

## Live Like Jesus

**1 John 2:6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.**

This is our theme for 2024, to Live Like Jesus. We want to “Love Like Jesus and Live Like Jesus.”

**Philippians 2:5 (NCV) In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus.**

The NIV says, “... **have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.**”

*How many of you would say that God has blessed you? How many of you would say that I would like to be even more blessed?* Well then, Jesus’ words speak directly to you. Paul reminds us that Jesus said, “...**It is more blessed to give than to receive.**” **Acts 20:35**

People think that, to be more blessed, you must get more. But, the secret to being more blessed and living like Jesus, is to have a heart of generosity.

**EX:** I was blessed to receive, but also blessed to be a blessing to someone else. A life-changing truth.

Living Like Jesus is also going to require us to think and act like Jesus concerning our finances as well. It’s part of our transformation process. Helping us to grow and become more like Jesus.

### Jesus talked more about money than He talked about Heaven or Hell

- 500 verses in the Bible concerning prayer help us grow, and become more like Jesus. Agree?
- Greater than 500 verses about faith help us grow and become more like Jesus. Agree?
- But also, there are more than 2000 verses in the Bible on the subject of money and possessions.
  - Jesus talked about money in sixteen of His thirty-eight parables.
- We need to understand that our handling of money is part of spiritual growth and being like Jesus.

Why? Money is actually a test from God. It reveals your priorities, loyalties, and affections.

There is a connection between our hearts and our wallets.

**Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

So, when I teach you about God’s Financial Plan for your life, it’s not that I want something “FROM YOU”... But I want something “FOR YOU.” I want you to Live Like Jesus.

### The Giving Ladder

This Giving Ladder represents our spiritual development in the area of our generosity and giving.

**“The Blessed Life”**. The goal, as Jesus said it is more blessed to give than receive (**Acts 20:35**)

**“The Stressed Life”** At the bottom of the Giving Ladder.

- **FIRST TIME GIVER** You get on the giving ladder by returning a first-time gift to God through your local church. This is the first step to the blessed life.
  - In an average congregation, **40-50%** of the people are reluctant givers.
  - Why? Trust issue with church leadership. Think Church is funded by the government or some other agency, or maybe some people just don’t see the need to give to the church.
- **EX:** Howard FBC, they have plenty of money, why do I need to give them anything?
- Maybe they are just fearful that they won’t have enough if they give some away. Fear is an enemy to growing in your faith. It stops you from living like Jesus. Fear keeps people in a scarcity mentality and the only way to break out of that deception is to take the first step on the ladder and make a first-time gift!

- **OCCASIONAL GIVER** This person gives what they can, when they can. Often their gift is spontaneous and this is a good way to give. If this is the only way they give, however, they will be limited in what they give.

**The Good Samaritan** said, “I see a need I can meet and I’m going to meet it.” He spontaneously gave. **Luke 10:35** **The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'**

**The Boy with the Loaves and the Fish. (John 6:9)** He did not go to see Jesus that day planning on giving his lunch away. But he said, “You’ve got a need and I can meet it,” and he spontaneously gave away what he had. Jesus multiplied what was spontaneously given.

**30-40%** of people are occasional givers and most of those people are limited to spontaneous giving.

**EX:** Large Church, known as the richest church in town with a multi-million-dollar budget, revealed that 2/3’s of their people gave less than \$200 a month. They are occasional givers.

- People respond and give occasionally to what pulls at their heart strings. “Build a Building, Build a Child”, The Gideon’s, Mingi Children of Ethiopia, Christmas, or Easter Offerings, etc. They saw the need and they met the need spontaneously.
- Some may only give occasionally in response to a sermon or giving challenge.

- **INTENTIONAL GIVER** Intentional Givers are people who say, “We are going to plan to be generous.” **Isaiah 32:8 NLT** **But generous people plan to do what is generous,** (They plan; they sit down and say, “How can we be more generous?) **and they stand firm in their generosity.**

Intentional Givers make up about **20%** of the people in an average church. They give a predetermined amount on a set schedule. They are taking ownership in the church and realize that they have a responsibility to meet the financial needs of the church and to fund the ministries.

- They realize that they are receiving a blessing from being a part of the church, so they begin to supply out of love for the church.

- **TITHING GIVER-** **I GIVE GOD MY FIRST AND BEST SO HE CAN BLESS THE REST.**

The tither is saying, “Strategically, I am honored to arrange my life around God, and I will make the conscience choice to return to Him 10% of what He entrusts to me.

It is not mine; it is His. I return the 10% to God through the storehouse, His church.”

**Leviticus 27:30** **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.**

A tithe of everything; a tithe of my increase, my income, the sale of a home; it is His. It is not mine. It is Holy to God; Set apart.

- Technically, you are not giving; you are returning to God what is already His.
- Bring the tithe to the storehouse. It is God’s money.
- Keeping what belongs to someone else is what? Stealing. **Malachi 3:8** **“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings**

**Context:** God’s people had been blessed and they had tithed in the past. **But as they became more blessed, they gave less.** As they received more, they were less generous. “Not my best lamb!”

They started giving less than the best and God said that was unacceptable. **They were bringing leftovers to a Holy God.** Things went downhill from there and they found themselves under a curse.

**Sadly, only about 1.8 to 2.5% of modern-day Christians tithe 10% of their income.**

## THE BLESSINGS OF THE TITHE

### 1) TITHING PROVIDES FOR GOD'S WORK THROUGH HIS CHURCH.

**Malachi 3:10a** Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, (The Storehouse – an Old Testament picture of the New Testament Church.) **that there may be food in my house.**

Bringing your tithe to God through the local church provides for God's people through His church!

### 2) TITHING TEACHES ME TO PUT GOD FIRST.

Tithing is one of the most practical and tangible ways in our entire lives where we can consistently put God first. **Deuteronomy 14:23 TLB** The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives. "You mean to tell me that in order for me to give 10%, I will have to totally prioritize and reorganize my life around God!" YES! Put God first! **EX:** Scott and Janet 850/85 budget.

### 3) TITHING INCREASES MY FAITH IN GOD.

Those of you who are tithers know this already. You know that tithing teaches you that 90% with God's blessings goes farther than 100% without God's blessings.

God is testing us, and we are told only one time in the Bible for us to test God.

**Malachi 3:10b** '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.'

Test Me! **Numerology – 10 is the test number.**

- In the Old Testament, how many commandments did God give us to test our obedience? Ten
- When God tested Pharaoh's heart, how many plagues did He send to test Pharaoh? Ten
- How many virgins were tested to see if they were prepared for the bridegroom's return? Ten
- How many lepers were healed to see how many would return unto Christ to thank Him? Ten
- How many disciples in the NT did Jesus surround Himself with? Actually, 12- just testing you.

Some of you are saying, "But Scott, that's Old Testament!" Jesus clearly affirmed the tithe in the New Testament. **Matthew 23:23 NLT ...For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.**

*The tithe as law has gone away, tithing as a principle is here to stay.*

I believe that 10% is the starting point for the supernatural blessing of God to be poured out on your finances. Some people tell me, "I don't tithe 10% of my income." I say, "I don't either. We passed 10% a long time ago." Remember, I will never ask you to do what I don't do myself. **EX:** Age 13

• **OFFERINGS GIVER** Giving above and beyond the 10% tithe is an offering. Offering helps you break the cycle of legalist giving. **EX:** Legalistic Giving. Tithe check of \$107.82. What? Why not round it up to \$110.00? (\$2.18)

Be a percentage giver. The first 10% is for God and now think about adding 1% -2% – 3% more above the tithe as an offering or toward a special offering the church is doing together. Be strategic.

- Now, you are not just reacting, but you are being prayerful.
- Now, giving is not just something that we do, generosity is who we are.

**The Serve the Boro Easter Offering - March 24, 2024** A special Easter Offering above our regular tithe. This money will help fund Serve the Boro and other outreach projects.

- For the special Christmas Offering and for this special Easter Offering, Janet and I give a little each week coming into the special offering, and then we give a large offering on that day.
- Begin to plan for it now and bring your tithes.

**Philemon 1:6 (NLT) And I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your faith as you understand and experience all the good things we have in Christ.**

- **SACRIFICIAL GIVER** This is where we all want to arrive. We give when and what God tells us to give even if we sacrifice something in order to be obedient.

**The Widow - Mark 12:41-44** Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. 43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 **They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.**”

**Sacrificial Giving** Some people say, “*We don’t really have much to give*”. No, you’ve always got something to give. When you have less, that’s when you can make the biggest sacrifice.

### **Where Are You on This Ladder Today?**

**I will commit to grow spiritually and shine brighter for Jesus by taking another step up The Giving Ladder.**

- **FIRST TIME GIVER**
- **OCCASIONAL GIVER**
- **INTENTIONAL GIVER**
- **TITHING GIVER**
- **OFFERINGS GIVER**
- **SACRIFICIAL GIVER**

**I will commit to growing in giving like Jesus by taking another step up The Giving Ladder.**

**NEXT STEP: I will participate in:**

- **All Tithe Day Sunday- March 3, 2024**
- **Accept the March, April, and May 2024 Tithing Test Challenge**
- **The Serve the Boro Easter Offering - March 24, 2024**