



Week #1

An Invitation to Test God by Faith!



Spiritual/Financial Growth Tool
Learning to manage what God has entrusted to our care!

Pastor Stan Lubeck
2009

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An Invitation to Test God: Giving By Faith



Day 1

What Does the Topic of Giving Do to You?

This booklet is a series on what God's Word has to say on the topics of faith and giving. We will work from the assumption that faith is God's spiritual currency system. He wants us to take the gift of faith that He has given us and invest it in Him. He wants it to produce a return for His Kingdom and His glory. This week we will be looking at investing our faith in God in regards to financial giving to Him.

Faith is not a matter of theory

A pastor went to visit one of the members of the small, rural congregation he served. He wanted to talk with him about financial stewardship and, specifically, about tithing. The man was a farmer and had some livestock. The pastor approached the man while he was standing near his pig sty.

The pastor decided to find out where the man stood on the topic of tithing, so he asked him, "Bob, if the Lord gave you 100 hogs, would you give at least ten back to Him?"

The farmer responded, "Preacher, if the Lord gave me 100 hogs, I'd give Him 25 out of gratefulness for His gift."

This sounded wonderful to the pastor. Here was a man who was willing to give 25% to the Lord, so he proceeded to ask, "Well, how about if the Lord gave you 50 hogs, would you give Him at least five?"

The farmer replied, "Pastor, if the Lord gave me 50 hogs, I would give Him 15 out of gratefulness for His blessings."

The pastor thought, "Wow, he is willing to give up to 30% to the Lord's work." So, he ventured further and asked, "Well, what if the Lord gave you 20 hogs? Would you give Him at least two of them?"

The farmer said, "Pastor, if the Lord gave me 20 hogs, I would give Him at least five of them."

The pastor was really impressed. Here was a man who was willing to give anywhere from 25-30% of his income to the Lord's work. The pastor ventured one last question of the farmer. "What if the Lord gave you 10 hogs, would you give at least one of them to Him?"

At this, the farmer tilted his head and squinted his eyes, as he looked the pastor in the eye and said, "Now Preacher, that's not fair. You know I only have 10 hogs."

We might laugh at a story like this and think that as long as the pastor was talking in the realms of the theoretical, it would also be okay for the farmer to do so. The problem arose when things got down to the level of everyday life and then things got uncomfortable. The farmer was not about to commit to something he would actually have to live up to.

Maybe you have seen the comic strip with Dennis the Menace and his parents walking out of church one Sunday. The pastor was standing at the door as they walked out and when Dennis and his parents got in front of the pastor he said, "Reverend, could I ask you a question?" The pastor responded, "Sure son, what would you like to ask?" Dennis replied, "What are you going to do with the 25 cents my Dad put in the offering plate this morning?"

For many people money is one of the most sensitive topics that can be raised. But, according to the Bible, it is also one of the most important. Maybe you get nervous when the topic of giving money to the Lord comes up. If you do, I want you to know that I'm not saying this to put you on the defensive or somehow make you feel guilty.

I know the feelings of nervousness that come when the topic of giving comes up. With five children to feed, the word "resourceful" has become a common word in my vocabulary. I get uncomfortable because by nature, I am selfish and I don't want to be stretched. I like being comfortable. But God has a way of stretching my faith, and He has used the financial area to teach me to trust Him even when it was not easy.

Beginning in high school, Robin and I learned to honor the Lord with the tithe, and it has been a habit ever since. Where God has stretched us is in our willingness to give over and above the tithe as an expression of our love to God. For years we gave 5% over and above our tithe, and at one point gave 9% over to the Lord's work. God has been faithful to us every step of the way. We have never gone without and the bills have always been paid. God is truly the one who provides. Jehovah Jirah!

My temptation is to allow my giving to become a mindless habit. It is good and healthy for my giving to be evaluated regularly to make sure that I am giving thoughtfully and "faith" fully to the Lord. My flesh wants nothing more than to be pampered, yet I need accountability so that I don't just feed myself!

My goal in this booklet is not to make you fidgety, but to help you understand this very important topic— this area of faith and finances. I want to help each of us consider what God's Word has to say about this area of our spiritual lives. Frankly, I would be blessed if, when you finish this booklet, you would be inspired to truly trust God by giving Him tithes and offerings in great freedom and joy, if this is not currently your practice.

Malachi 3:6-12 "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. 7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—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 you will not have room enough for it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. 12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.

In verse 10 of Malachi 3, God says, "**Test Me in this. . .**" God is putting His reputation on the line and saying, "I'm inviting you— test Me and see if what I am saying is not true." When we take God at His word take Him up on His challenge, that is faith.

Where are you right now? Have you started to become fidgety as we have begun to talk about tithing? _____

Do you often find yourself thinking, "All the church ever talks about is money. That's all they want from me."? _____

Explain why you feel this way. _____

Will you commit to try and remain open to the Lord as you work through this booklet? _____



Day 2

Giving God Our First and Finest



Certainly some of us are thinking, "I want to honor God with my finances, but I cannot. After I pay all of my bills, there is never enough money. If I just made more money, then I would be able to be generous."

Is it that simple? We live in a society that has more abundance than any in history, and yet two out of three people are in trouble financially. Making more money rarely fixes our financial problems. We need to learn how to manage what we have according to Godly principles. We obey God first, not last. The Scripture speaks of honoring God with our "first" and "finest".

A comparison of Cain and Abel's offerings

Genesis 4:2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. **3** In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. **4** But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, **5** but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. **6** Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? **7** If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." **8** Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Abel gave the first of what he had right off the top — verse 4.

When the law was written, people were told that the fat of the animal sacrifices belonged to the Lord. (See Leviticus 3:16) When this situation between Cain and Abel took place, the law had not yet been written. We do not know exactly how Abel knew, but God had somehow revealed this to him.

"The priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma. All the fat is the LORD'S."

Leviticus 3:16

Verse 4 tells us Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. He brought the Lord what He desired and the Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering. When we know what God's will is in a matter, it is to our favor to do it.

Abel gave the *first* of his flock

He did not wait until he had accumulated a good sized flock and then start giving to God. He gave right off the top, just as we were later instructed to do in Proverbs 3:9,10 There is something about giving to God first, before we know what all the bills and expenses are going to be. The first check we write on payday should be the one to the Lord. Our tithes and offerings— our first and finest— belong to the Lord.

Cain's offering was not his first nor his finest

Verse 3 says Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. Hebrews 11:4 indicates that Cain did not trust God nor act by faith. 1 John 3:12 tells us that his actions were wrong. So Cain was not offering a sacrifice that was pleasing to God and he wasn't offering it in good faith. His attitude toward God did not reflect a trusting and willing heart. He must have thought that God should be pleased with whatever he gave and with whatever attitude. He was wrong.

Verse 5 says, "**but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.**" Cain gave to God grudgingly, thinking God would be pleased that he remembered Him. When He was not, Cain got angry. Why should *he* be angry? He had not done what he had been instructed. It was God who should have been angry.

Why would someone refuse to Give God what He asks for in faith?

They may not really believe that God is who He says. They fail to believe that God is the blessed provider of all things. They trust the bank, rather than the God who owns every bank. Some refuse to give, simply because they are selfish and think they deserve to have everything for themselves.

So, we see that, from the very beginning, people have chosen not to honor or trust God in their giving. The question for us is, "When the offering bag is passed, do we put in our firstfruit?" When the ushers bring the plates to the front and we sing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow. . ." or "I give all my worship to you, I place all my trust in you," do the offerings we have given reflect the words of worship we are singing? Do they reflect that we really trust God? Or is it just leftovers, no sacrifice at all, no worship, with no faith required to do what we just did?

God is not interested in faithless gifts.

Be careful if your giving is not pleasing to God. When God was not pleased with Cain's offering, Cain became angry and his face was downcast. God asked

Cain in verses 6 and 7a **"Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?"** Then God gives Cain a warning, **"But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."**

Cain became jealous of his brother Abel and attacked and killed him— verse 8. This was the end result of his jealousy and anger. Those in the church who do not give or who do give but give as Cain did, start to blame others because they are guilty. They often become critical of the church. They become jealous when God chooses to bless someone else. They covet and want for themselves what God has given the other person. Instead of dealing with their own sin, they blame someone else.

Cain killed Abel out of jealousy.

The problem is not with the pastor for preaching on giving each year. The problem is not with the church or the board. The problem is that we are not right with God. We want to hold back. We do not like to hear about giving because we want the firstfruit and everything else for ourselves. People get angry when you start talking about their god... money.

So, we see from the very beginning, with the very first family, giving to God is to be off the top, the first fruit of what God has provided, or else we can be setting ourselves up for a big fall.

If you are struggling with giving to the Lord of your firstfruit, then lay that at His feet. Confess that you have been withholding from Him. Repent and decide to begin giving from this day forward. Do not hold back!

Look back through today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more ideas He wants you to understand, learn or apply to your life.

What Scripture or statement spoke to you today? _____

Rewrite this Scripture or statement into a prayer request to God. _____

How can you apply this Scripture or thought to your life? _____



Day 3

Abram: The Father of the Tithe

The example of Abram's giving:

Genesis 14:17 After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. 21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath 23 that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' 24 I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me - to Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them have their share."

15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

This passage is the first mention of the tithe in the Bible. "Tithe" means one-tenth. Let's see what we can learn from Abram's giving.

1. **He tithed— gave one tenth of the spoil of victory to the Lord.** Verse 20 says, "Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."

2. **He recognized God owned everything.** In verse 19 Melchizedek reminded him of this, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, *Creator of heaven and earth.*" Abram states this in verse 22 when talking with the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. . ." Everything we see belongs to the Lord because He created it.

**God owns
everything**

3. **He gave out of gratefulness** for the victory. In verse 20, Melchizedek reminded him that God had "delivered your enemies into your hand." Abram gave the tithe, one-tenth of the spoil.

4. **Abram wanted to be sure that God received the credit for his material blessings and not man.** By right of conquest, Abram owned all the people he got back and all the spoil he had captured. All of it belonged to him by law of the land. In verse 21, the king of Sodom was asking Abram to return the people

of Sodom to him (which really did not belong to him any more) and Abram could keep all the stuff.

Abram could have come away looking really good in the eyes of the people as well as being a very wealthy man, but he regarded the king's offer as a temptation. He knew that if he kept the goods of Sodom and the other cities of the plain, he would never be able to say that his sole dependence and source of blessing was God. The king of Sodom would be able to say, "Sure, sure, that's what all religious people say, but the real reason Abram has prospered is that I let him keep my possessions."

One commentator has said,

"Abram desires to stand out clearly as a man who prospers only because of God's blessing. If God is possessor of heaven and earth, as Abram declares Him to be, then He is able to take care of His servants without benefit of the possessions accumulated by a corrupt and pagan king. Abram knew this. So he was determined to take nothing, even though it was his by right of warfare. . . The first striking thing about Abram's attitude toward the king of Sodom is that he desired the glory of God above everything— above wealth, success, reputation, or anything else that could possibly be mentioned. . ."

Abram wanted to be certain that God received the credit for his material blessings not man.

It was not easy to do what Abram did. Maybe Abram had second thoughts— he had an army and a family to take care of. He might be thinking, "I have given my nephew the best of the land. Maybe I was wrong." But God encouraged Abram in 15:1 **After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."** God is telling Abram, "I will take care of you."

**Abram
understands
temptation**

Jacob's promise of the tithe

Genesis 28:20 "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, `If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God 22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.'"

**Abram wanted God
to get the credit for
prospering him.**

Jacob was Abram's grandson. At this time he was destitute and living on his own. But he understood the concept of tithing and promised to tithe once he had something to give. He basically says, "Give me food and clothing— the basic necessities of life— and I will make sure I give a tithe to you."

Look back through today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more ideas He wants you to understand, learn or apply to your life.

What Scripture or statement spoke to you today?

Rewrite this Scripture or statement into a prayer request to God. _____

How can you apply this Scripture or thought to your life? _____



Day 4

Tithing Becomes the Law of the Land



Up to this point, God's giving standard was assumed because people were doing it. But now God is going to make it clear— He is going to have it written down and become part of the law. "This is how you can honor me with your finances." This was given just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land so they would know, right from the start, what God expected of them.

The tithe belongs to the Lord and is holy to Him.

Leviticus 27:30-32 "'A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

. . . 32 The entire tithe of the herd and flock -every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod - will be holy to the LORD.

This passage gives a theological basis for bringing the tithe to the Lord: it belongs to the Lord and is holy to Him. It is the Lord who produces, owns, and distributes the wealth of the land. God laid this down as law— "One-tenth is Mine, every year." By giving the tithe, the Israelites were solemnly declaring that they were giving back to the Lord a portion of that with which He had prospered them.

God also gave them this instruction from Deuteronomy 14:28, 29 that specified an extra tithe every three years for the poor, widows, orphans, Levites, etc. The tithing system demanded that the Israelites serve their God at a significant cost to themselves. It is estimated that they gave from 13½ to 30% of everything they had to God. This placed them in a position where, to obey God, they had to trust Him to provide for their needs. This was God's design behind His commands for giving. God wanted to be their provider and He wanted them to know it. And, as long as they worshipped Him, He provided.

"At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live

In this amazing system of tithing, Israel's economics became a channel for expressing love to God and love to their neighbors— this was the heart of the Torah (see Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Leviticus 19:18). Giving of the tithe was not to be just a dry obligation. It was to be given with reverence and joy.

Amos 4:4, 5 emphasizes the lack of blessing because of presenting tithes with wrong motives: **"Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years. Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings - boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do," declares the Sovereign LORD.**

Tithing in Malachi

Malachi 3:6-10 stresses the lack of blessing (curse) because they did not bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.

Malachi 3:6 "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. 7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from My decrees and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob You?' "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse - the whole nation of you - 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 you will not have room enough for it."

"I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed." How is that for a conversation starter? "The only reason you are not dead is that I do not change. I remain loving, merciful, and forgiving. That is the only reason you are still alive."

I think it is significant that God calls them "descendants of Jacob." He does not call them children of Israel, which is what He had changed Jacob's name to. "Jacob" means supplanter, to overreach or circumvent. In Genesis 27:36 Esau claimed that Jacob had ripped him off twice and taken what was his for himself.

Look in Malachi 3:8, 9 the word "rob" which is a play on the name of Jacob is used four times in those two verses. God is basically saying to the Israelites, "You are taking what is Mine and you are using it for yourselves. You are supplanting or robbing Me."

They were doing what no one should do, they were taking what belonged to God—the tithe and offerings. They did this in one of two ways:

1. either by not paying the tithes at all, or
2. not paying them as they should. Instead of bringing them into the storehouse, they were using them for something else.

We have experienced recessions in the US from time to time. We can understand a bit of what it was like for the people of Israel to experience a

recession that was brought about by a curse. They were hurting financially, at God's hand, because they were robbing God of what belonged to Him. Someone once said, "I believe that if you don't give God the tithe, He extracts it from you." This could be a picture of that very thing.

God tells them He is trying to get their attention and it is not working. He says in verse 7, **"Return to Me and I will return to you."** The Israelites may have responded, "But God, we are in a recession, how do you expect us to tithe?" God replies, "You don't understand, I am the One who shuts off the flow and I am the One who opens the valve. Trust Me!" The Kingdom of God is not dependent upon the economic system of any country.

Look back through today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more ideas He wants you to understand, learn or apply to your life.

What Scripture or statement spoke to you today?

Rewrite this Scripture or statement into a prayer request to God.

How can you apply this Scripture or thought to your life?





Day 5

Putting God to the Test: Giving by faith

Malachi 3:10 "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 you will not have room enough for it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.

As an aside, based upon this passage, the church is the basis of the Kingdom of God. God has chosen to establish local churches to do His work. The whole tithe, the whole 10% needs to come into the storehouse (the local church) because this is where God wants to work. Let *us* use it to do what God has called *us* to do, both here and around the world, to support who He has called *us* to support. When you give to other organizations, you do not know how much of it will really go where you want it to go. As a church, we have all kinds of checks and balances in our financial system to insure that it is handled properly. When you give your tithe here, you will know it is going where we say it is going.

The church is the basis of the Kingdom of God.

In verse 10, the word "bring" is a command. "Whole tithe" means the full 10% not just a portion of it. To give any less is to rob God because the tithe was paid to Jehovah. The application of "**into the storehouse**" for us is into the local church. The whole tithe is to be given to the church for the ministry of the church. This is to be our first and primary, and for some, our sole giving.

Giving less than the tithe (10%) is robbing God.

Giving by faith is an invitation to test God

God says in verse 10, "Test Me." This is a very strong word meaning to prove or to try someone or something. This is the Lord Almighty (the Lord of the armies of heaven) saying "Test Me, now!" When He says that, we should do it. He cannot make it any plainer, He is laying His reputation on the line.

He couples this with a promise, "**See if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven. . .**" Have you ever been around when they have opened the floodgates of a dam? You may recall seeing the news coverage when one of the gates broke on Folsom dam. Water was literally bursting out of that gate with tremendous force.

That is the picture God is using here, floodgate of floodgates in the sky, opened

by Yahweh, through which rain pours. (This is a word picture of abundance, see 2 Kings 7:2, and of blessing—Malachi 3:10.) God controls the valve and He knows just how to aim His blessings! Opening the floodgates of heaven is a figure expressing the most inexhaustible supply of blessing, so that it flows down from heaven like a pouring rain until there is no more need. It is a picture of superabundance.

Jesus promised the same thing in Luke 6:38: God promises to take care of every need we have, and at times, even beyond, in abundance, if we will give to Him what is His. And He invites us to put Him to the test. It is His reputation that is on the line, not ours!

"The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, 'Look, even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?'"
2 Kings 7:2

The principle illustrated

You may have a life insurance policy. It says that, upon your death, your beneficiary will receive a certain amount of money. You have a multi-page document that tells you so. You pay your premiums and you believe that policy.

You also have auto insurance which says it will pay so much money or such a percentage if you are in an accident. You pay your premiums. You have a policy that outlines the agreement. You believe that policy.

Most of us pay a mortgage or rental payment every month. In essence, you have a contract that says, that as long as you make the payments, you can live in that house or apartment. You write a check and pay according to the agreement. You are certain that no one is going to force you out because you have a contract and you are paying the bill. You believe that contract.

God says that if you will put Him first, He will make sure that every need of yours is met. He put it in writing. He invites you to put Him to the test and see, to invest your faith in His financial management principles instead of your own. Yet we trust people and contracts a whole lot more than we trust God. We pay insurance premiums to companies we do not know, to people who may not be Christians. But we trust them to pay off after we die or are in an accident. Yet God says, "Put Me to the test." and we say, "That is Old Testament, it does not apply any more."

Let's see what the New Testament has to say then:

Philippians 4:19 "And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

Romans 8:32 "He who did not spare His own Son, but



God says that if you will put Him first, He will make sure that every need of yours is met.

gave Him up for us all— how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Do you put God first in your financial life? _____

Do you tithe to the Lord through His church? _____

Do you believe a human being or institution (insurance company, etc.) more than you believe God? _____

"Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Luke 6:38

Many folks do. We need to put ourselves in a position where we are trusting God in the financial area of our lives. Where is your faith in this area?

Sometimes we make poor financial decisions. The problem is that we get ourselves in those situations and, then, the first place we cut back is in giving to God. Instead of choosing to reap the consequences of our poor decisions, we, in essence, make God pay. And, in doing so, we are not only irresponsible, we rob God. We choose to trust our own abilities instead of trusting God to do what He promised He would do.

The first place we cut back is in giving to God.

God says, "Test Me in this." Do we trust Him with our souls and not our pocketbooks? Do we trust Him to provide for forgiveness of sins but not food and shelter? Do we trust Jesus to go and provide a place for us in heaven, but not here on earth?

The result of giving by faith

Malachi 3:12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.

God says that all the nations would look at Israel and call her blessed because her land would be an object of pleasure to everyone. They would say, "Surely God is with them! It has to be God! People can't do that."



Let me help us focus our attention on why this area of faith is so important to us now and in our future for God. Look at Luke 16:11. Aren't we asking God to bless us as a church and to see hundreds and thousands of people come to know Christ? Aren't we asking to grow up in the faith and to reach out into the world? Yet God says, "How can I trust you with that if I cannot even trust you with money?" Money is not that big of a deal unless it gets its hands around our throat and chokes us off from God. What Jesus is saying in Luke 16:11 is, "If I can trust you with worldly wealth, I can trust you with true riches—the souls of men." Isn't that what we want?

God associates our ability to handle money with our ability to handle spiritual matters! Every time that God entrusts us with money, He is taking a risk that we will not handle it properly. He puts it in our hands to see if we will use it as good managers of His. It is the proving ground to determine if God can take an even greater risk in entrusting us with "true riches," the lives of His people.

**"So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"
Luke 16:11**

In conclusion

Does the tithe apply today to the New Testament believer? Yes it does. It has always characterized God's people. But we see that it is merely the place to start and not the place to finish or grow content. We need to start with the tithe and grow from there.

Like Abel's offering, our giving should be our first and finest. Like Abram, we need to recognize that God owns it all and give in gratefulness desiring God's further blessings.

Who will you believe when it comes to finances—the devil, the flesh or God?

Jesus said in **Luke 16:13** **"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."** Look at your budget or your check book register as a statement of faith. It indicates who or what you worship. What does yours tell you?

The tithe is only the starting point of our giving to God.

Look back through today's lesson. Pray and ask God to identify one or more ideas He wants you to understand, learn or apply to your life. _____

What Scripture or statement spoke to you today? _____

Rewrite this Scripture or statement into a prayer request to God. _____

How can you apply this Scripture or thought to your life? _____





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