

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Hands Up! – Blessed

January 18, 2021

This weekend, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder asked us a pretty interesting question: “Did you know that you can rob God?” I am not sure if you’ve ever thought about it, but if you don’t give back to him, that is what you are doing. It is not that you prevent God from doing what he wants to do in the world, but you are preventing him from doing what he wants to do in you and through you. God wants to bless you—don’t make the mistake of limiting his blessings to the earthly things you’re holding on to.

John 10:10

“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.”

When we give to God, we connect with him and trust that he will provide for us. One of the ways we give is by tithing, which means we give back to God out of our resources. The literal translation of “tithing” is 10 percent—it’s the first 10% of what we produce or earn. Giving from our first is important because when God’s first, everything falls into its proper order.

This weekend, Ben shared a story from the book of Malachi about the Israelites stealing from God. Malachi was a prophet sent by God to the Israelites with a message. At that time, Israel was in exile—far from a blessed life.

Malachi 3:6-10 (NIV)

⁶ “I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty.

“But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’”

⁸ “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. 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."

In this text, we see Malachi challenging the Israelites to return to God. When they ask "How?" he answers:

"STOP ROBBING GOD." He tells them that because they are withholding their firsts. They're under a curse—the opposite of a blessed life.

Instead, they should, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, and then God will bless you."

According to Scripture, our greatest motivation for giving comes from God's love for us which grows our love for others. Just as Jesus Christ died for the sins of others, we ought to freely give of ourselves for others ([2 Corinthians 8:8-9](#)). In turn, God promises to reward and bless us when we do.

Luke 6:38

³⁸ Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back."

Questions:

Do you believe God wants to bless you? Do you want a rich and satisfying life in Christ?

In [Malachi 3:6-10](#), what was keeping the Israelites from God's blessing? How did Malachi tell the Israelites to return to God?

Next Steps:

I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but it is what I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess. Giving 10% of what God gives to you demonstrates your thankfulness to him for what he has provided and helps you to remember to rely on God instead of riches. Pray for his continued gifts and guidance in your life today. Ask for his guidance in determining your next step in giving.

[21 Days of Prayer:](#)

Day 15 Focus - My Relationships ([Philippians 2:3-5](#))

Dear Lord, please help me reflect you in all my relationships with others. Please help me humble myself and think of the needs of others before my own. Help me see how I can serve those around me. Help me show others they matter and let them know they are not alone.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Gary Schnabel, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

A Test of the Heart - Blessed

January 19, 2021

I lead a couple of CedarCreek's ladies' Groups. The ladies in my groups are amazing women of God. They are my dearest friends, and they are such a blessing in my life. Every year, each of us picks a word to focus on throughout the year. A lot of thought is put into the chosen words. And 2021 was no exception—I was blown away by this year's words.

My close friend, Amy, picked the word "heart." She wants to make sure her heart is always pure and loving. She wants all of her thoughts and actions to honor God. She wants to show his love in the way she treats others, and she wants her thoughts to be kind and loving. Amy wants most to have a generous heart. The thing you don't know is that Amy already has a huge heart. She is always helping others and living out her faith.

The Bottom Line from this weekend's message is: *The Tithe is God's Test for the Blessed Life*. Tithing tests your heart.

I know these are tough times. The COVID pandemic has been a real struggle in many ways. My intention is not to make you feel guilty. But I also believe that when we prioritize tithing, God's blessings overflow. I believe *giving is a heart issue*. It is important to give joyfully.

Amy and her husband, Todd, are examples of joyful givers. They have chosen to give their hearts and have been faithful to God by tithing through an extremely difficult time. In return, they have been overwhelmed by God's goodness.

Amy's family owns a business that has suffered greatly during the pandemic. Despite the decrease in their earnings, they have continued to give what they always have. Amy and Todd placed their faith in God to provide for them, and he has. They have gone through times when they didn't know how they would pay their bills, only to have a check miraculously arrive that they weren't expecting.

Amy rejoices that even though things have been tight, they were able to help buy turkeys and donate shoeboxes to the Tabernacle Church during the holidays. Amy and Todd have been living out their faith and demonstrating that

God is their true treasure. It's no coincidence that they have felt so very blessed by God in the midst of their struggles.

Matthew 6:21

Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

Questions:

How do you feel about tithing? Do you give on a regular basis? How does tithing test your heart?

Next Steps:

Read and study Malachi 3:6-10. Look up verses about tithing. Pray about this. If you aren't doing so already, devise a plan to give. If you already give, consider tithing.

Journal God's blessings when you obey him.

[21 Days of Prayer:](#)

Day 16 Focus - To Listen to Him ([John 10:4](#))

Dear Father, I am so grateful to have you near me, guiding me with your voice so that I may not stray from the path you have planned for me. I trust that your way is best and brings me closer to you. Amen.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Marsha Raymond, a regular contributor and editor or the LivingitOut.

The Ultimate Test - Blessed

January 20, 2021,

Did you know God invites us to TEST HIM. *Test him?* Do we dare attempt to test God? Many would say no—*trust*, but don't test. However, God truly does invite us to test him.

With what and how do we test him ... and why? God tells us to test and see if he will not bless and provide for us when we trust and give to him from our resources.

Malachi 3:10

¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!

At the same time, trusting God with our resources and giving him our firsts can be a test for us as well. The Bottom Line from this weekend's message is: *The Tithe is God's Test for the Blessed Life.*

Years ago, I was in a financial struggle and desperately needed a loan for a rather large sum of money. I tried nearly everywhere to get that loan, but to no avail. As a last-ditch effort, I applied to a financial institution. On top of all the work it took to collect the information needed to apply, I was also praying earnestly for God to help provide a solution to my situation. Several days passed and I hadn't heard anything from the loan officer, so I called to inquire where things stood. I was informed that they probably wouldn't be able to help me. I was devastated, *again*, and truly at the end of my rope.

On my way to work the next morning, I had a very angry conversation with God. I told him how much I was hurting... how I felt abandoned. I had put my trust in him to answer my desperate plea through prayer. Yes, I was angry with God, but I also told him in that same conversation that I trusted his judgment—even if the answer to the loan was "no." I still had faith that everything would be okay.

About two hours after I got to work, I received a phone call from the financial institution. It was the young lady who took my application. She proceeded to tell me how the loan officer was only looking at the "whats" and not the "whys."

She fought on my behalf, and ultimately, the loan was approved. God was up to the test and showed that I could trust him with my needs.

James 1:2-4

² Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³ For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴ So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

Questions:

How do you react when you are tested? Are you currently trusting God with your finances? Have you ever experienced an overflow of God's blessing from your giving? If not, are you ready to test him?

Next Steps:

Talk to God about what your next step is in the area of giving. Decide to take that step today, and watch what God does in your life.

[21 Days of Prayer:](#)

Day 17 Focus - My Purpose ([1 Peter 2:9](#))

God, you have given me, as a follower of Jesus, the right to be your child. You have set me apart and called me one of your chosen people. I can now show others your goodness and be a light to them in this dark world. Help me shine your light so others can see you.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Ned Miller, a regular contributor and editor or the LivingitOut.

Is It in the Bible? – Blessed

January 21, 2021

If there has been a lack of “hot topics” in your corner of the world (Ha!), here is one for you: Announce to your family and friends, “the tithe is Biblical.” The mere mention of the tithe, especially within the context of a sermon, often results in offending and/or upsetting the saints. (FYI: I am NOT referring to the New Orleans Saints. The reference is to regular/faithful church attendees—those identifying themselves as followers of Christ.) More than a few “faithful Christ followers” contend the tithe is Old Testament, under the law, and therefore, does not apply.

An examination of Scripture reveals the principle of the tithe existed before the legal aspects (law) of the Bible. Genesis 14:20 clearly references this: “And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you.’ Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.”

The principle of the tithe continues in the New Testament:

Matthew 23:23

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! 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.”

As was his style, Jesus pointed out the self-righteous ways of the Pharisees. Clearly, the rigidity of their tithing while ignoring matters of greater importance was unacceptable. It is important to note, however, Jesus did not diminish the principle of tithing in this passage—“You should tithe.”

What we do with our money reveals where our heart is, as reflected in [Matthew 6:21](#): “Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.” Tithing really is not about the money—*it is about the heart.*

My experience has been that until I allowed him to hold my heart, my “giving back” was out of proportion—majorly. Thankfully, I have lived long enough to joyfully embrace the principle of tithing. Completely stepping into tithing was a no-brainer once I understood that everything I own/possess truly belongs to him in the first place. His generosity to me placed that “stuff” in my life. Being stingy with the resources he gifted me is not an option!

Questions:

What are your thoughts on tithing? Is it for us today or was it only for those before Jesus? What do you believe we should give to God?

Next Steps:

Dig deeper into the Bible to study the topic of tithing. Thoroughly examine your finances. Identify ways to step into tithing if you aren't already. Baby steps are steps—each one counts! Consider increasing your level of giving if you tithe. Make a list of no more than three major areas where you need to grow in your faith. Commit to surrendering those areas to God daily. Journal the steps you've taken.

Consider joining a Financial Peace University Group. You can find one at your campus by visiting the [Group directory](#).

[21 Days of Prayer:](#)

Day 18 Focus - Commitments to Him ([Psalms 37:5](#))

Heavenly Father, you are trustworthy. I know I can rely on you, so I commit everything I have and am to you. May I carry out your will in my actions. May I bind my thoughts and behavior to your path for my life. Help me to trust you in all that I do. Teach me to listen for your voice and obey your guidance. You are the source of my strength, and my help comes from you. In your Son's name I pray, amen.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Karen Peck, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

The Personal Art of Robbery - Blessed

January 21, 2021

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder shared a personal story of the time he was robbed. The act against him felt personal because the deliberate intent to take from him wasn't done from far away, but right within his presence.

When we tithe, we give back what isn't ours to begin with. At times, we selfishly think it was all ours or don't believe that we have enough to give. I've been guilty of that before, and I haven't always thought about the personal implications of my actions—the idea of victimizing God doesn't seem possible.

The easiest way for me to explain this concept is to relate it to the relationship between a parent and child. Children should be raised to love God and respect life. They should be protected and nurtured so that they may grow strong and go out into the world to pursue and live out their purpose. Kids are a trusted gift, a true blessing from God. But they aren't ours to keep.

It's heartbreaking when a parent doesn't realize the responsibility God has entrusted to them. It's personal for the child. (I know it was for me.) A deliberate show of not wanting their child to be around turns the child into a victim, but holding on too tight does the same. In both instances, the child is being robbed.

Tithing is personal to God because he loves the local church. It is his BRIDE ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#), [Ephesians 5:31-33](#)). The church is his idea and his plan to reach the lost world. What we have and what we've earned was given to us from God, and God trusts that we acknowledge that truth. But when we don't, we limit our own blessings.

I am reminded of some song lyrics:

“Blessings” by Chance the Rapper

I, made it through, made it through, made it through

And, everything I gave to you, I gave to you, I gave to you

You got it, you got it, you got it, it's comin'!

So are you ready?

Are you ready for your blessing?

Are you ready, are you ready, for your miracle?

We tithe to show that we are ready to trust in God, that we're ready for our blessing ... for our miracle.

Questions:

Have you experienced a personal or emotional robbery? Are there times when you don't trust God? Do you see tithing differently than before?

Next Steps:

Trust goes both ways, so start giving God your firsts to show that you're ready to trust. Seek guidance if this is your first time taking that step. Once you experience blessings, offer more of yourself to help others experience God's truth. Pray when your trust starts to drift.

Prayer:

[21 Days of Prayer:](#)

Day 19 Focus - My Freedom ([Galatians 5:1](#))

Thank you, God, for freeing me! You have freed me from sin and from shame. You have freed me from the law and from striving to earn salvation. You have freed me from death itself! For all those things and more, I praise you. Help me to live as someone who is free. Don't let me fall back into old ways of thinking or the behaviors of my past. Don't allow me to fall back into serving the things that used to control me. I want to serve you alone. You bought my freedom and loyalty at a high price on the cross and I am grateful.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

Day 20 Focus - My Growth ([Ephesians 4:15](#))

Heavenly Father, I am not who I was before I met you—and it's all because of you. Thank you for the growth I have already experienced, but I'm grateful you're not finished with me yet! Teach me to be more and more like your Son every day. Help me to submit humbly to the situations you use to keep growing my trust in you, even when I wouldn't choose them for myself. Above all else, may I grow in love for you and for others. In Jesus' name I pray.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

Day 21 Focus - My Life ([Luke 9:23](#))

God, there is great purpose for me in loving you and others. You have given me specific gifts, passions, and talents so that I can show others who you are and love them like you do. You have also placed me right where I am to love you and love others. Help me to see that no matter what I face, this is how I live a life of purpose. I am dedicated to you and what you say is most important. Give me this vision for all of my days.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Payton Lechner, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

