How Do I Calculate my Tithe: Now that I am retired?

During our working years, many of us learned to tithe from our paycheck. But when we retire, the paycheck may stop while God's blessings continue. We still have resources, experiences, talents, time, and opportunities to bless others.

So, the question isn't simply, "What is ten percent of my salary?" The question becomes, "What has God entrusted to me in this season of life, and how can I faithfully give back?"

In many ways, retirement offers a wonderful opportunity to reconsider how we use everything God has entrusted to us. Below are four different approaches to tithing in retirement:

1. The Monthly Income Approach

This is probably the simplest approach for most retirees. In the Monthly Income Approach, you simply tithe from the money you receive each month.

Include regular income such as Social Security, pensions, annuities, and retirement account distributions used for living expenses.

For example:	Monthly Income	Amount
	Social Security	$2,500
	Pension	$1,500
	IRA Withdrawal	$1,000
	Total	**$5,000**

10 % tithe would equal $500 per month.

2. The Retirement Withdrawal Approach

This approach to tithing is particularly helpful for retirees whose income varies from year to year. In the Retirement Withdrawal Approach you tithe from the retirement savings you actually withdraw.

Many retirees have accumulated savings in IRAs, 401(k)s, or other investment accounts, this may be you. If it is, rather than attempting to tithe on your entire retirement savings, you can choose to give a percentage of what you withdraw.

For example, a retiree withdrawing $30,000 annually from an IRA could set aside $3,000 for giving. In some instances, giving to the church is non-taxable to you, such as giving a required minimum distribution (RMD), which could help you significantly on your income taxes.

One consideration: Some retirees have already tithed on the money they originally contributed to retirement savings. If this applies to you, then you may choose to focus on investment growth or simply treat withdrawals as a fresh opportunity for generosity.

3. The Annual Resources Approach

Some retirees have considerable assets but relatively little regular income. Others have irregular investment distributions. If this applies to you, one suggestion is that rather than focusing exclusively on monthly income, you can prayerfully establish an annual giving amount based on your available resources. Look at your entire financial picture and establish an annual giving commitment.

For example: You might determine that you can faithfully give $6,000 during the coming year. You could then give $500 monthly, $1,500 quarterly, or make one annual gift.

This approach emphasizes intentional stewardship rather than a rigid accounting formula.

4. The Legacy and Generosity Approach

For many of us, retirement is an opportunity to ask not only, "What can I give from my income?" but also, "How can the resources I have accumulated become a blessing?" If this is you then you can include accumulated wealth in your understanding of stewardship.

Possibilities include charitable gifts from investments, qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) from eligible IRAs, gifts of appreciated securities, or including the church in an estate plan.

These are generally additional ways to practice generosity, rather than replacements for a regular giving commitment. Tax treatment and eligibility vary; for example, QCDs generally require the IRA owner to be at least 70½.

Our recommendation for each of us, if we do not have a giving plan we follow, would be to do the following three things:

- Choose a method for determining your giving, whether monthly income, retirement withdrawals, or an annual commitment.
- Choose a giving goal, working toward a tithe of 10% as you are able.
- Choose a rhythm, whether weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually, so your giving becomes an intentional spiritual practice.

As you plan, please know that there is not one universally correct accounting formula for retirees. Some of you may live almost entirely on Social Security. Others have substantial retirement accounts. Still others have already tithed faithfully on your earnings throughout your working lives.

The biblical invitation is not to create anxiety about which dollars have already been tithed, but to cultivate a heart of generosity and faithful stewardship. The goal isn't simply to calculate ten percent correctly. The goal is to become the kind of person who recognizes that everything belongs to God and joyfully uses what has been entrusted to them to bless others.

Blessings to you as you work through your giving plans for 2027.