

Empower
Session 4

A Financial
Revolution

A Financial Revolution

One of the elements of the Alternate lifestyle that we discussed in the last session was that of a “Financial Revolution”. Let’s pursue this aspect of the new lifestyle a bit deeper.

At the very heart of this topic of a Financial Revolution is an understanding of God’s **OWNER-SHIP** and Man’s **STEWARDSHIP**.

Stewardship is the disciplined use of material possessions in our worship of God.

For us in this day and age, the concept of “steward” is a bit strange. In modern terms, a steward might be synonymous with a “financial overseer”.

In New Testament days, many times a steward was a trusted slave. He was one who had real gifts in how to manage finances, manage material things, and perhaps manage staffs.

- All of his master’s goods would be under his control
- He would be responsible to the master
- He didn’t own any of it
- But he was to make the best of it, make it prosper, make it grow
- And, he had to give an accounting to his master

You can write in your notes that the steward recognizes that all that he has is not **HIS**, but **GOD’S**.

When we recognize this truth, we realize that there isn’t a single item that we own or acquire that we can say is really ours.

- God gave us the abilities
- God gave us the opportunities
- God gave us the strength
- God gave us the health
- God gave us all the things that are necessary to purchase, earn, and acquire everything that we own

So it all belongs to Him. And if we are one of His stewards, then we are accountable to Him.

A FINANCIAL REVOLUTION

A basic element in our life-style of worship is the understanding of

GOD’S **OWNERSHIP** and MAN’S **STEWARDSHIP**

Stewardship is the disciplined use of material possessions in our worship of God.

A steward recognizes that all he has is

Not **“His”** but **“God’s”**

There is not one single item that comes into our hand which we can claim to be exclusively ours. Our Lord owns it all and allows us to exercise control over it for Him. We will give an account to Him as to our faithfulness in its use.

TITHING IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH A LIFE OF STEWARDSHIP WILL BE BUILT.

Tithing is rendering the **“First” 10%** of all that God has entrusted to us back to Him.

— It is a **Continual Declaration** of God’s ownership and our stewardship

— It is a **Significant Involvement** of material possessions in our worship of Him.

“The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.” (Deut. 14:23)

THE TITHE BELONGS TO GOD!

Tithing was practiced by the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, and the Romans in the dawn of recorded history. Abraham paid the tithe to Melchizedek 500 years before the Law was given to Moses. (Genesis 14:20) Tithing was recognized and pursued by Jacob all of his life (Genesis 28:22). When the Law came, it was legally required.

Leviticus 27:30 *“A tithe of everything...belongs to God.”*

Numbers 18:26 *“You must present a tithe...”*

TITHING is the foundation upon which a life of stewardship will be built.

Tithing is not a familiar term to everyone. It literally refers to the “**FIRST**” **10%** of all that we acquire and all that we possess. When we tithe, we present the first 10% of what He has entrusted to us back to Him.

When we adopt this principle of tithing in our life, two things happen:

- First, it becomes a **CONTINUAL DECLARATION** of God’s ownership and our stewardship.

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul writes, *“this is one way to prove that your love is real, that it goes beyond mere words.”*

It’s easy to talk about love and commitment, but when we have to back it up with cash out of our pocket, it is much more likely to be genuine.

- It provides a **SIGNIFICANT INVOLVEMENT** of our material possessions in our worship of God.

It’s recognizing God in a substantial way; in a way that it makes an impact on our finances.

If it doesn’t make much of an impact on our financial position, then it is not worthy of our Great God.

In the Living Bible, Deuteronomy 14:23 states, *“The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.”*

It isn’t that God is poor, that He needs our money. He hasn’t decreed that His people should tithe so that He would be rich. No, “He owns the cattle on every hill and the wealth in every mine.”

But, He instructs us to tithe because He loves us and wants to bless us! And He knows that in order to get blest, we need to get free from a “grasping” spirit. We need to develop a giving spirit. This is fostered as we honor Him with our tithe.

So it’s for OUR good that He instructs us to put Him first in our finances as well as in every other part of our life. That’s the reason that God requires the tithe.

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Leviticus 27:30 *“A tithe of everything...belongs to God.”*

Numbers 18:26 *“You must present a tithe...”*

Please write in your notes, the tithe **BELONGS TO GOD!**

This is the strong teaching all the way through the Bible.

Tithing is something that is planted in the heart of man and was practiced by the early Egyptians, by the Babylonians, by the Greeks and Romans

There are those in many churches today who say, "Tithing was part of the Old Testament Law. We're not under the Law anymore, and therefore we don't need to tithe."

Yet, tithing started way before the Law.

- Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek 500 years before the Law was ever established.
- Abraham's grandson, Jacob, walked in tithing.
- Having received from God the "Law" as he and the children of Israel were about to embark on becoming a new nation, Moses communicated the principle of tithing over and over

Leviticus 27:30 ... *"And all the tithe of the land ... is the Lord's"*

The context tells us that this instruction means the produce of the land -grain and fruit – it all belongs to the Lord.

Numbers 18:26 ... *"You must present a tithe ..."*

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Leviticus 27:30 *“A tithe of everything...belongs to God.”*

Numbers 18:26 *“You must present a tithe...”*

Deuteronomy 14:22 ... *"You shall truly tithe all the increase ..."*

Proverbs 3:9 ... *"Honor the Lord ... with the first fruits of your increase," wrote the wisest of all men (Solomon).*

So important is the tithe to God that He wrote specific instruction regarding tithing through His prophet Malachi. **MALACHI 3:8-12** clearly illustrates God's views on the matter.

The context of these verses is found in Malachi 3:7 where God reproves the children of Israel for their continual turning from His laws, *"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 Almighty. But you ask, 'How are we to return'?"*

We can read in several places in the Old Testament where God's people turned away from Him to follow other god's, other customs, ways other than the ways of God. And many times, God would come to them and say, "Return to Me," like He did here. And they would say, "What have we done? What are we doing wrong?" Because they either failed to know God's instructions or failed to obey them, the children of Israel often ended up in bondage or trouble. They were walking in disobedience, perhaps without even know it.

20 F.L.C. — “EMPOWER – Adopting the Lifestyle”

Deuteronomy 14:22

“Be sure to set aside a tithe of all... “

Proverbs 3:9

“Honor the Lord with the first part of all your income.” (LB.)

Malachi 3:8-12

illustrates how seriously God views this matter of the tithe.

v.8-9

God’s

Accusation

“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse — the whole nation of you — because you are robbing me.”

v.10

God’s

Instruction

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.”

v. 10-12 (NIV) God’s

Promise

“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 will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the Lord Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty. (NIV)

IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

Tithing was commended by Jesus – Matthew 23:23

“Woe upon you, Pharisees.. for you tithe down to the last mint leaf in your garden, but ignore the important things – justice, mercy and faith. Yes, you should tithe, but you shouldn’t leave the more important things undone. “

Tithing was practiced by the early Christians. Ireneaus, Bishop of Lyons, in 177 AD. wrote that Jesus did not abolish the tithe, but put into it a deeper meaning. Origen (185-253 AD.) declared the tithe was binding upon Christians. During the fourth Century, four separate church councils declared the tithe. And the Council of Seville in 590 AD. decreed, *“If anyone does not tithe everything, he is a robber and a thief”*

So what does God say to them when they ask, "How are we to return?"

- First, He gives a **SEVERE ACCUSATION** in verses 8 and 9

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, In what way have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me."

- It's probably a true statement to say that 60-70% of the people who attend church every Sunday morning have no idea that they are in the position of thieves.
- Most churches take an offering every week. Ushers pass the plate. What if an usher had a few needs at home and so, every Sunday, he would slip Rs. 10 out of the offering basket. Would you call that stealing? Yes.
- How about if you had a bill to pay or something, and you took that Rs. 10 and paid the bill instead of bringing the Rs. 10 to church to give at the offering time. What would be the difference? If it's God's, if the tithe belongs to the Lord, what difference does it make if its taken after it goes in the offering plate or before? God doesn't get it.

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- Then God has a **SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION** in verse 10

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house.”

- Here is a principle that we all need to understand. Obedience always precedes blessing.
- So God’s instruction is specific. “Bring all the tithe into the storehouse.”

- Then God gives us His **ABUNDANT PROMISE**

“Try Me now in this,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so the he will not destroy the fruit of you ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

God is saying, “Test Me”. I will so work in your land that the fruit will not rot, that the pests will not bother you, and all the nations will look at you and say, “There is a nation blessed of God!”

God is saying, “Test Me and see if my mathematics aren’t different from yours. See if My principles aren’t different from yours. Yes, test Me, and I will bless you!”

When we trust God, and we put Him to the test on the basis of His word, then He becomes free to bless us and He does.

There aren’t many people who have an extra 10% to give, who would find it easy to begin tithing. Normally, we wrestle with this. We are worried in our minds that we are going to come up short financially if we tithe. Most often, people have to say, “God, I’m going to face financial ruin unless you fulfill your promise when I test you with this.”

To this day, I’ve never seen God fail anyone who has put Him to the test.

This is not a “get rich quick scheme”! You aren’t going to give God 10% and then He give you back 100%. You don’t do this so God can give you everything you want. God has promised that He would supply your needs. He didn’t say He would fulfill all of our wants. He said, “I’ll take care of You. I’ll supply what you need.”

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In the New Testament, tithing was commended by Jesus. In Matthew 23, Jesus was in the midst of pronouncing “woes” upon the Pharisees, and He said, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. For you pay the tithe on mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law; justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”*

Jesus is taking the Pharisees to task because they were legalistic. They wanted to obey the legal instruction of the Law, but their heart was far from it. It would be like “tithing” your “cumin seeds”. 9 seeds for me, 1 for God; 9 for me, 1 for God. It’s ridiculous!

Jesus said “tithing isn’t the whole thing ... you should tithe, but there’s a lot more that you should do, as well.” They were being legalistic about tithing, but forgetting to be merciful and gracious.

The early church spoke about the obligation to tithe. In your notes you see reference to some of the writings of early church leaders, who dealt with tithing

- Ireneaus, Bishop of Lyons, in 177 A.D.
- Origen, 185-253 A.D.
- Church councils in the fourth century
- Council of Seville in 590 A.D.

Tithing was historically practiced by the early Christians.

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The key in the New Testament Church regarding tithing was this ... instead of tithing being a legalistic, slavish obedience to the Law, it was to be their **HEART'S RESPONSE** to God's love.

- The early Christians were not so much to be bound by the Law, as they were to be constrained by love.
- Their stewardship was to be a natural expression of their love.
- However, it was always taken for granted that love's response would lead believers to go beyond the legal requirement of Old Testament Law.
 - We see this in passages from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.
 - "The Law says, 'You shall not murder.' But I say to you, 'If you hate somebody in your heart, you've already murdered them.'"
 - "The Law says, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, if you lust after a woman in your heart, you have already committed adultery with her."
 - So Jesus validates the Law, but makes it clear that God is judging the true response of our heart more than He is the outward actions which we perform.
 - The same thing is true with tithing. God wants us to express in our tithing that all we have is His and He is free to use it wherever needed. Sometimes, our response to God is to empty our pockets at His urging - be extravagant, just like the widow Jesus pointed out.
 - So, the New Testament shows that the tither's expression of love for God should be:
 - 1st **CHEERFUL**
2 Cor. 9:7 ... "Don't force anyone to give more than he really wants to, for cheerful givers are the ones God prizes."
2 Cor. 8:7 ... "I want you to be leaders also in the spirit of cheerful giving!"
If we grumble as we give our tithe, we may as well keep it. God wants "cheerful" givers.

Each person’s **Hearts Response** was always the primary focus of the New Testament. The early Christians were not bound by law but rather were constrained by love. Their stewardship was a natural expression of their love. However, it was always taken for granted that love’s response would lead believers to go beyond the legal requirements of Old Testament Law. (Matthew 5:21-42; Luke 12: 1-4)

Their expressions of love for God and for each other would be:

1st **Cheerful**

Everyone must make up his own mind as to how much he should give. Don’t force anyone to give more than he really wants to, for cheerful givers are the ones God prizes. —II Corinthians 9:7

You people there are leaders in so many ways—you have so much faith, so many good preachers, so much learning, so much enthusiasm, so much love for us. Now I want you to be leaders also in the spirit of cheerful giving. —II Corinthians 8:7

2nd **Proportionate**

On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up so that when I come no collections will have to be made. — I Corinthians 16:2

3rd **Abundant**

Now I want to tell you what God in His grace has done for the churches in Macedonia. Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, they have mixed their wonderful joy with their deep poverty, and the result has been an overflow of giving to others. They gave not only what they could afford, but far more; and I can testify that they did it because they wanted to, and not because of nagging on my part. — II Corinthians 8: 1-3

BASIC PRINCIPLES IMPLICIT IN TITHING

1. **God’s ownership!**

Tithing is a reminder that God owns everything — not just 10%, but the 90% as well.

- 2nd, our giving is to be **PROPORTIONATE**

I Cor. 16:2 says, *“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”*

That’s the thing about tithing. Not everyone gives the same amount. The person who makes less gives less. The person who makes more, gives more. It’s proportionate to his income. A tithe is proportionate giving.

- 3rd, our giving is to be **ABUNDANT**

In the beginning II Cor. 8, Paul says, *(read from participants notes)*

Though they had been going through rough times, they really wanted to give, not only what they could afford, but far more. Paul was rejoicing because they had the right attitude toward worshipping God with their resources.

So, our giving should be cheerful, proportionate, and abundant . These are the New Testament understandings of the Old Testament principle. If we view tithing only as law, then we have lost God’s heart about the matter of tithing.

There are some basic principles in God’s Word which are implicit in tithing:

- The first of these principles in **GOD’S OWNERSHIP**
 - Tithing is a reminder that God owns everything. Not just the 10%, but the remaining 90% as well.
 - So God says, Obey Me in the 10%, but the rest of it – remember, you are a steward, and I want you to use it in ways that are pleasing to Me.
 - It changes our whole approach to life’s possessions. Now we pray about their use. “Lord, is this the way you desire me to spend my income?”
 - A Christian would do well to live on a budget in order to be truly accountable.

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BASIC PRINCIPLES IMPLICIT IN TITHING

1. God’s ownership!

Tithing is a reminder that God owns everything — not just 10%, but the 90% as well.

- The second principle is the **FOCUS OF ATTENTION**
 - Tithing helps to change our attitude toward material things.

In Luke 12, Jesus said, “... *fatten your purses in heaven, not with things from down here.*”

Because if fatten your purse in heaven, there are no rips or tears for it to fall out, there are no thieves there to steal it, there are no moths there to eat or destroy it, or rust to corrode it. It will be safe in God’s keeping.

Then He said this, “... *for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”

Jesus knew this would be true. He wanted our first focus to be on spiritual things. Our first priority is to be on things of God.

The Bible tells us that the “love” of money is the root of all evil. There’s nothing evil about money. God uses it all the time for the advancement of His kingdom. But it’s the “love” of money that is the root of all evil.

We learned in the last lesson that the early Christians shared everything in common, selling their possessions and distributing to those that were in need. Jesus has called us to focus on His kingdom - meeting people’s needs - rather than just considering our own. (Mt. 6:37)

2. **Focus of Attention**

Tithing helps to change our attitude toward material things.]

Sell what you have and give to those in need. This will fatten your purses in heaven! And those purses of heaven have no rips or holes in them. Your treasures there will never disappear; no thief can steal them; no moth can destroy them. Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be. —Luke 12:33-34

And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything with each other, selling their possessions and dividing with those in need. —Acts 2:44-45

3. **Messure of Blessing**

Tithing sets in motion the eternal principles of “sowing and reaping.”

“For if you give, you will get! Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more and running over. Whatever measure you use to give — large OR small-will be used to measure what is given back to you” —Luke 6:38

Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. — Galatians 6:7-9

But remember this—if you give a little, you will get little. A farmer who plants just a few seeds will get only a small crop, but if he plants much, he will reap much.

For God, who gives seed to the farmer to plant, and later on, a good crop to harvest and eat, will give you more and more seed to plant and will make it grow so that you can give away more and more and more fruit from your harvest. Yes, God will give you much so that you can give away much, and when We take your gifts to those who need them they will break out into thanksgiving and praise to God for your help. —II Corinthians 9:6 and 10-11

4. **First Fruits**

Tithing of our income fulfills this important Scriptural principle.

As it is also written in the Law, we will bring the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, of our herds of our flocks to the house of our God, to the priests ministering there. We also assume responsibility for bringing to the house of the Lord each year the first fruits of our crops and of every fruit tree.

- The 3rd principle is the **MEASURE OF BLESSING**
 - Tithing sets in motion the principle of “sowing and reaping”
 - Jesus said in Luke 6:38 ... *“For if you give, you will get! Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more and running over. Whatever measure you use to give — large OR small-will be used to measure what is given back to you.”*
 - Many Christians debate about whether they should tithe on the “net” (after taxes, etc.) or on the “gross” (before taxes are taken out). The real question is this ... God says, you give and I’ll bless based on the measure that you give. So what do you want to be blessed on ... the net or the gross? We can’t out give God.
 - Paul wrote to the Galatians in Gal 6:7-9, *“Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*
 - 2 Cor. 9:6 ... *“A farmer who plants just a few seeds will get only a small crop, but if he plants much, he will reap much.”* Lots of seed in, lots of crop out. Its the principle of sowing and reaping. Yes, God will give you much so that you can give away much.
 - 2 Cor. 9:6 – 10:11 ... *“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”* It’s the principle of sowing and reaping. God isn’t giving us more and more seed so we can pile it all up for ourselves. He’s giving us more so that we can share liberally.

- The 4th principle inherent in tithing is the principle of **FIRST FRUITS**
 - In the Old Testament, when God was educating His people on the practice of tithing, they were instructed to give Him the “first part”, not the leftovers. He wanted the best, the first, not the last. He didn’t want skim milk, He wanted the cream.

It wasn’t that God was to receive the last 10%. He was to receive the first 10%

In Numbers 18, He told them that He should receive the first grain, the first wine, the first oil, the first born should be sacrificed or given to God. That included the first-born children; the first to open the womb.

2. **Focus of Attention**

Tithing helps to change our attitude toward material things.]

Sell what you have and give to those in need. This will fatten your purses in heaven! And those purses of heaven have no rips or holes in them. Your treasures there will never disappear; no thief can steal them; no moth can destroy them. Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be. —Luke 12:33-34

And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything with each other, selling their possessions and dividing with those in need. —Acts 2:44-45

3. **Messure of Blessing**

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- After God's people had been punished and carried off to Bablylon, when they returned to the promised land to reestablish their nation again, the people promised the tithe as one of the things for which they would now be responsible.

Nehemiah.10:35-37 "Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God; to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites ..."

If God is most important in our lives, we won't want to give Him what is left over after everything else is taken care of.

Most of us don't have lambs to bring, or fruit, or grain to bring to God. We have money. If we want to walk in the principles of God's word, we express first fruit principles by giving to God first. The first funds we disburse out of our income should be the tithe.

Moreover, we will bring to the store rooms of the house of our God; to the priests the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work—Nehemiah 10:35-37 (see also Numbers 18:12-17)

5. **“Store House”**

Tithing is the basic means of sustaining local ministry.

*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house
— Malachi 3:10 (NIV)*

*There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.
— Acts 4:34-35 (NIV)*

6. **The Devourer**

Tithing is a protection against financial adversity.

“God gets it or Satan collects it”

BEYOND THE TITHE, the Bible speaks of:

— **Offerings** — gifts to the work of God which are above the basic tithe: free-will contributions to express special thanks or to support a special need, or person, or ministry.

In a Scriptural sense it is not permissible to give an “offering” if you have not first given your tithe.

— **Alms** — works of mercy or charitable gifts to relieve the poor which are also above the basic tithe.

- The fifth principle is that of the **STORE HOUSE**
 - The store house principle is based on the scripture that we just read in Nehemiah and also on the passage in Malachi.
 - In Old Testament times, people didn't get paid every week or two weeks. The people were to bring their crops to the temple where there were many rooms used as storehouses. All year long, the needs in God's house were taken care of out of these rooms filled with the tithes of the land.
 - So where is our store house? Where are we being fed spiritually? Where are we receiving from God's word? Where are we being taken care of spiritually?
 - If you eat at one restaurant, you don't pay at another one! What local fellowship is feeding you, and encouraging you, and strengthening you, and blessing you ... that's where your storehouse is. And, so you bring the tithe there.
 - God says that you bring it to the storehouse "so that there may be food in My house." The tithe is to be used for the ongoing work of that church fellowship in their worship of God and their outreach into the lives of other people.
 - In Acts 4:34-35, we see people in the early church selling what they owned and laying the profits at the feet of the apostles. The people trusted the apostles to distribute it to those in need. It was now "God's money"; not their own.

Moreover, we will bring to the store rooms of the house of our God; to the priests the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work—Nehemiah 10:35-37 (see also Numbers 18:12-17)

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- The last principle is that of **THE DEVOURER**
 - In Malachi, you remember, God said that if we tithe, He will rebuke the devourer so that our crops will not be destroyed. But if we fail to tithe, He will not rebuke the devourer and we will suffer unnecessary financial loss.
 - Tithing will not make you rich. But, God has promised that He will keep you from financial adversity.
 - This will be tested from time to time. If we are faithful, God will take care of us and we will be blessed when the testing is over.
 - There was a Christian businessman who was listening to his neighbor share with him about his many financial woes. The Christian businessman asked his neighbor if he had been tithing. His neighbor said, “You have to be joking. I can’t afford to tithe ... I can’t even pay my bills.” Then the Christian asked him to go home and tally up all of his unexpected bills to see if it didn’t come close to the amount that he should have been tithing. He did it and to his amazement, it was within a few dollars of what would have been his tithe.
 - If we give God the tithe, he makes our clothes last longer. He makes our food stretch further. He takes care of things so we don’t have so many emergencies.
 - The principle of “the Devourer” can be stated: “Either God gets it or Satan collects it!”

Moreover, we will bring to the store rooms of the house of our God; to the priests the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work—Nehemiah 10:35-37 (see also Numbers 18:12-17)

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— **Alms** — works of mercy or charitable gifts to relieve the poor which are also above the basic tithe.

Beyond the Tithe

- As we said earlier, the tithe is the foundation upon which a life of stewardship will be built. Beyond the tithe, the Bible speaks of two more types of giving.

- **OFFERINGS** are gifts to the work of God which are above the basic tithe. They are free-will contributions to express thanks or to support a special need, or person, or ministry.
 - In the Old Testament, God's people were required to give sacrifices and offerings on special occasions (special events, thanksgivings, seasons or for buildings)

 - These should not be confused with the tithe. There are many missions, Christian TV and radio programs, evangelists, and other good causes to support, but these should be "offerings" over and above the tithe.

- **ALMS** are works of mercy or charitable gifts growing out of your love for God to help relieve the poor.
 - Alms are also to be above the basic tithe

 - God wants us to help the needy out of love for Him without expecting anything in return. It is not a part of our salvation as would be true for those following Hinduism. But, God cares about those in need and He wants us to respond to their need as we are able.

Moreover, we will bring to the store rooms of the house of our God; to the priests the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work—Nehemiah 10:35-37 (see also Numbers 18:12-17)

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— **Alms** — works of mercy or charitable gifts to relieve the poor which are also above the basic tithe.

Let us summarize in closing with the three purposes for tithing:

- The first is to secure not your money, but **YOU** for God
 - Jesus' primary concern regarding giving was not the amount that we gave as it is with the giving of ourselves to God. When Paul commended the Macedonians for their giving in II Cor. 8:5, it was because "first" they gave themselves to the Lord.
 - When we have surrendered ourselves to the Lord, then we will give generously of our money and everything else to Him.
 - Veteran missionary, Dr. Bill Scott, said, "No Hindu goes to worship their god or goddess without a gift. At one time, government statistics showed that average yearly giving to be Rs. 1,000. In addition, many used to spend 10 rupees on smoking, 5 on movies, 15 on drink, and 100 a month on their god. Now that they are delivered from this past way of life and spend less on medicine because of a more healthy lifestyle, believers can easily give at least that much to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus."

- The second purpose of tithing is to establish our **PRIORITIES**
 - When we give God that "significant portion" and give it regularly, putting Him up front and honoring Him with it, then it becomes a regular demonstration of what and Who really comes "first" in our lives.
 - We are saying week after week, "Lord, you are first!" and showing it, not only in our worship and praise, but in our finances as well.
 - Deuteronomy 14:23 out of the Living Bible says that the purpose of tithing is, "... to teach you always to put God first in your lives."
 - Jesus knew that one of the chief obstacles to His Lordship in a life would be earthly possessions. It is important that a person regularly demonstrate what comes "first" in their life. He let us know in Matt. 6:31-33 that He understands that we need a certain amount of earthly possessions just to live, but that we are not to worry about these. If we put Him first, He will add all the things we need on to us.

PURPOSES OF TITHING

1. To secure not your money, but “ YOU ” for God.

The concern of Christ with our giving is not so much with the amount we give, as it is with us. When the Apostle Paul commended the Macedonians for their giving, it was because “first” they gave themselves to the Lord, (II Corinthians 8:5) When we have surrendered ourselves to the Lord, then we will give generously of our money and everything else to Him.

2. To establish our Priorities

Jesus knew that one of the chief obstacles to His Lordship in a life would be earthly possessions. It is important that a person regularly demonstrate what comes “first” in their life.

...To teach you always to put God first in your lives.

— Deuteronomy 14:23

“So do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows you need them. But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” — Matthew 6:19-21 and 33

3. To stimulate our Faith

Obedience in the area of our material possessions is one of the biggest and most important steps of faith for God’s people. It will open up whole areas of blessing and spiritual growth that we will never discover if we do not take this step of faith.

- The third purpose of tithing is to stimulate our **FAITH**
 - When we are obedient in the area of our material possessions, it is one of the biggest and most important steps of faith. It will open up new areas of blessing and spiritual growth.

- Our own personal testimony concerning tithing and God's faithfulness.
 - When we tithed faithfully to the Lord, we experienced that God
 - Opened up jobs (in Dallas; later at Ford Motor Company) (Don)
 - Unexpected income
 - A home for a year to save for a down payment (Don)
 - Peace – confidence in His care

 - When we did not tithe faithfully, we experienced:
 - Selfishness and fear
 - The devourer seemed to flourish with unexpected bills, automobile break-downs, need for new appliances, even thefts
 - Lack of peace

 - Read portions of Pat Robertson's "The Secret Kingdom" regarding a missionary to South America who God challenged to share the "whole truth" with those to whom he was ministering.

Close in prayer.

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**FULL LIFE IN CHRIST, Group Facilitator Suggestion.
EMPOWER: Adopting the Lifestyle, Session 4**

FIRST

- Quickly go over the group's responses to question 2, 3, and 4 from last week's question sheet.
- Depending upon the freedom within the group you might encourage some to share their "Letter of Testimony" but don't push it.
- Collect all the "Letters of Testimony" which are completed. Encourage those still working on theirs to bring you a copy next week.

THEN

- Let any who have had personal experience with tithing share.

NEXT - Thoroughly discuss the subject of tithing.

1. What is the "first fruits" principle?
2. How do they feel about the "storehouse" principle?
3. Discuss the important principle set forth in this passage:

Proverbs 11:24-25

"One man gives freely, yet gains even more, another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty."

"A generous man will prosper, he who refreshes another will himself be refreshed."

4. What is their response to the statement: "The purpose of tithing is to secure not your money, but you for God."

FINALLY

Discuss any problems various members may have with the practice of tithing.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

1. Complete Study Question Sheet #4 and bring it to the next session.