

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. 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.