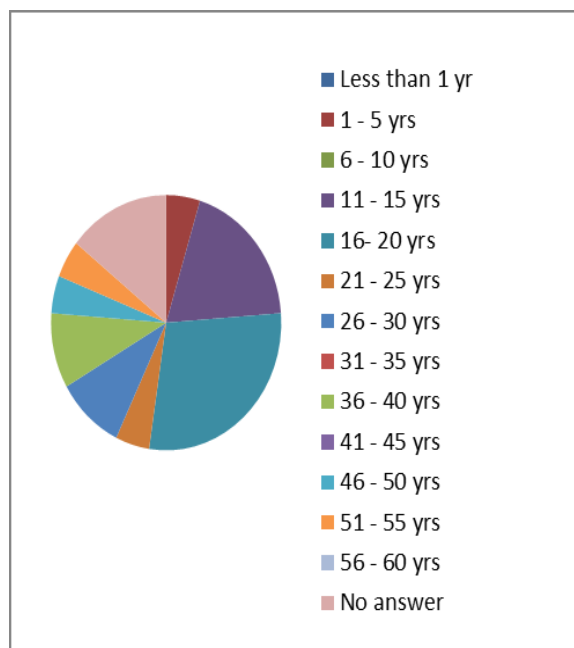
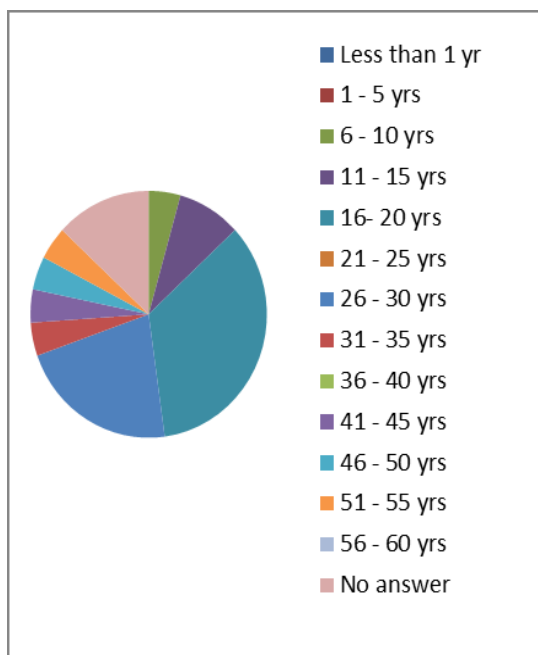


Pre-Project Focus Group

Less than 1 yr	0	0%
1 - 5 yrs	0	0%
6 - 10 yrs	1	4%
11 - 15 yrs	2	9%
16- 20 yrs	8	35%
21 - 25 yrs	0	0%
26 - 30 yrs	5	22%
31 - 35 yrs	1	4%
36 - 40 yrs	0	0%
41 - 45 yrs	1	4%
46 - 50 yrs	1	4%
51 - 55 yrs	1	4%
56 - 60 yrs	0	0%
No answer	3	13%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

Post-Project Focus Group

Less than 1 yr	0	0%
1 - 5 yrs	1	5%
6 - 10 yrs	0	0%
11 - 15 yrs	4	19%
16- 20 yrs	6	29%
21 - 25 yrs	1	5%
26 - 30 yrs	2	10%
31 - 35 yrs	0	0%
36 - 40 yrs	2	10%
41 - 45 yrs	0	0%
46 - 50 yrs	1	5%
51 - 55 yrs	1	5%
56 - 60 yrs	0	0%
No answer	3	14%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

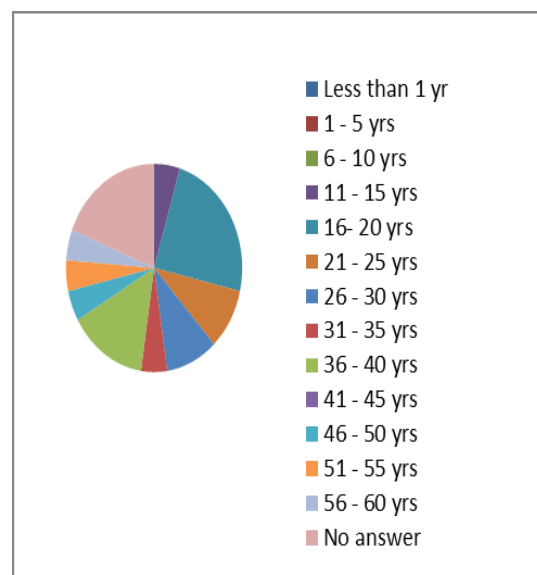
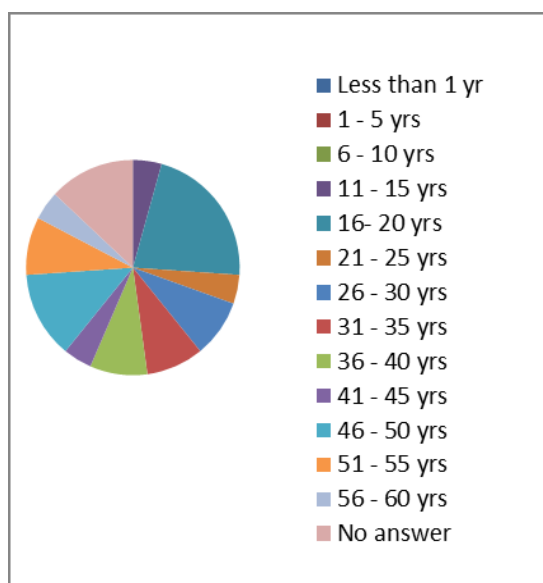
Number of years Church experience

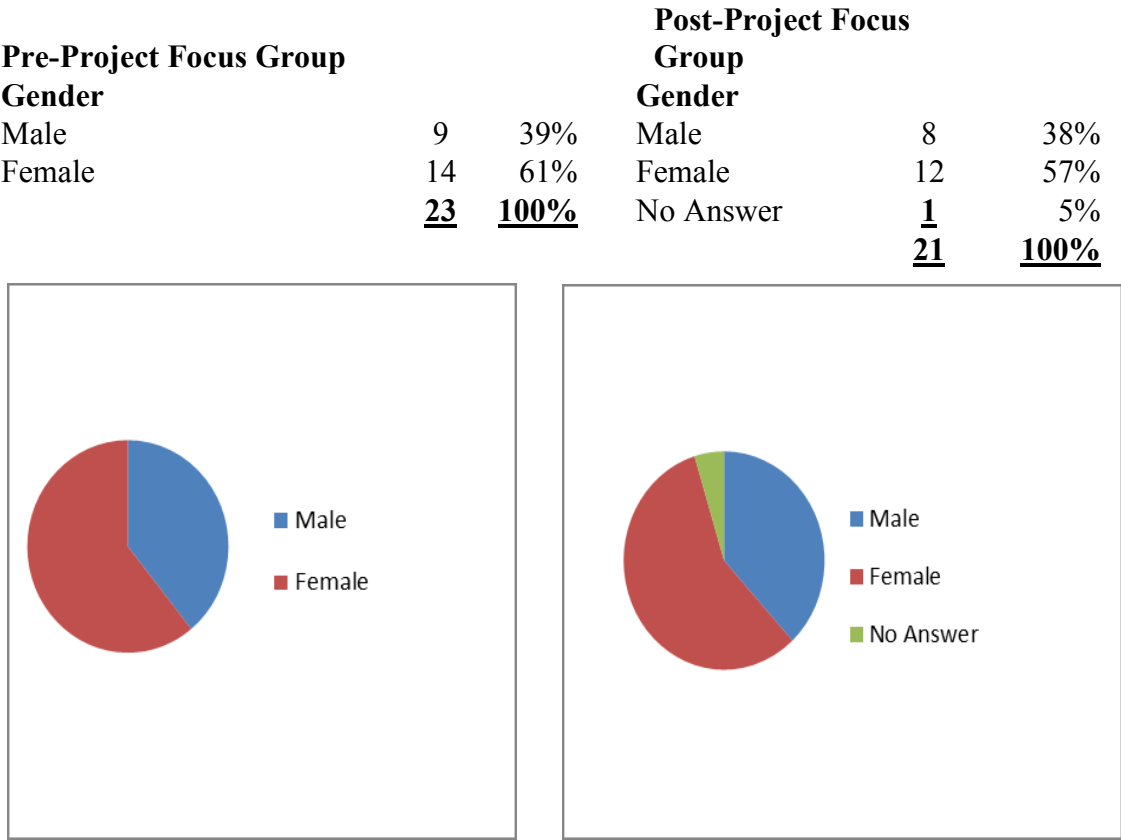
Less than 1 yr	0	0%
1 - 5 yrs	0	0%
6 - 10 yrs	0	0%
11 - 15 yrs	1	4%
16- 20 yrs	5	22%
21 - 25 yrs	1	4%
26 - 30 yrs	2	9%
31 - 35 yrs	2	9%
36 - 40 yrs	2	9%
41 - 45 yrs	1	4%
46 - 50 yrs	3	13%
51 - 55 yrs	2	9%
56 - 60 yrs	1	4%
No answer	3	13%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

Post-Project Focus Group

Number of years Church experience

Less than 1 yr	0	0%
1 - 5 yrs	0	0%
6 - 10 yrs	0	0%
11 - 15 yrs	1	5%
16- 20 yrs	5	24%
21 - 25 yrs	2	10%
26 - 30 yrs	2	10%
31 - 35 yrs	1	5%
36 - 40 yrs	3	14%
41 - 45 yrs	0	0%
46 - 50 yrs	1	5%
51 - 55 yrs	1	5%
56 - 60 yrs	1	5%
No answer	4	19%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



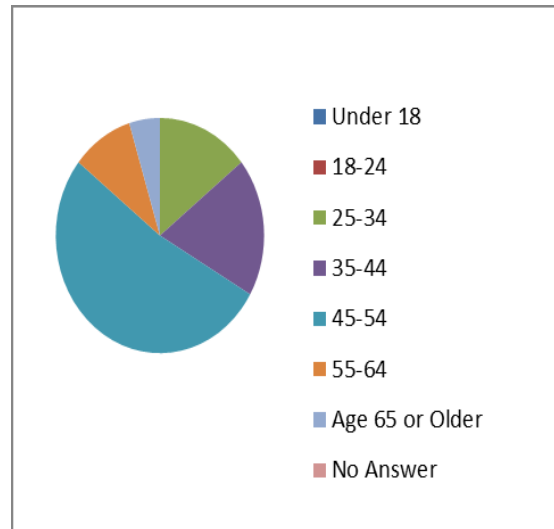
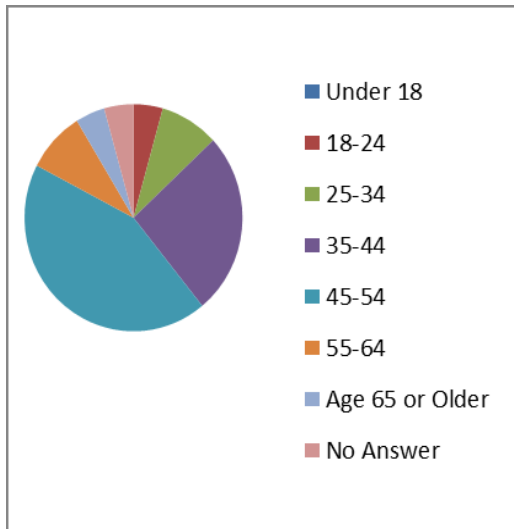


Pre-Project Focus Group**Age Groups**

Under 18	0	0%
18-24	1	4%
25-34	2	9%
35-44	6	26%
45-54	10	43%
55-64	2	9%
Age 65 or Older	1	4%
No Answer	1	4%
Total	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

Post-Project Focus Group**Age Groups**

Under 18	0	0%
18-24	0	0%
25-34	3	14%
35-44	4	19%
45-54	11	52%
55-64	2	10%
Age 65 or Older	1	5%
No Answer	0	0%
Total	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>

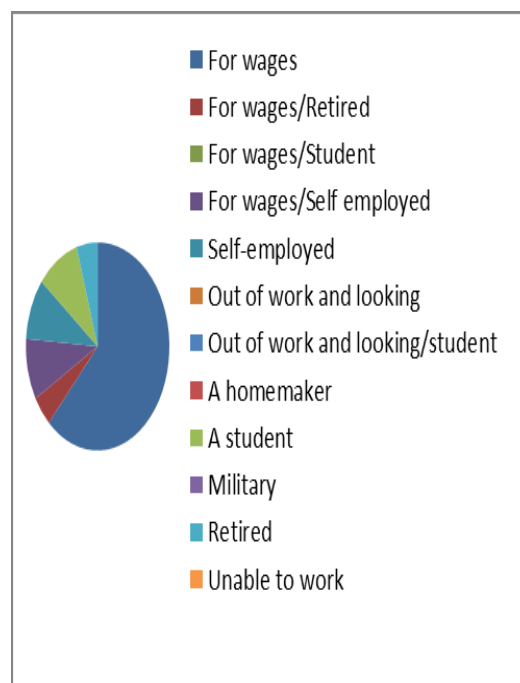
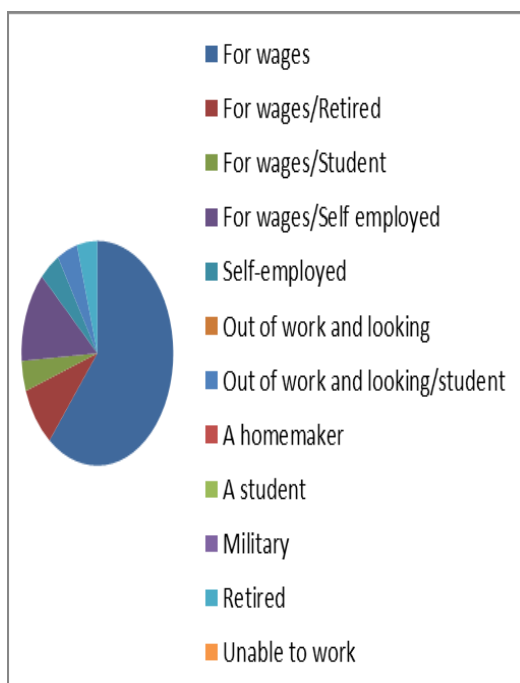


Pre-Project Focus Group**Employment status**

For wages	14	61%
For wages/Retired	2	9%
For wages/Student	1	4%
For wages/Self employed	3	13%
Self-employed	1	4%
Out of work and looking	0	0%
Out of work and looking/student	1	4%
A homemaker	0	0%
A student	0	0%
Military	0	0%
Retired	1	4%
Unable to work	0	0%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

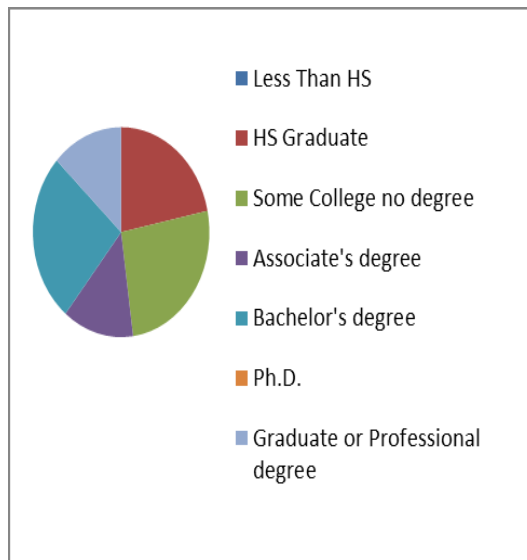
Post-Project Focus Group**Employment status**

For wages	13	62%
For wages/Retired	1	5%
For wages/Student	0	0%
For wages/Self employed	2	10%
Self-employed	2	10%
Out of work and looking	0	0%
Out of work and looking/student	0	0%
A homemaker	0	0%
A student	2	10%
Military	0	0%
Retired	1	5%
Unable to work	0	0%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>

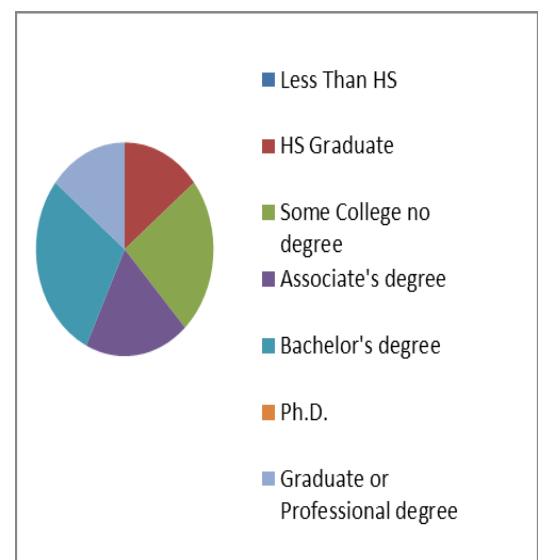


Pre-Project Focus Group**Education**

Less Than HS	0	0%
HS Graduate	5	22%
Some College no degree	6	26%
Associate's degree	3	13%
Bachelor's degree	6	26%
Ph.D.	0	0%
Graduate or Professional degree	3	13%
Total	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

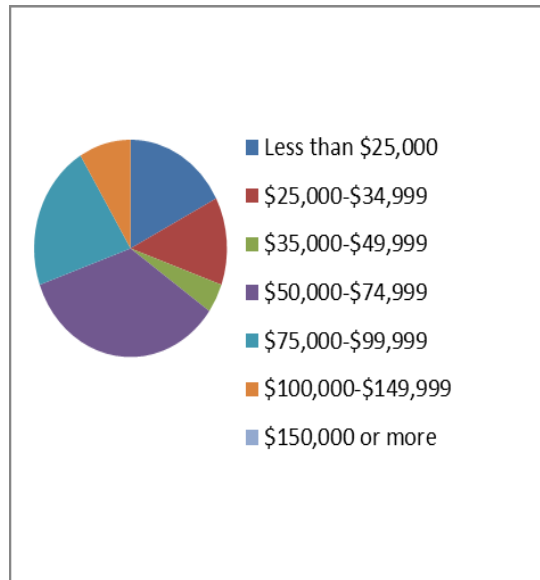
**Post-Project Focus Group****Education**

Less Than HS	0	0%
HS Graduate	3	14%
Some College no degree	5	24%
Associate's degree	4	19%
Bachelor's degree	6	29%
Ph.D.	0	0%
Graduate or Professional degree	3	14%
Total	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>

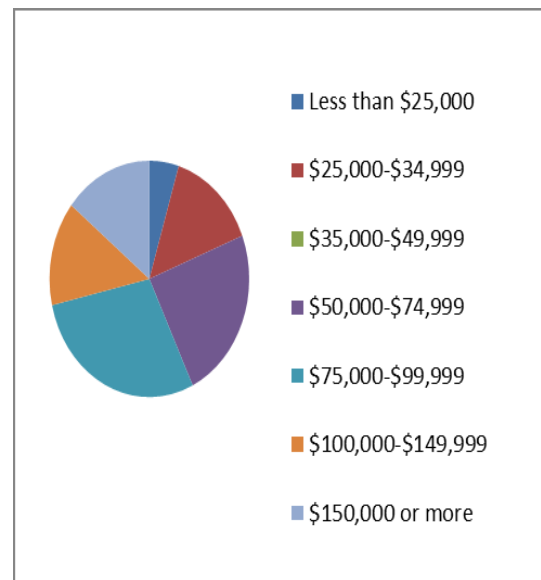


Pre-Project Focus Group**Total Household Income**

Less than \$25,000	4	17%
\$25,000-\$34,999	3	13%
\$35,000-\$49,999	1	4%
\$50,000-\$74,999	8	35%
\$75,000-\$99,999	5	22%
\$100,000-\$149,999	2	9%
\$150,000 or more	0	0%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Focus Group****Total Household Income**

Less than \$25,000	1	5%
\$25,000-\$34,999	3	14%
\$35,000-\$49,999	0	0%
\$50,000-\$74,999	5	24%
\$75,000-\$99,999	6	29%
\$100,000-\$149,999	3	14%
\$150,000 or more	3	14%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

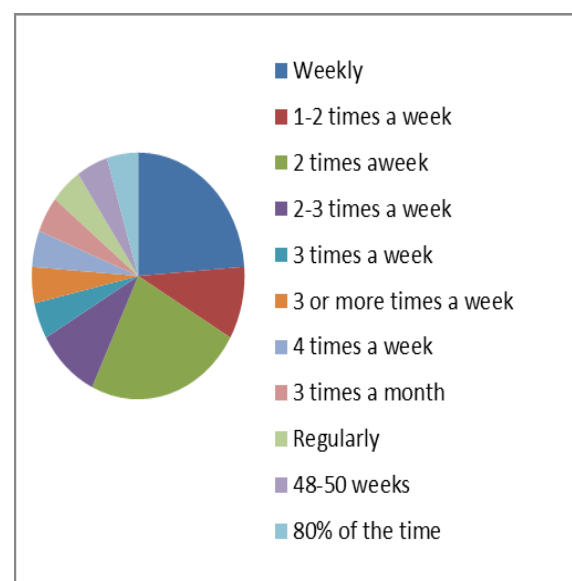
1. How often do you attend church?

weekly	3	13%
twice a week	12	52%
three times a week	3	13%
1-2 times a week	1	4%
twice a month	1	4%
2-4 times a month	1	4%
3-4 Sundays a month	1	4%
Regularly	1	4%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

Post-Project Focus Group

4. How often do you attend church?

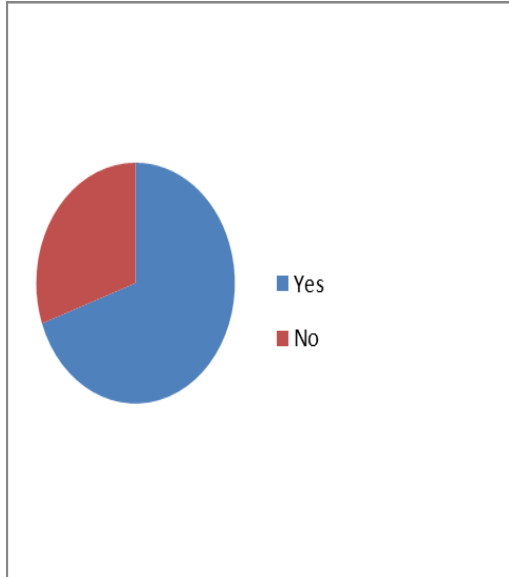
Weekly	5	24%
1-2 times a week	2	10%
2 times a week	5	24%
2-3 times a week	2	10%
3 times a week	1	5%
3 or more times a week	1	5%
4 times a week	1	5%
3 times a month	1	5%
Regularly	1	5%
48-50 weeks	1	5%
80% of the time	1	5%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

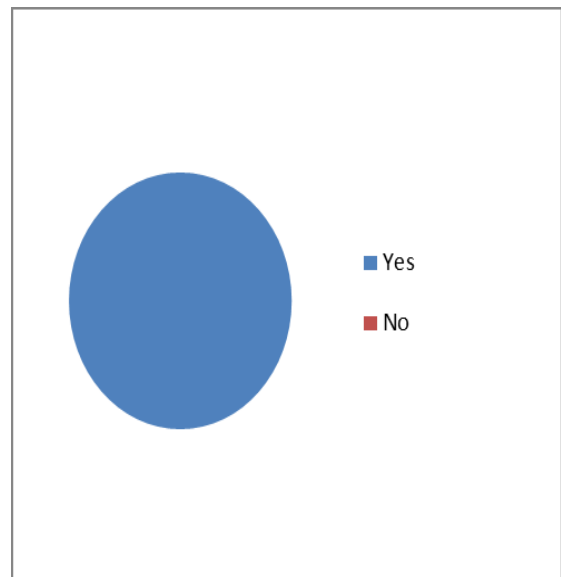
2. Is there a relationship between attending church and worshipping God?

Yes	16	70%
No	7	30%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Focus Group**

5. Is there a relationship between attending church and worshipping God?

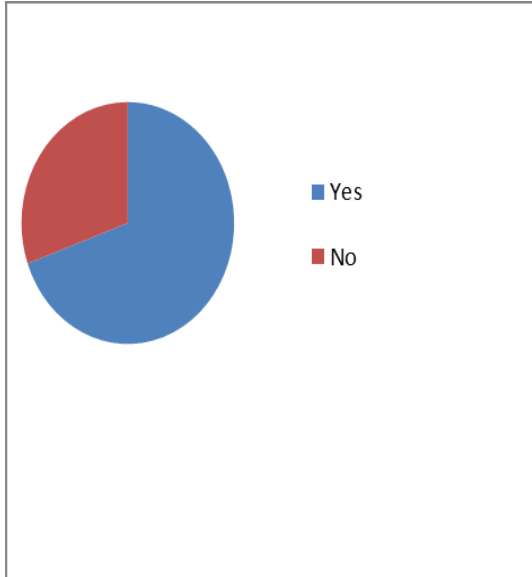
Yes	100	100%
No	0	0%
	<u>100</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

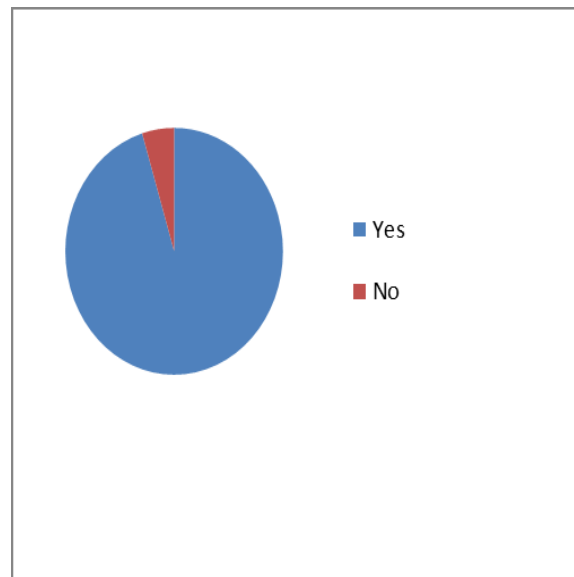
3. Is giving required to worship God?

Yes	16	70%
No	7	30%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Focus Group**

6. Is giving required to worship God?

Yes	20	95%
No	1	5%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>

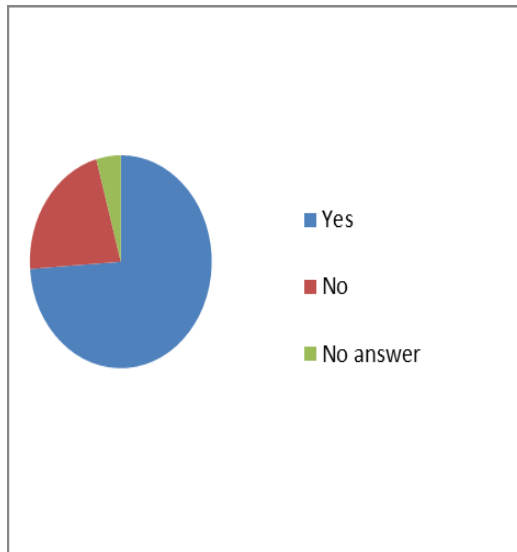


Pre-Project Focus Group

4. Is the method we use for giving an element of worship?

Yes	17	74%
No	5	22%
No answer	1	4%

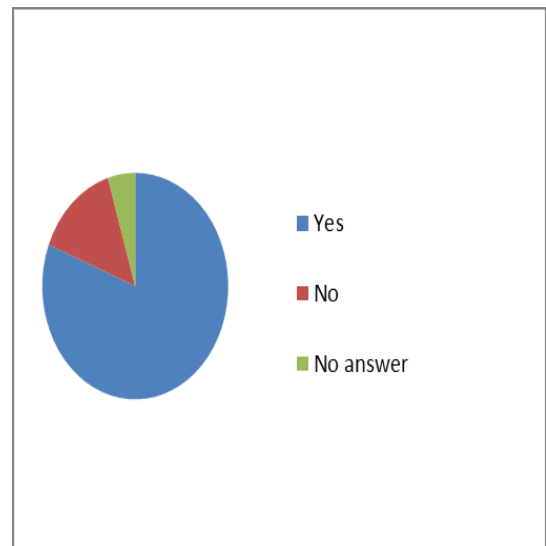
23 **100%**

**Post-Project Focus Group**

7. Is the method we use for giving an element of worship?

Yes	17	81%
No	3	14%
No answer	1	5%

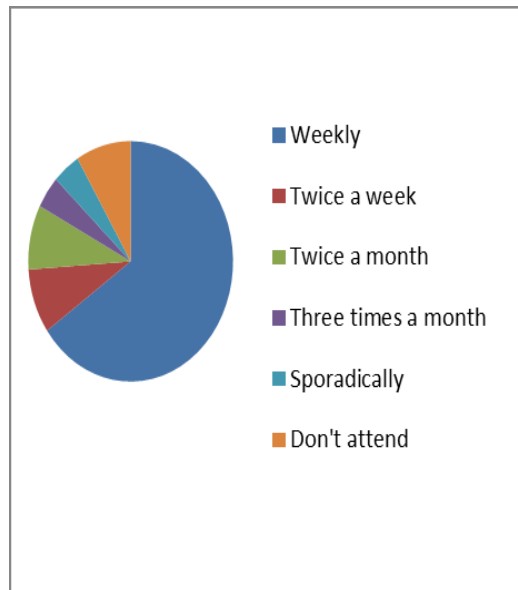
21 **100%**



Pre-Project Focus Group

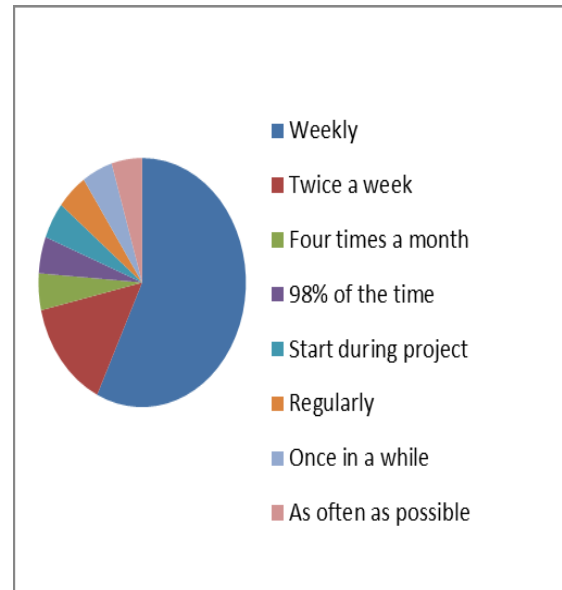
5. How often do you attend Bible Study?

Weekly	15	65%
Twice a week	2	9%
Twice a month	2	9%
Three times a month	1	4%
Sporadically	1	4%
Don't attend	2	9%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Focus Group**

8. How often do you attend Bible Study?

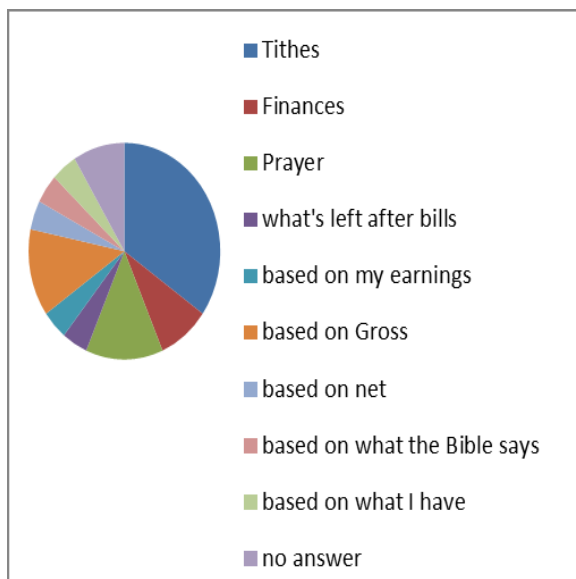
Weekly	12	57%
Twice a week	3	14%
Four times a month	1	5%
98% of the time	1	5%
Start during project	1	5%
Regularly	1	5%
Once in a while	1	5%
As often as possible	1	5%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

6. How do you determine what you will give God?

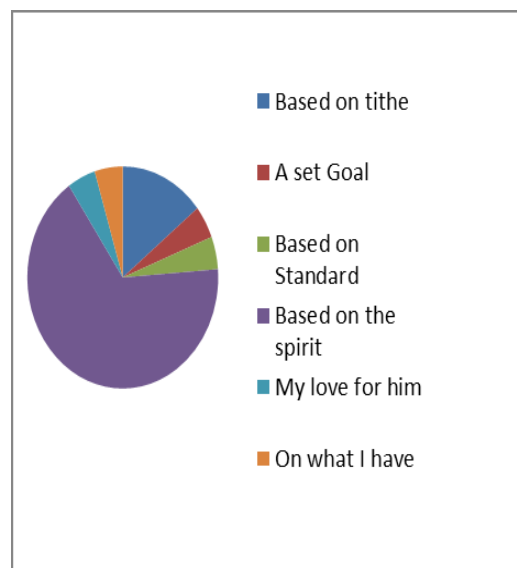
Tithes	8	35%
Finances	2	9%
Prayer	3	13%
what's left after bills	1	4%
based on my earnings	1	4%
based on Gross	3	13%
based on net	1	4%
based on what the Bible says	1	4%
based on what I have	1	4%
no answer	2	9%
	23	100%



Post-Project Focus Group

9. How do you determine what you will give God?

Based on tithe	3	14%
A set Goal	1	5%
Based on Standard	1	5%
Based on the spirit	14	67%
My love for him	1	5%
On what I have	1	5%
	21	100%



Pre-Project Focus Group

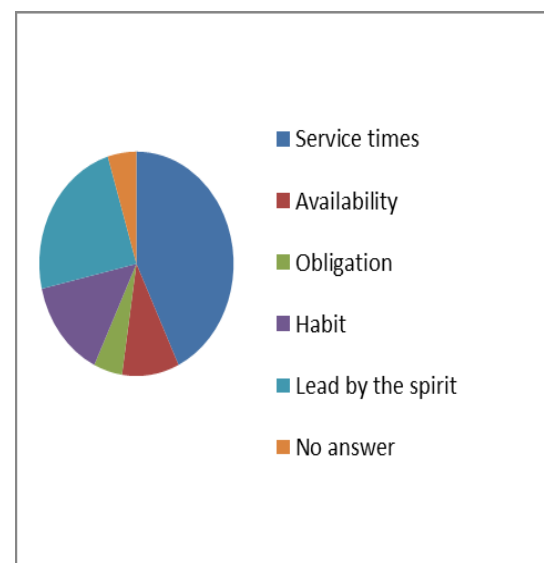
7. How do you determine when you attend church?

Tradition	6	26%
The time set for worship	3	13%
because it's Sunday	3	13%
based on my relationship	3	13%
when the doors are open	1	4%
based on the bible	3	13%
what I know to be right	1	4%
when I can	1	4%
based on how I feel	1	4%
no answer	1	4%
	23	100%

**Post –Project Focus Group**

10. How do you determine when you attend church?

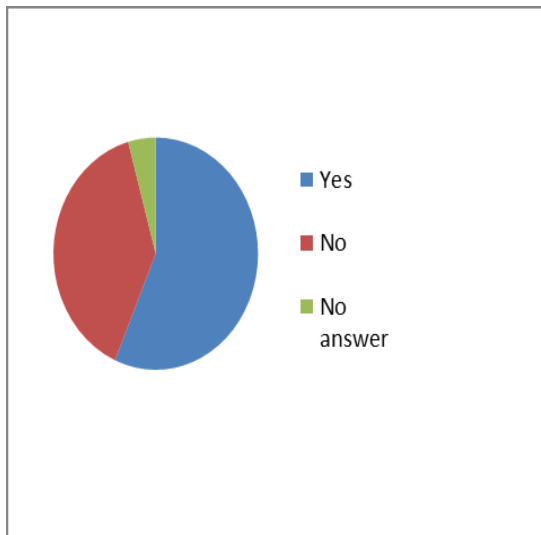
Service times	9	43%
Availability	2	10%
Obligation	1	5%
Habit	3	14%
Lead by the spirit	5	24%
No answer	1	5%
	21	100%



Pre-Project Focus Group

8. Should tithing be a required element of worship?

Yes	13	57%
No	9	39%
No answer	1	4%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Focus Group**

11. Should tithing be a required element of worship?

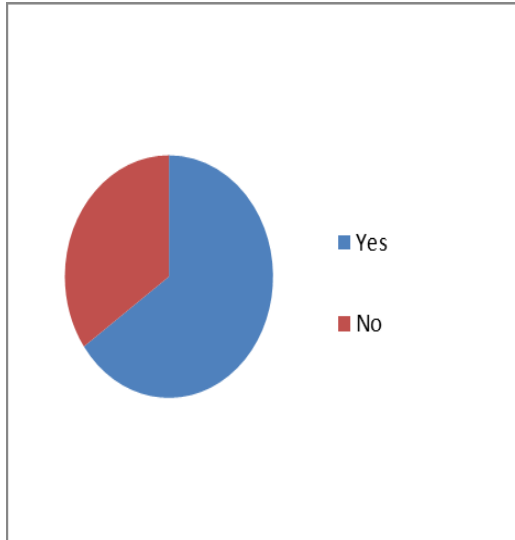
Yes	10	48%
No	11	52%
No answer	0	0%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

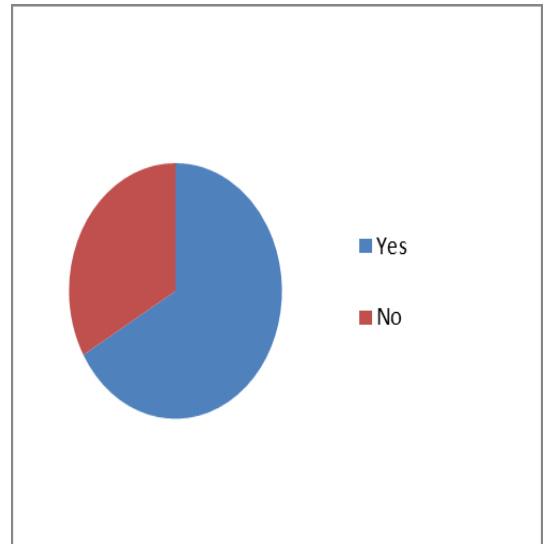
9. Are you a biblical giver (Is your giving based on scripture)?

Yes	15	65%
No	8	35%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Focus Group**

12. Are you a biblical giver (Is your giving based on scripture)?

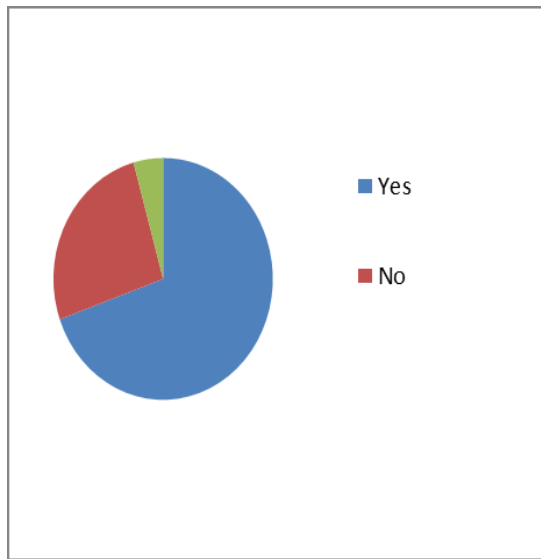
Yes	14	67%
No	7	33%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

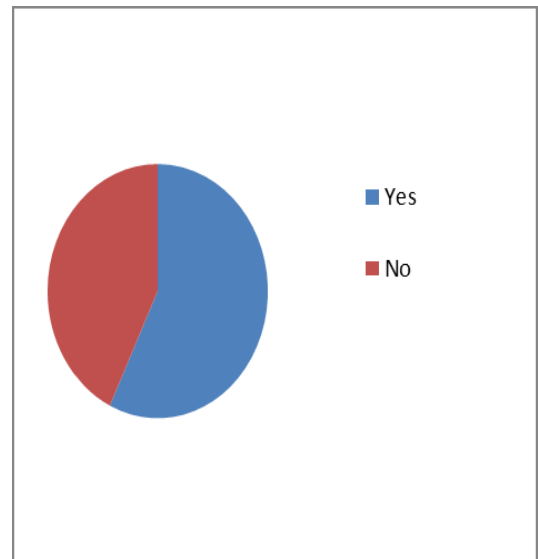
10. Is your giving a reflection of your relationship with God?

Yes	16	70%
No	6	26%
No answer	1	4%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Focus Group**

13. Is your giving a reflection of your relationship with God?

Yes	12	57%
No	9	43%
No answer	0	0%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

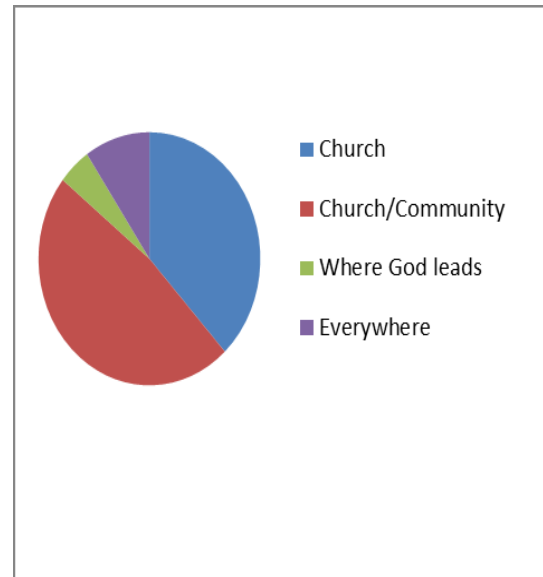
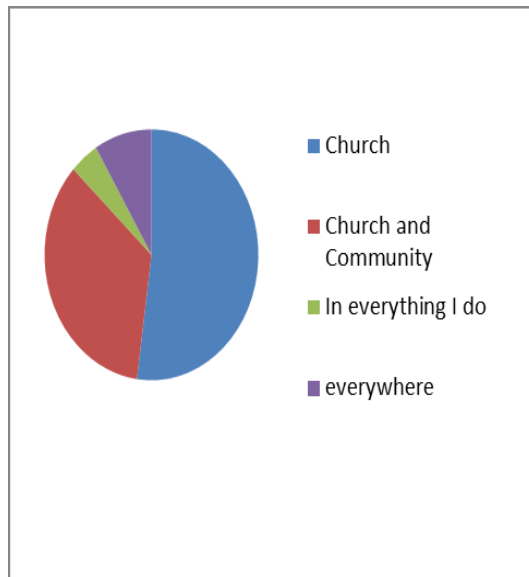
11. Where do you give to God?

Church	12	52%
Church and Community	8	35%
In everything I do	1	4%
everywhere	2	9%

23 **100%****Post-Project Focus Group**

14. Where do you give to God?

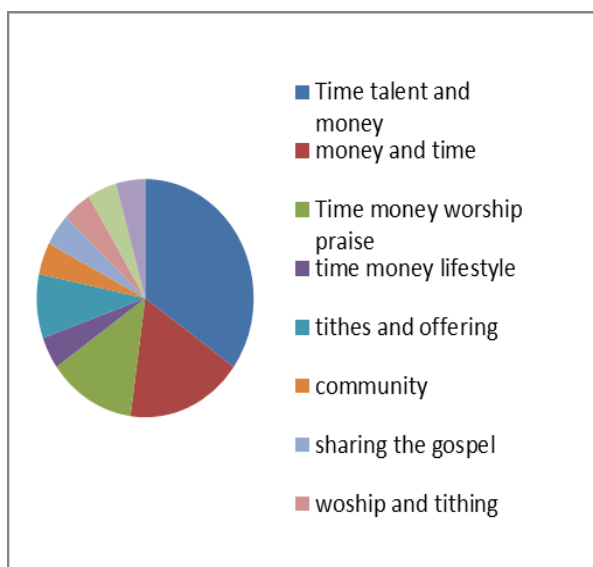
Church	8	38%
Church/Community	10	48%
Where God leads	1	5%
Everywhere	2	10%

21 **100%**

Pre-Project Focus Group

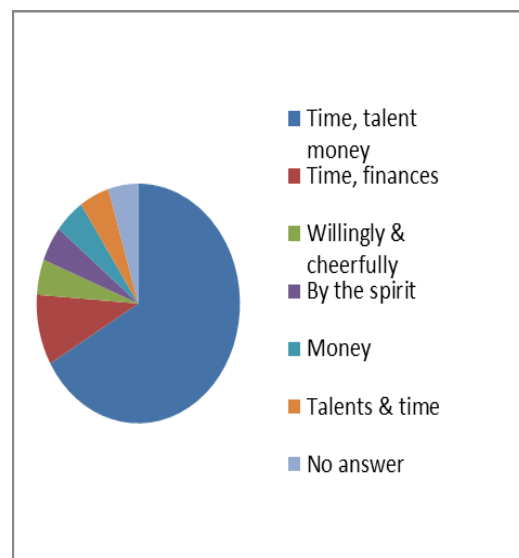
12. How do you give to God?

Time talent and money	8	35%
money and time	4	17%
Time money worship praise	3	13%
time money lifestyle	1	4%
tithes and offering	2	9%
community	1	4%
sharing the gospel	1	4%
woship and tithing	1	4%
Online	1	4%
no answer	1	4%
<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>	

**Post-Project Focus Group**

15. How do you give to God?

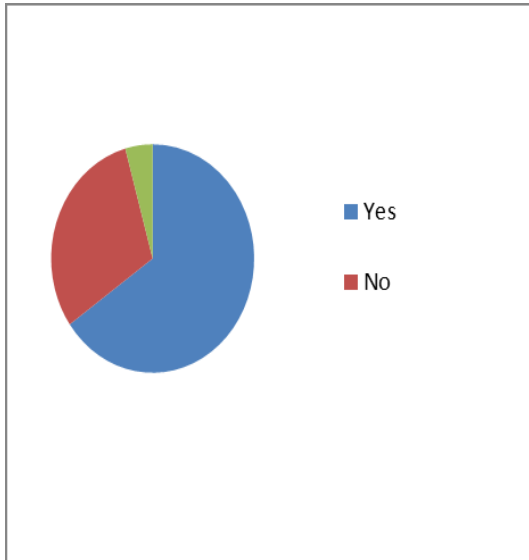
Time, talent money	14	67%
Time, finances	2	10%
Willingly & cheerfully	1	5%
By the spirit	1	5%
Money	1	5%
Talents & time	1	5%
No answer	1	5%
<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>	



Pre-Project Focus Group

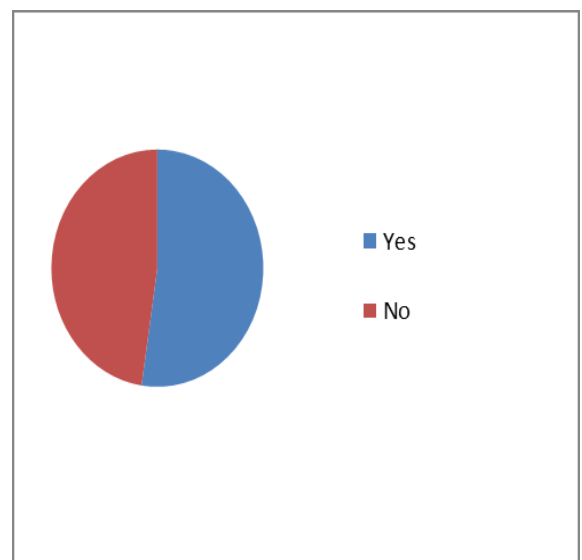
13. Can you serve God without attending church?

Yes	15	65%
No	7	30%
No answer	1	4%
	<u>23</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Focus Group**

16. Can you serve God without attending church?

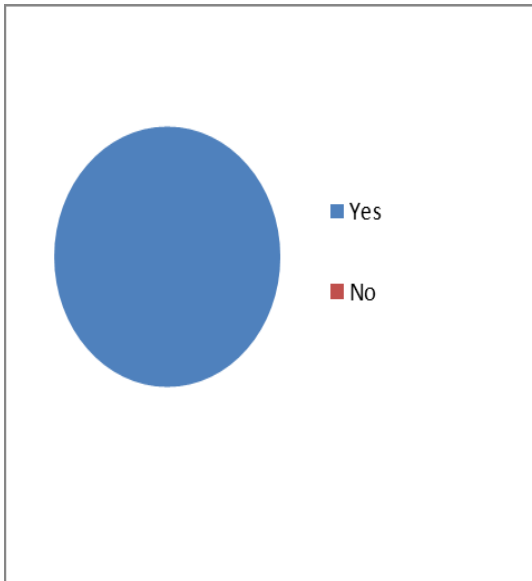
Yes	11	52%
No	10	48%
No answer	0	0%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

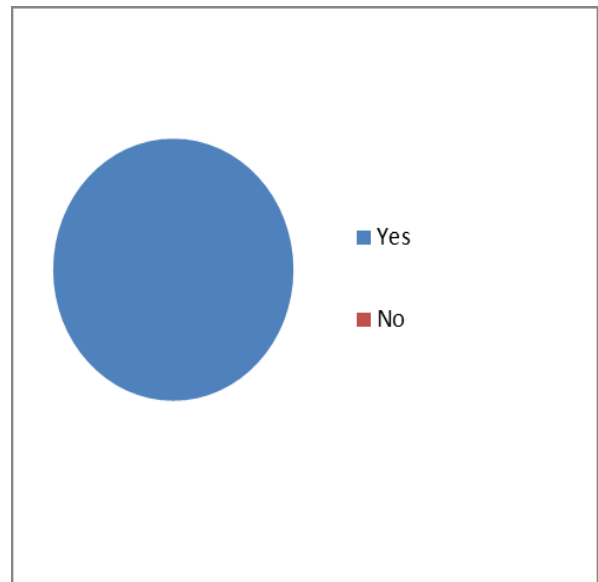
1. Is this your second survey during the project experience?

Yes	21	100%
No	0	0%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Focus Group**

3. Were you a part of the focus group?

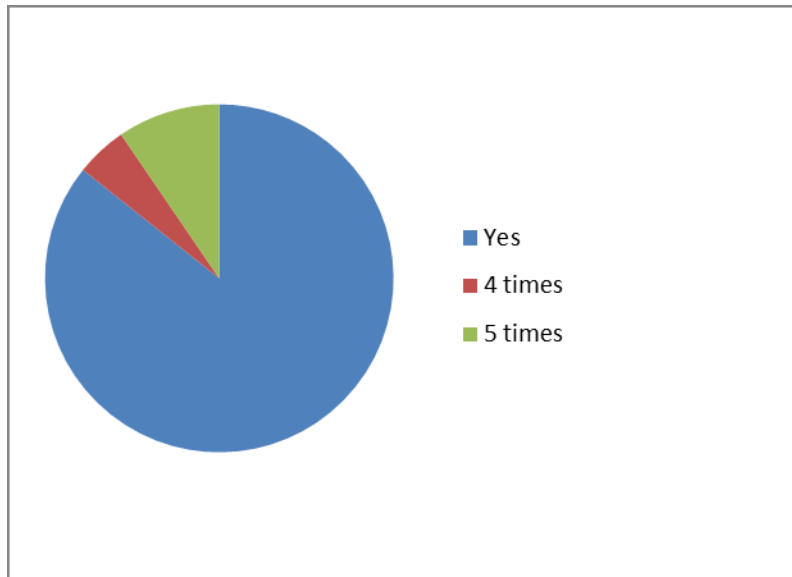
Yes	21	100%
No	0	0%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Post-Project Focus Group

2. Did you attend all six lessons? If no, please put the number of lessons you attended in the space beside the answer "No".

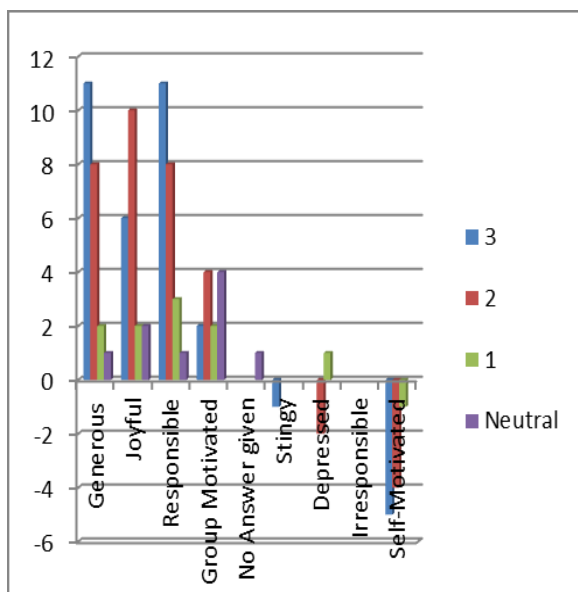
Yes	18	86%
4 times	1	5%
5 times	2	10%
	<u>21</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Focus Group

Rate yourself within your personal life
excluding Church:

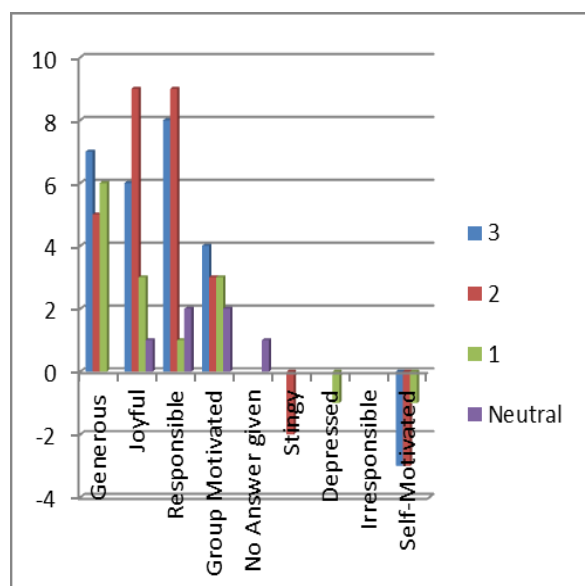
	3	2	1	Neutral
Generous	11	8	2	1
Joyful	6	10	2	2
Responsible	11	8	3	1
Group Motivated	2	4	2	4
No Answer given				1
Stingy	-1			
Depressed		-2	1	
Irresponsible				
Self-Motivated	-5	-4	-1	



Post Project Focus Group

Rate yourself within your personal life
excluding Church:

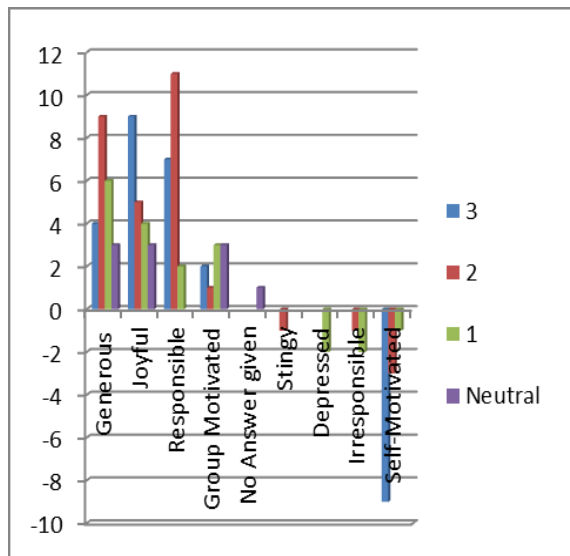
	3	2	1	Neutral
Generous	7	5	6	
Joyful	6	9	3	1
Responsible	8	9	1	2
Group Motivated	4	3	3	2
No Answer given				1
Stingy		-2		
Depressed			-1	
Irresponsible				
Self-Motivated	-3	-3	-1	



Pre-Project Focus Group

Rate yourself as a worshipper:

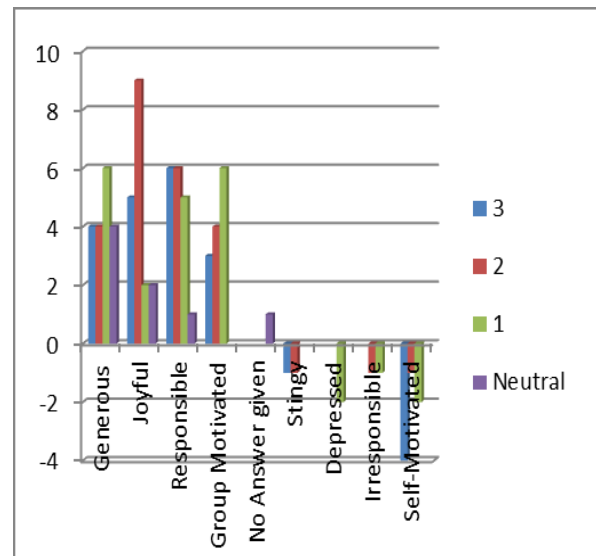
	3	2	1	Neutral
Generous	4	9	6	3
Joyful	9	5	4	3
Responsible	7	11	2	
Group Motivated	2	1	3	3
No Answer given				1
Stingy		-1		
Depressed			-2	
Irresponsible		-1	-2	
Self-Motivated	-9	-3	-1	



Post Project Focus Group

Rate yourself as a worshipper:

	3	2	1	Neutral
Generous	4	4	6	4
Joyful	5	9	2	2
Responsible	6	6	5	1
Group Motivated	3	4	6	
No Answer given				1
Stingy	-1	-1		
Depressed			-2	
Irresponsible		-1	-1	
Self-Motivated	-4	-1	-2	

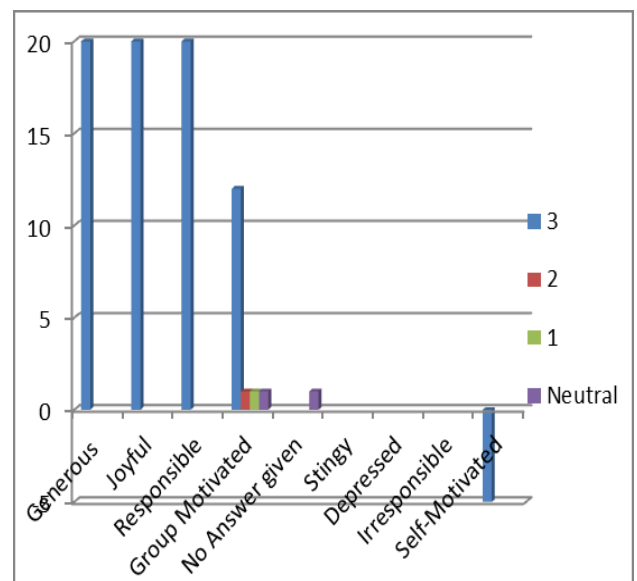
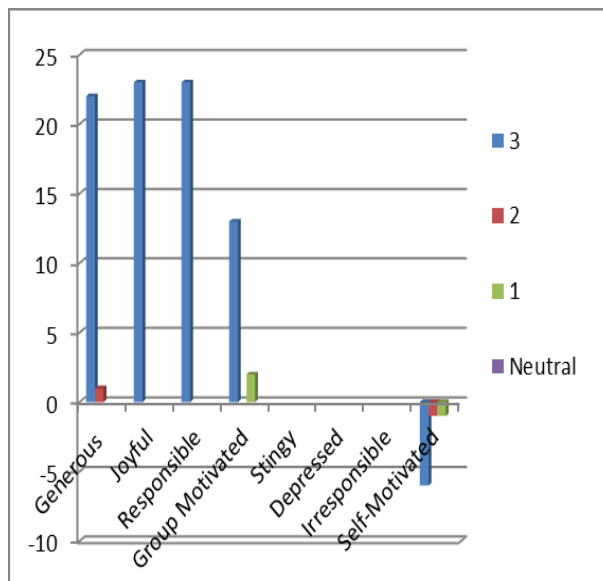


**Where do you believe God wants
you to be?**

	3	2	1	Neutral
Generous	22	1		
Joyful	23			
Responsible	23			
Group Motivated	13		2	
Stingy				
Depressed				
Irresponsible				
Self-Motivated	-6	-1	-1	

**Where do you believe God wants
you to be?**

	3	2	1	Neutral
Generous	20			
Joyful	20			
Responsible	20			
Group Motivated	12	1	1	1
No Answer given				1
Stingy				
Depressed				
Irresponsible				
Self-Motivated	-5			



I. Control Group Data Comparison with Graphs**Pre-Project Control Group****Salvation**

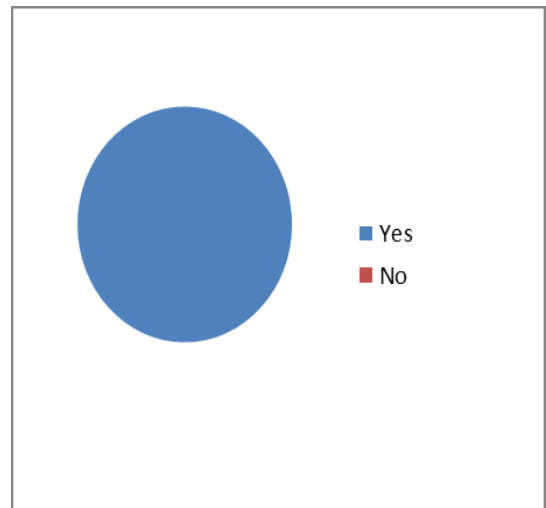
How Many answered

Yes	25	89%
No	1	4%
No Answer	2	7%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Control Group****Salvation**

How Many answered

Yes	10	100%
No	0	0
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

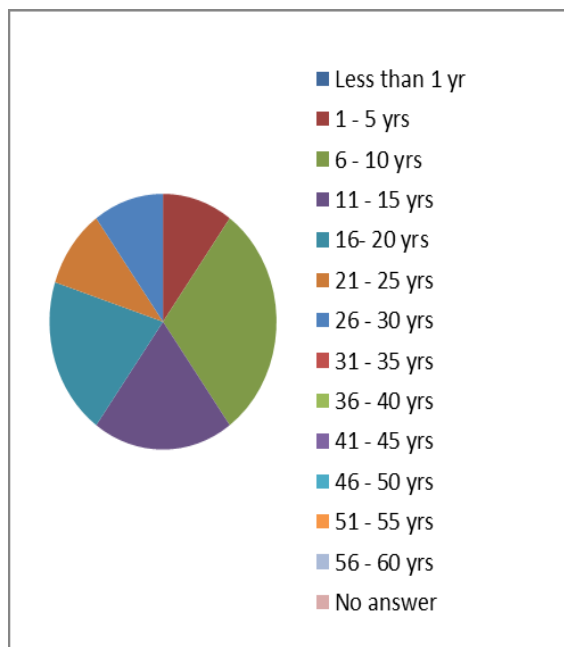
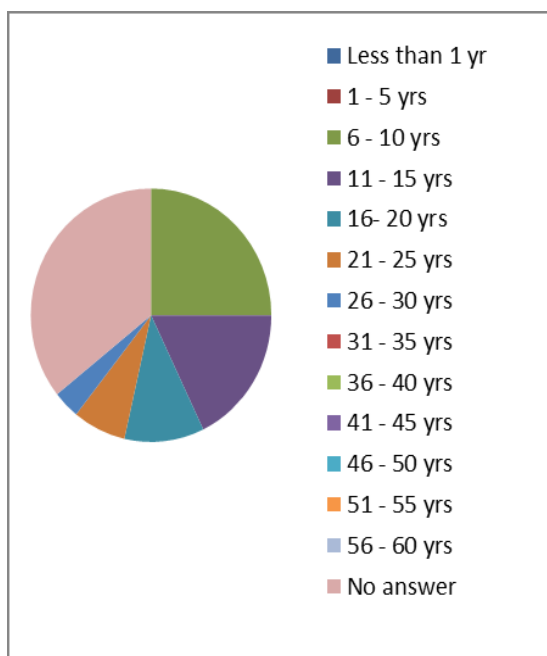


Pre-Project Control Group
Number of years Saved

Less than 1 yr	0	0%
1 - 5 yrs	0	0%
6 - 10 yrs	7	25%
11 - 15 yrs	5	18%
16- 20 yrs	3	11%
21 - 25 yrs	2	7%
26 - 30 yrs	1	4%
31 - 35 yrs	0	0%
36 - 40 yrs	0	0%
41 - 45 yrs	0	0%
46 - 50 yrs	0	0%
51 - 55 yrs	0	0%
56 - 60 yrs	0	0%
No answer	10	36%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

Post-Project Control Group
Number of years Saved

Less than 1 yr	0	0%
1 - 5 yrs	1	10%
6 - 10 yrs	3	30%
11 - 15 yrs	2	20%
16- 20 yrs	2	20%
21 - 25 yrs	1	10%
26 - 30 yrs	1	10%
31 - 35 yrs	0	0%
36 - 40 yrs	0	0%
41 - 45 yrs	0	0%
46 - 50 yrs	0	0%
51 - 55 yrs	0	0%
56 - 60 yrs	0	0%
No answer	0	0%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

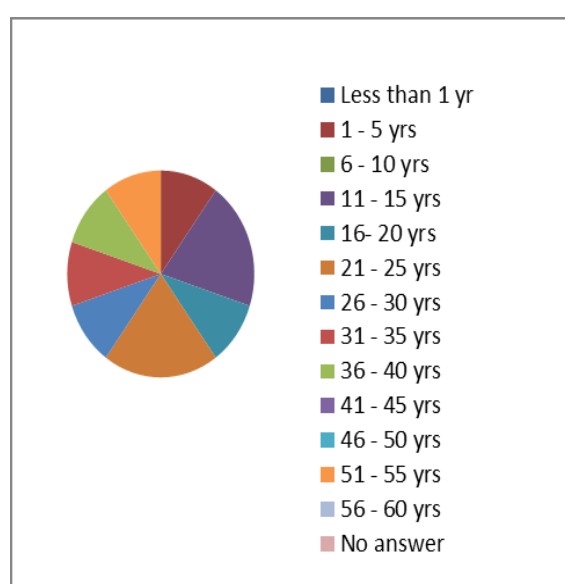
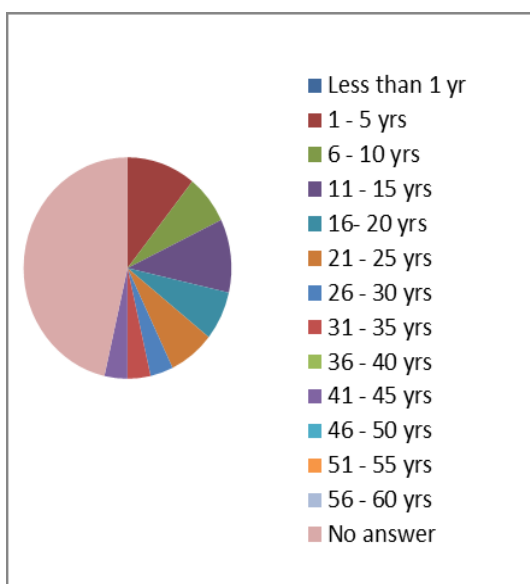


Pre-Project Control Group**Number of years Church experience**

Less than 1 yr	0	0%
1 - 5 yrs	3	11%
6 - 10 yrs	2	7%
11 - 15 yrs	3	11%
16- 20 yrs	2	7%
21 - 25 yrs	2	7%
26 - 30 yrs	1	4%
31 - 35 yrs	1	4%
36 - 40 yrs	0	0%
41 - 45 yrs	1	4%
46 - 50 yrs	0	0%
51 - 55 yrs	0	0%
56 - 60 yrs	0	0%
No answer	13	46%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

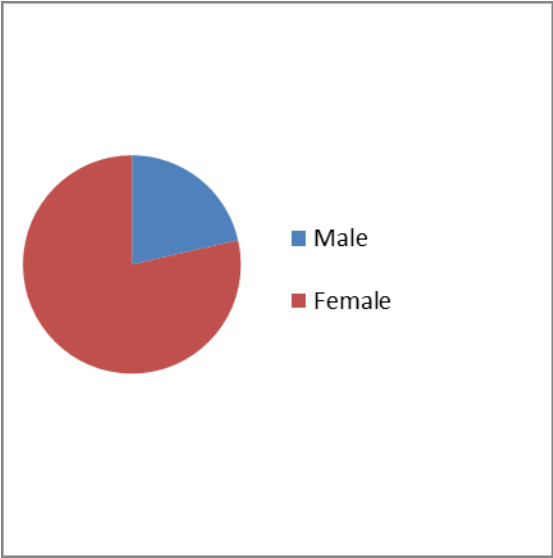
Post-Project Control Group**Number of years Church experience**

Less than 1 yr	0	0%
1 - 5 yrs	1	10%
6 - 10 yrs	0	0%
11 - 15 yrs	2	20%
16- 20 yrs	1	10%
21 - 25 yrs	2	20%
26 - 30 yrs	1	10%
31 - 35 yrs	1	10%
36 - 40 yrs	1	10%
41 - 45 yrs	0	0%
46 - 50 yrs	0	0%
51 - 55 yrs	1	10%
56 - 60 yrs	0	0%
No answer	0	0%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>



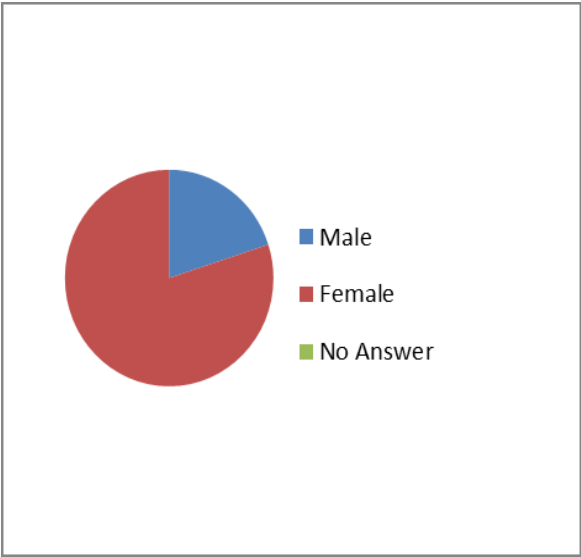
Pre-Project Control Group
Gender

Male	6	21%
Female	22	79%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>



Post-Project Control Group
Gender

Male	2	20%
Female	8	80%
No Answer		0%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

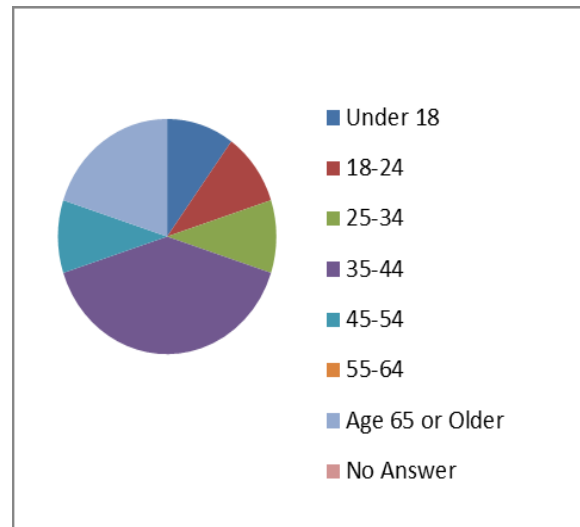
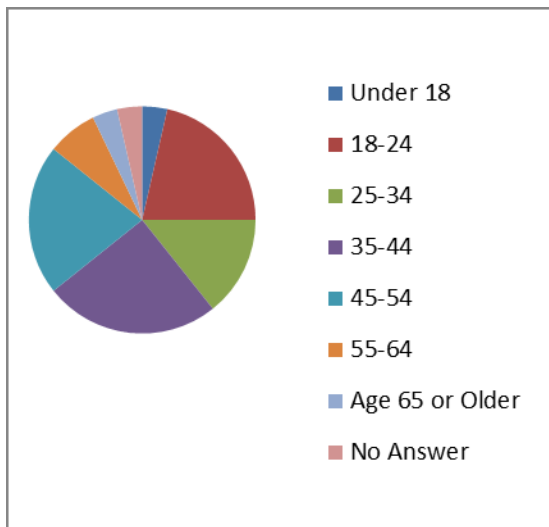


Pre-Project Control Group**Age Groups**

Under 18	1	4%
18-24	6	21%
25-34	4	14%
35-44	7	25%
45-54	6	21%
55-64	2	7%
Age 65 or Older	1	4%
No Answer	1	4%
Total	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

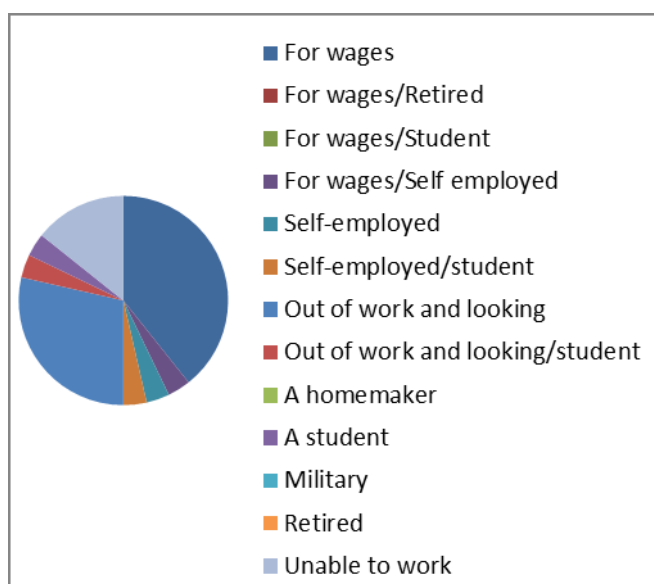
Post-Project Control Group**Age Groups**

Under 18	1	10%
18-24	1	10%
25-34	1	10%
35-44	4	40%
45-54	1	10%
55-64	0	0%
Age 65 or Older	2	20%
No Answer	0	0%
Total	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

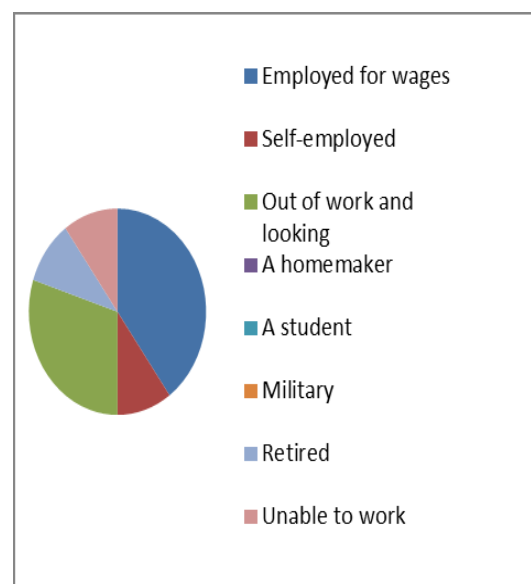


Pre-Project Control Group**Employment status**

For wages	11	39%
For wages/Retired	0	0%
For wages/Student	0	0%
For wages/Self employed	1	4%
Self-employed	1	4%
Self-employed/student	1	4%
Out of work and looking	8	29%
Out of work and looking/student	1	4%
A homemaker	0	0%
A student	1	4%
Military	0	0%
Retired	0	0%
Unable to work	4	14%
	28	100%

**Post-Project Control Group****Employment status**

Employed for wages	4	40%
Self-employed	1	10%
Out of work and looking	3	30%
A homemaker	0	0%
A student	0	0%
Military	0	0%
Retired	1	10%
Unable to work	1	10%
	10	100%

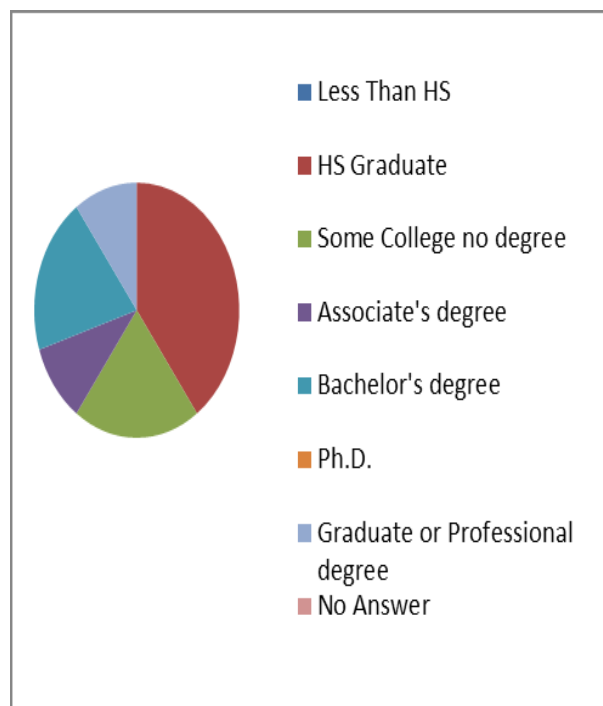
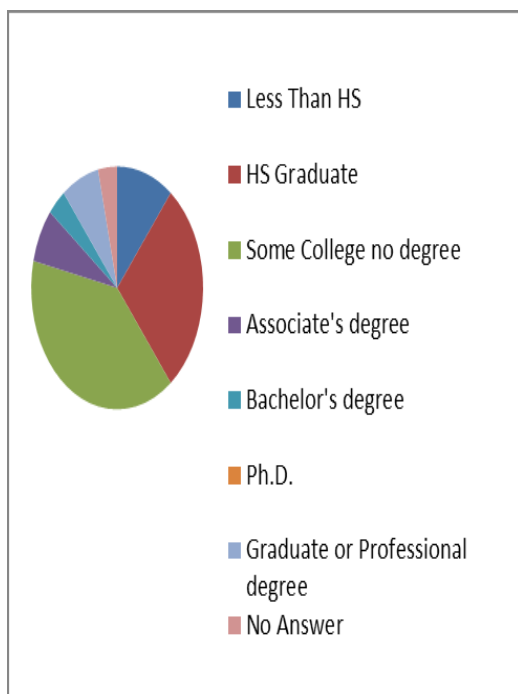


Pre-Project Control Group Education

Less Than HS	3	11%
HS Graduate	8	29%
Some College no degree	11	39%
Associate's degree	2	7%
Bachelor's degree	1	4%
Ph.D.	0	0%
Graduate or Professional degree	2	7%
No Answer	1	4%
Total	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

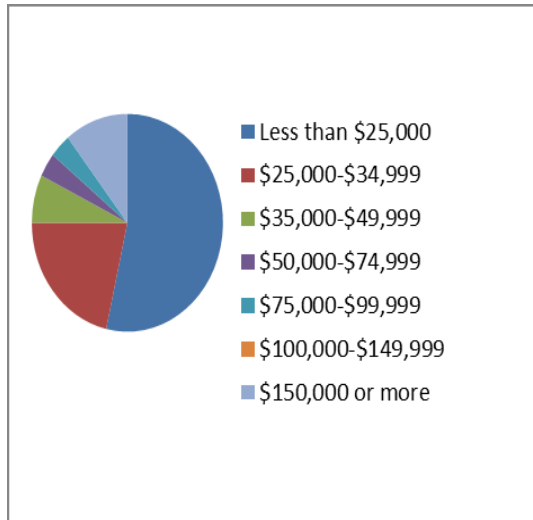
Post-Project Control Group Education

Less Than HS	0	0%
HS Graduate	4	40%
Some College no degree	2	20%
Associate's degree	1	10%
Bachelor's degree	2	20%
Ph.D.	0	0%
Graduate or Professional degree	1	10%
No Answer	0	0%
Total	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

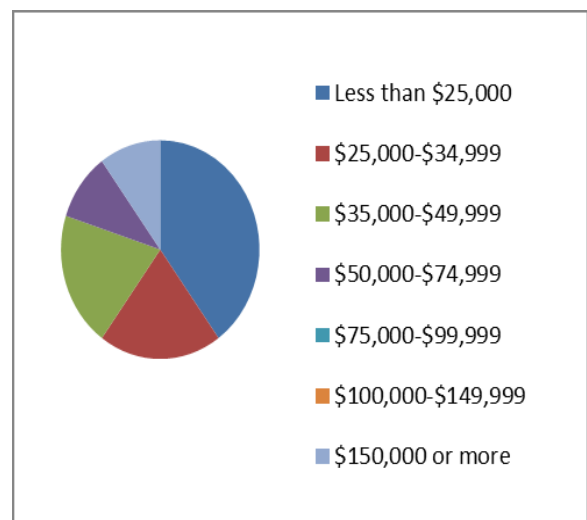


Pre-Project Control Group**Total Household Income**

Less than \$25,000	15	54%
\$25,000-\$34,999	6	21%
\$35,000-\$49,999	2	7%
\$50,000-\$74,999	1	4%
\$75,000-\$99,999	1	4%
\$100,000-\$149,999	0	0%
\$150,000 or more	3	11%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

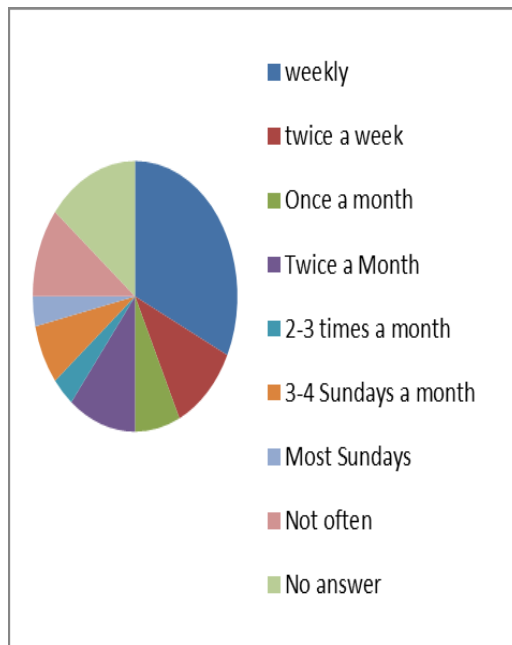
**Post-Project Control Group****Total Household Income**

Less than \$25,000	4	40%
\$25,000-\$34,999	2	20%
\$35,000-\$49,999	2	20%
\$50,000-\$74,999	1	10%
\$75,000-\$99,999	0	0%
\$100,000-\$149,999	0	0%
\$150,000 or more	1	10%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

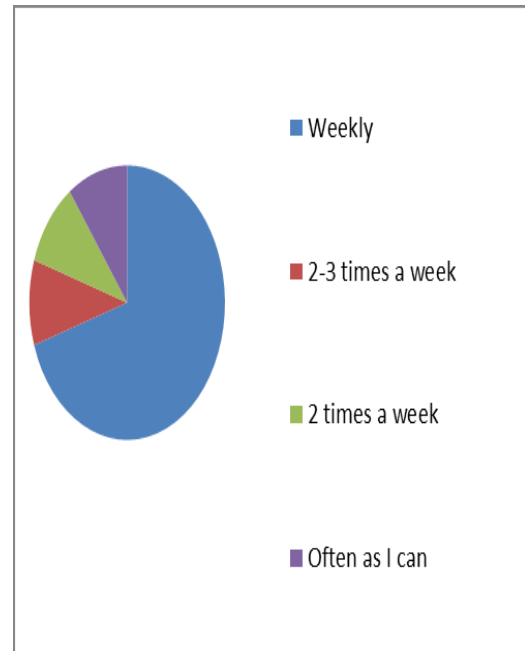


Pre-Project Control Group**1. How often do you attend church?**

weekly	9	32%
twice a week	3	11%
Once a month	2	7%
Twice a Month	3	11%
2-3 times a month	1	4%
3-4 Sundays a month	2	7%
Most Sundays	1	4%
Not often	3	11%
No answer	4	14%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

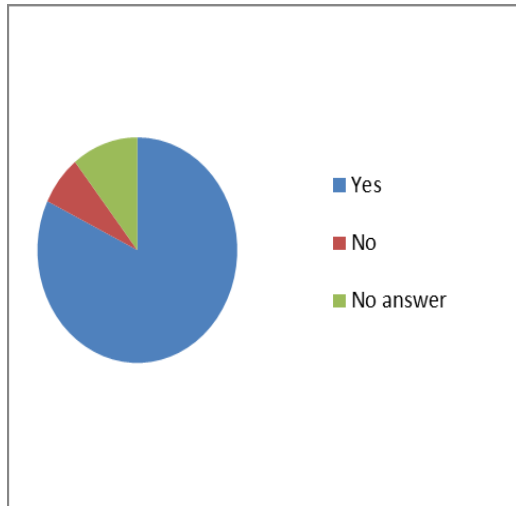
**Post-Project Control Group****4. How often do you attend church?**

Weekly	7	70%
2-3 times a week	1	10%
2 times a week	1	10%
Often as I can	1	10%
	<u>10</u>	100%

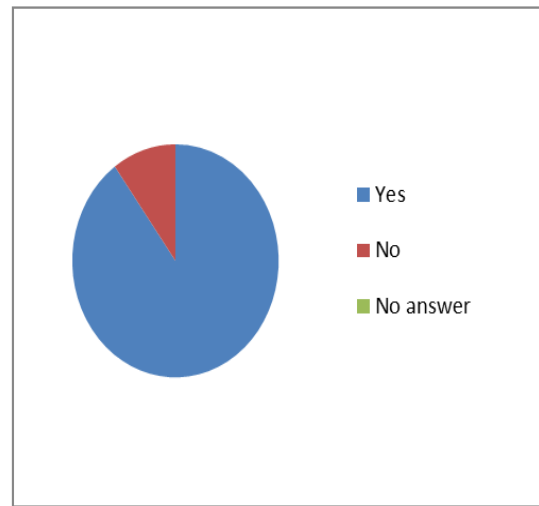


Pre-Project Control Group**2. Is there a relationship between attending church and worshipping God?**

Yes	23	82%
No	2	7%
No answer	3	11%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post Project Control Group****5. Is there a relationship between attending church and worshipping God?**

Yes	9	90%
No	1	10%
No answer	0	0%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

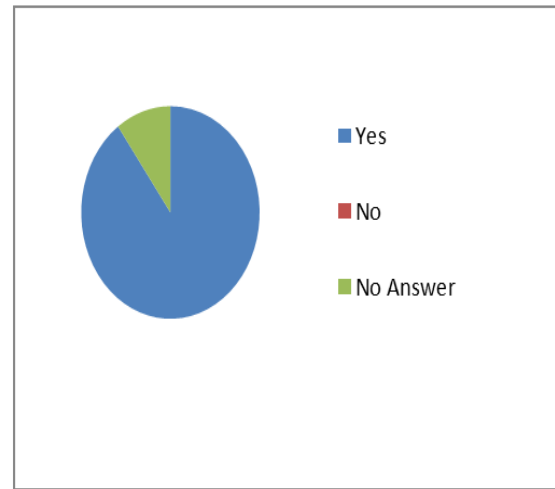


Pre-Project Control Group**3. Is giving required to worship God?**

Yes	18	64%
No	7	25%
No answer	3	11%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post Project Control Group****6. Is giving required to worship God?**

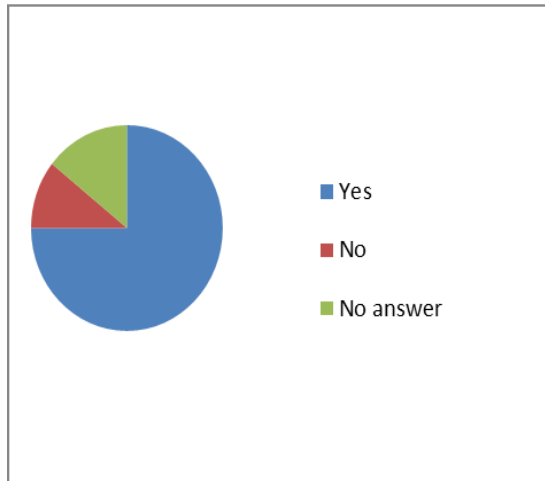
Yes	9	90%
No	0	0%
No Answer	1	10%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Control Group

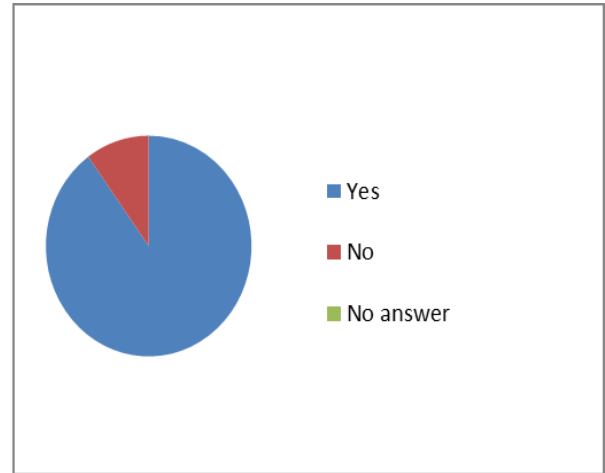
4. Is the method we use for giving an element of worship?

Yes	21	75%
No	3	11%
No answer	4	14%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post Project Control Group**

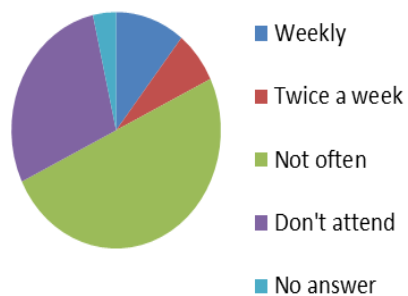
7. Is the method we use for giving an element of worship?

Yes	9	90%
No	1	10%
No answer	0	0%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

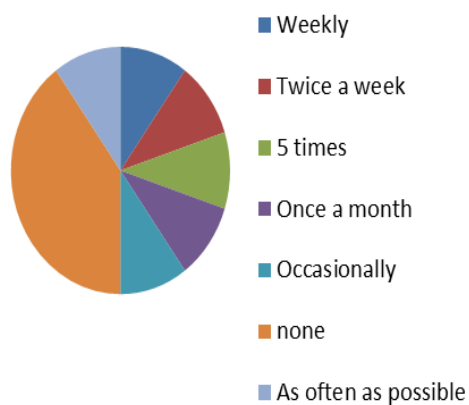


Pre-Project Control Group**5. How often do you attend Bible Study?**

Weekly	3	11%
Twice a week	2	7%
Not often	14	50%
Don't attend	8	29%
No answer	1	4%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post Project Control Group****8. How often do you attend Bible Study?**

Weekly	1	10%
Twice a week	1	10%
5 times	1	10%
Once a month	1	10%
Occasionally	1	10%
none	4	40%
As often as possible	1	10%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

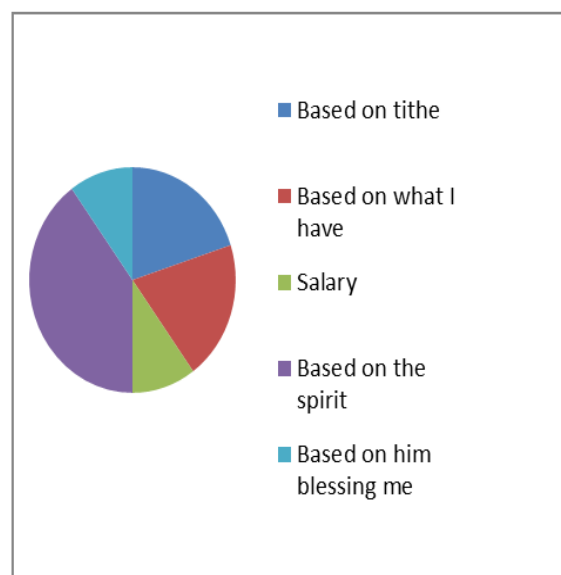
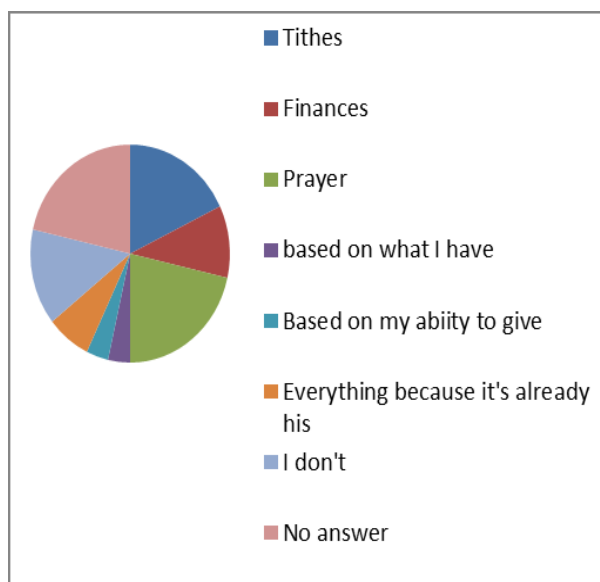


Pre-Project Control Group**6. How do you determine what you will give God?**

Tithes	5	18%
Finances	3	11%
Prayer	6	21%
based on what I have	1	4%
Based on my abiity to give	1	4%
Everything because it's already his	2	7%
I don't	4	14%
No answer	6	21%
	28	100%

Post Project Control Group**9. How do you determine what you will give God?**

Based on tithe	2	20%
Based on what I have	2	20%
Salary	1	10%
Based on the spirit	4	40%
Based on him blessing me	1	10%
	10	100%



Pre-Project Control Group**7. How do you determine when you attend church?**

Based on it being Sunday	3	11%
Health	2	7%
Ride	2	7%
Work Schedule	1	4%
Want to hear the word	1	4%
I don't know	1	4%
Prior Preparation	1	4%
God	6	21%
I Just Go	5	18%
No answer	6	21%
	28	100%

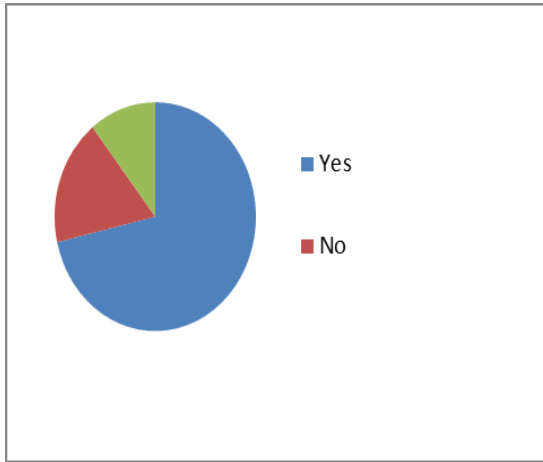
**Post-Project Control Group****10. How do you determine when you attend church?**

Service	2	20%
Availability	2	20%
Obligation	1	10%
Relationship with God	3	30%
Lead by the spirit	1	10%
Waking up	1	10%
	10	100%



Pre-Project Control Group
8. Should tithing be a required element of worship?

Yes	20	71%
No	5	18%
No answer	3	11%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>



Post-Project Control Group
11. Should tithing be a required element of worship?

Yes	6	60%
No	2	20%
No answer	2	20%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>



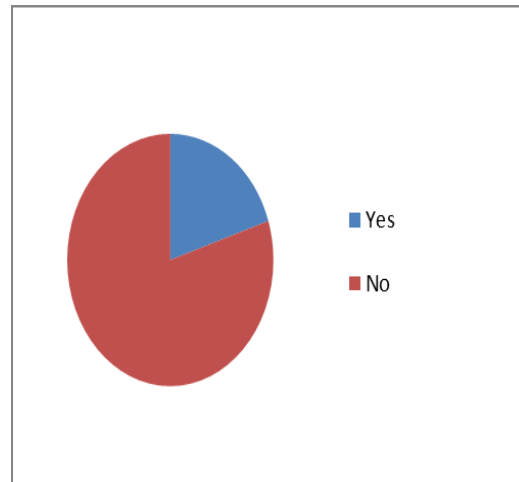
Pre-Project Control Group
9. Are you a biblical giver (Is your giving based on scripture)?

Yes	9	32%
No	15	54%
No answer	4	14%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>



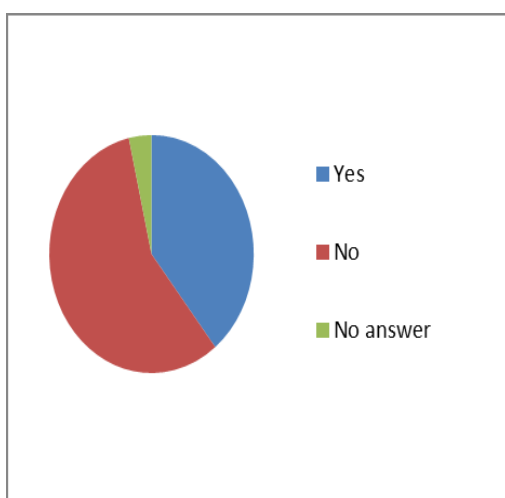
Post-Project Control Group
12. Are you a biblical giver (Is your giving based on scripture)?

Yes	2	20%
No	8	80%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

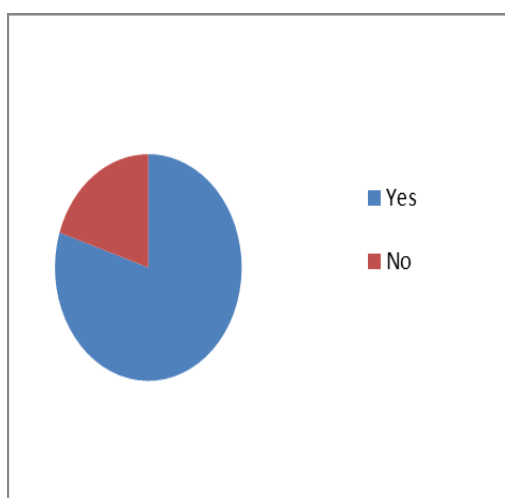


Pre-Project Control Group**10. Is your giving a reflection of your relationship with God?**

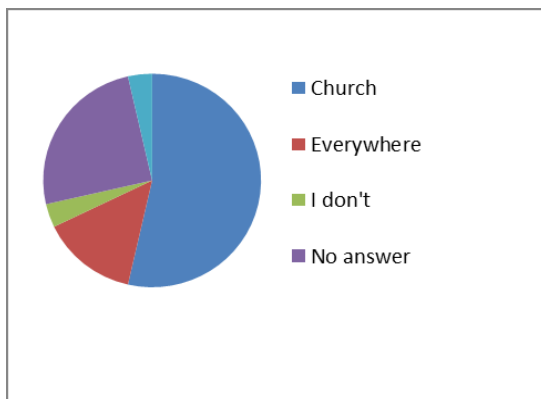
Yes	11	39%
No	16	57%
No answer	1	4%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Control Group****13. Is your giving a reflection of your relationship with God?**

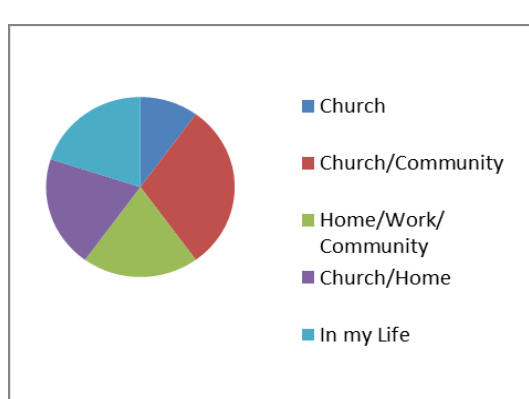
Yes	8	80%
No	2	20%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Pre-Project Control Group****11. Where do you give to God?**

Church	15	54%
Everywhere	4	14%
I don't	1	4%
No answer	7	25%
I don't know how to answer	1	4%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>

**Post-Project Control Group****14. Where do you give to God?**

Church	1	10%
Church/Community	3	30%
Home/Work/ Community	2	20%
Church/Home	2	20%
In my Life	2	20%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>

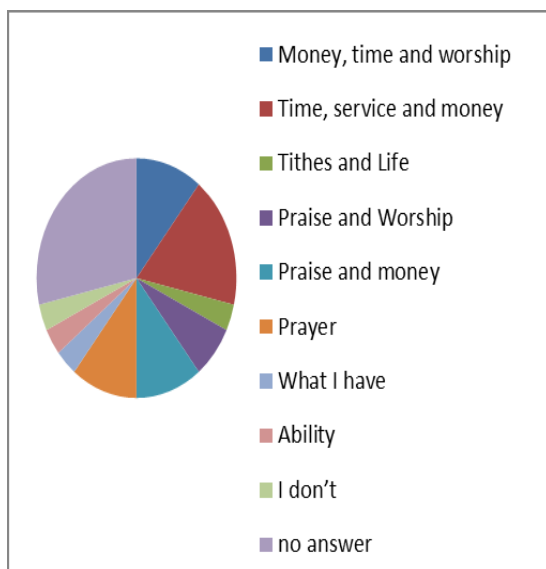


Pre-Project Control Group

Pre-Project Control Group

12. How do you give to God?

Money, time and worship	3	11%
Time, service and money	5	18%
Tithes and Life	1	4%
Praise and Worship	2	7%
Praise and money	3	11%
Prayer	3	11%
What I have	1	4%
Ability	1	4%
I don't	1	4%
no answer	8	29%
	28	100%

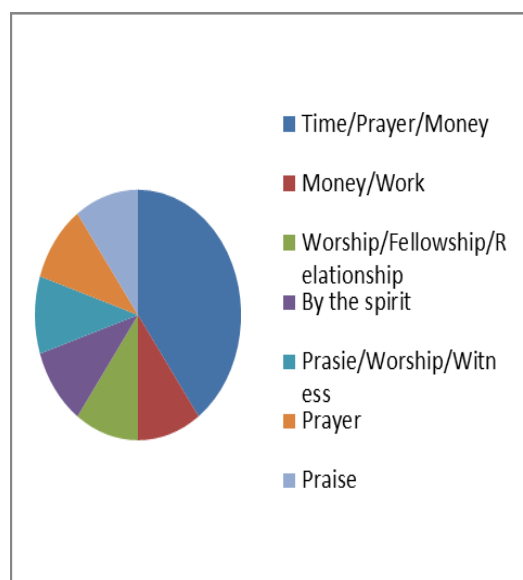


Post-Project Control Group

Post-Project Control Group

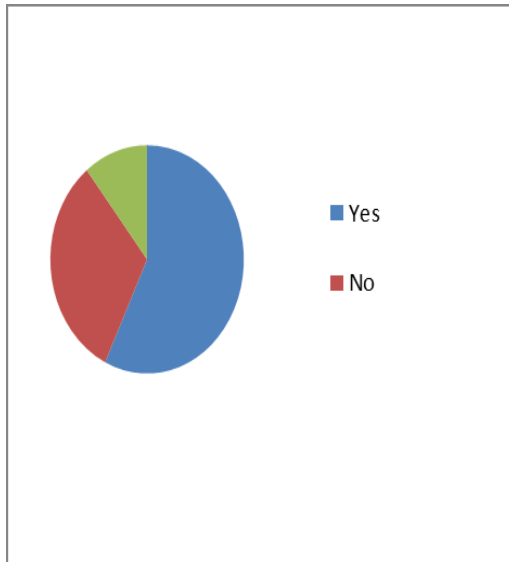
15. How do you give to God?

Time/Prayer/Money	4	40%
Money/Work	1	10%
Worship/Fellowship/Relationship	1	10%
By the spirit	1	10%
Praise/Worship/Witness	1	10%
Prayer	1	10%
Praise	1	10%
	10	100%



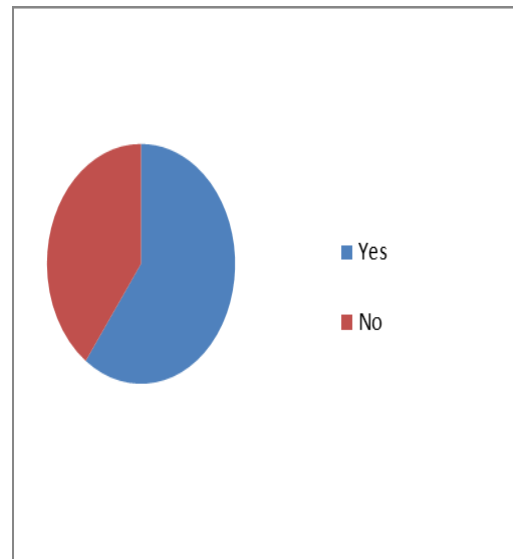
Pre-Project Control Group
13. Can you serve God without attending church

Yes	16	57%
No	9	32%
No answer	3	11%
	<u>28</u>	<u>100%</u>



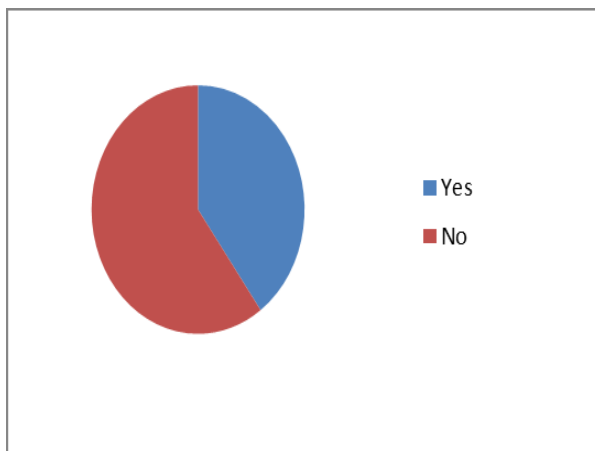
Post-Project Control Group
16. Can you serve God without attending church?

Yes	6	60%
No	4	40%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>



Post-Project Control Group
1. Is this your second survey during the project experience?

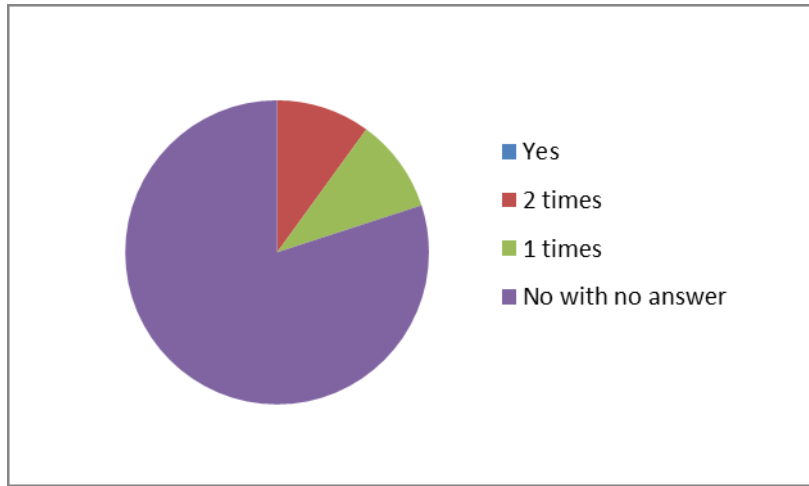
Yes	4	40%
No	6	60%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>



Post-Project Control Group

2. Did you attend all six lessons? If no, please put the number of lessons you attended in the space beside the answer "No".

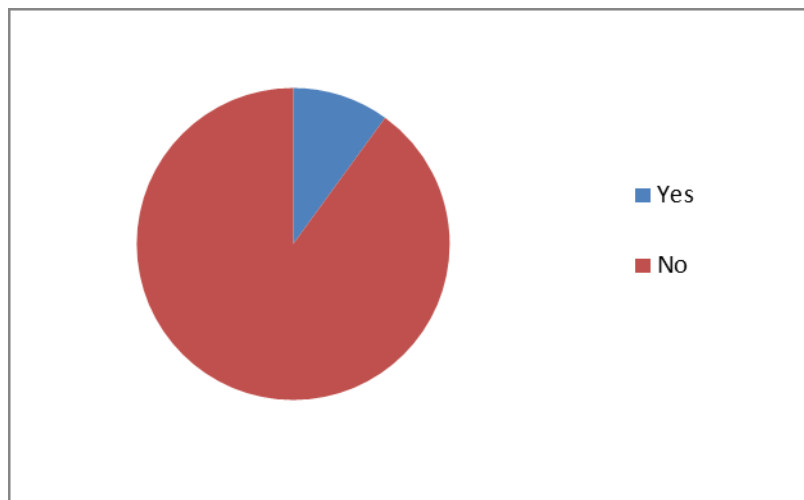
Yes	0	0%
2 times	1	10%
1 times	1	10%
No with no answer	8	
	<u>10</u>	<u>20%</u>



Post-Project Control Group

3. Were you a part of the focus group?

Yes	1	10%
No	9	90%
		0%
	<u>10</u>	<u>100%</u>



Pre-Project Control Group

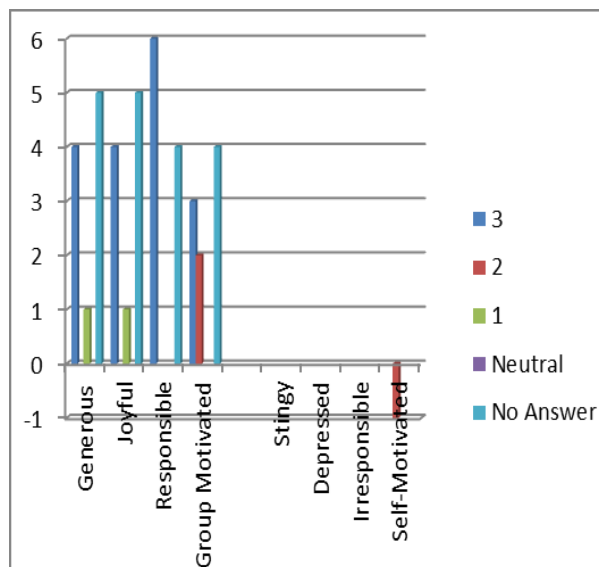
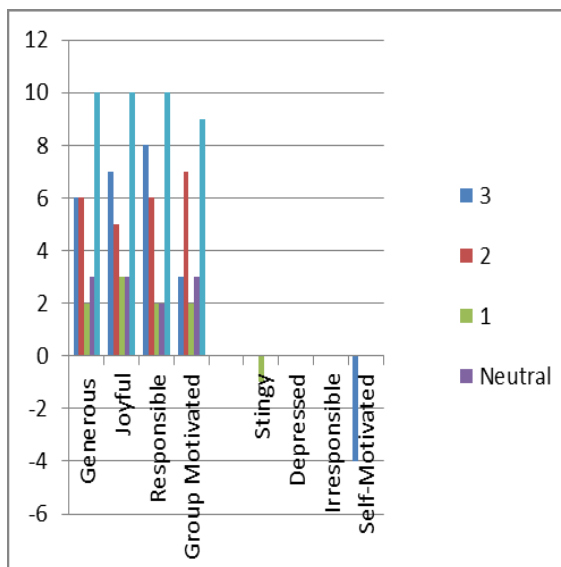
Rate yourself within your personal life
excluding Church:

	3	2	1	Neutral	N/ Ans
Generous	6	6	2	3	10
Joyful	7	5	3	3	10
Responsible	8	6	2	2	10
Group Motivated	3	7	2	3	9
Stingy			-1		
Depressed					
Irresponsible					
Self- Motivated	-4				

Post Project Control Group

Rate yourself within your personal
life excluding Church:

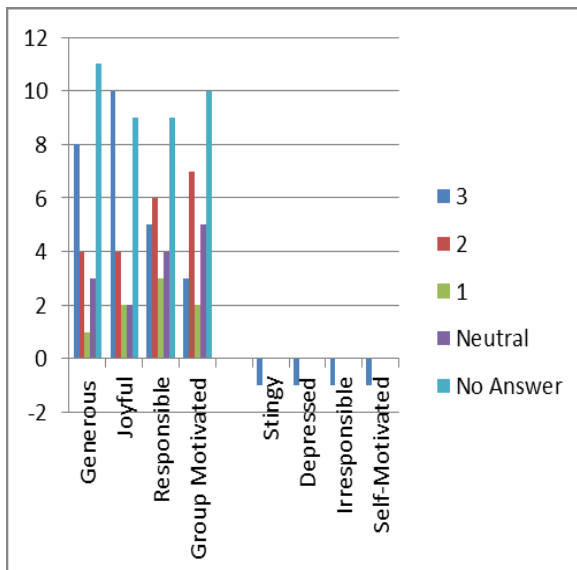
	3	2	1	Neutral	N/ Ans
Generous	4		1		5
Joyful	4		1		5
Responsible	6				4
Group Motivated	3	2			4
Stingy					
Depressed					
Irresponsible					
Self- Motivated		-1			



Pre-Project Control Group

Rate yourself as a worshipper:

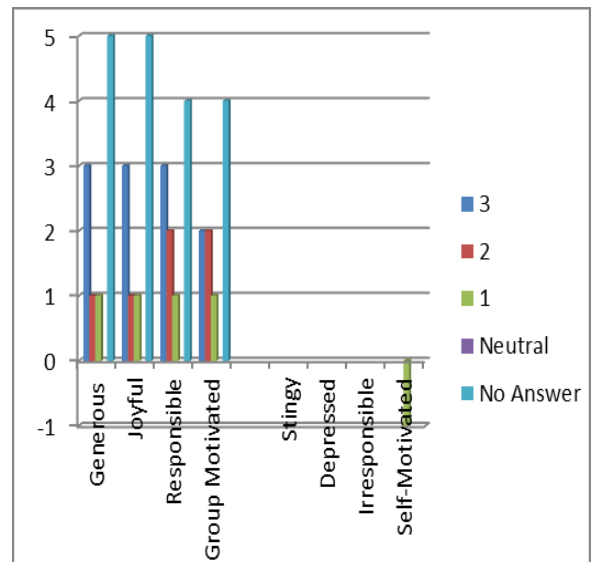
	3	2	1	Neutral	N/ Ans
Generous	8	4	1	3	11
Joyful	10	4	2	2	9
Responsible	5	6	3	4	9
Group Motivated	3	7	2	5	10
Stingy	-1				
Depressed	-1				
Irresponsible	-1				
Self-Motivated	-1				



Post Project Control Group

Rate yourself as a worshipper:

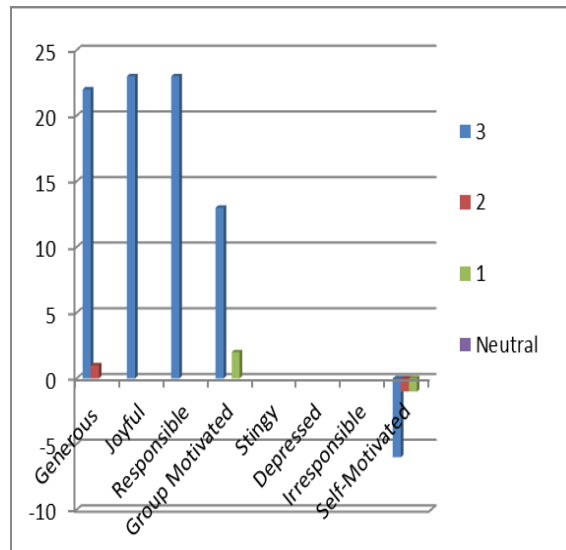
	3	2	1	Neutral	N/ Ans
Generous	3	1	1		5
Joyful	3	1	1		5
Responsible	3	2	1		4
Group Motivated	2	2	1		4
Stingy					
Depressed					
Irresponsible					
Self-Motivated			-1		



Pre-Project Control Group

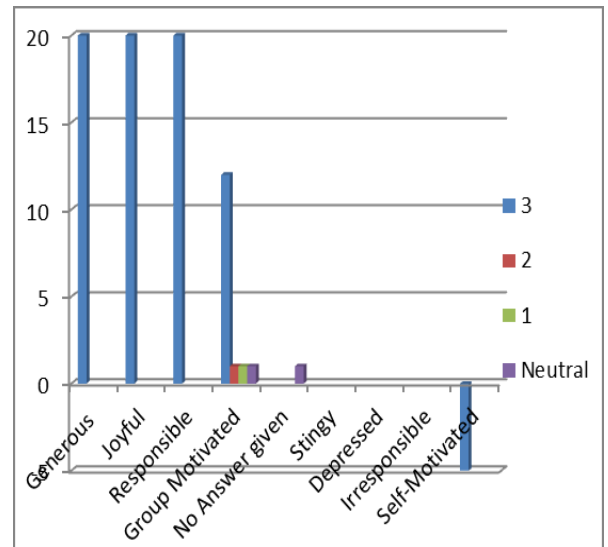
Where do you believe God wants you to be?

	3	2	1	Neutral	N/ Ans
Generous	13	2	1	3	9
Joyful	13	3	1	2	9
Responsible	13	3		2	10
Group Motivated	13	1		3	9
Stingy					
Depressed					
Irresponsible					
Self- Motivated	-2				

**Post Project Control Group**

Where do you believe God wants you to be?

	3	2	1	Neutral	N/ Ans
Generous	5				5
Joyful	5				5
Responsible	6				4
Group Motivated	4				5
Stingy					
Depressed					
Irresponsible					
Self- Motivated	-1				



J. Lesson 7 – How to Give in Worship

We have studied how God has instituted giving in worship now we must address the final question “how to give in worship?” The model of giving can be found in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

The first element of God’s giving is love, this must be the motive for everything we do and give to God. With the evidence presented about tithing many believers are left with an issue. It was easy to determine what to give in the Old Testament because everything was spelled out for us. Now that grace has released us from the obligations of The Law, we do not have God telling us how to express our love in giving. God found a way to represent love by giving “his only Son.” Technically, Jesus is not God’s only Son. Everyone is a son or daughter of God, so why does John use this language. This text does not say God so loved Jesus, it says God so loved the world. God loves everyone created.

Redemption was not sent just for believers. Redemption has been provided to everyone. God’s plan is not to condemn but redeem. Condemnation is a choice not a necessity. Church services are comprised of believers, backsliders, and unbelievers. Giving appears to be the responsibility of those who believe in God. If giving is an expression of love, how can someone give if they do not first love God through commitment? Belief in God is not a function of a faith statement; it is the reflection of surrendering our lives to the God that first loved us. V. 17 states “God did not send the Son to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” We can no longer view giving as an obligation. God is not focused on the negative so the redeemed cannot focus on the negative. Giving is viewed so negatively because the focus has shifted from an act of worship to meeting budgets and other financial needs or desires. God was thinking about those who would believe not those that would not believe. We cannot determine our gift based on others. Only God and the giver are aware of everything God has done to redeem and maintain them so only God and the giver will know if the gift is a representation of love and thanksgiving.

The amount of the gift is intended to represent love and thanksgiving. Surely, the obligation of a tenth becomes just a baseline to determine a gift. Through Jesus the world has been forgiven for failing to live by The Law and been restored to a loving relationship with The Creator. V. 18 makes a clear statement about condemnation. “Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” The coming of Jesus did not condemn the unbeliever they were condemned already. We invest so much of our attention on The Fall that we do not know how to live free from condemnation. God’s plan in creation was closeness and intimacy. The redemption offered through Jesus allows believers to live free from the burden and punishment of sin

therefore our giving has been released to love our God who wants to be our Father by providing and protecting us.

In vv. 19-21 John uses the contrast between light and darkness to describe believers and unbelievers. I would like to apply this contrast to how giving is applied in worship. First, I must say that your gift to God is no one's business and to make this information public is not appropriate. I believe the focus here is not that everyone should know but that we should not be ashamed of our gift. The giver and God know whether the gift is a reflection of love or not. This concept is in line with Paul's statement in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel." How can we be ashamed for expressing love for The God that saved us? Giving has been reduced to a comparison of economic condition instead of an expression of love based on thanksgiving and stewardship. Let us work on coming out of the darkness and walking in the light of freely expressing our worship through giving without preconditions or the need for earthly recognition.

I am not going to ask questions here, I am going to give some action steps so that you can celebrate the love of God in and through your giving in worship:

- 1) Expressions of love are planned and prepared – seek the Holy Spirit for what God wants from you. This is going to take planning and preparation. God does not want giving to be a decision between bills and God. God wants giving to be a reflection of your commitment to the kingdom by planning and managing what you have to present a gift of love. Plan your giving long-term, allow the Holy Spirit to show you an annual total not just a weekly amount. This will encourage planning and investment, which will improve your stewardship.
- 2) For many of us we are not in the position to apply the first action step (above) so start with a percentage, this does not have to be ten percent but ten percent is a good baseline. The issue is not the tithe it is giving based on an obligation.
- 3) Giving begins with reflection so that we are focused on everything God has done and is doing around us. Never just pull out something without considering love and thanksgiving.
- 4) Make giving your first act of worship. When you enter to worship, the first action is to give to God. This means that you came to worship with the intention to express your love for God in worship.
- 5) Do not give to impression but do not try to hide your gift. It is what it is. Love God by identifying with your gift; put your name on it, not to be recognized or out of a feeling of pride (God resists the proud). It is yours so present it as such. In the United States for tax purposes, you need an itemized statement from the church so you need to be identified with your giving.

- 6) God loves a cheerful giver – we do not give to receive. We have already received giving is meant to be a reflection of what God has done or is doing. Celebrate the greatness of your relationship with The God of your salvation and never be ashamed of that.

K. Journal Entries

All editing I have done to the journal entries is *italicized*.

Responses 1.1

Journal Entry 1 - Document your experiences with giving prior to your participation in this project. Please include your understanding, attitude, thoughts and feelings.

Participant 1

My understanding is that giving is an opportunity to show your love and faith. I love to give, however my monetary giving *has* been inconsistent over the past several months.

Participant 2

I have been involved (experienced) various kinds of practices as it relates to giving, some according to the word, some not. Practices where people are required and in some cases literally forced to give a certain amount of money. Practices where the time of giving is turned into a competition. Practices where people are made to feel guilty for not giving the required amount, and practices where people are told if they do not give the amount required of them they will miss the blessings of God.

I have been extremely aggravated and frustrated with these man manufactured practices, that really have nothing to do with the worship of God, but *fed* the greed ego and pride of men. These practices often times cause people to give in a manner that God rejects that is grudgingly and of necessity.

I understand that we are to bring our tithes in obedience to God's command, and our offering in supposed to be given out of our love for God as we have purposed in our own heart. The time of giving should be a time of joy and excitement filled with anticipation, but because it has been handled not as worship but reduced to giving according to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, many are frustrated in their giving.

I do believe that even though the request may be extended with the wrong motives the giver can still be blessed if we give with the right motives, and cheerfully as worship unto God.

Participant 3

Well, I would have to begin with the early beginning of my church teaching at a friend's church. This is how I started to see the church as a playground because there was no understanding to why we are listening to a person when we do not know who God is yet, therefore it did not have the impact it should have *had* on me. So I say all of that little information to say the moral of the story is that I had money to put in *the* collection plate but chose to ignore what was supposed to help me. These were my thoughts and never once did I see it different for my soul or that God was real then, *I was* just following the rules.

It took some time for me to believe that a man could be trusted with God's property and when I became fully aware of how *God can* change you instantly therefore, my life became like his teaching and then my life would change for the better simply because the word *got* on the inside. You learn that your help is God Almighty.

Now that he allows us to be in him and he in us we become overcomers and *have* joy that he gives us freely. Your tithe offering comes so many ways mainly with time and money to support his earthly business for those who have lost their *way* and trying to find a way back *to* the kingdom. Love, joy and peace take pain away from them and give them a repentance way, *knowing* I still can make it into heaven's gate or a life of Christ.

Participant 4

I have seen different ways in which churches proceed with offering, *two* (2) of the ways are not correct in my opinion. *First is* the *process* where each person marches to the front to give, if you *did not* have any money that day you had to march anyway and touch the basket so that God would bless you to have it the next time. I *did not* like this at all. I thought it was rude and insensitive to the people who *did not* have money to give. I felt like they were put on parade for the whole church and this was a church *that* picked *people* up at the *homeless* shelters and most of the time they *did not* have any money; as they were the featured attraction each week.

The second way is to me just a show of greediness. Where the table is put up front and they take and count the money right then. If a certain amount was not *met* they would pass or ask for it until it was *met*. If it took 4 times then that's what they did. They may even survey the room and count the people so if *there were* 25 people in the room and they were trying to get \$25.00 they would say if each of you give \$1.00 we would be done. Just stop the service until the money was right, the opposite of being a cheerful giver, and if somebody *did not* walk and give that dollar they would call them out; Sister Sally you know you *have* a dollar.

I happened to be one of the people who *did not* walk around because I gave all I had and I felt embarrassed and bullied. Somebody beside me said oh here let me bless you, gave me a dollar and the time I'm walking up there I'm thinking why *didn't* you just give the dollar before they called me out. That would have been the blessing. Just wrong.

Participant 5

I have been participating in church for numerous years. I was taught that giving is what God expects of his people. He wants our time, talent, and treasures. In the former years of my worship, I was excited about going to church, so that I could give my tithes and offering to God. With hopes that he would open the windows of heaven and pour me out blessings that I will not have room enough to receive (you know the scriptures). Give and it would be given back to you pressed down shaken together and running over. That is what I am expecting from God. I am looking to receive from him because I believe his words. Unfortunately, after a lot of people realized that they could open a church and give themselves titles, in my personal opinion, the spirit of giving changed to me and I am sure it has changed to others. It appears that we were being harassed for money; Pastors were doing well and the congregation was living in poverty. As a former church/pastor secretary and trustee, I have experienced individuals asking the ministry for assistance with bills such as utilities. The Pastors and trustees would say that they did not give enough to the church that year to be able to receive from the ministry of help funds. Others have been turned away because they were not a member of the church. They may not have been a member of that particular church, but they are a member of the Kingdom of God. I have also witnessed the church leaders stopping the move of God while people were getting their deliverance to go on with the next portion of their program, which was the offering portion. We are Christians wonder why sinners are not coming into church even after we performed extensive outreach. They know how church people really are; some of them were once a member of someone's church. But I guarantee you, if we did a tent revival to reach sinners some would say, what must they do to be saved? After being saved, they will want to give in order to advance the Kingdom of God with tools and instruments that will teach his people and enable them to reconcile others to Christ.

Blessed Harvest *Institute* is doing a wonderful thing by not allowing offering time to interrupt the move of God. That is one thing that attracted me to the church. Although, I am a giver by nature, meanwhile, if I do not have *anything* to give then, I do not feel oppressed because of my lack. One of the good things about our form of giving at Blessed Harvest is that God may have blessed you so good during the services and after the services an individual may want to empty his or her pocketbook at the

offering basket. That is certainly, what I felt like doing my first day of worship at Blessed Harvest *Institute*. Standing up and calling individuals up to give his or her offerings often times single people out. Most people do not want to be singled out for anything, they are giving what God has placed on their hearts and they are giving to the glory of God.

Participant 6

Well, when reviewing my upbringing in the Baptist Church and many other experiences with a variety of faiths (Christian). I have been given or developed the belief that one should tithe 10% of one's earnings (gross), and my understanding is that giving begins above the *tenth*. But I do struggle with this principle, not because it isn't biblical, but because of my struggle with the logic behind the entire spiritual process. I am working on conditioning my mind to rebuff the logic that fights against my spirit man. I still have work to do though.

Participant 7

When you have been a part of different churches, you tend to see each one's viewpoint on giving. The first church I attended did not put much emphasis on giving *but* to know and see the building needs not *getting* met put a damper on my giving. The second church I was a part of did good teaching on tithing and giving. It was very evident of where the resources were being spent to the point that "being a cheerful giver" was something you *were* proud to do and be a part of.

A church I visited pretty regularly turned me off on tithing. They did multiple collections, came to your home to pick up your tithes, and had the number (*amount*) lines. It was just terrible. I did encounter a family that gave their tithes to a family in need each time they got paid. They were very sweet Christians. They allowed the Holy Spirit to direct them to which family; most of the times the family was in the shelter, crisis, homeless people, orphanage, or hospital patients. I had never heard of someone doing that. I was totally in agreement with this because helping people is more important than building buildings. The only thing I was unclear about was the scripture "bring to the storehouse" and how that relates to people.

Here at Blessed Harvest Institute, I enjoy the liberty of giving and tithing. To know that giving happens at the end of service shows that *we are* more focused on the word and worship. Although I am not disciplined in my giving yet, I truly believe it is a part of worship. It is my prayer that I become disciplined in my giving. One thing that affected my giving was when the church *became* more focused on the business rather than the bodies.

Participant 8

I always believed and was taught that tithing was a focus on cash only and that it was the responsibility of all members to tithe to pay the bills of the church. I thought tithing, “paying my money”, made me at least somewhat right with God. I treated tithing as part of a check off system.

Participant 9

My experiences with giving as an element of worship have been interesting. As a child we were always encouraged to put something in the offering plate. At that time I did not understand the God association, I just thought it was a church thing. As an adult I was instructed that paying tithes is a requirement in serving God and in addition you should never go to a church service without having at least \$5 to put in the offering. The offering time was the longest part of the service. The church always asked multiple times for more money. I would split my money up so that I would be prepared to make multiple trips to the basket. I remember when I was on government assistance I was told that I should be tithing off of everything, my check I got once a month and my monthly allotment of food stamps. I was told that having faith in God meant trusting Him with everything so if I had to choose between paying my tithes or paying my rent then I was commanded to trust God and pay my tithes; if I did not then I was told that I was not trusting nor being faithful to God. I felt as though I was doing something wrong if I did not give. It felt like God Himself was going to “get” me or at the very least I was on my way to hell. I hated that feeling. Sometimes I just did not have it but the church made such a big deal out of having it that it was sometimes safer to stay home and watch service on TV, at least then when they got to the offering I could just turn it off. It seemed that everyone treated offering the same way, as the most important part of serving God and proof of loving and trusting God.

When I became a leader in the church it did not matter if I had money to give or not I was still required to give. I would borrow money to give and pull money off of my credit cards just to be able to give whenever they required an offering. I was taught that if the first line in your checkbook after each pay period was not your tithes then you were not putting God first. As a leader whenever an amount was given for the people to pay you were expected to be the first one to pay what was asked. Leaders were also expected not to participate in collecting the offering without first putting their own offering in the basket. If the leader did not have an offering then they were not trusting God. The financial records were checked on a regular basis to see who was giving and who was not so that those who were not giving could be addressed. I have witnessed and participated in forcing those who receive income from the church to pay

10% of their earnings, even if they did not want to it was still deducted. The day we deducted 10% from our musician in his eminent disagreement was the beginning of the elephant moving into the room. It felt like we were sticking him up in the name of God. Money was tied to everything. During times of bad weather when the church was closed on Sundays due to the unsafe driving conditions I was the church officer who drove around in the snow and ice to pick up everyone's tithes and offering. I was the person who counted the money and made the deposits. If leaders and ministers missed a Sunday service I would call them to find out where their tithes were and if needed would pick it up or provide them the account information so that they could make a deposit into the church's checking account. There was a pain growing in the pit of my stomach that only flared during offering time. I struggled with how we handled money in the church. In spite of my growing discomfort I became one of the officers who would raise the offerings. I was good at convincing the congregation to give money. I raised money for the Pastor's anniversary, building fund, Pastor's appreciation, Christmas and Birthday gifts for Pastor and his family and every fundraising program we could create. We sold fish sandwiches, chitterling plates, pig feet and turkey legs all to create a steady flow of finances, in the name of the Lord of course. I believed that I was doing God's will in teaching the people how to trust God in their giving. I moved from being the person who felt bad during offering to being the person who made others feel bad during offering. Something was wrong and all of my experiences indicated that we missed the mark. But is it possible for every church I have attended to miss the same mark.

3 ½ years ago God led me to BHI. An honest breath of fresh air. A place of worship where there was no fundraising; no passing the offering basket around. There were no Pastor Anniversaries, appreciations, or birthday celebration collections. No fish to clean, fry and sale, chicken sandwiches to purchase or TVs to raffle. Even the sermons CDs were free. BHI did not sale anything to support the church. In fact offering is only mentioned in a 4 second blurb at the end of service. No pressure to give. And although the external pressure has been removed I am still conditioned internally to pay my tithes. I have, however learned during my time here that tithes is my obedience to God but my offering is how I express my love for God. So I began asking God what He wanted me to give in addition to my tithes and whatever amount He gives me is my goal for the year.

I can say that giving tithes and offering and worship are different components in serving God.

Participant 11

My experience with giving as an element of worship prior to my participation in this project has been very positive. It has not been positive as far as what I have been able to give, but positive because I *do not* feel pushed to give. I have been and I am sure most of us have been subject to many other churches where you feel like you should be ashamed of what you are giving compared to all that God have done for the individual. I do believe that giving is an essential part of a church being able to do ministry and that all members and church attendees should give according to what they have.

My understanding – I understand what the bible teaches about tithing and offerings. It has been many years since my early understanding as a child but I always *understood* that giving a tenth of what you have is what the Lord asks of us. I struggle sometimes to rid myself of the guilt I have when I *do not* do my part to tithe and after many years just this last year have I actually put enough trust in God to try. I started to tithe then stopped, then started again and then stopped! Some Sundays I *do not* give anything and some Sundays I only give an offering. This I am never satisfied with because I do feel as though as the bible “will a man rob God”. I am disobedient when I *do not* and I feel guilty. I do believe that my church has this part of worship right. This is the first experience I have had as a member of a church where someone was not asking for money who may not have in turn had any money to give themselves.

My attitude – I feel as though my attitude has changed overtime. Honestly, my attitude used to be if the church has one hundred members and fifteen people are giving then why is anyone stressing members to give when so few are giving. I have learned that this is not how God deserves to be treated. If I died today I couldn’t go to God and say “well, they didn’t so I didn’t.” It is funny but true that you honestly have to reflect on how you react when someone else may not be doing something and the rationale to justify why you are not.

My thoughts, feelings and practices – As I write these responses I feel guilty for all God has done for me. My thoughts are to only think of the monetary meaning of tithing, offering and giving but not what the Bible talks about the talent and time. Of course, I could only think of the money and leave God’s house always feeling guilty that I did not give him a tenth of my check but I don’t think the purpose is to feel guilty all of the time.

Blessed Harvest *Institute* does not practice what any other church I have seen attempt when it comes to the offering, that being leave it up to the individual and God. My feelings are that of a trusting relationship with the people of God that they are doing the right thing with the Lord’s money. I refer to it as the Lord’s money because I believe you have to have the frame of mind that what God gave you is a gift. I may manage my money poorly at this time, but I have come to understand that this is not an

excuse. I think from time to time God understands us and our finances and I also believe he gets fed up with us and our finances, especially those he has blessed with more. I like the practices Blessed Harvest *Institute* has because despite where you may fall financially, there are no \$100 dollar lines and \$5 dollar lines. There is no expectation for those who may not be capable of doing more or less with what they have. The teachings are very clear at Blessed Harvest *Institute* in that a monetary commitment does not have a guaranteed blessing. We give because we love and I have learned not to expect reward for my giving. It is only an opportunity to support the ministry and kingdom building here on earth.

Participant 12

I was born and raised in church. During my life I have experienced *going* to different churches which include going to *African Methodist Episcopal Zion* and *Holiness churches*. *This project will allow me to evaluate my* elements of giving on a daily basis. I will get clear understanding of the meaning of giving. My attitude is good about this. I am a little nervous because I am not a bible scholar, but I am willing to learn *through participation*. My thoughts are good. I will *interact* as we go farther into this. *My current giving* practices are tithing and small sacrifices to others.

Participant 13

I have always thought that when it came time to give unto God we are to follow what the Bible says and that is a tenth of your earnings. I have seen in a lot of churches that they talk down to you for not meeting whatever that church goals were at that time. I have felt for a longtime that if Ministers focus on teaching the people the importance of tithing then the people would recognize what they need to do to honor God. All of these *fundraisers* take away from what may be used for the people's standard tithes or giving.

Participant 14

Giving is an integral part of worship. Deut. 16:16-17 states that we should not appear before the Lord empty handed, and everyone should give as he is able to give according to the blessing he has received from God. If you do not give to the Lord, how do you expect Him to bless you?

From childhood days our parents taught us that giving is a blessing from God and that if we want God to bless us we should make it a habit to give an offering when we go to church. This principle has been a part and parcel of our lives, no matter how small the offering is one must give something back to God.

Giving is not limited only to monetary, we give our talent, time and service to others are all part of giving. When I need God to do a special thing in my life I sow a seed and name the seed, which is separate from tithing or offering, and then wait patiently for the result, which has always been fulfilled.

Participant 15

My experiences with giving as an element of worship are that the church has been self-seeking, non-caring and putting projects before people. My understanding that tithes and offerings are so the church may function, but the church's function is off center. The church should serve the members not visa-versa. The ritual of giving in the church is not according to biblical principles.

Participant 16

I always knew that giving was part of worship. My thought *has* been as God has given you, you give back to him. However, there *have* been times when *I* resented giving because there were just too many offerings woven into worship. Also, if it was felt that not enough was given another collection took place.

At Blessed Harvest Institute there is no compulsion to give. I can show my love for God freely in my giving. Also, I hate the practice of anyone making someone offer up a specific monetary offering. Why would anyone offer God a standard set by someone else? I believe that we should give as God leads us, not as people lead us.

Participant 18

Growing up in traditional tithe and offering type church, I was conditioned to bring my money up to the front and place it in a box! I really did not understand why I just placed the money given to me by my mother. I went along with the program. As my understanding of God became more clear I knew that you were supposed to give God 10% of your income.

After visiting other churches of African-American decent I didn't understand why lines were being formed to give money just to get a "blessing". I found it ridiculous and ungodly. I did not understand why they were doing this. I was taught that you gave to God because you loved him and it was a commandment. My perception was biblical and I felt the preachers that were doing this were doing it for the money. I heard stories about fraudulent preachers and felt that they were being very manipulative and going against what God intended giving to be. Giving should be an act of love and relationship with God! You give because God requires it and you love him – bottom line.

Participant 19

My understanding of giving has been (*until* being at Blessed Harvest Institute) *two* things: 1) Give, but not of necessity or grudgingly and 2) It is only your last if you keep it.

I do agree with the fact that when we give it should be because we want to. The second part have made me “think about” giving. Other ways of giving have been the usual everyone get \$20 in your hand or this one I still don’t get is to match the dollar amount to a purpose. If you are looking for a divine manifestation get \$9, \$40 together, a new beginning \$8, a completion to your *revolving* door \$7, the list goes on.

The giving I didn’t care for was when celebrating the Pastor and *First* Lady’s birthday, this wasn’t the time to be a part of a ministry in the church because they expected “X” amount from this department and that *department*. I was a bit amused, yet sad because when it came time for our birthday we would get a bookmark with the theme of the month and Happy Birthday by Stevie Wonder. I am convinced that the church I was at gave when it was necessary and important to them – ok, when it was beneficial for them. The Pastor and *First* Lady mentioned how they gave to this person and that person, yet when it came to time and investing if you were not “investing” *money* it was an issue. It was like as long as you gave money that is when they pay you any attention. I did not like giving them money on their birthday, Pastor Appreciation and Christmas. That was a lot.

Participant 21

Initially, I did not understand that giving was/is an element of worship. When I say “*initially*” I was about 18-20 years old.

Once I understood that giving – monetary is *an* element of worship I have *given* the 10% of what I earned. If I received any money from tax refund I would do *a* 10% gift to God. My feelings about giving was/is everything I *have* belongs to God our Father. From the life I live, even the air I breathe comes from the Lord God Almighty. If he knew me before I came into this world, I have to give him thanks and worship him at all times for all things (money, house, car, job, family and friends – The Word).

I was taught as young child to give (money) in church from maybe the age 6-7, but at this age I do not recall anyone helping me understand that giving is an element of worship. I know it was a practice my mother has enforced.

Now, I have practice to give money and time to God daily is my purpose or the purpose God has me here on earth. I feel good about *giving*, I

understand that attitude is everything God wants you to be positive in your giving.

My thoughts *were* to give the 10% of your earnings (earned income). My feelings of giving as an element of worship is to be *compassionate* to all people are what God *is* going to honor. My practice is that I used to give 10% net earnings. *Then* I started giving 10% of my gross salary, if I have it. I paid my household bills – rent/mortgage, utilities, car payment, car insurance, and my tithe would be included in my budget at the top. I would do without in the food part of my budget to pay my tithes (currently).

Participant 22

Giving has never been taught as an element of worship. It was taught as if it were the law, so you were put on a guilt trip. The tithes and offerings were taken up and counted, then if \$200 more dollars *was needed to meet a need we would be asked to give more*. Even benevolence was taken up as an offering.

As it relates to Malachi I also felt it was a duty. I am beyond giving a tithe meaning a tenth is just a starting place, so is the offering and any type of building fund.

Participant 23

At Blessed Harvest *Institute* I love the giving experience because there is no pressure to give. I can truly give cheerfully and what I have purposed in my heart to give. I love that offering or giving is not in the worship service. On the other hand I have been in churches where they took up money two or more times or until they got *what they* wanted. *In some instances, they* even said certain things to persuade believers to give. Awful! Even in that environment, I gave what I purposed to give, no pressure for me. My beliefs or opinions *are* if God takes care of us and provides a way for resources to keep up our house, surely he would provide *for* the house of God (the church building).

Begging and continuously making people feel a certain way, or even pressure to give their last, bill money or even money they do not have to give *is not what God intended*. To me giving from the heart without pressure is freeing. My love relationship with God is the drive that causes me to give.

Participant 24

My understanding of giving in worship, for most of my life, was tithing and offering. Tithing being 10% of everything I received. Offering had

always been whatever I wanted to and had to give. Offering had also been what was asked of me, whether it was an offering for someone in need, a love offering, seed offering, etc. It was usually given because I was asked and not initially because of a love for God. Many times I did not have it to give and felt pressured and guilty into giving. I detest this because this fueled the perception that the church was only after our money. This was so pervasive across the church body as a whole that I did not see a change in sight.

My thoughts when I experienced the concept of giving at Blessed Harvest Institute; the tithing did not change, but my concept of offering changed and I felt liberated. I was supposed to seek God as to what my offering should be. My offering should not be dictated by others, it should be a reflection of my love for God.

Participant 26

Understanding and Practice:

- We are commanded by God to give, if I do not give I will not receive
- You do not have because you do not give
- We are supposed to give 10% of our income before taxes
- Any amount we give over 10% will be looked upon as over and above what God has instructed us to give of our money
- Giving is a part of the service *which* is set a part, it is not taught or understood to be worship
- I have been taught worship to be singing, clapping, shouting, dancing, waving of hands or hands lifted up
- I was also taught that giving is also of my time, gifts and talents

Attitude: they are the teachers of God's word so what they said is what God *wanted* us to do.

Thoughts and Feelings: giving and worship is not done in the spirit and truth but for show, people, credit or some type of reward. It is done for the outer man not the inner man. I have issues with being selfish, stingy, greed, and stewardship. We also participate because we like or want others to like us.

Responses 2.1

Journal Entry 2 Question 1 - What are your thoughts concerning the information you received on giving?

Participant 1 – In my mind I never related worship and giving together. I have always seen them as two separate events.

Participant 2 – I thought the information was in line with the word so I agree.

Participant 3 – Money does not always get you what the church needs in the now. I am sure that my love for the needs of others outweighs how I come forth with my time and provisions for the church. There will be times where we do not understand why we give of ourselves but know there is something good that comes from giving to others and the church.

Participant 4 – I am stuck with this information about preaching not being a part of worship

Participant 5 – The information I received on worship and giving nearly blew my mind. This information clarified that worshiping God was more than participating in activities and services. It should be a recognition and affirmation that God is really sovereign in our lives.

Participant 6 – I feel that I have a better understanding of the reasons for giving according to the Old Testament. I am now aware of which reasons I choose to give.

Participant 7 – It was great information. It caused me to really examine myself, my motives, and how I treat God. It was not the best feeling but it birthed truth.

Participant 8 – I did not see, believe, *or* understand that giving meant anything more than money. Honestly, *this* new information challenges how I think of giving myself.

Participant 9 - The information received brought clarity to my current understanding of worship.

Participant 11 – I feel guilty that I have never given out of love. I have given most of the time out of what was left over.

Participant 12 – *The information* made me wonder was I giving because of what the pastor said or what is in the Bible? That my giving was to make the church grow, *I* was never looking for a blessing after giving.

Participant 13 – I never thought that it (*giving*) would be based on my expression of love for God. I was always taught that it was important to pay my tenth.

Participant 14 – We worship God for who He is, as Creator of heaven and earth. When we do so our whole being is released as you your mind is focused on Him; there is that feeling of connectivity in the heavenly realm

as you praise and glorify His name. The tithe is the Lord's (Leviticus 27:30)

When Abraham gave tithe to Melchizedek the Priest, it was not money, but rather he gave one tenth of the spoil he had collected for the enemy (goods) he was not working to earn physical cash. In today's economy we are not in the barter system, so it is appropriate to equate it to money.

Given the fact that our giving expresses our love for God, and as the scriptures state, one should give with all his heart and not be stingy. I do agree with some of the information.

Participant 15 – Great information, the question is how do we implement

Participant 16 – I have only touched the surface of giving based on the information received.

Participant 18 – I really did not understand what giving meant in its true meaning when it came to being a part of my worship. I never took the time to understand it or apply it.

Participant 19 – I am thinking about what I have been taught previously at the church I attended. In this information it is clearly evident that giving is a part of worship and also the manner that we give.

Participant 21 – The information is very well structured of the written materials and explanation for what is in the Bible

Participant 22 – It was eye opening

Participant 23 – I agree with the *information* received. It helped me to understand more about worship. I can see why giving is a part of worship. When we love we want to give.

Participant 24 – That worship in the corporate setting was much deeper than I thought. It involved all of me being available and present to adore and praise God and God alone.

Participant 26 – Clearly, in reading the passage Abraham is in relationship with God. He gives him the victory in the fight to get Lot back and he promised him land and seed. He had a giving heart because he refused to take anything but food for him and his men. The Israelites willingly gave what they vowed. David and the people gave in great amounts gold, silver, and stones. The people in that day were totally real and serious in their worship and giving to God. They seem to be united and sincere in their trust that they gave in the right spirit.

Responses 2.2

Journal Entry 2 Question 2 - How did this information make you feel?

Participant 1 – The information made me feel bad and confused. If I come to worship but do not have money to give am I a participant or observer?

Participant 2 – This information made me think even though I agree it still made me think.

Participant 3 – Shallow, because we have so many saying that have taught us bad thought of how the church should be but do not have truth to get correct feeling from ministry. Now that the church has moved forward we get a clear view of what God means to us more than ever before, much love and mercy every day.

Participant 4 – Inadequate

Participant 5 – This information was an eye opener. It made me feel like I needed to do more in terms of my worship and giving to God.

Participant 6 – It made me think and caused me to reflect on the motives for my giving.

Participant 7 – It was good to get the truth but I felt bad once I saw how I treated God through my love, relationship and provision.

Participant 8 – I did not have any feelings associated with the new information.

Participant 9 - This information caused me to consider everything I do in light of my relationship with God. I give because it is what God requires as part of my relationship with Him not always, because I want to give but because I want to be obedient to God.

Participant 11 – The information on giving that I have received so far puts me in a bad place. I am somewhat angry that I have not focused more on becoming a better giver than church member. In the life of our church that are many activities where there is a free opportunity to give, but it does not make me feel good about giving when I see so few others doing the same. I am angry because I have even let comments from people I care about *impact my giving because they* thought I was trying to support the church on my own based on what I was giving despite the fact that it really was not a lot of money. The tithe has really been rooted in my head for such a long time it is hard to think that I have never given God *an* honest offering and I honestly mean never. Overall, I will say this information will address how I understand what really offering God a gift out of love is and I feel I will grow from what I have learned.

Participant 12 – Made me examine myself for the purpose of giving

Participant 13 – *I feel* worse than I was before

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – It was received immediately in my spirit as truth

Participant 16 – It made me feel as if I have fallen short and I have not given fully.

Participant 18 – It made me feel like I was missing out on what God expected of me. Like I was “out of the loop” on what giving truly meant. I was giving out of what I deemed, out of obligation so I did not take a look at giving from my heart and out of love.

Participant 19 – Is my giving acceptable to God when I have not given out of relationship but instead out of provision? I feel like I have been selfish.

Participant 21 – I felt disappointed in what I learned in the past about giving as an element of worship. The information I learned here brought about trust issues with the church people/priest/ministers/leaders.

Participant 22 – I need to reevaluate

Participant 23 – This information made me feel good, but at this time in life I wish I had more provision so I can express more of my love for God.

Participant 24 – It made me more conscious of how I approach corporate worship. It made me feel convicted because I did not have this understanding, but it also made me excited because if we would truly do ministry throughout the week then come together on Sunday it could really be a praise party that is ALL about God.

Participant 26 – It is amazing to understand how the people had no restraints holding them in their giving. They gave what they had and somewhat they did not have even some gave all they had. They did not worry about their own needs and they were taken care of. I feel like I have held back on God, not totally trusting him. I feel greedy and self-centered. How can I be a true worshiper and not give back to God what he has freely given me.

Responses 2.3

Journal Entry 2 Question 3 - How did this information conflict or support your current understanding of giving?

Participant 1 – The information that I received really did not conflict or support my current understanding of giving. I have just tried to give because that is what you should do. I never related giving to worship.

Participant 2 – I understand that giving is worship unto God, but I need to study further on the way that we give. I never considered the importance of the time of giving in the worship service. (At the beginning before we enter the sanctuary) I need to study this further.

Participant 3 – Open my thought of how to listen more on a spirit level than my own personal feeling. So now I worship to hear from the Lord on what maybe specify instruction to the need at hand. Knowing that we can get clear understanding from our heavenly Father.

Participant 4 – If we use this information, Love → Relationship → Provision, there cannot be a dollar amount put to or time to provide any offering worthy of *being given* to God.

Participant 5 – In the beginning, the information was a little confusing, but *as the lesson continued* the Holy Spirit confirmed his word in my spirit concerning the teaching. For years, I have been taught in the Full Gospel and Church of God in Christ. We have always believed in 10% tithes and giving *an* offering that was greater than our tithes and the rest belongs to the people of God.

Participant 6 – Well, I have always had a conflict or battle that has waged within me concerning giving. So, I now have more information that supports why I should give.

Participant 7 – It supported what I believe what you say “genuine worship” involves submitting of minds, bodies, etc. which to me means “all.” Giving is a part of worship so it should be all. What truly blessed me was *the statement*, “structure your agreements” so that information helps you to do what you are supposed to do, keep from putting God second.

Participant 8 – The current information conflicts with my understanding of giving because all of the giving knowledge I had was based on Malachi and robbing which is usually associated with money and possessions.

Participant 9 - It further explained the concept and act of worship as well as clearly delineating between being an attender or worshipper. At times I am both. The process I currently use to determine my offering is in line with what was shared tonight. However I don't believe my giving as it relates to tithing is worship.

Participant 11 – The conflict arises solely from understanding what God said in his word. As we discussed in study we have heard different

interpretations from other preachers and pastors that do not line up with what the Bible teaches. I am glad though that it does conflict with my current understanding of giving. In other words I am very happy to throw out old information that I really did not understand because I was following what I had been taught. The conflict was that giving a tenth was always what was required and anything over and above was considered an offering. Learning that the two fundamental reasons for giving were the conflict that now in hindsight brings about more awareness that the tithe really does not apply to us. It is hard to digest in a lot of ways but in scripture it is very plain. I say this because the way this is taught comes directly from scripture.

Participant 12 – I should not have given 10% because the rest of them were giving 10%. Give with love in it first do not worry about who is giving what

Participant 13 – No conflict, it just made me want to do better

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 - Our giving *is* shallow in spiritual meaning. The church is set up on obligation and tradition.

Participant 16 – I knew that giving was an element of worship and I also knew that what you give to God should be first and not after all of my wants and needs. It supported my understanding, and then some.

Participant 18 – It conflicted with my understanding because I was taught that you “give” your tithes and your offerings were given out of love.

Participant 19 – Oh, it definitely conflicted in many ways. It’s deeper than giving not grudgingly or of necessity, but cheerful which is what God loves.

Participant 21 – In general, worship and giving information gave me an understanding that I have never experienced before. I understand the first term of worship as an action word. To bow down, to prostrate oneself in *for* our sovereign God at a specific time and place. The second term giving was and is out of love. I have never heard “Giving grows out of who we are.” I give because I love you and an individual needs or because God loves me.

Participant 22 – It enhanced it biblically because what you see at traditional churches is unbiblical.

Participant 23 – This *information* supports my understanding of giving. I *am* glad to know that giving (the amount) is not the biggest key. I give out

of my provision. I want to give out of my love and relationship. My provision does not express my love or my relationship with God!

Participant 24 – It did neither, it was information

Participant 26 – I can say it supports what I have read. If you are in relationship with Christ, you cannot separate worship and giving. I think a lot of us are worshiping ourselves and calling it worshiping God. If Christ abides in us we should have a giving spirit because Christ is giving.

Responses 2.4

Journal Entry 2 Question 4 - Do you agree with the information? Please explain

Participant 1 – Yes, I agree with the information that I have received thus far, starting with the beginning statement “giving to God is a great opportunity and a point of exploitation.” My giving is a reflection of my love and relationship with God, not sure about how to interpret giving for atonement.

Participant 2 – I have a point of conflict as it relates to the unbeliever being a part of the worship service. I understand that only believers can worship God but is that to the exclusion of non-believers. Should they leave the sanctuary as we go on to worship God? Maybe, maybe not, I do not know. I do know that I am conflicted about this.

Participant 3 – Yes, because until now I thought my connection was a tenth and above what I felt lead to giving more than gross. My thinking has changed how I look at worship and giving now for my growth personally.

Participant 4 – I am reading it and hearing it but I reserve my agreement at this time.

Participant 5 – I do agree with the information because it was referenced in the word of God. Meanwhile, I believe that it is going to take more practice in order to change the mindset of the people. In essence, we as believers need to be re-taught concerning giving God our best offerings and how to worship God in our giving. I do agree that churches are not good stewards in investing in God and that as believers we are not truly giving as a reflection of our love to God.

Participant 6 – For the most part I agree with the information that was provided. As I stated earlier I now have a better understanding about the subject and it makes a lot more sense to me now.

Participant 7 – I agree with *the* majority of the information, worship and the definition. The definition of giving was not connecting to worship as far as it pertains to giving in two ways, sparingly and grudgingly. How does that say you worship, or if you do not give is it still possible to worship?

Participant 8 – I agree because of the way that the information was explained. I can see where the ideas about tithing that I was previously exposed to would be in conflict with my previous teachers. However, the idea I have now is based on relationship not religion.

Participant 9 – I agree with the information

Participant 11 – I agree, but I do have some skepticism because we have not explored what the New Testament says about giving. I know more information is coming but I am kind of in limbo because in my old church there were believers that convinced the church that we are no longer under the teachings of the Old Testament so only the New Testament applies to us. I have been in a sense conditioned to agree with tithing so I do not feel misinformed now that I understand. I will go as far enough to say most of us remain misinformed or have never challenged the idea of why do we tithe and what really is the definition of offering. I have always felt that tithes and offerings were not the only way to give. If I feel I do not have an acceptable offering I still give most of *the* time from what I have but unfortunately it is from what is left over after bills and expenses. What I have learned is an awakening and if I disagreed with why the Bible said what it says I would feel slighted, but with a thorough understanding I can move forward with some new knowledge.

Participant 12 – *I agree* (Yes). Make sure that I understand the reason for giving. Do not always look for something in return.

Participant 13 – Yes, because God has done so much for me why should not my expression of love be more for his kingdom.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 - *I agree* (Yes). The using of resources (provisions) to show love towards our creator is simple and straightforward. Do not give because you love the building, give because you love God.

Participant 16 – In order to glorify God we must do it from a surrendered posture. If we *are* redeemed our giving should be a love expression of our change and a commitment to God's service.

Participant 18 – Yes, I agree! It is supported by the word of God. It has been there ever since it was written. The way in which it was explained made sense and really opened my eyes.

Participant 19 – Yes, I do agree. I agree because for us to be able to give as a part of worship I see that we must have a relationship with God. That relationship will provide because I love him and he loves me.

Participant 21 – I agree with the information today. The unclear part of this information for me *is* if we give to priest and to provide for the priest why do the current day priest feel we should give to them when we should give for the two fundamental reasons stated in the lesson. This information needs to be broadcast to the believers constantly.

Participant 22 – I do

Participant 23 – Yes I agree with this given information. I have felt this way for a long time. I always gave out of love for God! I struggle sometimes with choosing myself or God in offerings.

Participant 24 – Yes, we serve a God who is bountiful towards us. I believe He likes to see if we will become focused on stuff or are we going to remain solely focused on Him.

Participant 26 - *I agree* (Yes). In my study of the scriptures not only did they give freely materially but they gave God themselves, thanking him and honoring him. I do agree that our giving comes out of who we are. One thing we can be sure of for most people is self usually comes first. We get or take what we want before we think about God and others.

Responses 2.5

Journal Entry 2 Question 5 - Will this information changed your approach to giving? Please explain

Participant 1 – I do not think my approach to giving will change based on the information in this lesson. Over the last several years I would like to think that my giving was out of love.

Participant 2 – It may I am not sure yet. I have more studying to do concerning this information.

Participant 3 – Yes, it is *clearer* to me that everything belongs to my father and creator of my being, therefore I am short changing wealth that he has allowed to me through understanding his promise to me.

Participant 4 – I am unsure

Participant 5 – No response

Participant 6 – No response

Participant 7 – It has made me quit spending recklessly. I always wanted to give but I mismanage money or I did not structure my agreements. Now I am getting my finances in order so that this is never an issue again.

Participant 8 – Not immediately, I am looking forward to the completion of the study.

Participant 9 - It will strengthen my giving by changing my approach to everything else. I will do a better job at managing my provision so that my offering reflects my love for God and become more conscious of the agreements that impact my ability to give.

Participant 11 – Yes, because now I have to consider how much I love God. I never put any thought into is this really an expression of my love. I do wonder how do I increase what God has given in a two-week timeframe. I say this because I am paid bi-weekly so I want to understand like the parable of the men who were each given talents by the master; one five bags of gold, two to another and one to the last in Matthew 25:14-30. The expectation of the master was that they would turn those bags of gold into something more than what they had. I really have to consider am I doing anything more with what I have from God or do I just keep paying bills and getting by with my check or what I have earned. This information will challenge what I have been doing so far which is giving God what has been left over instead of actually preparing a sacrifice to give to God. What I give now does not hurt me in anyway – financially, emotionally, or physically but now I know I am doing more harm than good and God is definitely not pleased with how I give. I will definitely rethink not getting caught up in having an offering every time I worship. I now understand that it would mean more to give God an offering out of love that to short change him three out of four Sundays in the month. I still want to understand more about what the tenth is so that *this* will be the minimum he will get from me.

Participant 12 – Yes, my giving will help other people. Also giving to help a church grow and also giving to help them if they were losing their church.

Participant 13 – Yes, because even though it was always for God and his kingdom I also want to express my love for God through my giving.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Yes, I have given out of obligation and to make a deal with God now I am free to give out of love and worship.

Participant 16 – My approach to giving has always been one of gratefulness, love, and thanksgiving. It will continue.

Participant 18 – Yes, now that I have been enlightened by this truth moving forward I can give based on how much I love God. It also takes away the yoke of 10%.

Participant 19 – Yes, I will need to be shrewd and manage. Be a better steward which also means that I will make better decisions so I can give to God in a state of worship and not based off of what I have left over.

Participant 21 – Yes, this information have and will continue to help me especially in the area of being a good or better steward of my finances. This information *will* help *me* to stop and think about the information or words others speak to me.

Participant 22 – Yes, I will seek to line up with true worship.

Participant 23 – Yes, to stop beating myself up or feeling bad about my provisions my provisions do not express my love or my relationship with God.

Participant 24 – No

Participant 26 – Yes, because I want to be in right relationship with my Father. I want to be a true worshiper in spirit and truth. Once God brings you into his understanding he expects me to totally trust him with and in everything.

Responses 3.1

Journal Entry 3 Question 1 - What are your thoughts concerning the information you received on giving?

Participant 1 – A couple of thoughts come to mind: 1) Do we totally disregard the Old Testament when it comes to giving? 2) I was taught for years that if you gave a little God would give you back a lot (Luke 6:38). How do you get this teaching out of your spirit?

Participant 2 – I thought the information was interesting. Initially I did not understand how the Old Testament way of worshiping God with animal sacrifices was going to translate to our worship of God today. I thought initially that this concept was really over the top. I did not have a

true understanding of what true worship giving really is, so I believe that this is the reason that what I was hearing sounded kind of crazy.

Participant 3 – We have missed the true belief of what *God* has been saying for many years. I have believed *for* so many years that the more you give the more you shall get in return but now I do not think it *is* a fact *any* more as we get this. *I* need the information to be clear on this fact. I think some of my blessings were on hold because I am trying to buy my *blessing*.

Participant 4 – That the new understanding of those scriptures really clears up *things* so we/I can act on this the correct way.

Participant 5 – The information that I received on giving really gave me more insight on giving and what it means to give God my best. I now have clarity concerning the fact *that* God will give the giver more to give, with hopes that the giver will give more to help others.

Participant 6 – Well, I really feel that I have a better understanding about giving based on the content of the lessons. I can look at myself and know that I really only have been giving with two motives: 1) out of guilt, 2) expecting a larger return. But that is what I was taught.

Participant 7 – I am amazed at the truths that were uncovered tonight. It makes great sense. It made me go back and look at the information in the beginning of my journal.

Participant 8 – The explanation of the difference provides the entire framework that I had not previously considered. The new information gave the scenarios in the Bible more relevance.

Participant 9 - The information destroyed my understanding of my obedience to God. I believed being obedient was an act of my love for God. I have been operating under a legalistic system and calling it worship.

Participant 11 – My thoughts concerning the Agrarian giving is that in this day and age how does anyone equate today's inflation, taxes and base income into what God asks for out of love. It makes me concerned that I am disobedient if I do not take the time to understand what God expects from me. I do not think this is a bad expectation but in the same way that we discussed in class the value we put on our gifts. I like this example because in the same way that believers and worshippers offered animals and sacrifices in relation to the Agrarian system it really does open up awareness that I need to consider what a sacrifice is concerning my money.

Participant 12 – The information that I received made me think all of tithes was not good enough. *I thought* that I was doing it right after the information. When you said do not tithe *that* just blew my mind.

Participant 13 – *I have* always loved God but never associated my giving as my expression of love. *I have been giving* mostly out of obedience to the Law.

Participant 14 – We tithe to acknowledge our Heritage. My heritage of paying a tithe precedes the Law of Moses. As a child of Abraham and an heir of the promise of Abraham I acknowledge my family relationship by paying tithe. Jesus said to the Jews, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.” (John 8:39) It would be strange to claim to be a child of Abraham and yet to neglect one of Abraham’s most fundamental and noteworthy acts. I pay my tithes as a spiritual descendant of Abraham, the father of the faithful.

We give to show our love for God. Love is the strongest motivation in the world. King David said, “Neither will I offer...unto the Lord my God of that which does not cost me nothing.” (2 Samuel 24:24).

For someone who genuinely loves the Lord, the tithe is only the beginning of his giving. He gives not only his tithe, but also offerings, not grudgingly and not of necessity, but cheerfully with love.

Participant 15 – Very on point to how I have felt for a longtime

Participant 16 – I never took into account the nurturing and care of the gift given.

Participant 18 – Amazed! It is amazing how the church has taken biblical nomenclature and agriculture and transported it over to a monetary system. We have taught and misinformed what is not applicable to our modern day system.

Participant 19 – I feel that there is not a set dollar amount that we have to give to God. It is based on how much we love Him.

Participant 21 – WOW!

- A) Power in really understanding the word of God
- B) Such an eye opener, this information is spectacular
- C) Yes, the expressive relationship must go beyond the church – institution – building

Participant 22 – I had not thought a lot about Old Testament agrarian giving verses our monetary *system*. But it does make sense that our giving today does not reflect the love and devotion of the Old Testament.

Participant 23 – Starting to feel a little uneasy, I have understood giving one way, but some new information has been given to me.

Participant 24 – Even though in the Old Testament their system was agrarian and ours is now monetary it is still applicable to us because it is the concept of giving that we take away. The concept that we serve a God who wants us to give out of our resources and abundance.

Participant 26 – God has made everything so he knows what is of value to him and man in the times we live in. Yes, Jesus Christ has come he is our atonement. We must willingly give back out of the things that God has given us in our time (example: money which is near and dear to man's heart). The Old Testament teaches us the way they worshipped God in their times, out of what God gave and entrusted them with.

Responses 3.2

Journal Entry 3 Question 2 - How did this information make you feel?

Participant 1 – I feel bewildered

Participant 2 – The information made me feel, at the end, that I needed to go and do my own research because I had never looked at worship and giving in this way before and it caused me to question my own understanding and my actions as they relate to my own worship and giving. My question to myself, has my worship to God in this area of giving been something other than true worship?

Participant 3 – Lost and *in* need of more clarity on why my heart is shaken in place for not studying to know what he said to be true for the believers.

Participant 4 – Informed

Participant 5 – This information was an eye opener. I have been taught that your offering should exceed your tithing. Actually, I was not aware that as a giver your best offering should be something that is pleasing to God, even if you have to save several offerings in order to give God your best offering. In my mind I am thinking, how do people achieve that if they do not have any monetary resources? Will this make the people of God feel bad about giving when you are taught that giving is a form of worship?

Participant 6 – This section of the lesson provoked a great deal of thought regarding the balance placed on giving in a monetary system considering that it is based on an agrarian system.

Participant 7 – It eliminated the feeling of not being important if you do not tithe; when you are not obedient and not being consistent it still brings the same feeling.

Participant 8 – There were no feelings associated.

Participant 9 - This information caused me to realize how much of my giving was about me and not God. That reality was a difficult pill to swallow. It caused me to re-evaluate my relationship with God and question my preparedness to worship God.

Participant 11 – The information did make me feel awkward just as we discussed in class most of us have been conditioned to only understand tithing as what we owe God and offering as simply something that exists. To me it is as though offering never had an emphasis. In my church before I attended Blessed Harvest Institute an offering never had any importance. It was always “you need to tithe.” The tithe has been, in my past, overemphasized to the point where there was no explanation on what an offering was. It makes me feel as though I only needed to tithe. I do not feel as though I have been misinformed, but I do feel uneducated about what is a true offering. As we learned from the information offerings were made to atone for sins so I understand this all changed when Christ died for us. I do still feel as though I am atoning for my sins by doing two things: 1) praying and asking God for forgiveness and 2) by trying to make an effort to consistently tithe. I have truly fallen short on tithing so I wonder if I should be atoning for not tithing and this is the feeling of conviction I have a lot of weeks in church service.

Participant 12 – Embarrassed

Participant 13 – No difference because I know I should be doing better for God’s kingdom.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 - Gratified

Participant 16 – I feel sorrowful that I neglected this important aspect.

Participant 18 – Honestly, *I felt* like a fool. It made me feel lazy. I had not studied on my own to get knowledge of this concept. I felt bad that something had been at my disposal but I did not take the time to learn.

Participant 19 – It made me feel like I have a lot of work to do as far as being a good steward. It is hard to give even when you love God if you are not a good manager of your finances.

Participant 21 – Once again I was tricked by the leaders in my life (from the past). I was angry at hearing the miseducation I *received*. But my soul rejoices now *that* I know the truth.

Participant 22 – It was a WOW!

Participant 23 - Uneasy, going to be told again because it goes contrary to what I learned over the years.

Participant 24 – No difference from response to Journal 3 Question 1

Participant 26 – Misled by others, always study God's word for myself asking the Holy Spirit for understanding and guidance. Some people do not really care to know what God is saying about this matter. *I feel* selfish and stingy.

Responses 3.3

Journal Entry 3 Question 3 - How did this information conflict or support your current understanding of giving?

Participant 1 – This information is in direct conflict *with* my understanding of giving. To be honest I looked at giving as a cannot lose investment you would at a *minimum* get a tenfold return.

Participant 2 – This information supported my understanding that giving is worship unto God. The part that blew me out of the water was how we are to give, and what part of what we receive belongs to God. I was shocked to hear that I may not be giving God all that He deserves. I was also shocked to hear that I may not *be* handling what God has entrusted to me in a way that is going to multiply what He has entrusted to me.

Participant 3 – Offset thinking, but makes me more alert to how to grow from the knowledge I am getting now so history will not repeat itself. Many are being lead from other thinking but not all true to the people who need understanding.

Participant 4 – It backs up what I thought but was not really sure.

Participant 5 – This information somewhat confused me, if giving is a form of worship and a person does not have any monetary resources how will that make the giver feel? Does that mean that his or her worship to God was not pure? Does that mean he or she cannot be a true worshipper?

Participant 6 – Well, I am of the feeling that two systems cannot be set equal to one another and the information seems to support that conclusion

to me. Because giving is an expression of love then the amount or percentage does not come into place in your giving regardless of system.

Participant 7 – The information supports what I believe about tithing. God loves people and takes care of people. I could not connect how the resources come out of the church and take care of people.

Participant 8 – *So far all* of the information has been in conflict with my previous understanding of tithing.

Participant 9 - It was a conflict because I believed my giving was about God. It can only be about God when it is no longer about me. It also conflicts because I never considered the transportability of those scriptures into today's monetary system. We actually give less when we take in consideration the management, care and investment that went into preparing an offering for God.

Participant 11 – The understanding definitely conflicted with what I have understood because I am not or have not been educated enough until this point *with* a true understanding of what an offering is. Now that I know for what our study has revealed I do not have an issue with not knowing. The question always is now that I know what to do and how do I respond to giving now.

Participant 12 – After receiving giving information now I know my giving should be more than what I was giving. I cannot give what I was used to, I have to go beyond that.

Participant 13 – No conflict, it is a process that has now become a little more challenging.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – *The information* conflicted with what I had been taught, but aligned with the new ideas and direction God is taking us.

Participant 16 – I never took into consideration the shift in cultural societies, and based my understanding solely on tradition.

Participant 18 – Once again it conflicts, but in the end it made sense once I had it broken down for me and once again shown to me in the word of God.

Participant 19 – It has been a conflict since day one. It makes me not give what I have left but save to give more. *I* have a “save to give” plan.

Participant 21 – This Agrarian vs. Monetary System the way it was presented in the Bible Study, helped me tremendously to understand why we follow the New Testament.

Participant 22 – I would have to say neither. It is a brand new understanding. I have always felt in my heart that 10% was not the gold standard but the minimum. I thought our stewardship would allow us to give 20%, 30% and 40%. Then 2 Corinthians 9:10-11 *said* we would be enriched to give more.

Participant 23 – This information conflicts *with* my current understanding of giving cause I have never heard of it.

Participant 24 – It supported my understanding of giving because it only makes sense that we give out of what we have whether agrarian or monetary. If we choose to worship God with our giving then we will give.

Participant 26 – In today's world, we are all about the green money. We do participate in the mindset give to get. I can see how easy these verses can take people to miss what they are really talking about. It takes the Holy Spirit, prayer and meditation in the word to understand what it is saying to us. We sow our seeds by helping people. God gives to us so that we will give back.

Responses 3.4

Journal Entry 3 Question 4 - Do you agree with the information? Please explain

Participant 1 – I do not disagree, it will take time to digest. Long standing teaching takes time to overcome.

Participant 2 – I am still studying this teaching but I can say for the most part I do agree with the information. The biggest problem I have seeing that I so agree with the interpretation of the scriptures. How do I move forward with applying this teaching?

Participant 3 – Some has me on the fence but the truth of the matter is before my very eyes to see and believe for myself.

Participant 4 – Questionable

Participant 5 – *(same response as Journal 2 Question 4)*

Participant 6 – Now that I fully understand the reasons for giving and that it has nothing to do with receiving from God, yes I do agree.

Participant 7 – I agree with the information. My question again is what does it mean to bring your tithe to the storehouse?

Participant 8 – Yes, I agree with the new information because I have a better understanding of monetary system of those times in comparison to now.

Participant 9 - Yes, as soon as I look to benefit from what I give it is not worship.

Participant 11 – I do agree with the information because it is very plain now that an offering is something completely different *from* what I understood. When we discussed and studied at another time *at BHI* that you give an offering only after you have given a tithe. It is much clearer now and I am glad what has been revealed makes sense.

Participant 12 – Agree with some of the new way of giving. Totally disagree about killing any animals.

Participant 13 – Yes it sounds correct, it just made my transition more urgent.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – *I agree* (Yes), we do not give out of love. We give out of obligation and thinking we will get something by giving to God.

Participant 16 – Yes, the scriptures are plain that giving is a love expression, not to receive.

Participant 18 – I most certainly do *agree*! What is right is right. When something is revealed and it is truth, it *was* hard for me to first grasp and accept, but after I think about it and understand it is truth I grow from it and try to implement it.

Participant 19 – Yes, God is about structure and stewardship. This is essential to giving. When I save I am making provision and being faithful with what He has given to me.

Participant 21 – Yes, totally, wholeheartedly, completely, incredibly, and joy fills my spirit. The relationship I have with God no one can describe it for me. I love the Lord, at all times we must submit ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice.

Participant 22 – *I absolutely agree*. Giving has to be a part of worship. I am grateful for this truly biblical perspective.

Participant 23 – I do agree, but I am still processing the information and see how I can invest.

Participant 24 – I do agree that God gives/blesses us so that we bless others.

Participant 26 – Yes and No! What I gather from Luke 6:38 is he tells us to give and maybe he is talking about the act of giving, I think he is referring to when and whatever we give whether it is forgiveness, money or friendship. I do not read that I should give to get in this verse. 2 Corinthians 9:10-11 ministry, seed is *given* to the sowers, people are taking care of and God is *given* thanks. I did not read in these verses giving to get.

Responses 3.5

Journal Entry 3 Question 5 - Will this information changed your approach to giving? Please explain

Participant 1 – At this point this information has changed my thinking process, now I have alternatives.

Participant 2 – I am sure that my approach in giving will change. I have always thought that I was giving to God because I love Him but hearing this teaching I understand that was not always true, so I know this must change.

Participant 3 – Yes, perhaps more for good reason than what someone tells me to do. My thinking is not the same as before more to conclude fact for the building up *of* the church and the man reasoning to trust the pastor and leader.

Participant 4 – No!

Participant 5 – No response

Participant 6 – Yes, well as I stated *previously*. Since my giving is simply a token of my love for God, I have to consider how I would want to be shown love in return when determining my giving, not 10%.

Participant 7 – Yes, I will begin to give God in all areas. I first have to give consistently and focus on all areas; it is then I can surrender my all.

Participant 8 – I want to reserve my opinion on this question until later

Participant 9 - Yes, I must lower myself to make sure God is getting everything He wants from me. I will cultivate my offering and be open to

recognize ways to manage and increase what God has given me and become a better steward.

Participant 11 – I feel that this information will change my approach to giving. I have been disobedient in what I am giving because I still have not trusted God enough to let me release what I feel he deserves. (This is only a quote from a longer response)

Participant 12 – *I* will look at how much I love God when it comes to my giving. My giving must come from the heart and how much I love the Lord.

Participant 13 – Yes, because in the near future I will be having my God and his will for me first.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Yes, I will think of giving more as an opportunity to worship than as an obligation to serve the law.

Participant 16 – I believe that my approach to giving will *move* towards love and relationship with God and not just provision, which was my previous stance.

Participant 18 – Yes, the boundary has been lifted! There is liberty in giving. The weight of a certain amount has been. Now that I think about it that is how God wants it to be.

Participant 19 – See response to Journal Entries 3 Question 3

Participant 21 – Yes, just 5 – 7 years *ago* I heard of \$1000 fold blessing. I know Luke 6:37-38 meant forgiveness (not money). So, I have to make the investment into healing my heart so I can help the people that hurt me. I will and must increase my righteousness so I can give more.

Participant 22 – I am not sure now but yes

Participant 23 – Yes, new information, I am feeling a slow change coming

Participant 24 – No, I believe giving is a concept that is transportable over any generation therefore I give out of love for a God who freely gives to me. I also believe that it supports ministry, which further supports the work of Christ.

Participant 26 – Yes, I will be very mindful not to give to get. I will stop spending in areas that I should not. I will give because I love the Lord

Responses 4.1

Journal Entry 4 Question 1 - What are your thoughts concerning the information you received on giving?

Participant 1 – This is the first time that I have understood the full reasoning for Abram tithing to Melchizedek. The sermons and teaching that I have received stopped short of the full story. I have been enlightened.

Participant 2 – I do not know how to reconcile this concerning tithing. Does God expect us today to use the tithe in a celebration feast for the church, aren't the dynamics now different from the Old Testament times? There were no real financial responsibilities and today there are. If this is not transported in this manner should we stop tithing all together? This is difficult!!!

Participant 3 – It is certainly not as simple as it sounds but seeing how they used battle for a reason to give shows that they would die rather than give honor to God for favor was upon them all who understood who he was to his people.

Participant 4 – Shocked, I feel uncertain how I can put this into practice in my life.

Participant 5 – As believers *we* have been giving our tithes according to what *has been* taught to us by our leaders. I have not seen anyone challenge the traditional way of giving until now.

Participant 6 – I think the information was a shock at first, but in reviewing the scripture and the lesson it is completely logical to me that tithing does not apply in the same sense today, just as sacrificing people does not apply.

Participant 7 – My thoughts are good. My question about the storehouse was answered. I am amazed and it all makes sense.

Participant 8 – I have always understood Malachi to be explaining the entire congregation withholding their tithe or giving the wrong offering to God in terms of money.

Participant 9 - This information is alarming because it contradicts everything the church including BHI has taught on tithing.

Participant 11 – My thoughts on tithing in this week's lesson have been completely confused. This is simple to explain because we have for years, decades of limited and redundant practices been seriously misinformed.

Now I understand why so many priest, teachers, apostles and ministers avoid the true definition of a tithe. It was difficult to translate what a tenth would be in today's time because it is simple math when you make \$40,000 it is \$4,000. I have always known and I am sure most believers have a good understanding of this, but my thoughts are around all of what has been quantified as "is it before taxes or is it my take home income?" It sounds silly but this is a real fact that churches have different interpretations.

Participant 12 – It is a provision for the ongoing for church. *In* obedience to God's word.

Participant 13 – It just goes to show you how you need to read the Bible for yourself and ask God for his understanding.

Participant 14 – We tithe because we love God. Tithing is God's way of supporting the ministry.

Participant 15 – We follow tradition

Participant 16 – This was an eye-opening experience for me. A revelation of information that was given.

Participant 18 – All I can say is WOW! I have been bamboozled! That is truly mind-boggling. All this time I have been following and doing something that is NOT a "commandment" for all these years. There is NO tithing, what? There is NO specific amount to give.

Participant 19 – I cannot believe that I have spent so much time apologizing to God for not tithing and to find out that I should not have been tithing. I am pretty relieved.

Participant 21 – I think this information needs to be put on TV, radio, and newspaper for the world to see. Awesome point made with Leviticus 27:30-33 the redeeming *of the tithe*, I never *thought* of this. We (man) decide → give portion to God →Um! Especially in Deuteronomy 14:22-29.

Participant 22 – It is tearing down traditions I have believed

Participant 23 – I feel like I received the information given, but on the other hand *this is* going to be a challenge in my flesh to comply.

Participant 24 – Disturbing, Quite frankly my first thought was the church was going to suffer because of this. Statistically most Christians do not tithe, and that was considered law, so I thought that we really would

not give since we now know that tithing is not supported scripturally in the New Testament times.

Participant 26 – Abram called it a tithe because that was the amount he wanted to give. Jacob, I think also used the word tenth because that is the amount he wanted to give. The Israelites were given instructions with the tithe-tenth given by God. He told them what, when and how to give.

Responses 4.2

Journal Entry 4 Question 2 - How did this information make you feel?

Participant 1 – Perplexed

Participant 2 – I feel like I do not know what to do with this information, right now I really want to act as though I do not know this, but I really cannot unknow what I know.

Participant 3 – Very uncomfortable for so many years we have missed God because of a lack of his knowledge and it is a setback. Some of my blessings can be held back from this because of wrong prayers and what God really will do for me and others who learned the law of reaping from the harvest that is already there for me.

Participant 4 – Clueless and uneasy

Participant 5 – The information that I have learned has been sound doctrine. I am excited to learn the true principals of giving that is deemed pleasing in the site of God.

Participant 6 – Well, at first knowing that I am not required to tithe is good news. I do not have to give the 10% anymore. But, upon further inspection and remembering the reasons for giving I have no choice but to conclude that just because it is not required that is not expected to demonstrate my love.

Participant 7 – I was glad to hear it. It makes you look at the scripture in a whole new way. There are some things that you can research because it does not sound right or certain things that do not add up, but things are becoming more clearer every study group.

Participant 8 – I feel I have a better understanding of what was going on during those times especially regarding the faith the priest has to maintain regardless of the circumstances.

Participant 9 - I am distraught, confused, sad and nervous. The tithe was like the guide to giving, it was the one church concept that many people

across denominations agreed upon. I am confused as to how to move forward with this information. I am sad that I have treated my giving to God like a bill and that does not accurately express my love for Him. I am nervous because this is a church tradition that has withstood time, denominational splits and religious wars – how will the church survive, how will BHI survive.

Participant 11 – It made me feel good to know silly enough that I do know what 10% means. It did throw a wrench in my program though when I saw the explanation on the information saying God is not requiring a tithe. It is hard to grasp after so long some forty plus years knowing one thing and hearing what your parents, ministers and pastors have taught about the tithe without ever hearing this. I love the fact *this information has been* made plain. In summary, “the reason we have struggled is because we have tried to make this text a requirement to tithe so we concluded the penalty was to be assessed for not tithing.” Now I understand what the scripture is explaining. Of all the teachings I have had over the years on the “tithe” this piece was never explained. It does make me feel also that I have not spent enough time in study of my Bible.

Participant 12 – Should have a joyful feeling since I am able to *give* back.

Participant 13 – It gave me more insight on just how far I was away from God just through giving back to him.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – As if God is being cheated

Participant 16 – I was shocked into the truth. We have been betrayed; no, the appropriate word is misled. I believe the ones giving this information thought it was truth.

Participant 18 – This information made me feel shocked. I was sitting in my seat in true awe, like REALLY? Are you kidding me?

Participant 19 – It made me feel like I have been bamboozled by the times that I did tithe. That I also have been doing it because it was taught not something that I read for myself.

Participant 21 – This information made *me* feel like I do not know what the word of God says on tithing or how I should do my money – finances. I have paid the penalty for lack of knowledge one-fifth penalty. Leviticus 27:30 tried to make a system – wronging the people (conviction in church).

Participant 22 – It lets me know I really need to carefully read God's word for true revelation.

Participant 23 – I felt like my love for God is going to be challenged also is my love just lip service?

Participant 24 – Uncomfortable. It made me check my own relationship with God. It is easier to give know that it was 10% required but now I have a choice as to what I want to give and it all has to stem from my love for God.

Participant 26 – Some of today's churches do not understand or do not want to understand that was the things they did in that time. I feel that when Jesus Christ rolled up on the scene he made all things new.

Responses 4.3

Journal Entry 4 Question 3 - How did this information conflict or support your current understanding of giving?

Participant 1 – This information conflicted with my understanding of giving. I was always told that God said to give 10% and that was it, and that was my goal.

Participant 2 – This conflicted greatly with my understanding of giving (the tithe) and the purpose for which it is to be used, I always thought the tithe was for the church for ministry and church expenses, now this understanding is greatly compromised through this teaching. If the tithe is not used for these purposes how is the church supposed to function as we know it? Could it be the church is not supposed to function as we know it? I do not know.

Participant 3 – What I am learning now lines up with the truth about tithing or giving because now I am not under a have to give but understand my spirit man helps me decide how to give and shows me what it means. Now I do not look at this as how I give and it is over from God's point or mine.

Participant 4 – Total conflict because it destroyed everything I knew and leaves me with an empty feeling, but I think it will be ok.

Participant 5 – This information supports and confirms my understanding of giving. As mentioned before, I was taught this a while back. My son informed me of what God had imparted in him about giving. Pastors were not teaching that, therefore, I never made any comments about what I was taught.

Participant 6 – Well, I still need to work on knowing what God wants me to give, but that is not an issue with the information.

Participant 7 – The only thing I am not clear on is who supports the church when the funds drop low due to inconsistency of giving or a neglect of worship from the children of God.

Participant 8 – Conflicts! Continually a conflict to what I have been taught.

Participant 9 - It definitely conflicts with my current understanding of giving. To remove tithes is to destroy my predominant approach to giving. In light of this information I have not been a giver because the majority of what I give is tithes. I don't know what to do with this information.

Participant 11 – I think this enhanced my understanding of the tithe and the fact that understanding what God wants. It does conflict with what I have been taught, but this also is a reflection of never being taught. Despite reading my Bible and understanding some of the text specifically Leviticus 27. I never took the opportunity to question before now why the Bible says what it does.

Participant 12 – That my giving will be a blessing for me that I will enjoy all of his favor that he *has* given me.

Participant 13 – Again no conflict just need to do better

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Conflicts against what I has been taught

Participant 16 – This information totally blew my understanding of giving out of the water. It is good to know the truth.

Participant 18 – It certainly conflicts *with* it, But after getting the information I said to myself, “well, now you know, it is the truth, move forward.” I had no reservations about *it* I was just like WOW!

Participant 19 – It conflicted yet opened my eyes to why this is not a principle and simply a dogma that is taught.

Participant 21 – My understanding of giving was 10% to the church (priest) and offering for church. I currently have change in how we give more money than we do have.

Participant 22 – It conflicts with all I have been taught, because it was based on incorrect interpretations of scriptures.

Participant 23 – It conflicts with the information in my mind because for me it is easier to give based on the obligation of what I thought was law (for now). To give out of love for God may *reveal* trust issues with God.

Participant 24 – It conflicts *with* my entire belief on tithing.

Participant 26 – Scriptures are not being taught or understood in the way they are written. People are using the scriptures to fit what they want to do or make happen, instead of what it is truly saying.

Responses 4.4

Journal Entry 4 Question 4 - Do you agree with the information? Please explain

Participant 1 – I have no reason not to agree at this point. I am processing the new, to me, information.

Participant 2 – I am struggling with this information. I can see how this is supposed to work, but I do not see how this can work in our present day system.

Participant 3 – Yes, the word gives complete growth and how we should approach the throne with grace and mercy for a break through to heavenly worship and to give for the use of talents and gifts that were not ours anyway but he allowed the man to make a choice on how he or she lives it out on the earth.

Participant 4 – I am still on reserve, but my issue now is more so adding it to my life, with accuracy, studying, and understanding it so I do not fall into another trap or lead others in a trap giving information that is not true.

Participant 5 – Yes, I agree because the word of God confirms that

Participant 6 – I fully agree with the information. Well in my limited knowledge of the word of God the basic concept that Jesus came to wash away all debts and obligations to me means I am not bound by the old law, but now I am in a relationship and when in a relationship one demonstrates his/her love in *their* giving (one way).

Participant 7 – I agree with the information and believe it wholeheartedly if love is expressed in the area of giving in any aspect of worship.

Participant 8 – Reserved (but moving toward agreement)

Participant 9 – It is supported by scripture; I cannot refute it. I do understand that worship is not just the foundation of giving but it is also the frame work and substance.

Participant 11 – Simply stated I do agree with what the lesson teaches, in that, there is no biblical backing that a tithe is required with the expectation of the scripture that refers to bringing the tithe into the storehouse where the tithe was required.

Participant 12 – Yes, because it *is* showing my love for God

Participant 13 – Yes, because you need to understand where you are in regards to this topic with God.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – So-So

Participant 16 – I do. After reviewing the material, I see tithing was not instituted by God (*as we know it*). This was a human element.

Participant 18 – I agree! All I can say is its biblical and once the text is broken down the correct way I had to review it for myself and see that it was correct.

Participant 19 – I do agree because God wants us to give, it says nothing about tithing. How can you return to God something that is already His.

Participant 21 – Yes, I agree with *the* information. We need to *cancel* the misinformation *getting* back something because we gave.

Participant 22 – I agree now that I see and understand the intent of Malachi 3:6-10. I must not ever let people pluck a scripture from the Bible and based truth on *it*.

Participant 23 – I agree with the information, scripture was used to build a new foundation.

Participant 24 – I do agree because it is accurate scripturally.

Participant 26 – See response to Journal 4 Question 1. God gives us free will to choose and act. If we ask God he will tell us what he wants.

Responses 4.5

Journal Entry 4 Question 5 - Will this information changed your approach to giving? Please explain

Participant 1 – I do not know if my approach to giving has changed based on this information, but I am seeing giving from a different vantage point.

Participant 2 – At this point I am not certain because I have a lot *of* conflicts that must be worked out.

Participant 3 – Yes, it gave a clear view of how we look and think of God with our spirit man that clearly shows what worship means to the Father and what we have to gain as we grow more *in* the wealth and life of *the* Savior.

Participant 4 – Yes, with the cap removed I will give a true love offering and it made me look at my relationship with God and giving.

Participant 5 – No response

Participant 6 – Yes, I will not confine myself to the 10% rule, and I will now consult God on what he wants from me as a token of my love.

Participant 7 – My approach to giving has to change. There has been too many things that have been pointed out that support the scripture.

Participant 8 - Reserved

Participant 9 - It must, but I'm not sure how. Now that we have this truth if we continue perpetuating a system that is not scripturally sound or biblically accurate then we become false teachers whether by language or actions. Wow, that is a rude awakening.

Participant 11 – I do think it will in some ways change my approach to giving in that I will consider what God has given with exception to my money. I will most likely make *more of an effort* to offer God what I have out of love now as opposed to God putting a requirement on me. I do think the information printed does not assume I will wait or God will wait for three years for me to prepare an offering. I also think having a weekly requirement will have to change. This is a personal thought and not meant for everyone, but there is more conviction on believers every Sunday than most people know. I am glad we discussed how many believers stay home for church or worship service when they feel they do not have an adequate offering for God because this is my issue. I have been taught I should feel disobedient when I do not bring God an offering and this information has been stuck in my head for ages.

Participant 12 – Change from the way we were taught to give. Stop always saying I am only giving my tenth. Work to go higher than that.

Participant 13 – Yes because it will not be out of obligation, but for my love for God.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – No response

Participant 16 – Yes, I will no longer call my offering a tithe; but rather an offering.

Participant 18 – No response

Participant 19 – Yes, I love God and I want to give to Him solely based on that. Plus it grows out of who I am not to get what I want, like give to get.

Participant 21 – Yes. First, understanding it is all about love/relationship. Second, nothing to give to get. Third, he knows what man does with churches.

Participant 22 – Being a tither it will change but I do not know just how yet.

Participant 23 – Yes, but more challenging to make sure I am led by the Holy Spirit or to even be open and to obey.

Participant 24 – Yes, I feel like it has liberated me to where my giving is between God and me and there is no benchmark. It has actually made it feel more intimate.

Participant 26 – Yes, because it is in my heart to give

Responses 5.1

Journal Entry 5 Question 1 - What are your thoughts concerning the information you received on giving?

Participant 1 – Just amazing that Malachi 3 has continued to be used to get people to give. When only 7% of people tithe, that would mean the church is cursed.

Participant 2 – My thought is, now that the tithe is no longer applicable we are now supposed to trust God by trusting people to be led by God in giving of their offerings. This, in my opinion, is really out there

considering how deeply rooted in the old system we are. I do believe this can be done but I do not believe this is something that all will immediately embrace, so it will take time.

Participant 3 – All the many years I have been a part of building other ministries and corporations to help overseas and some foreign countries shows that how your giving was not totally a wash because you did not but I *am* happy I gave anyway for the glory of God.

Participant 4 – I agree because I always knew that it was more than money and it could be given in different ways.

Participant 5 – As believers *who* have been giving our tithes according to what *was* taught to us by our leaders. I have not seen anyone challenge the traditional way of giving until now.

Participant 6 – Well, my first thought was that I did not feel as bad now for not giving the 10%. The fact that I was not required by law to give today sort of took the weight off my shoulder. Once I realized that giving is now a demonstration of my love, well that hits like a ton of bricks. I now feel worse about my giving habits.

Participant 7 – Stewardship is key to managing and management. I think you have to develop and implement what you learn on a daily basis so that obedience becomes natural.

Participant 8 – The God vs. man control continues to exist especially in me so I understand the struggle but not how to overcome it.

Participant 9 - I never looked at tithing being a box that did not give me an opportunity to express my love.

Participant 11 – I believe I received more of an education than a simple lesson this week because this scripture has been more in the forefront of any other when it comes to anytime we give to God whether it be tithes or offerings and ironically Malachi 3 talks and combines both as from what I understand is addressing the priest. Once again I go back to what I have been taught as this applying to everyone and I have heard thousands of believers recite this to coerce people to ensure that they do not rob God. In my mind it is hard to understand that why for so long did I never understand that this applies to the priest of that day and not me. I do understand now that the priests were the example for the people so this was an example for the people in their understanding about being honest in their giving. For example, do not say with your mouth that you will give to God and lie about it. This I understand is where we are robbing God. I now understand that God wants us to be honest and consistent, not just say or commit to him something we truthfully will not give.

Participant 12 – Why would you rob God when he owns all of your possessions? Because he sacrificed his son he gave away the most important thing to him.

Participant 13 – We need to be more trusting knowing that God will supply all of our needs.

Participant 14 – We pay tithe to escape condemnation. Will a man rob God? How said it is that people who are honest in business and who pay their debts to the bank, the store, and the government will not pay God what belongs to Him! Sometimes people quibble about whether they are “paying or giving” tithes, but both terms seem appropriate. The tithe is the Lord’s and He expects us to pay it to Him; at the same time, He does not receive it until we give it to Him. He does not give us the authority to use His tithe for other purposes, but we have the power to spend it as long as it is in our hands. Nevertheless a person is condemned if he spends God’s money.

We do not give to get something back from God; we give out of our relationship with Him.

Participant 15 – Tithing is not enough

Participant 16 – This information continues to be in line with the fact that we should give ourselves.

Participant 18 – I am at the point now where I am convinced! This whole “tithing” concept has just been a misinterpretation of scripture. Man has misinterpreted the word of God for his own benefit and the church’s benefit. Love for God has been taken the wrong way.

Participant 19 – My thoughts are that if Malachi is talking to the priests – then they should know this and not try to put it on the people they are sent to. Giving should not be something that is forced.

Participant 21 – Will the man of God rob God? The man of God has robbed the flock (sheep). Thank you for helping me understand Malachi 3:8-10. Thanks for letting me know God shifts to restoration for the people. Let God continue to use you to let the people know God is not selfish.

Participant 22 – It is very sad that foundations and beliefs have been based on twisting the scriptures.

Participant 23 – I have so many *thoughts*, where do I start? How do I do this? Old information vs. new, conflicting badly.

Participant 24 – I believe that this information still applies to us today. God is not just a God who zeroes in on one to one translations. I believe God gives us a concept of giving, living etc. that is transportable across the times. Therefore the same thing that displeased Him about the priests and people then still displeases Him now.

Participant 26 – I agree with the information I received. The priests followed some of their own desires and they were the keepers of the laws of God and his temple. They did not teach or stop the people in their wrong doing they joined them. God was angry, he warned them. He gave them a way to come back into right relationship with him.

Responses 5.2

Journal Entry 5 Question 2 - How did this information make you feel?

Participant 1 – Emancipated

Participant 2 – Actually I feel better about this teaching than I did about the last. I must say that I do feel bad that I never got this in my own study.

Participant 3 – Will this give pastors an out for not sharing in this teaching. Can this change what type of ministry you are or how you believe?

Participant 4 – It is an eye-opener. I think it is clear and concise. Showing what and who the scripture was talking to, and why.

Participant 5 – The information that I have learned has been sound doctrine. I am excited to learn the trust principles of giving that is deemed pleasing in the site of God. I also feel that the believers have been exploited by leaders when it comes to tithing and offering. They always drilled how we were going to be cursed with a curse. To this day, I could never conceive how the person of God was going to be cursed. That never made sense to me.

Participant 6 – Horrible, I realize that I have not demonstrated a great deal of love.

Participant 7 – As we move through these lessons I realize how I feel has an effect on my decisions unless I just do whatever God leads me to do, then I do not have to feel or think about anything.

Participant 8 – There were no feelings associated

Participant 9 - I felt angry as the manipulation by the church has been illuminated. I always felt like something was wrong with the way the

church handled giving but would have never thought that tithing was an expression of not trusting God. We did not trust God to take care of us so we transported information and passed it down from generation to generation to make it easier. Surely this cannot be new revelation. And those who knew this truth were either afraid or intentionally dishonest. We were taught to depend on ourselves and not God.

Participant 11 – This information did make me feel misinformed and awkward because I have to now look at this scripture with a different understanding now. In a sense, it still does apply to what I feel about giving because I understand that I still can be robbing God of what I want to express as love which I know I do not want to do. In a sense, I have to treat my offering as we discussed and explored in study as a gift of love.

Participant 12 – Selfish

Participant 13 – No different because it starts early in life what we are taught. It does make it more difficult when you get older .

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – I am trying to change

Participant 16 – I feel that I have been misled, misinformed, and taken advantage of.

Participant 18 – It made me feel sorry for the people that give to get something back. They have been misinformed. I felt the church has used scripture for personal gain. It is sad.

Participant 19 – It made me feel like I have been bamboozled. Can I get a refund for all of the monies I have given because of not wanting to be cursed?

Participant 21 – This information made me feel good, very good to know God always loves us.

Participant 22 – That I must prayerfully read the scriptures for myself.

Participant 23 – Very enlightened

Participant 24 – No response

Participant 26 – Like the priest in some ways: of honor, respect, value, trusting, and honesty

Responses 5.3

Journal Entry 5 Question 3 - How did this information conflict or support your current understanding of giving?

Participant 1 – This information supports my current understanding of giving. Prior to this lesson I did not know why I believed as I did but now I know.

Participant 2 – Of course the concept of the removal of the tithe and becoming completely dependent on our offerings to God completely conflicts with my understanding of giving. This is a difficult piece to grasp and maybe it is because it is something that we have never done and with it comes a certain element of fear.

Participant 3 – *In* a lot of ways I believe the Holy Spirit prompts me to give but not always because the moment you took was a direct answer so doing better now is going to *be* great for the church going forth.

Participant 4 – It conflicts in some ways because it is so far from what I am use to, but it supports what I now know to be true.

Participant 5 – This information supports and confirms my understanding of giving. As mentioned before, I was taught this a while back. My son informed me of what God had imparted in him about giving. Pastors were not teaching that, therefore, I never made any comments about what I was taught.

Participant 6 – Well, I was under the traditional understanding that I should give at least 10% tithe and an offering. Based on this information the law does not apply, but you are not compelled by love to give.

Participant 7 – The information continues to support what I believe about tithing and giving.

Participant 8 – Both, because I understand both sides of the struggle

Participant 9 - It was definitely conflicting because I always believed that paying my tithes was me trusting God. Now I understand that the church (me included) did not trust God to take care of us. We depended on us because it was comfortable and it was what we had been taught.

Participant 11 – In a way it conflicts with my understanding of giving but it does shed light on what I really need to consider when I think about what to give.

Participant 12 – *I* need to be more generous with my giving.

Participant 13 – No conflict

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – I am learning

Participant 16 – It conflicted *with* my understanding because my understanding of tithing was stuck in tradition; what I had been taught.

Participant 18 – Of course, it conflicts once again. I have always thought that tithing was a requirement.

Participant 19 – It profoundly made a conflict. I was told that if I do not tithe faithfully that God *would* not stop things or rebuke the devourer. That it is better to have a blessed 90% than a cursed 100%.

Participant 21 – I did not totally support the idea that tithing was to support the priest. I thought it was for the church.

Participant 22 – I have so much to learn since I was not taught giving scripturally.

Participant 23 – They are nothing alike. I have a mind struggle badly!

Participant 24 – It supports it. It is always based on our motives.

Participant 26 – I agree with the findings brought out of this study. One of the key points I see God is looking at how their hearts are turning away for him in terms of a love relationship with him. It seems like they forgot who God is, and what he has done for them. Some pastors today act like the priest in the way they use God's word for their own purposes, teaching it not in the way it was intended.

Responses 5.4

Journal Entry 5 Question 4 - Do you agree with the information? Please explain

Participant 1 – Yes, I agree with the information. God was speaking to the priests about what they were doing. God was not speaking to us today. The Church is not the storehouse.

Participant 2 – I cannot say I disagree so I suppose I agree. I agree because the text has been exposed in such a way that brings understanding. In Christ we are not under a curse. The tithe is not to be brought to the church so this cannot be transported, and the church is to depend on the offering out of our love relationship with God.

Participant 3 – Yes, I agree with the scripture for it is written for the church and saints but making a change and impact on my life like this has me looking closely at the man of God and the following of members who would go forth with a new understanding to them.

Participant 4 – I do believe now because it is seeming to be factual and it have torn down the misinformation *to* show the truth.

Participant 5 – Yes, I agree because the word of God confirms *it*.

Participant 6 – Yes, I think that the information have logical support.

Participant 7 – I agree with the information. I believe the relationship you have with *the* Father will determine how you give. Your motive and intentions can only be wrong if it is not God led.

Participant 8 – I agree with the information but question how to apply it.

Participant 9 - Yes, I am redeemed.

Participant 11 – I do agree with the information now that it is broken into what I am now understanding what it means to be cursed and living cursed. I agree with what is also meant by restoring myself back to God when I have sinned, in a better light. Not from a posture of disgust and depression but understanding that restoring my relationship with God does not depend on how much offering I give, but in my approach. If *I* give because I am upset and feel I am being pushed to give, God does not accept it. Only the offering I give out of love is an acceptable gift.

Participant 12 – Yes, you should never rob God. That is a sin. We should not decide what we want to give.

Participant 13 – Yes, because I need to be more trusting.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Yes

Participant 16 – I agree with the information. The reading of Malachi in its entirety allows you to see that the book is directed to the priest, not the people.

Participant 18 – Yes, by now this information is new but the trend has not stopped. It is biblical and in its true context it has revealed the truth.

Participant 19 – I do agree now that I understand its context. This is crazy. Why would the church teach this “doctrine” of the tenth and it is not true. So would it be wrong to mandate this as a mandatory lesson and you pass with 100%.

Participant 21 – Yes, this shows man/priest *is* subject to sin. *This information* is anointed of God to keep the community educated to God’s will.

Participant 22 – No response

Participant 23 – Yes, but this information is going to take some time to work on me, especially my mind.

Participant 24 – I disagree that this information is not transportable to us because Jesus died.

Participant 26 – It is clear to read that God is offering restoration back to right relationship with him and not give to get material gain.

Responses 5.5

Journal Entry 5 Question 5 - Will this information changed your approach to giving? Please explain

Participant 1 – Yes, this information will change my approach to giving. I will no longer give whatever at my church or to people expecting God to give more back to me. I now realize the fallacy in my past thinking.

Participant 2 – This information will change my approach to giving because my heart is to honor God in my giving, and I believe that as leaders in the church that before we can approach others these truths must first be at work in our own lives.

Participant 3 – Yes, more caution to know what the full intent of where and how the money is being used to grow and change the mind of people to be more God controlled than just loose on your own self-discipline.

Participant 4 – In time I think it will change. The truth is there no beginning or end.

Participant 5 – No response

Participant 6 – Yes, I really need to demonstrate my love better.

Participant 7 – The information will change how I give What this information also *did* is change *my* view of how *I* treat God

Participant 8 – Yes, because there will be focus on relationship

Participant 9 - Yes, although there is still some reluctance inside me as a result of releasing everything I believed to be true about giving, I must remove the box of tithing and let the Holy Spirit inform me on what to give in everything.

Participant 11 – I am still in thought about how this will impact my giving because there will be a change in my approach, but I am not sure of how the amount I give will matter. My approach will be less out of guilt and more out of love and I did not think about it after I gave, but more often it has been a what I had left offering and I felt guilty.

Participant 12 – Need to be super generous when giving to God

Participant 13 – Yes, it is because God needs to be first in everything we do

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – I want to give out of love

Participant 16 – My approach will be the same. I have sought the Lord in what He would have me give as an offering.

Participant 18 – My approach to giving has already been changed based on the previous *lessons*.

Participant 19 – Absolutely, I really understand the stewardship is ultimately the issue and I love God. I want to give my best and I have not been able to do that. I need to get my stewardship together.

Participant 21 – Yes, I can give more to God because the scripture told and showed how He was in my corner one more time (again)

Participant 22 – Only God knows that

Participant 23 – Yes, it already has

Participant 24 – I believe that this information still applies to us today. God is not just a God who zeroes in on one to one translations. I believe God gives us a concept of giving, living, etc. that is transportable across the times. Therefore, the same thing that displeased Him about the priests and people then still displeases Him now.

Participant 26 – Yes, the truth has set me free

Responses 6.1

Journal Entry 6 Question 1 - What are your thoughts concerning the information you received on giving?

Participant 1 – The information in this lesson has caused me to conduct an honest critique of self. Am I truly under God-control or do I pick and choose what I will surrender to God.

Participant 2 – I am on board with this because I believe that our life is to be worship unto God first, this speaks to God-control. God must have control of our lives before we can accept and implement these concepts, but giving God complete control comes through trust and our trust is established through our love relationship.

Participant 3 – Great information on how to allow change to come to you and your new way of looking at the word of God has been interrupted.

Participant 4 – Good information, scary to put into action

Participant 5 – The information we have received on giving *is* on point. My son showed the principle *to me* a year ago along with *the* same scriptures being used. I thought to myself that it made sense, but pastors are not going to teach it due to losing money in the ministry. Here it is a year later, this radical pastor is really teaching the correct principal of giving and how to be blessed by your giving.

Participant 6 – Well, I am further convinced that I really need to work on how I demonstrate my love through my giving.

Participant 7 – I agree with the atmosphere of liberty. Although you are freely given the opportunity to express your love for God, we must still educate others as they come to Christ, church, and the ministry.

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - I must trust God.

Participant 11 – I have been waiting to understand what the New Testament says about giving because this I know is what applies to us. I understand what it means now to give of yourself as opposed to the giving of money. There is a lot I understand about time and talent, but I have not fully committed my treasure. I have to be honest, it is not that I do not offer God my treasure but I have a hard time with my consistency, which is my own doing, and I know God is not pleased with it.

Participant 12 – That my expression of giving should be based on love.

Participant 13 – I never got into someone telling *me* what to give. It was hard enough just doing it by myself.

Participant 14 – We give to fulfill the Covenant. In every comparison of the law of Moses and the new covenant that came by Jesus Christ, the new covenant stands supreme. The characteristic word in the Book of Hebrews is better, and everything is better about the new covenant. If the law demanded tithes, then how much more should we who are under the “perfect law of liberty” give our tithe willingly (James 1:25). If the law is written in fleshly tables of our hearts and we follow God’s commands not from outward rules but because of our new nature, then how quickly and how easily we should give the tenth that belongs to the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:3-6).

Some people say, “Oh we do not pay tithes, because tithing is under the law.” If that is the reason for not paying tithes, then we should also mistreat our parents, for the law says, “Honor thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12). Actually, we honor our father and mother and we give tithes because the principles of the law are written in our hearts by the Spirit of God. We give willingly and liberally because the Spirit motivates us to give what God has said is His.

Participant 15 – Christ taught us to give freely

Participant 16 – I think this information is hard to digest. The 100% aspect of giving is tough, but who am I going to trust, God or me?

Participant 18 – Yet another eye-opener! Just more information to support what this study is all about.

Participant 19 – Well, for one I have been portraying that I am God-controlled when I have not. I have been making my own decisions.

Participant 21 – Tithing vs. Giving, Self-control vs. God-control. These concepts were put so gracious to the community. I received this information with much openness. How can I understand my relationship more *than* to understand and be exposed to today’s information?

Participant 22 – I am still taking it in

Participant 23 – It is getting better. The information is a matter of trusting God!

Participant 24 – I believe the model of giving in Jerusalem was one model. We do not see any of the other churches or societies practicing this method of giving.

Participant 26 – Well put. God placed us in his creation for his purposes, it makes good sense to turn over my self-control to him. He is life and the reason I am here. That thought is now very alive in my thinking. Question *to self* – does God really have all of me?

Responses 6.2

Journal Entry 6 Question 2 - How did this information make you feel?

Participant 1 – Exposed

Participant 2 – I am feeling kind of excited because now I see how this can work.

Participant 3 – Although I am saved my feelings have been shortened on where something can make you think differently about what the church really means and where it can lead to a not so good way of loving the Lord through teaching you not all of the word.

Participant 4 – Scared, because I do not what to be disobedient to God. The mirror has been put on my behavior or lack of behavior.

Participant 5 – This information confirmed what I was taught by my son was correct. It also confirmed that our giving reflects how we really feel about our relationship with God. I would like my giving to be pleasing in the sight of God. I truly believe that an individual should be led by the spirit in terms of what to give, and every aspect of his or her life. If an individual is told what to give, he or she will only give what was asked of them and potentially will not give more than what was asked. If an individual is led by the spirit, it will be hard for them to deny what the Holy Spirit has asked them to give.

Participant 6 – I am feeling very guilty and unworthy of any blessings that God has given me.

Participant 7 – It was a blessing to hear all the different misconceptions from the different types of churches but being able to hear him through all of those things saying “that is not me” is great, because so many people get caught up in that.

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - It is simultaneously liberating, exciting and frightening. The unknown is what’s frightening but being able to remove the boundaries is liberating. This is definitely new territory that will not only stretch my understanding of God as it relates to surrender but it will also

cause me to grow in trusting God. It feels like I have been set free from a prison that I had been in all my life and that is exciting.

Participant 11 – I feel empty based on this information because through the years I know I promised God monetary offerings that I did not follow through on. I have received sums of money where I knew the right thing to do was surrender to God what I promised him in my mind first but did not follow through on even though with my lips I said I would. I sure feel as though that as described in the lesson I have misrepresented my intentions. I have allowed my flesh to come before God in many instances and I feel part of my life is either cursed like we discussed in a previous lesson or God is about to see how much I love him. Though disobedient, will I still trust him with my future decisions with money and will I follow through with what I say.

Participant 12 – Joyful and willing to do anything

Participant 13 – My attitude has not changed I just need to be doing better

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Good! Cheerful giving is the answer

Participant 16 – It made me feel inadequate because I realize I have been selfish.

Participant 18 – I have got to the point where this information is very good and makes me feel like I have been out of the loop and lost. Discouraged at times, but the truth.

Participant 19 – It made me feel bad, but then I realized during this lesson that because I have a relationship with God that when I give it is because of my relationship with Him.

Participant 21 – It made me feel very ignorant. However, every day I ask God to open the doors to my mind / heart and soul to what he wants me to understand from the word as I live in the world of today.

Participant 22 – We have come so far from biblical giving

Participant 23 – It made me feel challenged but hopeful.

Participant 24 – Unmoved, I really do not see the necessity of us moving to this form of community.

Participant 26 – Our hearts can be renewed as our minds are given God’s truths.

Responses 6.3

Journal Entry 6 Question 3 - How did this information conflict or support your current understanding of giving?

Participant 1 – The conflict is not in this lesson but in me. There have been times when I gave as God directed and other times I made excuses. This information does support my understanding of giving.

Participant 2 – This information supported my understanding as it relates to the life of worship, but the problem for me was stewardship. Now I know that God wants and expects us to be good stewards but I never tied together that it was so that we could be able to give to God in this way. So that we would not be hindered in our offerings to God as we are led by the Holy Spirit.

Participant 3 – Some because I can relate to giving on a community level so have I learned how to be more in tune *with* what to give based on what *the* spirit says to give to a certain place or where it is needed to help.

Participant 4 – It supports my new understanding, but it conflicts *with* my current habits.

Participant 5 – This information supports and confirms my understanding of giving. I am still confused about how an individual can give if he or she is not employed.

Participant 6 – It does neither, it has given me a better interpretation of what is expected of me.

Participant 7 – I do not agree with prompting anyone to say or do what they have no intention of doing; especially if they do not fully understand it. Regardless to what you know to be true, allow a person to get there without force.

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - When I first came to BHI what solidified my transition was a part of the worship statement that spoke to where God was taking me “Surrendering all that is me for all that is God”. This information supports the understanding of surrendering to God everything including how and what I give. This requires removing the legalistic guide and trusting God completely.

Participant 11 – I already knew this information would conflict with my understanding of giving from the definition we discussed as being either self-controlled *or* God-controlled. I have never exercised God-control because I have not earnestly trusted God with what he has given me. My trust sometimes is based on the end of the road feeling meaning I trust him when I cannot do anything else about it. For example, I do say after all my bills are paid well God, this is what I have and I rarely have considered to give to him first.

Participant 12 – Once you get God-control in order you then know how to get your giving *to* increase. *You* have to be a faithful and good steward.

Participant 13 – No conflict

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – My views are changing.

Participant 16 – As I said, I do not believe we really grasp the concept of Christ being Lord and Master, and what that really means. Nothing belongs to us anyway, so why do we have an issue with trust?

Participant 18 – Conflict! I have been wrong about this whole tithing thing (concept).

Participant 19 – It conflicts because I gave to get something or based off what the requesting pastor said that I would have if I did.

Participant 21 – I thought I gave out of what I earned only not the relationship – God-controlled relationship.

Participant 22 – I have felt that giving should be voluntarily and freely.

Participant 23 – The information conflicts, but it makes sense.

Participant 24 – Neither

Participant 26 – Giving is put in place to help the community and make provision for God's purpose. In our giving people will see the love of God and turn to him. This also means there will be no lack.

Responses 6.4

Journal Entry 6 Question 4 - Do you agree with the information? Please explain

Participant 1 – Yes, I do agree with the information starting with the statement that our first and primary gift to God is ourselves. We must

surrender self-control for God-control. Once we do this our giving will reflect the giving that was demonstrated in the book of Acts.

Participant 2 – I do agree with this teaching. It puts a very different understanding on giving, not only that but it shows us what it takes (the steps) to make this a reality.

Participant 3 – On a scripture level yes but the church following the understanding of what may change or happen this will be a big one for all who choose.

Participant 4 – I agree with the concept because it will improve my relationship with God, my faith and my money. So at the end of the day if I follow the principles it will produce what I want to give to God.

Participant 5 – Yes, I do agree with this information. I would like to be led by the spirit in my giving. I want my giving to be pleasing to God. I have been taught that my offerings to God should be greater than my tithing to him. My giving should and will reflect my true love to God.

Participant 6 – Yes, I believe that since Jesus has paid the price for our sin and we now operate under covenant and not law, we now demonstrate love by giving what the Holy Spirit tells us to give.

Participant 7 – I am in agreement with 98% of the information except what I stated *in my response to Journal Entry 6 Question 3*. One cannot give, surrender, or release an appropriate gift to someone you do not know. It will only be duplicated until a relationship is formed.

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - Yes, I agree with surrendering my control for God control.

Participant 11 – I agree with the information for what my last sentence (*in the response to Journal Entry 6 Question 3*) describes a self-controlled believer does what he needs with his provisions to take care of self first and God gets what is left over. I know this is really bad for me in my relationship with God but it is the truth.

Participant 12 – Yes when you are in self-control you do what you want, but when you get God-control doing everything in faith personal matter with you and God.

Participant 13 – Yes, same as before with the previous *lessons*

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Yes, good view

Participant 16 – Yes, if we look at the early church the community took care of itself. Our society is geared toward independence and the whole world suffers.

Participant 18 – Yes, this was yet another ahhh experience. You cannot deny the word of God when the truth has been revealed.

Participant 19 – I definitely agree. I agree because when we give God us He gets everything that is me that He allowed me to have.

Participant 21 – Yes, I believe we are led by the Holy Spirit

Participant 22 – Yes, I rarely allow the tactics of some churches to make me feel guilty because they want and need more. They must be accountable to be good stewards over what they receive.

Participant 23 – I do agree. Decisions to give should really be out of love not law or made to give a certain percentage.

Participant 24 – I do agree that our primary gift to God is ourselves. Out of this stems everything else and giving would not be an issue. I believe the Ananias and Sapphira was their lying to the one true God.

Participant 26 – Yes, God wants the whole person that is the only way he *will* abide in us.

Responses 6.5

Journal Entry 6 Question 5 - Will this information changed your approach to giving? Please explain

Participant 1 – Yes it will. I will purpose *to* surrender each day to God until it becomes first nature. When I am totally under God-control my giving will change to reflect His control.

Participant 2 – Yes, I believe it will make me a better steward of the blessings of God in my life so that I can give in a manner that is well pleasing to God.

Participant 3 – No, but I will say it will have some other thoughts for me to look at more honestly.

Participant 4 – I will research different investment opportunities so I can increase or set aside what I want to give God.

Participant 5 – No response

Participant 6 – Yes, I will now consult the Holy Spirit in my giving

Participant 7 – The information has *caused* me to reevaluate “my preparation.” We meet God on Sunday at church to give our worship offering, there are other times and places where we can give as well.

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - Yes, I will begin by seeking God for my total gift and not just the offering. I will yield and allow God to stretch me beyond the 10% box I had grown comfortable with. As I grow in this concept I will let the 10% be where I begin and not a means to an end.

Participant 11 – Yes this changes my approach in that simply said I have to work on putting more trust in him. The difficulty is I have to trust along while having the responsibility for others. I do not mean any negative from this, but we are not in an age where the community (as described in a previous lesson) is honestly taking care of anyone. We do not care to much for each other to offer help or offer a meal to someone that is hungry because we are always looking for what is in it for us. I am glad that I have been awakened by the teachings to understand that when you give looking for something back has never been God’s plan. I understand now that God expects all that we do to be out of love for him and nothing else.

I do feel as though we have to acknowledge God in what we do. I am a big proponent of telling people thank you because it shows love. I am also a proponent of letting a person know that you love or care for them without using words. We as a community of believers and churches everywhere have grown very little over the years when this was a true mission to take care of our children, feed the elderly and shelter the homeless. We still look for acceptance from God or someone in return.

Participant 12 – Because everything I give I have realized God owns everything including me.

Participant 13 – Yes, it *has* convinced me to do better

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Already has

Participant 16 – Yes, the concept of being led and obeying the Spirit is what will please God, and increase my faith.

Participant 18 – My approach changed a few *lessons* ago

Participant 19 – It will change my approach because now I know what it looks like to give without any ulterior motive. Ask the Holy Spirit what God wants and listen.

Participant 21 – No, I believe I gave to God by asking him what he wants me to give.

Participant 22 – Yes, I will seek to please God in my giving

Participant 23 – Yes, I will be listening and letting the Holy Spirit lead

Participant 24 – No

Participant 26 – Yes, I have asked God to help me be the steward he wants me to be.

Responses 7.1

Journal Entry 7 Question 1 - What are your thoughts concerning the information you received on giving?

Participant 1 – The information that I received in this lesson have given me insight on what our focus should be on when we give. My focus has never been on the believers, but the building and expenses.

Participant 2 – I cannot say I disagree with this concept of giving. I agree that our life is worship and our giving is a component of our life of worship that is done out of our love relationship with God. This is a wonderful truth, but it comes with the challenge to trust God by faith, which is what God wanted the priest to do in the book of Malachi. The question for me is am I willing to trust God in this way so that the lives of many will be blessed.

Participant 3 – This shows a way of trust. Take a key step on the line *from* others who follow the order of the church. Only a ministry of true people who are honest enough to make a church come out of man's ways and start to own the God-controlled church that should be for the greater good.

Participant 4 – It is factual and scripturally supported but a little hard to swallow.

Participant 5 – The information on giving has really opened my eyes in terms of how monetary offering and giving are supposed to be a part of worship.

Participant 6 – Well, the more we have discussed the scriptures pertaining to the topic or subject; the more I agree with the evolution of giving in the scripture.

Participant 7 – No response

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - Compelling can come from the inside of an individual due to conditioning. God is not concerned with the amount of the gift He is concerned with the intention and motivation. God wants us to be fully engaged without being compelled. But we must be able to delineate between compelling and conviction.

Participant 11 – My thoughts are two-fold: one being what I believe what I need to be doing as a believer and two being what I need to do as a part of a group of believers to strive toward. My thought on giving now means I give an offering or a tithe to simply help the church pay the light bill as we discussed in study but to offer to God what I have as an *expression* of love. I understand that despite not being bound to making an offering when I enter into the temple it does not just limit me to on Sunday.

Participant 12 – You should be able to give freely when *it* comes to your worship and giving. Always be *a* cheerful giver.

Participant 13 – Going forward I think we should continue to focus on teaching God's people on giving but making it a place of freedom not to do what we are supposed to do.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – We do not worship through giving.

Participant 16 – My thoughts are that I have been short on what I felt was giving, and the actual act of giving based on the early church.

Participant 18 – It is tough to get new information and grasp it. It made me deeply think about giving and worshipping.

Participant 19 – My thought is that this should be implemented as soon as possible so we are on one accord with what the Spirit is saying.

Participant 21 – God loves a cheerful giver, but His people are not cheerful or happy. Therefore the people especially believers are not free. They are pressured into giving because of the conduct, standards, *and* rules of the church. Where is the Holy Spirit in this?

Participant 22 – My responses *for all of Journal Entry 7* are the same as *Journal Entry 6*

Participant 23 – I am still feeling some kind of way. I do not like it.

Participant 24 – At the beginning of being informed about tithing I was worried about the financial health of the church, but now I believe that once we sincerely follow God's word and trust Him, He will provide and we will be alright.

Participant 26 – God gave us a heart, mind and choice. I do not see any restraints, amount placed on giving in this passage. He tells us we must keep any promises we make, make up our minds with to give, give what they are able to give, give in the amount that God has given me.

Responses 7.2

Journal Entry 7 Question 2 - How did this information make you feel?

Participant 1 – Ashamed

Participant 2 – I feel very confident that God is able by His Spirit to bring about the kind of giving that points back to Him, through those that are living a God-controlled life.

Participant 3 – Make your own time you spend with the Lord yours so you can know the true feeling of a man and what his intentions are for those who follow the leading of his calling to the office that belongs to God.

Participant 4 – Confused

Participant 5 – This information made me feel overwhelmed because for years we have been taught to give a certain way and we expected something back because of our freewill giving. For many years our giving was explained by our leaders and certain scriptures were supposed to support our giving but in actuality, we were not giving according to our relationship with God.

Participant 6 – I really feel empowered with the knowledge that I gained from our journey through the subject of giving.

Participant 7 – No response

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - This information revealed my self-centeredness as it pertains to the increase that God gives me. I always looked at it as my reward. God-control means it cannot be about me....EVER.

Participant 11 – This information challenged everything I knew about giving and it made me feel bad but gave me a much clearer understanding that unfortunately most believers and ministers will never challenge or

attempt because of old traditions and the “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it” logic. I feel I was able to explore more and not limited to one view or understanding and even though this was a true ground breaking moment in what worship is, it may not go beyond my own selfishness. By this I mean, there may be things I want to change but if I cannot share in others doing the same will I be consistent with it. One example I will use is to describe what I mean will be the offering of the harvest. If I get \$3,000 and decide one day to give God all of it out of love expecting nothing back from man, should I not expect others to follow or should I allow this to discourage me from doing so.

Participant 12 – Feel better about all I have learned about giving.

Participant 13 – Relieved because it has always been some type of pressure when it pertained to giving.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Short changed

Participant 16 – It made me feel as if I have been giving sparingly.

Participant 18 – The same as all the others, this was hard to swallow.

Participant 19 – It made me feel like I have the opportunity to be a part of a movement.

Participant 21 – I thought I had liberty with the Holy Spirit, Jesus and God but after this information I was given I feel like I was not always giving voluntarily.

Participant 22 – My responses *for all of Journal Entry 7* are the same as *Journal Entry 6*

Participant 23 – Still uncomfortable

Participant 24 – Excited to see what becomes of this in our lives.

Participant 26 – It feels like I have been released or set free from man made practices, in this study I can truly say *I felt* God’s truth and freedom. Feels good compared to man’s ways.

Responses 7.3

Journal Entry 7 Question 3 - How did this information conflict or support your current understanding of giving?

Participant 1 – I had no preconceived understanding so the information did not conflict with my thinking. From this point forward I concur with this information.

Participant 2 – This information supported my understanding of giving to God out of a life of worship. The conflict for me comes into play in two areas: 1. Getting rid of the tithe and 2. The change of focus in giving. I believe there is conflict because these truths are really challenging me to trust God at a new level of faith.

Participant 3 – Very different when one of us lacks we pick up where they need you no matter the reason. Everyone is somebody because of the grace that was meant for each day and forever.

Participant 4 – It supports it. Still a little scary on getting started

Participant 5 – This information has caused me to renew my mindset and embrace the new way of giving that was taught to us in study. It *is* going to take some time for me to adjust but I believe the word and I would like worship/giving be pleasing in the sight of God.

Participant 6 – What has occurred is that what I was taught was that I had an obligation to give a 10% tithe plus a offering, regardless of whether I wanted to or not. This was not the same as freely and voluntarily as I now understand it to mean.

Participant 7 – No response

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - It's supporting because I can now see how what I experienced prior to this information was a form of compelling and not worship. For it to be free I must be free to say no. It must be my free opportunity to give God what I want God to have and that has to be determined by God not me nor anyone or anything else.

Participant 11 – As described this does create an extremely new approach to giving that we can only, through prayer let it become our life. This is a very difficult task personally because of my struggle with trusting God 100%.

Participant 12 – Never knew that I would have to refuse it in order for it mean something.

Participant 13 – No conflicts just focus on my freedom to give and continue to express my love for God.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – We give out of necessity

Participant 16 – It conflicted with my understanding as I felt that tithing was a good gift.

Participant 18 – Conflict! All of this information was conflicting *with* what I was told to follow.

Participant 19 – It was supported by “new” understanding on giving

Participant 21 – The information over the course of this bible study has presented conflict in my understanding of giving because I am in *a* financial jam. I support the *current* information because it helped me to understand why I want to help people who do *not* have what I have.

Participant 22 - My responses *for all of Journal Entry 7* are the same as *Journal Entry 6*

Participant 23 – I just need more time to process this new information. I feel like all I knew of tithing just went out the window now I am challenged to do a new thing.

Participant 24 – Supports it

Participant 26 – Totally support and agree

Responses 7.4

Journal Entry 7 Question 4 - Do you agree with the information? Please explain

Participant 1 – Yes I concur with the information. Prior to this lesson I really never *gave* much thought to the “why” I gave and only occasionally did I allow the Holy Spirit *to* direct my giving.

Participant 2 – This is strange because although there is conflict and challenge I do not disagree with this information. I believe this is because of my own experience. Whenever God presents or reveals a new understanding it will immediately conflict with our old understanding, and it also challenges us to increase our faith. So for me this is what this teaching has done. I believe this can be done if I move past the conflicts and challenges that I am facing in this.

Participant 3 – Yes, there will always be someone who wants to take control of the moment but miss the real purpose of where to start and finish. Therefore the seed should be sown no matter the case to produce what is a known fact for his people.

Participant 4 – Yes, I agree that you have shown and explained it with accuracy through the word of God, but I need to decide if I agree with the parts that were your opinion.

Participant 5 – Yes, totally agree with the information. Scriptures have been given to back up the new concept of giving. My spirit has confirmed that God wants us to learn how to be blessed by our worship/giving to him.

Participant 6 – I do agree now I am better educated on the true meaning of the scripture pertaining to giving.

Participant 7 – No response

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - Yes, having the option to say no authenticates my yes. For this to happen then the feeling of obligation has to be removed.

Participant 11 – I agree with the information wholeheartedly now that I understand. My concern is what will it mean going forward for me personally and my church.

Participant 12 – Yes, giving should always be an element of worship because you are giving an expression of your love for God.

Participant 13 – Yes, because we need to remove the atmosphere that is preventing people from giving.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Yes, giving is worship

Participant 16 – Yes, the New Testament Church became a community as a result of surrendering all for the church.

Participant 18 – Of course! This information was refreshing and on time.

Participant 19 – Yes, giving to God is based on my relationship with Him. I will know what He wants of me specifically at that time.

Participant 21 – Yes, I agree with this information because my life is not my own. I was created by Master Jehovah God to give love because He love me first and gave me all things that I possess/own/the people He put in my path, etc. If love dictates what I gave, I want to give money, time, heart, etc. back to Him.

Participant 22 - My responses *for all of Journal Entry 7* are the same as *Journal Entry 6*

Participant 23 – Yes, I agree

Participant 24 – Yes, we need to keep it voluntary

Participant 26 – Yes

Responses 7.5

Journal Entry 7 Question 5 - Will this information changed your approach to giving? Please explain

Participant 1 – Yes, this information has changed my thinking process, therefore my approach will be different. My focus will be on believers. I will seek the direction of the Holy Spirit when giving.

Participant 2 – I can honestly say that this information will change my approach to giving. At the least I now have a great curiosity to see how this will work, and at the most I want to see how much more praise and glory will be given to God when I live this.

Participant 3 – No

Participant 4 – Yes, this is the part that I know needs to change it is just how and when.

Participant 5 – No response

Participant 6 – It already has, before I felt bad because I was not meeting my obligation or contract with God by not giving the 10% plus a tithe. Now that I understand the reasons for giving I feel bad because I have not demonstrated my love for God very well.

Participant 7 – No response

Participant 8 – No response

Participant 9 - Yes, the reluctance I felt I now understand that to be the internal obligation that was birthed out of a life of church tradition.

Participant 11 – It was definitely a conflict more in practice than in theory. It conflicted because a learned behavior carries you through a lot of questions. Even if I have questioned the practice of giving as a part of worship it was always overshadowed or never put in front of old tradition and no one has ever biblically shown the understanding.

Participant 12 – Will still keep giving, but giving will be between God and me. But I must give all *of* me first.

Participant 13 – No, because I am already convicted in what the Lord God wants me to do for his kingdom.

Participant 14 – No response

Participant 15 – Yes, the information is vital to change

Participant 16 – I will now base my resource giving by being led by the Holy Spirit.

Participant 18 – Already changed it

Participant 19 – Yes, as stated in a previous journal entry. I will seek the answer from the Spirit of God, and be obedient to what He is saying.

Participant 21 – Yes! To recognize/realize when I give to church/priest I am giving to God and only God. (Not to question those who I give to – especially the church). To recognize/realize my foundation of the 10% is solid – exact 10% and build on my offering amount every year not just because I get paid weekly/biweekly/monthly.

Participant 22 - My responses *for all of Journal Entry 7* are the same as *Journal Entry 6*

Participant 23 – Yes it is going to change my approach from 10% mindset to the God given way.

Participant 24 – No, my approach changed way back when I had to digest that I was no longer obligated to tithe.

Participant 26 – Yes, give like I am placing it into God's hand

L. Questions and Answers from Journal Entries

Question six in the journal offered the participants an opportunity to ask questions about the material. The plan was for the participants to ask their questions during the sessions. These questions helped with understanding how the participants received the information and the key areas they were focused on. I have consolidated the questions to prevent repetition, these questions capture the essence of the questions recorded in the journals.

Journal Entry 2 – Worship and Giving

What is the significance of giving for atonement for not maintaining love and relationship with God? The information presented in the lesson is related to the Old Testament practice of offering sacrifices to atone for sins. The sacrifice of Jesus atoned for all sin therefore; we do not sacrifice animals anymore because their blood is not necessary. The first standard of giving is to present yourself to God as a surrendered vessel to be God-controlled. This is where the love relationship with God begins. There is no struggle over giving out of what you have if God has you.

Should non-believers be asked to leave after the first part of service if they reject the invitation to discipleship? The basis of the point I was making is that worship requires belief as a prerequisite. It would be theologically correct to extend an invitation to discipleship at the beginning of worship so that only believers participated in the worship of God. The Church is attempting to accomplish things through worship service that should be executed in the daily lives of believers, such as evangelism. If believers impact the world with the love of God daily people can acknowledge Christ during the week and come together to worship. This would mean no invitation to discipleship, but the focus would be discipleship training for new believers.

How does The Lord feel about the way we take care of His life He gave us for His glory? I think God is disappointed in our lack of focus and commitment. Church is just a part of life instead of being the standard-bearer or compass for life. Humankind must invest to recognize and embrace the need for and power of a selfless commitment to God based on giving love not receiving anything in return. God's gift of The Cross was more than enough for us to love God without expectations.

Is it worship without giving? The answer is both yes and no. Worship is so much more than monetary giving. Worship in its purest form is complete surrender to

fulfill the desires of God; therefore, we can worship without monetary gifts. The issue is some people have money to give but conclude they will not give to God. When we make the decision on the amount to give sometimes we determine what we have is not enough to give to God so we keep it or waste it. God only wants our giving to be based on what we have, not what we do not have. To have something to give and not give it is to miss the opportunity to love God with the substance that God has blessed us with. What we have will always produce an offering to God if we desire to give. Worship is impacted when we have been blessed with money but do not focus on God but ourselves. This is when we cannot worship without giving monetarily.

How does tithing become an act of worship? Many of the Focus Group participants appear to have a big struggle with the information on tithing. As stated in lesson 3, Abram and Jacob gave a tithe; there is no issue with giving a tithe. The issue is whether the tithe is given out of obligation or liberty. Tithing is an act of worship when the tenth is determined and given based on love not obligation.

Is the storehouse in Malachi 3 the church? The church is not the storehouse in Malachi 3. There are two applications for storehouse in the Old Testament. The first is the place where provisions were left for the priest, poor and strangers. The second is the additional buildings King Hezekiah had built to hold the tithe the priest had not sacrificed yet. In each application, the storehouse is not the church.

What is the provision for the priest? In the Old Testament, the tithe was the provision for the priest. In the New Testament, the provision is for the royal priesthood, all believers. The provisions are managed by the Apostles to provide for all the believers that have walked away from everything to serve God. These provisions were voluntarily offered to the community of believers.

Are there any guidelines or limits to what the provision should be? There are no guidelines in the Old or New Testament to limit the provisions for the priest. The biblical system was based on what was given while the system in many churches today is based on salary which is usually a fixed amount. In BHI all salaries are voted on by the congregation therefore, everyone has an opportunity to offer their input.

Can we be forgiven as we grow and express our love for God through giving? Quite a few Focus Group participants have expressed concern about forgiveness based on the information from these lessons. God is gracious to forgive so the simple answer is yes God will forgive. Now that we know our giving is a reflection of love to God the issue is what will we do with this information. Will we allow it to inform our stewardship so that we can give to God or will we continue to make excuses for what we do not have to give? It has always been difficult for me to understand how a person can desire to give but not give unless they did not receive any provision at all. Retirement, Social Security, salaried, hourly wages, minimum wage, food stamps are all provisions that we can give

from. The issue is not do I have enough to give, the question must always be do I want to give. Then I choose to give God something.

How do we change our understanding of giving as an element of worship?

Believers must stop focusing on the amount and focus on the act of giving. No one that loves God will ever have enough money to express his or her love because there is not enough money to express how much we love God. This fact cannot be the reason for not giving out of what we have. Believers should start committing to what they will give. When Paul addressed the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 9:7, he told them to give what they had already decided to give. If we are going to change our understanding of giving as an act of worship, we must establish a giving plan that is formed by the Holy Spirit. Giving must be systematic so that giving becomes a regular and consistent expression of worship.

How can we share this information on worship and giving with others? In light of the difficulty this information caused the Focus Group, I would caution everyone to approach this discussion from the perspective of giving not tithing. The intention of this project is not to discontinue tithing but to inform believers that giving is not to be an obligation but an act of love and thanksgiving. It may be best to get the people to see what giving is, and then approach the tithing conversation only to address the obligation of it. In hindsight, I should have made it clearer that tithing is an option if the believer wants to give God a tenth. I want believers to see that the tithe is not the optimum gift. If we are looking for an optimum it would have to be one-hundred percent not ten percent.

How can stewardship be changed? While stewardship is outside of the scope of this project for many believers it is at the heart of the giving issue. Stewardship impacts giving in two direct and pertinent ways; the lack of stewardship causes an inability to give, and good stewardship will produce resources to be used for giving. Changing stewardship takes an honest evaluation of expenses. It is necessary to evaluate how money is being allocated and then we will be able to prioritize where we want God to be in the hierarchy of our financial plan. Many people do not have a plan so there is never any money for God because there is not enough money for everything else. Stewardship strengthens discipline which will result in having the resources to give to God.

Journal Entry 3 – Agrarian vs. Monetary

If the premise here is that the agrarian system basis for giving is not applicable to our system of commerce, what are we to do with the Old Testament scriptures that address this? The Old Testament scriptures are still relevant because they inform us of God's pleasure in being our first priority. The information provided in the Old Testament informs us of the importance of a strong loving relationship with God. With this foundation we can appreciate the sacrifice The Father made in giving Yeshua to redeem creation. Without having a firm understanding of the Old Testament standards and situations we can take The Cross for granted and

believe we deserved to be redeemed. It is easy to appreciate liberty after being in bondage.

How can we (believers) be so wrong about giving to get? There are two reasons this concept, giving to get, has taken hold. First, sin birthed selfishness. We struggle with the concepts of community and sacrifice because we have been nurtured to possess. The second reason is materialism. The failure of every economic system is materialism motivated by greed. Conceptually there are some great solutions for the struggles people experience financially but none of the solutions can control the need to possess more than someone else. Biblically, God provided before the people were ever expected to give. God never expected the people to give what they did not have. God only instructed them to give based on the provision God made possible. In this system, the people received before God expected anything. Give to get is a concept birth out of a perspective of lack. The cup is always half empty therefore I need God to give me something. God's view of giving is the resources have been provided now what will you give. This is a perspective of blessings, thank God my cup is half full so I am trusting God to be my provider therefore I am going to give out of what I have not based on what I do not have.

How do I decide between giving to God and household expenses when there is not enough money to do both? The concepts that lead to this question are not familiar to God. People who have been interested in securing money have lead people to believe God wants us to choose between necessities and giving. I do not believe God supports this concept. I must be very clear here; necessities are life sustaining everything else is a want. As I said in the lesson 2 and 3 we must consider our giving plan when we enter financial agreements or spend money. If the household expenses are not necessities, they cannot affect our giving. We choose to live in a certain house or neighborhood but then we conclude we cannot give because of household expenses. If we legitimately cannot afford to give to God and maintain a household we should ask two questions; first, would God understand why I cannot give, i.e. eating; second, do I love God enough to make some changes in order to be able to give. It is one thing to choose between feeding our children and giving, or driving a \$45,000 car and giving. We cannot allow our materialism to inform our understanding of necessities.

Journal Entry 4 – Tithing

What do I do with this information? Allow it to inform you of your love for God as expressed in your giving. Some of the Focus Group participants called these lessons “new information”, it is only new to us because we have been focused on different information. This information has been in the Bible for thousands of years it is not new just being revealed. As The Church works to embrace giving as one of many ways that love is to be expressed to God we will see more consistency and less struggle with this concept of giving in an atmosphere of liberty out of love not obligation or oppression.

Why did it take so long for someone to see the mistakes? It has taken us this long because we have not taken the time to execute an honest evaluation of our method of collection and our understanding of giving in worship. There are churches that have been existing under these principles for decades. I think another term should be used instead of “mistakes” to express the situation. An alternate term would be “comfort zone.” I did not look for this because there was no reason to look, it was comfortable, it was not working but there was no reason to reevaluate the process. Therefore, I would reword this question to say, “Why did it take so long for someone to see the comfort zone?” It was never my intention to mislead or misinform anyone. I would hope most of the teachers and Church leaders were trying to do the will of God. We may have been wrong and focused on the wrong priorities but the mistake was not evaluating the word against the practices of The Church. I will probably make this mistake again but this project has shown me that everything should be evaluated against the Bible. This evaluation should be routine because as we understand, we can reevaluate based on a growing understanding which may reveal new understandings.

Journal Entry 5 – Tithing (Part 2)

Why do leaders use their authority to justify the means? In the Bible, the people understood God’s standards and disobeyed them. The Church today has been so indoctrinated to concepts that are foreign to God that we cannot determine when we are being lied to. Leaders are able to misuse authority because we cannot tell when we are being misled. The real issue is that we must study and understand what God wants instead of blindly trusting our leaders.

What is Malachi 3:8-10 saying to The Church today? The text is explaining that God always desires for humankind, to return, but we must make the first move. God is always willing to receive us back when we are willing to pursue returning without any promise of being accepted. This text asks us the question do we want the provisions of God based on God’s terms, not based on a tenth but based on returning to a loving relationship with God. Our return cannot be to receive God’s provisions. The provisions must be a byproduct of a love relationship. The relationship has to be the motive for returning not the provisions.

Journal Entry 6 – New Testament Giving

How often can you give God a worship offering? We can give God an offering whenever we want to. Remember giving is an expression of worship as a reflection of our love and appreciation. This becomes confusing if we believe the only place or way to give to God is during worship service. Worship is more than a service it has to be a lifestyle; therefore, anything I give based on my relationship with God is worship. The different types of offerings I give cannot substitute for each other. Giving money to feed the hungry can be a worship offering to God if it is done in the name of The Lord, but this cannot take the place of giving during the worship. There are a lot of great causes that can reflect the love of God to the world. Our first gift should be through The Church, but our

stewardship should prepare us to make a broad impact in the name of The Lord. We should not seek to determine where to give; it is always The Church first. We should be seeking to manage our resources so that our giving plan can expand to influence the world with Christ.


Journal Entry 7 – How is giving incorporated as an element of worship?

Are we to refocus our giving from the new temple to the benevolence ministry?

We should not refocus our giving from one initiative to another. We should apply the discipline of stewardship so that we can have an expanding giving plan, which will include all of the initiatives of the church. Allow the Holy Spirit to direct you on what to contribute. By following the Holy Spirit, we will all support and achieve God's plan. All initiatives of the church are important so everyone must be good stewards and yielding to the instruction of the Holy Spirit.

M. Giving Envelope

PRE-STUDY OFFERING ENVELOPE

 <p><i>Make It Happen!</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Check for address change</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">OFFERING ENVELOPE</h2> <p>Date _____ / ____ / ____ No. _____</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City, State, Zip _____</p> <p>\$ _____ Tithes \$ _____ Other: _____</p> <p>\$ _____ Offerings \$ _____ Investment For The Temple</p>
--	--

POST-STUDY OFFERING ENVELOPE



Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7



BlessedHarvest

Date ____ / ____ / ____ Number _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

☐ Check for address change

\$ _____ My Love Expression To God	\$ _____ My Investment For The Temple
\$ _____ Other _____	\$ _____ Other _____
\$ _____ Other _____	\$ _____ Other _____

Blessed Harvest Institute
A Traditional Church in an Un-Traditional Way



N, Commitment Card

 <p>2014 COMMITMENT 5522 Statesville Road Charlotte, NC 28269 www.BlessedHarvest.org</p>	<p><small>Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7</small></p>	 <p>2014 COMMITMENT 5522 Statesville Road Charlotte, NC 28269 www.BlessedHarvest.org</p>
<p>A REMINDER OF MY COMMITMENT I have pledged for 2014 the following as an expression of my love to God and my Church</p>		
<p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____</p>	<p>I Commit to Blessed Harvest Institute for 2014 the following amount (s) as my love expression to God and my Church:</p> <p>My Love Expression To God \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly My annual total \$ _____</p> <p>My Investment For The Temple \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly My annual total \$ _____</p> <p>My Commitment For Discipleship _____</p>	
<p>Signature _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>Blessed Harvest Institute A Traditional Church in an Un-Traditional Way</p>	
<p style="text-align: right;">Keep this portion for your records</p>		

O. Project Evaluation Responses

Question 1 – What were the best parts of the project?

- The introduction of biblical principles to present new ideas.
- The breakdown of the true meaning of some of the scripture.
- Presenting the project.
- The last two chapters of the project were best for me because they brought it all together.
- Part about the tithes, shock about the part not to tithe. Best part I love the most was about how you show your love for God. How to learn to invest in God.
- I enjoyed the entire project. Specifically the topics “Monetary vs. Agrarian” and the study of Malachi.
- Dialog
- The clarification sessions on tithing according to the scripture.
- The information given.
- The discussions were the best part because the audience was able to share ideas.
- Lesson 6
- The best part of the project was getting information about giving and tithing from the Bible. It was very enlightening to get information that had been given in the wrong context.
- The discussions about the information in the booklet enhanced the experience.
- The total experience was the best part. The Bible Study book and the power point were very informative, along with the discussion of the scripture intentions.
- Being informed about information that we as believers are not clear about.
- Understanding, finding God’s truths

- The very best part was when we began talking about tithing. Also, the information on how giving does not only mean money along with the illustration of Relationship and Provision.
- The Agrarian vs. Monetary, and the two sessions on tithing. I believe the changes in cultures and societies are often overlooked and we try to use scripture out of context.
- The best part was that believers should be the reason for giving, not buildings or expenses.
- The challenge of what we already knew or have been conditioned to know and pulling it all apart biblically. The fact that most pastors would rather continue doing the same thing they have been trained or learned to do instead of asking questions of the Bible. Also, the Agrarian vs. Monetary lesson and how we have to apply the information today.
- Learning about the depth of what worship really is, and being informed about tithing.

Question 2 – What part(s) of the project would you like to see improved or removed?

- Journal needed to be filled out after class.
- Maybe a slower pace, because with the information that is being taught we needed or I needed some time to digest the information.
- All to be modified.
- Actually none.
- Can keep all of it.
- None
- I really cannot think of any sessions that should be removed. I am not sure how I would improve any sessions as well.
- Everything was fine.
- Ground rules in terms of one person speaking at a time. Inform the audience that everyone's opinion will be respected.

- Lesson 5
- The questions in the journal were repetitive.
- I would have liked to have the booklet ahead of time.
- To improve the project we need more examples from the Bible.
- More in depth scripture learning and longer teaching time.
- The questions in the Bible Study book should be more directed.
- I would like to see Blessed Harvest Institute implement giving as an integral part of worship.
- I do not know about improvements but we could have expanded the last session.
- I think the journal questions could be improved by asking more challenging questions.

Question 3 – How has your experience with this project enhanced or impaired your understanding of giving and worshipping God?

- Enhanced we need to give more freely.
- It has just pulled the rug of ignorance away, so now that I know better. I have no choice but to do better. I will implement the information in my worship so it will be complete. This has enhanced my understanding of giving through my worship.
- There are some challenges in the first five sessions but in the end my understanding is not impaired.
- Knowing why I give. The meaning for giving, that you give from the heart not what a pastor tells you.
- The project has enhanced my understanding of tithing and relationship with God and how the relationship not expectations should dictate the monetary and in-kind offerings made to God.
- Enhanced: my understanding of worship and giving has been expanded to focus on God and not self.
- I truly feel that this project has enhanced my understanding of giving and worshipping God.

- Has challenged if I really love God through my giving.
- This information has clarified that giving is a part of worship. We as believers show and give God our best and be led by the spirit as to what is pleasing in the sight of God. God gives to us so that we will be able to give to others.
- It makes me look forward to pressing with this new found information.
- It has definitely enhanced my understanding of giving and worshipping. I now have a better understanding of giving as it relates to worship.
- It enhanced my understanding through exegesis of the scripture and seeing how they do not transport to New Testament giving.
- The experience I had with the project helped me to understand that giving is an element of worship. It helped me to know I need more discipline in certain areas.
- Enhanced: we should do better with what belongs to the Lord, because we have been brought with a price so we should love more.
- Worship and giving cannot be separated.
- It has enhanced my understanding in the way that I give because I love God and want to give out of relationship with Him. It has impaired me regarding my way of thinking – I will no longer give to get.
- I believe my experience in this project has enhanced my understanding and I have already begun to implement the information.
- Enhanced my understanding by allowing me to see giving another way.
- It challenges me in a way that I did not think it could be challenged.
- It has enhanced my relationship with God making it more intimate.

Question 4 – Other comments:

- Detailed work good job
- It is just amazing that for over 20 years I was taught things that have nothing to do with what God intended with obedience.

- This has had some great conflicts and challenges but over all this has been a great learning experience.
- I enjoyed the classes they let me know that I can do this for six weeks. That I can go to Bible Study on Wednesday. Making me start something doing church not only on Sunday but Wednesday too.
- This project has been very enlightening. It has presented me with new information that I know that God will work out within me.
- Great job!
- I thoroughly enjoyed this class and project. I thank God for placing this assignment on Pastor. I learned a lot and any perceptions and views on giving have been drastically altered.
- It has been very important for me to be a part of something so valuable to the church for the growth of the people.
- Great class, changed my understanding and gave me a new outlook in understanding worship and giving.
- When will this begin in BHI? Since we know what is supposed to take place.
- Great lessons

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amerson, Melvin and Amerson, James. *Celebrating The Offering*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007.
- Amirault, Gary. *The Tithe is Illegal*. Accessed January 28, 2014.
<http://tentmaker.org/books/TheTitheisIllegal.html>.
- Bailey, Lloyd R. *Leviticus-Numbers: Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary*. Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2005.
- Best, Harold M. *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2003.
- Biddle, Mark E. *Deuteronomy: Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary*. Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2003.
- Bishop, Cecil. *The Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*. Commission on Discipline Codification. Charlotte: AME Zion Publishing House, 1996.
- Borger, Justin. *Generosity and Joy*. Accessed February 11, 2014.
<http://library.generousgiving.org/articles/display.asp?id=330>.
- Burkett, Larry. *Giving and Tithing: Includes Serving and Stewardship*. Christian Financial Concepts, 1998.
- Burroughs, P.E. *The Grace of Giving*. Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1934.
- Callahan, Kennon L. *Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church: A Guide for Every Member*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997.
- Carle, Graeme. *A New Look at Tithing / Eating Sacred Cows*. Wellington (N.Z): Emmaus Road Publishing, 1994.
- Clarke, Frank. *Tithing: A New Covenant Look at an Old Covenant Practice*. *Searching Together*, 16 Wint 1987, pp. 1-7.
- Clements, Ronald E. *New Interpreter's Bible: The Book of Deuteronomy*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2009.

Danby, Herbert. *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2011.

David, Chelan. E-giving: Embrace the Future of Tithing. *Your Church* 52, no. 6 (November/December 2006): 12-24.

“Discretionary Income,” *Inc.*, Accessed December 10, 2013, <http://www.inc.com/encyclopedia/discretionary-income.html>.

“Disposable Income,” *Investopedia*, Accessed December 10, 2013, <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/disposableincome.asp>.

Dollar, Truman. *How to Carry Out God’s Stewardship Plan*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1974.

Durall, Michael. *Creating Congregations of Generous People*. Alban Institute, 1999.

Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1986.

Fagan, A.R. *What The Bible Says About Stewardship*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1976.

Falsani, Cathleen. *The Worst Ideas of the Decade: The Prosperity Gospel*. Accessed January 17, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/opinions/outlook/worst-ideas/prosperity-gospel.html>.

Gane, Roy. *Leviticus, Numbers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Garganta, Richard W. *Tithing, The Truth About Tithing and The Tithe – Fact vs. Fiction*. Accessed February 1, 2014. <http://tithinginfo.com>.

Grimm, Eugene. *Effective Church Series – Generous People: How to Encourage Vital Stewardship*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

Grindstaff, W.E. *Developing a Giving Church*. Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1954.

Grindstaff, W. E. *Principles of Stewardship Development*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1967.

Halley, Henry H. *Halley’s Bible Handbook: An Abbreviated Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965.

Hastings, Robert J. *My Money and God*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961.

Hendricks, William L. *Resource Unlimited: Christian Stewardship – From Theology to Ecology, From Motives to Methods*. Nashville: The Stewardship Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1972.

- Hoge, Dean R. *Money Matters: Personal Giving in American Churches*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.
- Hoge, Dean and McNamara, Patrick and Zech, Charles. *Plain Talk About Churches and Money*. Alban Institute, 1997.
- Holt, David R II. *Handbook of Church Finance*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960.
- Hostetler, Bob. *Quit Going to Church*. Abilene: Leafwood Publishers, 2012.
- Hudnut-Beumler, James. *Generous Saints: Congregations Rethinking Ethics and Money*. Alban Institute, 1999.
- Huereca, Ronald. *The Christian Act of Giving – Reasons to Give*. Accessed February 10, 2014. <http://www.ronalfy.com/the-christian-act-of-giving-reasons-to-give>.
- James III, Russell N and Jones, Keely S. *Tithing and Religious Giving in America*. Accessed February 5, 2014. http://www.fcs.uga.edu/newfacs/hace/rpm/working_papers/Tithing.pdf.
- Kaiser, Walter C, Jr. *New Interpreter's Bible: The Book of Leviticus*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- King, Julius. *Successful Fund-Raising Sermons*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1953.
- King, Wesley D. *A Discourse on True Worship*. Accessed February 8, 2014. <http://voices.yahoo.com/a-discourse-true-worship-4811310.html>.
- Kostenberger, Andreas J and David Croteau. "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8): *A Study of Tithing in the Old and New Testaments*. Accessed March 3, 2013. DigitalCommons@LibertyUniversity 2006-01-01.
- LeBlanc, Douglas. *Tithing: Test Me In This*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010.
- Lotich, Bob. *The Story of the Widow's Mite: Do We Have It Wrong?* Christian Personal Finance. Accessed February 18, 2013. <http://christianpf.com/the-story-of-the-widows-mite>.
- Martin, A,W. "Will the Ushers Please Come Forward?" The Ethics of the Tithing Appeals. *Quarterly Review* 17, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 275-286.

- Martin, Alfred. *Not My Own: Total Commitment in Stewardship*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968.
- McConnell, Francis John. *Christian Materialism: Inquiries Into The Getting, Spending and Giving of Money*. New York: Friendship Press, 1936.
- McNamara, Patrick H., and M. Douglas. Meeks. *More than Money: Portraits of Transformative Stewardship*. Bethesda: Alban Institute, 1999.
- Merriam, Sharan. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2009.
- Metzger, Bruce M., and Murphy, Roland E. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *The Anchor Bible: Leviticus 23-27*. Vol. 3B. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Miller, Lynn A. *Firstfruits Living: Giving God Our Best*. Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1991.
- Miller, Patrick D. *Deuteronomy*. Louisville: J. Knox, 1990.
- Minor, Mitzi L. *2 Corinthians: Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary*. Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2009.
- Moretsi, Lekgetho. Tithing: An Evaluation of the Biblical Background. *In die Skriflig* 43, no. 2 (June 2009): 397-411.
- Newman, Stephen M. *The Offering – A Part of Our Worship*. Accessed February 5, 2014. <http://globalchristiancenter.com/bible-studies/the-offering-a-part-of-our-worship.html>.
- Oden, Thomas C. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: 1-2 Corinthians*. Vol. VII. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998.
- “Per Capita Personal Income By State,” *Infoplease*, Accessed December 10, 2013, <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0104652.html>.
- Petersen, David L. *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: A Commentary*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995.
- Piper, Otto A. *The Christian Meaning of Money*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965.
- Premawardhana, Devaka. Transformational Tithing: Sacrifice and Reciprocity in a Neo-Pentecostal Church. *Nova religio* 15, no. 4 (May 2012): 85-109.

- Rayburn, Robert G. *O Come, Let Us Worship: Corporate Worship in the Evangelical Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.
- Sampley, J. Paul. *New Interpreter's Bible: The Second Letter To The Corinthians*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Sawyer, Dennis. "Why We Stopped Passing The Offering Plate," *What We Believe*. Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www.graceb3.org/aboutus/believe/why-we-stopped-passing-the-offering-plate>.
- Schuller, Eileen M. *New Interpreter's Bible: The Book of Malachi*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Shedd, Charlie W. *The Exciting Church: Where They Give Their Money Away*. Waco: Word Books, 1975.
- Smith, Christian and Emerson, Michael O. *Passing The Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Stake, Donald Wilson. *The ABC's of Worship*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
- Tate, Marvin E. "Tithing: Legalism or Benchmark?" *Review & Expositor* 70 no. 2 (Spring 1973): 153-161.
- Thompson, T. K. *Stewardship in Contemporary Theology*. New York: Associated Press, 1960.
- Verhoef, Pieter A. *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1987.
- Viola, Frank and George Barna. *Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of our Church Practices*. Carol Stream: BarnaBooks, 2008.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.
- Weber, Herman C. *The Horizons of Stewardship*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1938.
- Whaley, Vernon M. *The Dynamics of Corporate Worship*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001.
- Williams, Talmage. *The Worshipgiver: One Who Gives as an Expression of Worship*. SBC Stewardship Commission, 1995.

Wilmot, William W., and Joyce L. Hocker. *Interpersonal Conflict*. 8th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2011.