

THE BLESSED LIFE
Week 4: The Principle of First
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



RECAP

In the fourth sermon of this series on money and giving, Josh discusses the Principle of the Test and looks at Matthew 23:23 and Malachi 3:6-12 to discuss the biblical basis behind giving and how to go to the next level in our giving.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Last week's homework was to brainstorm some specific ways to put God first in your relationship with God, marriage, parenting/family and career. Discuss with your group how you did with your homework this past week?
2. Josh started his talk with discussing a common nightmare among students: walking into class and realizing that there was a test that day that you didn't study for. Did that ever happen to you? What was the worst experience you had with a test or something you didn't prepare for at school?
3. Josh introduced the Principle of the Test: *Every time you get paid, you take a test*. The test builds off of the idea of the tithe, that what you do with the first portion of your income constitutes an act of worship. Leaving God and the church out of it for a moment, where does the first portion of your income typically go to?
4. Read Malachi 3:10-12 together. For those in the group who have tithed before on a consistent basis, talk about how promise of provision (v. 10) and protection (v. 11) have come true in your life.
5. Josh spent time talking about online, automatic giving as a secret that has helped him nail the Principle of the Test every time. From your paycheck, what deductions are made automatically without your input (we automate what's important)? What regular bills have you opted to pay for every month through online automatic billing? What are most common reasons why people don't do the same thing with tithing?

NEXT STEP

Josh listed five different categories of giving: Taking, Tipping, Trusting, Threshold, and Transformational giving. Where are you now and what would constitute the next level for you?

For more information (training and support) on how to start and lead a small group, contact steve.lizzio@cbcva.org

CENTREVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2018
WEEK 4: THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TEST
MATTHEW 23:23, MALACHI 3:6-12

The Principle of the Test: Every time you _____, you take a test.

5 LEVELS OF GIVING

T - _____

T - _____

T - _____

T - _____ giving

T - _____ giving

To start acing the Principle of the Test every time, go to: cbcva.org/give

Bonus Content

- Sunday (This Handout) - 7 Questions Worksheet on Matthew 23:23 and Small Group Questions for this week
- Monday (Blog) - The Principle of the Test: Every Time You Get Paid, You Take a Test
- Tuesday (Blog) - The Amazing Technology That Helped My Giving Go To a New Level
- Thursday (Blog) - The 5 Levels of Givers in Your Church

For bonus content and much more, visit: joshdaffern.com

MATTHEW 23:23

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Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. *Matthew 23:23*

1. WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THE ORIGINAL READERS?

If you start with today you're twenty centuries too late.

In Matthew 23, Jesus is detailing seven woes against the religious leaders of the day. Pulling no punches, he calls the religious leaders hypocrites, stage actors who preach one thing but live something completely different. Of the seven woes, this is the fourth and it deals with tithing. Tithing was an old covenant law (Leviticus 27:30 and Deuteronomy 14:22) established where a tenth of the seed and the fruit of the land was to be dedicated as a tithe (literally 'tithe' means 'tenth') to God.

The problem was that the religious leaders hyper-focused on this one aspect of the Law, being meticulous to the point of tithing even the garden spices, while neglecting the bigger matters in the Law, things like justice, mercy and faithfulness (Micah 6:8). The tithe, like so many other aspects of the Law, wasn't about the Law itself but about the heart. The religious leaders over-leveraged this one aspect of the Law as justification to neglect the overarching call to do justice and care for others in the land.

With Jesus' rebuke, he at once both affirms the principle of the tithe to God and also puts it in its proper context. The tithe to God is not an excuse to neglect the command to love your neighbor as yourself. It's not an either/or but a both/and. Jesus affirmed the need for the tithe, even in the new covenant, as a way not just to honor God but as a way to keep the corrupting power of money from controlling our souls.

GREEK WORD OF THE WEEK

ὑποκριτής (*hupokritēs*) is the word translated "hypocrites," and as you can tell from the phonetical translation (*in parenthesis*), this word is transferred almost directly from the Greek word, robbing us of the original meaning. The literal meaning is one who plays a part on a stage. In ancient Roman culture, a hypocrite was a stage actor, playing a part in front of others. The implied assumption was that this public part was staged and not reflective of the real person. This is essence is what a hypocrite is today in our world.

2. WHAT'S THE CONTEXT? *Scripture without context makes no sense.*

Matthew 23 is the culmination of a multi-year antagonistic relationship Jesus had with the religious rulers of his day. By itself these words seem incredibly harsh, but context will show that Jesus had been building up to this confrontation for some time. Matthew especially highlights the confrontations Jesus had again and again with the religious leaders who took issue with his bucking of tradition and his radical new way of thinking. In essence, Jesus' teaching was extremely dangerous to the status quo and those in religious power, and so the religious leaders reacted accordingly. In Matthew 23, Jesus answers back with seven woes and a painfully clear denunciation of the temple system and its cohorts.

3. WHAT TIMELESS TRUTHS ARE THERE?

Since the Word doesn't change it still matters today.

- God wants us to give a tenth of our income to Him as a sign of honor, trust and worship.
- Tithing is not really about money. Ultimately it's about the heart.
- As important as tithing is, it is never a substitution for the weightier matters of justice, mercy and faithfulness.
- As much as money matters, people matter more.

5. HOW DOES IT APPLY TODAY? *Information without application becomes stagnation.*

- Jesus reaffirmed the importance of the tithe, not because of God's need for our money (it's all already His anyways), but to protect our hearts from the corrupting taint of greed and to increase our trust in God.
- Any religious observance loses its benefits if it is done in a way that causes us to neglect justice, mercy and faithfulness towards other people.
- Tithing done right prepares our hearts and fuels our ministry to other people.

4. WHERE ELSE IN SCRIPTURE DOES IT SAY THIS? *The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture.*

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. *2 Corinthians 9:7*

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. *Acts 4:32*

6. HOW SHOULD THIS CHANGE THE WAY I LIVE IN COMMUNITY? *The Bible comes alive in me when I live it in community.*

- Jesus called the religious leaders of his day 'hypocrites.' Do we still struggle with hypocrisy in the church today? Have you ever experienced it? If you were honest, have you ever been guilty of hypocrisy?
- What has been your history with giving to God? Have you ever trusted God with the tithe? What's been the result? What is keeping you from trusting God with your giving?

7. HOW CAN MY LIFE GET BETTER BECAUSE OF THESE VERSES? *If I trust God and step in faith, what kind of life will God create?*

Imagine how strong your faith will become when you trust God with ten percent of your income and you discover that God is more than faithful to provide for you. Imagine the blessing you'll experience when you discover that 90% of your income blessed by God will go a lot farther than 100% of your income outside of the blessing of God. Imagine how your heart will expand when you give freely and joyfully to God, knowing that you are a humble steward of the resources God has given you. Just think of how that heart, expanded and softened by generosity, will spill over into your interactions with others. Instead of selfishness, your outward life will be characterized by justice, mercy and faithfulness, bringing honor to God and making a tangible impact in your world.