



**HATFIELD
CHRISTIAN
CHURCH**

LIFE GROUP GUIDELINE TERM 3 WEEK 5

31 August 2017

Blessed be the sower

‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and test me in this if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing till it overflows.’

Malachi 3:20 (NASB)

Icebreaker

Describe your earliest memory of giving of your finances or your material possessions to God and your most vivid memory of receiving an unexpected material blessing from Him.

Introduction

The topic of personal finances and church finances is always challenging. However, the Bible gives clear guidelines (principles, spiritual laws) to guide us in this. Firstly, based on precedents in the Old Testament (Malachi 3:20; Genesis 14:18-20; Genesis 8:22), sound Christian practice is to give the tithe or the first ten percent of all your income to God. This contribution is best made to the local congregation (‘the storehouse’) where you are regularly receiving spiritual food, fellowship, guidance, and protection.

Secondly, the instruction to tithe is reinforced by the teaching of the first fruits (Exodus 13:2; 12-13) where Moses instructed the Israelites to give the very first of their increase (in their case, the firstborn of their herds and their harvest) as a substitutionary sacrifice to God. In other words, they were to give their best to God, not the left-overs, as a token of overall commitment and a declaration of faith that He would supply all their needs.

Thirdly, we tithe because we are committed to the extension of Christ’s kingdom on earth. To carry out this task requires resources – human and financial – and thus we should give generously, willingly, and sacrificially so that the Church has the material, as well as the spiritual, means to do the work of the gospel. Our heavenly Father, in response, promises to provide abundantly in all our material and financial needs (Malachi 3:20; Matthew 6:33).

Discussion

- Discuss the following: 'Living on 90% of our income with the blessing of God goes much further than living on 100% of our income without the blessing of God.' Share examples from your own life to illustrate the truth of this statement.
- Apart from the faithful giving of a monthly tithe, how is God leading you in the use of your financial and material resources? In the light of the many needs in our communities, what is God calling you to do regarding your standard of living and material possessions? Think of areas in your life in which you could live more frugally to have more to give.
- Giving a tithe to the church is a very practical issue which usually starts with drawing up and sticking to a monthly budget. How do you (and your family) carry out intentional financial planning? Identify training opportunities in the church's programme and find people with financial expertise who could assist you to manage your finances more effectively. If you need expert help, share this with an accountability friend (e.g. your life group leader) and commit to seek advice on financial management within a specified time.
- Giving God the first fruits of our harvest speaks of giving God the very best of our lives. Apart from finances, what other first fruits can you identify in your life? Think of your most productive time of day, your energy, gifts and talents, and the use of your most prized possessions. Share how you ensure that God has prime access to these and about where you need to make adjustments.

Prayer

- Thank God for the channels He uses to provide for us daily: health and abilities, employment, parents and family, friends, benefactors, the church, etc.
- Pray for those in financial and material need in your immediate sphere of influence. Ask the Lord to bring to mind people, ministries, or organizations in need of finance, to show how you could help meet these needs, and to give you the willingness to respond quickly and cheerfully to them.
- In pairs, pray for one another to grow in tithing and giving habits and to develop your trust in Him as our only source and provider.

Personal challenge

Keep book of your requests for material needs. Note the date and the specific need. Keep a record of how God supplies each need. You will be encouraged by your own testimony!