

Study: Pastors Divided on What Tithing Should Look Like for Christians

For most, an occasional sermon about tithing is standard fare. As it turns out though, most American pastors aren't convinced Christians need to give the customary 10% of their income to the church.

Newly published data from Barna's "Revisiting the Tithe & Offering," a section in its The State of Generosity series, found pastors are divided on what tithing should look like for most churchgoers.

Most pastors don't define giving outside the church as a form of tithing, but a clear majority—70%—said such giving does not need to be solely financial. And when it comes to monetary giving, only 33% believe the traditionally accepted 10% is proper.

It should be noted the Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of "tithe" is "a tenth part of something paid as a voluntary contribution or as a tax, especially for the support of a religious establishment."

One-in-five pastors (21%) believe the threshold for a proper offering is simply whether it is sacrificial, while 20% said Christians should just give as much as they are willing to offer.

Interestingly, the Barna data—collected after surveying 2,016 U.S. adults from Nov. 12-19, 2021—found that most American Christians don't have a clear understanding of tithing.

Only 43% of self-described Christians and just 44% of church givers could "decisively" define tithing. However, practicing

Christians had a much better grasp of the term, with 59% saying they knew the meaning of the religious term.

As one would expect, 99% of pastors said they understand the concept of tithing, which begs the question: Why is there such a wide gap between pastors' and churchgoers' understanding of giving. {eoa}

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