

**Week Four: Tithing**  
*Matthew 23:23-24; Malachi 3*

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. When the subject of giving comes up, what's your gut reaction? (It's alright to be honest; God already knows how you feel!)
2. Sometimes we may be uncomfortable talking about giving, or even money in general, but Jesus had quite a bit to say about it. Read Matthew 6:24. Why is it important that we have a healthy relationship with money and possessions?
3. How would you assess your overall relationship with money? For instance, is it a means to an end, or do you feel the need to save every penny to feel secure? Has your relationship with money been impacted by your past experiences or recent developments?
4. Maybe the concept of a tithe is new to you. Read Deuteronomy 14:22-29 and Numbers 18:29 to see how the Israelites were instructed to tithe. How would you summarize the concept of a tithe in your own words?
5. The tithe had many functions, only one of which was to provide for the priests that served in the Temple. But there's so much more we will dig into this week! As you end your final FIFTEEN today, ask God to help you let go of any unhealthy attitudes you may have about money and open your heart to what God may have for you.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

6. When you think about your family of origin, was giving a part of your family's habits? How did your family's example impact your ideas about giving?
7. Read 2 Corinthians 9:7. Was "cheerful giver" how you described yourself in our first question today? Why or why not?
8. Read Matthew 23:23-24. How did Jesus describe the way the teachers of the law and Pharisees gave?
9. Read Malachi 3:6-15. When God spoke through his prophets, he put it a little more bluntly. What did he call the act of withholding tithes and offerings? What's your reaction to reading that?
10. Can you imagine painstakingly measuring out 10% of every spice you had? The Pharisees' actions might be described as obeying the letter of the law, but not the spirit. Describe how that might look in our modern-day context.
11. End your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you see ways you might follow the letter of the law but violate it by being a less-than-cheerful giver.

### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

12. For many of us, there's no difference between a tithe and an offering; we use the terms interchangeably. But they are very different in the Bible. We've already looked at the specifics of a tithe, but offerings were actually above and beyond the tithe. Skim through the following verses and list the various offerings described.
  - a. Leviticus 1, 6:8-13
  
  - b. Leviticus 2, 6:14-23
  
  - c. Leviticus 3, 7:11-34
  
13. Read Exodus 23:16. What were the offerings described in this verse?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
14. The concept of firstfruits helps us understand why God commanded the tithe. Instead of waiting to see how the crop turned out, God's people offered the firstfruits of the crop. What might happen if you gave the first 10% of a crop before the rest was harvested?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. What does it take to offer a firstfruits offering? Is that a concept that you feel comfortable with? What makes a firstfruits offering challenging?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. Now read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26. Who is the firstfruits offering?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. It may take faith and courage for us to offer a tithe, the firstfruits of what we have been given, but that offering pales in comparison to the sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf. End your FIFTEEN by reflecting on that sacrifice. Then end with a prayer of gratitude.

### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

18. As we have seen, God commanded his people to tithe, but it comes with a promise. Today, read all of Malachi 3. What sticks out to you as you read?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
19. Can you tell who the two people are who are referenced in verse 1\*?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
20. What is the promise associated with the tithe?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
21. While God commands many types of offerings, the tithe is the tipping point toward the blessings God promises. What bold statement did God make in Malachi 3:10?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
22. Read Deuteronomy 6:15-17. What does God say we are not to do?

23. God says we are not to test him, yet when it comes to tithing, he says, “Test me in this!” If you do not already tithe, how does this impact your faith to begin tithing? If you already practice tithing, what blessings have you experienced?
24. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God to give you the faith to tithe so that you may experience the blessings he wants to give to you.

\*Answer: John the Baptist & Jesus!

### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

25. Look again at Malachi 3:6-10. Yesterday we looked at the blessings that come with the tithe. But what exactly are those blessings? How do you define blessings?
26. Surprisingly science has a lot to say about the power of generosity! Pastor Dion has made some short videos talking about the surprising benefits of generosity. You can view them at [pathfinderstl.org/generosity](http://pathfinderstl.org/generosity). Look through the playlist and select a topic that interests you and watch that video. What did you discover about that benefit?
27. Read the following verses and note the blessings that God offers those who practice generosity.
- a. Deuteronomy 15:10
  - b. Psalm 37:26
  - c. Psalm 112:4-6
  - d. Proverbs 11:25
  - e. Proverbs 22:9
  - f. 2 Corinthians 9:6
  - g. 2 Corinthians 9:11
28. One of the greatest blessings God offers us through generous living is the strengthening of our faith and the realignment of our hearts and minds away from the things which can have a stranglehold in our lives. Things like worry, fear of loss, and constant striving. Stephen Hower said in his book *Contrary to Popular Belief*, “The way people handle their money will have a direct effect on their hearts. When the heart’s priorities become spiritual, Christians will enjoy the blessings of the faithful. When those priorities remain material, Christians experience the frustration of the self-serving. There is no correlation between degree of wealth and degree of satisfaction. The faithful poor often enjoy contentment even in their property. The non-faithful rich often experience dissatisfaction even in their wealth.” End your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you make his priorities your priorities so that you may experience his freedom and blessing.

## **Week Five: *Sabbath***

### ***Mark 2:23-28***

#### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. The theme of the Sabbath or seventh-day rest is a key theme in the Bible. You find it first in Genesis Chapter 2, and it goes all the way through to the end. The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word shabat, which means most simply “to stop” or “to cease from.” What comes to your mind when you hear the word Sabbath?
2. Read Genesis 2:2. How is the seventh day (or Sabbath) described here?
3. What had taken place on days 1-6? (Genesis 1)
4. A perfect place for humans to live with God was complete. The completion and enjoyment of that existence is described as blessed and holy. Yet humans rejected that life. Now the seventh day is a reminder of what was intended, a life of enjoying God’s full presence with us in his creation. What parts of your Sabbath observation remind you of Eden?
5. Sabbath observation recalls Eden and gives us a chance to recreate it in a small way until Jesus returns. What Sabbath practices recreate living harmoniously in the presence of God?
6. End your FIFTEEN anticipating the full restoration of Eden-like life. Thank Jesus for making that possible. Choose a way to make one day a week a taste of Eden.

#### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

7. How do you and your family observe Sabbath? If your neighbor asked you why you do what you do, what would you say?
8. Yesterday we saw that the seventh-day rest or Sabbath was an opportunity to remember and recreate Eden. There are other blessings and purposes for Sabbath in Scripture. Read Exodus 20:8-11. What does God command His people to do?
9. Exodus 20:10 says, “The seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God,” literally a rest (Sabbath) that belongs to Yahweh. In your weekly practices, who “owns” the Sabbath?
10. One scholar states, “Man normally is master of his time. He is free to dispose of it as he sees fit or as necessity bids him. The Israelite is duty-bound, however, once every seven days to assert by word and deed that God is the master of time...Keeping the Sabbath is acceptance of the kingdom and sovereignty of God.” How could the practice of a Sabbath with this understanding benefit you?

11. The structure of the Sabbath is meant to be inconvenient. God is the master of all time and he holds all the time that we think actually belongs to us. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to correct your view of time. Ask him for ways to surrender your time to him.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

12. Why do you think God made keeping the Sabbath one of the Ten Commandments?
13. Read Exodus 31:13. How would you define holy?
14. According to verse 13, who makes people holy?
15. We often associate holy with perfection. It actually means set apart or dedicated to God. How does observing a Sabbath set a person apart?
16. Verse 13 says observing the Sabbath will be a sign between God and his people, a way his people are different from others. How could observing a Sabbath point others to God?
17. What benefits are there in having a sign between yourself and God?
18. End your FIFTEEN in thanksgiving for Jesus, who is the one who makes us holy. Celebrate a relationship with a God who gives you ways to remember you are his.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

19. Some know the observation of Sabbath as restriction and deprivation. Read Mark 2:23-28. How does Jesus describe the Sabbath?
20. Read Exodus 20:8-11 again. Does the command appear to be a burden or a gift?
21. Who benefits from the keeping of the Sabbath in these verses? How does this help us with Jesus seeming to “break” the Commandment?
22. While we have seen that Sabbath has more benefits than just rest from labor, ceasing work is commanded. What are benefits associated with a break from work?

23. Since God does not need to sleep or catch a nap after a busy time of creating, what do you think it means when it says in Genesis 2:3, “He rested from all the work”?
24. Scholars understand rest to mean both a ceasing from work and a settling in to enjoy and be part of what was just created. How could this change your observation of Sabbath?
25. End your FIFTEEN with your eyes closed. Reflect on all God has done for you already today. Settle into him and rest. (Set an alarm if you might fall asleep!)

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

26. How hard is it for you to give up time and energy to observe a Sabbath? What factors play into your struggle (or lack of struggle)?
27. Read Exodus 16:1-5; 21-30. How did God provide food for his people? What was different on the Sabbath?
28. How did God demonstrate his trustworthiness in the provision of manna?
29. How does God’s Sabbath command in Exodus 20:8-11 test our trust? How does a chance to display trust benefit us?
30. In what way does your observation of Sabbath display your trust in God?
31. End your FIFTEEN reflecting on your Sabbath-keeping. What would you like to change? Praise God for the benefits he generously gives. Ask for his help to enjoy his Sabbath more deeply.

**Week Six: *The Sacred Meal***  
***Matthew 26:17-30***

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. As we begin this week's FIFTEEN focus on Communion, we need to recognize that this Sacrament is complicated and many have forgotten its deep significance. What is your understanding of the word "Sacrament"?
2. We define a Sacrament as something that is instituted by Jesus, includes a physical element, and is meant for the forgiveness of sins. For example, Baptism is a Sacrament because it was instituted by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20. The physical element of Baptism is the water! In your opinion, why are Sacraments important in our faith journey?
3. Please read Luke 22:19-20. In this Scripture, we read about the first time Christ's disciples experienced The Lord's Supper (Communion). Does anything stand out to you about these verses?
4. Notice how Jesus does not say in Luke 22, "this represents my blood" or "this represents my body." No, Jesus said, "this is my body given for you" and "this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." Jesus desires to be so close to us that he is present even in this Sacrament. How does knowing this change the way you think about Communion?
5. As we finish out our FIFTEEN today, consider praying this prayer, and adding on your own personal prayers as well. Heavenly Father, you are the God of the Universe. You spoke life itself into existence. Yet you value us above anything else in Creation. You loved us so much that you gave your Son to die for us. Thank you for giving us the gift of Communion, so that we may remember and experience the life-giving sacrifice that Jesus has made for us. Help us to consider the depth of meaning in this Sacrament each time we take part in it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

6. In today's FIFTEEN, we are going to focus on the intimacy of Communion. Please start by reading John 6:53-58. Does anything about this passage surprise you or raise questions in your mind?
7. God is omnipresent. That means he is everywhere at all times. Yet in the Old Testament, the Israelites often encountered God's presence in the Temple, which was first built by Solomon. When Jesus came down and was born as a human baby, that was God coming down to dwell among us and with us. God wanted to intimately connect with his people so that we could understand just how present he really is. What does God's desire for intimacy with his people say about his character?
8. Communion is another example of this intimacy. Jesus says that whoever takes it will remain in him, and he will remain in them. He says that he is the bread of life and whoever eats of this bread will live forever. Knowing this, how would you expect the experience of Communion to affect your daily life?
9. Do you remember when we talked about the Old Testament and how God's dwelling place was in the Temple? Do you also remember how we talked about the Gospels, when God dwelt among his people? Well in these days, God has

come even closer. As mentioned before, Jesus lives in those who take part in this Sacrament. We are now God's temple, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16:19-20. How do you feel knowing that you are God's temple?

10. Finish out your FIFTEEN with prayer. Thank God for coming close enough to dwell with his people and that his love for us is so deep that his Holy Spirit dwells not only among us, but in us.

### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

11. For the past two days, we have focused on the wonderful Sacrament God has given us in Communion. We have talked about the love God has displayed through his desire for intimacy with us, which is made evident in the Lord's Supper. So what attitude should we have in approaching this Sacrament?
12. Please read 1 Corinthians 11:23-32. Does anything surprise you about this passage?
13. Reread verse 27. Paul says here that anyone who takes part in The Lord's Supper "in an unworthy manner" is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. What do you believe would be considered "an unworthy manner," and what would be considered a worthy manner?
14. Now reread verse 29. At this point, Paul says that those who don't properly discern the body of Christ while taking part in Communion are eating and drinking judgment on themselves. Yikes! There are two ways we may interpret "discerning the body of Christ." First, one might not be properly recognizing that Jesus' body and blood are literally present in the bread and wine. Second, one might not properly recognize that the people who are also taking Communion with them are all part of the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:27). Why do you think that proper recognition of both of these is so important when taking part in The Lord's Supper?
15. Here's the thing. Yesterday we focused on the intimacy of Communion. God himself came down to dwell among us and in us. He is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. And he loves you dearly. Now that we have a right understanding of what Communion is, it's easy to see how incredible it is to take part in this Sacrament. We want to make sure that we're fully aware of the significance of this experience. Be honest with yourself...what is your normal posture when approaching Communion? Do you intentionally dwell on its significance and your need for this Sacrament? Do you celebrate the love of God shown through Jesus' sacrifice? Do you merely wait impatiently in the line of people to eat the bread and drink the wine so you can go sit down?
16. Communion should be taken penitently. Yet it should also be taken with joy and awe, because God's love for you is so evident in it! Rejoice in his love for you. Throughout your day today, find several times to pray to God, thanking him for the love and grace he has shown to you.

### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

17. In today's FIFTEEN, we will reflect on the nature of Communion as being a part of our fellowship together. Please begin by reading Acts 2:42-46. What sticks out to you about these verses?



18. Now read 1 Corinthians 10:16. Why do you think Paul put so much emphasis on fellowship with other Christians?
19. Being in community with fellow believers is so important to the Christian life. That is why Paul refers to us as the body of Christ. In what ways are you currently in community with fellow believers?
20. One crucial part of the fellowship of the body of Christ is Communion. We do not take part in this Sacrament by ourselves, but together with the body of Christ. Why is it beneficial to take Communion with fellow believers, rather than just taking Communion by ourselves?
21. The very definition of the word “communion” is more than being around others. It is being deeply connected to one or multiple people, especially spiritually. Being in communion with fellow Christians is beneficial to us, and taking Communion with fellow Christians is a true gift. Finish out your FIFTEEN today in prayer.
22. As you end your FIFTEEN, use these words to end your prayer.  
Father, thank you for putting other Christians in my life. Thank you for the way they have helped me in my faith journey. Show me ways to help others in their faith journey as well. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

23. This week, you’ve focused on the meaning of Communion. You have reflected on the intimacy of this Sacrament and how we should approach it. You considered the significance of fellowship with other believers and how this plays out in Communion. Overall, what has God shown you about Communion this week?
24. Read Luke 22:7-16. In this Scripture, we read that Jesus’ institution of Communion and “Last Supper” with his disciples was actually during the time of Passover. Passover is a Jewish feast that is still celebrated today. It is also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jewish families take part in the feast to remember the time when God struck down every firstborn son in the land but “passed over” the houses of those who had listened to God’s warnings and painted over their doors with the blood of an unblemished lamb. The sons of these households were saved. What parallels can you see between Passover and the Lord’s Supper?
25. Like much of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the institution of the Lord’s Supper during Passover is deeply and beautifully intentional. We have been saved from the price of our sin, which is death. It’s safe to say that this is a “meal” on purpose as well. Why do you think God might have chosen to give this Sacrament in the form of a meal?
26. Jewish families celebrate Passover as a remembrance. They reflect on the bitterness of their slavery, but also the sweetness of God’s love and grace and the freedom he brought them to. In Luke 22, as Jesus instructs the disciples to take part in Communion, he insists that they do so “in remembrance” of him. As we take part in this Sacrament, we are to reflect on the times that God has shown us his love and grace. Take a moment to reflect on the grace and love that God has shown you personally.
27. As you finish out your FIFTEEN this week, pray to God. Thank him for the unexplainable and deeply meaningful gift

of Communion. Pray that you would continue to remember its significance as you partake in the Sacrament. Lastly, ask God to continue to live in you and work through you as you spend time in fellowship with other believers and reach those who do not yet know him.