



KICKSTARTER

WEEK 7: Tithe

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As we take this season to think about our lives and what the year has in store for us, let's think about our lives with God. Let's take a look at a few things that could radically change our lives. What if doing a few small things could kick start a process, a lifestyle that would have very large results? Over the next few weeks we'll explore some "starters", some of which we have never addressed as a church. We do this in expectation that these small adjustments will result in large positive results in 2017.

MONEY IS POWERFUL

Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV) ¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:24 ²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Jesus teaches us that our hearts follow our treasure, not that we treasure what is in our hearts. What we spend our money on will eventually capture our heart. It will become affection, a priority, and a loyalty. Money is powerful. In **Matthew 6.24** Jesus actually calls it a "master", meaning that we would serve wealth versus the other way around. And it will contend with God for our hearts. Pastor Scott shared with us his experience in London on an all expenses paid conference/trip where for the "love" of \$5, he walked away from helping a person on the street on a bitterly cold day. It's amazing what money can do to a person, to not be who they really are, to not be who God called them to be. Money can have hold and influence over us and get between God and us.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

Do you treasure what you love or do you love what you treasure? Does it matter? Give some examples.

Does money "own" you? Does it serve you or do you seem to serve it? Has it ever caused you to do something that was perhaps not one of your shining moments?

THE FIRST TEN PERCENT

Malachi 3:6-8 (NIV)⁸ “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

What does it look like to obey God with our money? Cain and Abel brought the Lord some of their first fruits of the land and their herds. Abraham gave 10% of all he owned. The tithe is the practice of setting aside the first 10% of earnings for the house of God. And it's not a request; it's a command to God's people on Earth. What was happening in the times of Malachi was that God's people were bringing less than a tenth or perhaps not bringing in their best. The implication of this was that the first tenth belonged to God whether or not it was brought to God; it was not theirs. The result or consequence was not having God's blessings, but to have Him against the nation. In the same command God invites his people to put him to the test – the only place in the Bible with this invitation. Sometimes the promise that accompanies obedience is misinterpreted as the “prosperity gospel”. That if you tithe, you will become rich. On the other hand, the “poverty gospel” believes Christians should be poor. Neither are supported Biblically. God as the provider is supported in both the Old and New Testaments. He will provide all that you need to carry out His purposes.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

Why tithe? People tithed before Moses gave the law, why would they do that? Discuss various motivations, reasons for tithing back then. What are our motivations and reasons today?

How is setting aside the first tenth for God an act of faith? What do you believe when you do this? What do you believe if you do not do this?

Share your testimony; have you accepted God's invitation to test him? What happened? What impact did it have on your faith and relationship to God and others?

IT'S A HEART THING

Say you need to go away for a while and you ask your three most trusted friends to look after your business and your wife. You give them \$10,000 a month for them to keep - and ask that they provide \$1,000 a month to care for your wife. After 3 months, you find out that one friend faithfully gave \$1,000 a month to your wife. Another friend extravagantly gave \$2,000 a month. The third friend gave less than the \$1,000 and eventually stopped giving anything to care for your wife. How would you feel and what would you do upon your return? You might do what was done in **Matthew 25:14-30**. You would give more to those who were faithful because they can be trusted. They love your wife with the heart you have for her. This is the blessing that God promises. When we can show God our heart, he can bless us and not ruin us. The Church is called the bride of Christ and in the same manner, He is asking us to care for his beloved Bride. If we can't do this, it isn't a money problem; it's a heart problem. And He actually steps into this with us, to help us with our unbelief.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

How is this picture of blessing different from the prosperity gospel or the poverty gospel?

What does it mean to be ruined by blessing? Can it be bad to have too much of a good thing?

THE 5 HURDLES – WHY TITHING IS SO DIFFICULT

If we are honest - tithing is difficult. Here are some major hurdles that can get in the way.

1. Money has a hold on our heart and sometimes we believe it's more powerful than God. The more we have, the more it has a hold on us.
2. We are afraid God will not be faithful. We believe in God but for the large practical decisions in my life, I'm not sure I believe he will show up.
3. Tithing is an Old Testament thing. Yet when Jesus arrived, he came to fulfill the Law, not abolish it (read **Matthew 5:17**). If anything, Jesus raised the bar on Old Testament laws (read **Matthew 5:21-48, Luke 18:22**).
4. God will forgive me anyways. Read **Romans 6:15** and **Galatians 6:7**. Our response to God's grace isn't to take advantage. We receive what we put in.
5. The church doesn't need my money. The spiritual practice of tithing makes very practical aspects of ministry happen. Locally and globally, people are fed, clothed, ministered to, cared for. Buildings and operations make gatherings and community possible. Staff and families are supported as they support us.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

If we push aside the hurdles and just take a look at our hearts, why would we tithe? Why would we give anything to God?

If we look at the tithe through the lens of relationship, is it an obligation or an act of love?

ACTIVATION

Engage with our 90-day tithing challenge. We received cards this week with the following options:

- I'm ready to do it.
- I'm not ready and not going to do it.
- I'm interested but need to take the journey through Financial Peace University.
- I'm tithing but want to lean into extravagant generosity.

Prayerfully consider where you are and where you are going. Financial Peace University will be offered at all campuses for 10 weeks. Regardless of where you are, know that God is with you.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Apostle Paul said in **Galatians 5:1** that it is for freedom that Christ has set us free. God's heart is to break all strongholds and bless you and bless others through you. And when this feels impossible, we have this promise from Jesus himself, "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

PROVIDE US WITH FEEDBACK

We are excited about the potential these studies have to help each of us process the weekend message at a deeper level, and to see God change our lives in significant ways. In order to make these guides as helpful as possible, we would love to hear which elements are most helpful, which are least helpful, as well as any other comments, questions or suggestions. Feel free to send your feedback directly to Jon Holmberg at jonrholmberg@gmail.com.

Has God been prompting you to lean out over your skies a bit? Have you had a desire to write, but not sure how to start to scratch that kind of itch? This may be your chance. We are currently looking to expand our team of writers. If you have experience, or no experience, writing studies or devotionals... it's not a big deal – Let God guide your fingers. If you would like to investigate this a bit more please contact me at jonrholmberg@gmail.com.

REFERENCES