

I used to worry about teaching on money in church. I knew that *“People are funny about money.”* Even though I wanted people to understand God’s financial plan for their lives, and I was a strong believer in tithing myself, I didn’t want to come across as a “money hungry televangelist”. I didn’t want people to roll their eyes and say, *“Well here he goes. I knew it was coming. I told you the church only wants my money.”*

It took a while but all of that changed. I began to realize that if I didn’t talk about money, I wasn’t teaching the “full counsel of God” to our people.

- I didn’t and still don’t need people’s money, but I do want them to live the blessed life.
- In our FPU this weekend Dave Ramsey reminded us that “God doesn’t need your money; he needs your obedience.” “It’s hard for God to fill clinched fists, rather than open hands.”

In this series on prayer, we talked about being in a relationship with Jesus, resulting in Relational Communication. “Hear Me”, “Speak to Me”, “Exchange With Me”, and today let’s add “Test Me”.

WE SAY, “TEST ME”

- **WILL I LOVE AND TRUST MONEY OR WILL I LOVE AND TRUST GOD?**

Matthew 6:24 “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.

- Money – the number one competitor for our hearts.
- Do you love and trust God or do you love and trust money.

MONEY PROMISES WHAT ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE.

- **SECURITY** You can have all the money in the world and then your child gets hit by a car. You realize that money can’t provide security, only God can.
- **FREEDOM** You think that, if you have enough money, you will be totally free. But Jesus said if you want freedom you must know Him.
- **POWER** In reality, God is the one who gives power and takes power away.
- **SIGNIFICANCE** You can only find true significance in God and His purpose for your life.

Money promises what only God can provide. Money is a counterfeit god and, for so many, we are going to love and trust money instead of loving and trusting God.

We must be willing to say, “God test me.” We want to know and God wants to know who will be faithful with that He has given us so that he can trust us with more. That’s why Jesus said...

Luke 16:10-11 “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches.

If you haven’t been faithful with worldly wealth, can God really trust you with the truly blessed life?

The Problem with loving money? Ecclesiastes 5:10 **Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.**

- God wants to know do we love and trust money or do we love and trust Him?

- **WILL I GIVE GOD MY FIRST AND MY BEST SO HE CAN BLESS THE REST?**

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 And not in the bundle that I control.

- Keeping what belongs to someone else is what? **Stealing**. **Malachi 3:8-9** “**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.** Notice God didn’t say they were under the blessings at this point. You are under a curse, the whole nation, because you are robbing me!

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.**

The Store House, the Church, the House of God. When you bring your tithe to God through the local church, you are providing for the work of God through his church!

- Today, you are receiving spiritual food, spiritual nourishment through His Church. The primary source for your Spiritual development is the HOUSE OF GOD. The Church.
- For many of you, your life has been totally transformed by Christ through His Church.
- You came to church and got a fresh start. You are growing spiritually and relationally with others in Life Groups.
- The church is also providing an outlet for you to exercise and use your spiritual gifts and talents on Ministry Teams.
- On top of all of that, you tithe faithfully, give offerings above your tithes, so that this beautiful work of God and Authentic Christianity continues to grow right here in Statesboro, Bulloch County and Surrounding Areas. Outreaches, salvations, missions, and live change.
- 2022 – 105 Salvations bring out trackable total up to 2007. This happens because you give.

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!**

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.

- You say, “that doesn’t make sense.” It doesn’t, do the math, but it works.

EX: Praying that a man will make less. God has blessed you and you don’t have faith in God?

GOD SAYS, “TEST ME”

God is testing us, and this is the only place in Scripture where we are allowed to test God.

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 there will not be room enough to store it.*

- Technically, you are not giving. You are returning to God what is already His.

Context: The people had been blessed, and they used to tithe. 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. 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.

Sounds like what happens to people today. Studies show that, as your income increases, the percentages of what people give actually decreases.

- The avg. America gives 3.1 percent of their income to charities.
- Less than 10K income gives 5.2%
- Greater than 200k income gives on the average .07%. Less than 1%.

“Test me in this!” Ten is the number of testing, and God wants to see if we will return a tenth to Him. At the same time, we are allowed to put Him to the test.

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
- In the New Testament, 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.

EX: All the blessings in my life can be traced back to the first tithe. 13 years old.

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

Some of you are saying, “But Scott, that’s Old Testament!”

- The tithe preceded the law by over 400 years. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek.
- Then 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.

Jesus just assumed that tithe would be a part of life.

Tithing, 10% of our income is the beginning point for a believer and it teaches us to lose our trust and love of the number one competitor of our heart – money. And it teaches us to trust and to love God.

This is exactly the way God gave. We are to give first before we see the blessing.

God loved us and gave first. Before we believed, He sent His first and His best. He gave His one and only son.

Following that example, we give our first and our best so He can bless the rest.

Today’s Next Step: I will test God with my money and tithe 10% of my weekly income on “ALL TITHE SUNDAY” MARCH 5th.

Today’s Next Step: I will take “The Tithing Test Challenge” and tithe 10% of my income during April and May 2023.