

Discussion Starter: What did your parents teach or exemplify regarding money and possessions?

Key Text: *“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. ¹¹ I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts.”* (Malachi 3:10-11)

There is a humorous story about a pastor in a country church who was preaching on tithing one Sunday. He said to his congregation, “If someone has 10,000 cows, he should sell 1000 of them and give the profits to the Lord.” Farmer Brown shouted back, “Amen!” Then the pastor said, “If someone has 1,000 cows, he should sell 100 of them and give the profits to the Lord!” Farmer Brown again shouted, “Amen!” The pastor continued, “If someone has 100 cows, he should sell 10 of them and give the profits to the Lord!” Farmer Brown loudly agreed, “Amen!” Then the pastor says, “If someone has 10 cows, he should sell one of them and give the profits to the Lord!” This time, however, Farmer Brown was silent—no “Amen.” After the service, the pastor said to Farmer Brown, “I noticed you shouted ‘Amen’ when I applied tithing to people with 10,000, 1,000, and 100 cows, but not when I mentioned people with 10 cows. Why didn’t you agree?” Farmer Brown replied, “Because I have 10 cows.”

Tithing seems like a good idea... for everyone else! But when it comes to us giving sacrificially, things suddenly look different! The word “tithe” means “a tenth part.” From the earliest pages of scripture beginning with Abraham, the tithe has been the standard of giving for God’s people.

1. God promises that when we give so others can know Him, He will give back to us so we can keep giving so others will know Him.

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” (Malachi 3:10-11)

The “house” God refers to in v.10 was a special storehouse area in the Old Testament temple where grain and other resources were housed. When the people of God gave, others were blessed by their giving, so God promised that He would give back to the givers so they could continue giving so others would know Him.

The same principles of God are taught in the New Testament, too. 2 Corinthians 9:11 says, *“You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.”*

Discuss: How can your giving help others to know God?

2. We give out of gratitude for what God has given us in the past.

James 1:17 says, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”*

We would not have any good thing if it weren't for God's generosity and faithfulness. James uses the sun as an analogy. The sun is a brilliant light, but there is often a variation in its brightness. Shadows are cast on its light by a cloud or an eclipse. In the evening, as the earth turns, the light is removed from us. We see change, variation, and inconsistency in the lights of day. But James reminds us that God does not display such variation and inconsistency. He is dependable and consistent. Sometimes we may tremble on the rock, but the Rock never trembles under us!

Discuss: When have you seen experienced God's dependability in your life?

3. We give to show we trust God with our future.

Philippians 4:18-19 says, *"I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*

Notice that Paul is reminding his Philippian readers that God will meet their needs abundantly (v.19) because they gave generously to meet his needs (v.18). Not only does God meet our needs for today when we give, but God guarantees He will continue to meet our needs in the future as we continue to give to the needs of others.

Discuss: In what sense is your giving today an act of faith that shows you believe God will take care of you in the future?

Discuss: What steps can you take in your giving today to demonstrate to God you trust Him with your future?

4. We give to keep our priorities in order today.

Matthew 6:33 says, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

As we prioritize God, He will meet our needs so we can continue prioritizing Him!

Discuss: Why do you think some people are willing to trust God with their eternal salvation, but not with their daily finances?

Discuss: What are some ways we can seek God's kingdom first through our giving?

For Further Study:

Giving is the Good Life by Randy Alcorn

"Tithes and Offerings: Your Questions Answered" article at www.ramseysolutions.com