



A couple of years ago we did a series called “Loaded” where Steve spoke about the four ‘engines’ of our finances - Tithing, Giving, Saving, and Spending (wisely). We know that it’s possible for an airplane to fly on three engines instead of four, but it’s not good for the plane and it’s not safe for the passengers. The same can be said about the four engines of our finances. This Sunday we looked in particular at the ‘engine’ of tithing.

God is relentless about being FIRST

God wants to be first in our lives. In Matthew 22:36-37, Jesus was asked: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” to which He replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” In the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:3) we see that the first commandment also speaks about putting God first: “You shall have no other god besides me.”

So this poses the big question: “Is God first in your life today?”

God is relentless about being FIRST in our lives. Why is He so relentless on being FIRST?

- Because He is FIRST (SUPREME) within the universe
- Because our lives are only in order when God is FIRST.

When we put God first we get to live the lives He designed for us.

God also wants to be first when it comes to our

finances. He goes to great lengths to remind His people that:

- He owns it all (*To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.* Deuteronomy 10:14)
- He gives us the ability to produce wealth (*But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.* Deuteronomy 8:18) and
- He wants first place in our handling of Finances

God does this because He knew that throughout the ages people would tend to see His stuff as their stuff, thinking that their own hands produced it all. One of the reasons for the principle of tithing could be to help challenge us every month about Who/What we are putting first in our lives.

There are many verses on the topic of tithing. On Sunday, Steve focused on three verses:

1. “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. Leviticus 27:30.

A tithe is unique in that it refers to the first tenth of all of our income which BELONGS to God.

Why did God pick a tenth? Possibly because it’s a percentage so it’s applicable to everyone - no matter what you earn. It’s also interesting to note that the number 10 is linked to testing throughout the Bible:

- How many plagues were there to test Pharaoh?
- How many commandments were there as tests (Exodus 20)?

- How many times were Jacob's wages were changed (and the Bible said his heart was tested)?
How many times did God test Israel in the wilderness?
- How many days was Daniel tested in Daniel (1:12-14)?
- How many virgins were there tested in Matt 25?
- How many days of testing are mentioned in Revelation (2:10)?

(Hint: the answer to all the questions above is 10!)

Interestingly, tithing is the one thing that God encourages us to test Him on!

2. **'Honor** the Lord with your possessions, with the **firstfruits** of all your increase, so that your barns will be filled with plenty, your vats will brim over with new wine.' Proverbs 3:9-10.

Honour refers to priority (being first) in this context. Here we see that the tithe comes first and that it's a tenth of the **INCREASE**. God doesn't need our tithes – He wants to bless us more (It's for more **INCREASE** "barns filled, vats brimming over"). But this requires faith on our part!

3. *The best of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God.* Exodus 23:19

Scripture always refers to "bringing" a tithe (never giving). This is another reminder that we are not giving something that belongs to us, but bringing something that belongs to God.

The Scripture that pulls all of these ideas together can be found in Malachi 3:8-12: *"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. 'But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'" "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. 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. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the Lord Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty.*

The tithe is one way God tests for His **FIRSTNESS** in our hearts. When we pass this test, we are blessed with His supernatural provision and protection! When we don't put God first in our finances by tithing, we rob Him of the opportunity to provide the provision and protection He so desires to give us! Have you been living a life of putting God first?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Bible speaks about four important principles regarding our finances: Tithing, Giving, Saving & Spending wisely (Stewardship).
 - a. As a child, which of these four engines came most naturally to you?
 - b. And which was your weakest engine? Is the same true today?
2. Can you recount a time when somebody else's financial generosity towards you had an impact on you?
3. If a friend of yours who was not familiar with the Bible asked you to explain the scripture in Malachi 3:10-11 on tithing to them, what would you say? Does God still want to bless us in the same way today? (Please read the verses out loud to the group).
4. Why do you think God says to test Him in this (tithing)? Have you tested Him in this? What have been the results?
5. Spend some time discussing the Better Together series starting next week. Who are you inviting to join

PRAYER POINTS

1. Pray for those guests who may come along next week to Better Together.
2. Ask God for financial provision, and to guide us in ways to be generous this week.