

**Intro:**

What are you anxious about when it comes to money?

Our talk today is going to be about money, and what we are going to discover is money has a lot to do with spirituality.

A couple of disclaimers:

- If you've been here for a while, you know this is probably our once every half year talk on money. I think it's important that we have these regular talks to remind us of some of the crucial topic.  
If you are newer here:
- We are not here to pressure you into giving. In fact, we don't even pass around stuff here- we trust that if you call ethnos your home, you will take it upon yourself to give.
- We are not here to make money or play games.  
Some of us have seen this, where pastors have crazy incomes from church giving, and there's a whole manipulative strategy behind it.
- We will challenge you to give.

Read Text: Mal 3:6-12

Two main points to organize our talk under. The first is this.

**The bigger picture: God forgives and invites us to return to a relationship despite our wayward ways.**

Why this is important:

This is not about God who is getting anal about ticky tack things, but a God who longs for relationship. This is key for us to understand, especially if we have not entered into a relationship with God.

**One of the main ways of returning to God is through what we do with our money.**

Four subpoints:

*1. Money and Spirituality are deeply connected*

Jesus teaching: Matt 6:19-21, 24.

At root: what we treasure, find gratification in, is what our God is. So if it's money and the lifestyle of wealth, then that is truly our God.

*2. Giving generously is a way to return to God.*

We see this in Malachi. We see this in places like The Rich Young Ruler and the story of Zaccheus.

But what are we to give, and where?

The amount: Tithe, additional offerings (v.8)

The cause: Interesting to note that the tithe was for: the functioning of the temple, celebration meal for the family that gave, for the needy.

Our day:

The cause: the same- taking care of the church community including its mission, celebrating the life of the family, the needy.

Let me just note: our trip to West Africa- if we get 10 people going- we will need some big things.

The amount: The exhortation is generous and sacrificial giving. Tithing is a good bottom ground.

But how do we give joyfully? Two more truths to consider...

*3. Our return: blessing we can't even imagine.*

Malachi's context: blessing based off the covenant. Deut. 28:9-12

Our context: blessing in both material and other types.

Matt 6:19-21, 24

Let me clarify this, because there is a widespread notion in certain Christian circles that we are guaranteed physical wealth from God if we give. I think this is simply not true- we may get it from God, but it is not a guarantee.

a. It could be material blessing, but it is not a guarantee. Note in the following passages that the treasures we accrue are specifically ones in heaven where physical elements do not destroy.

Matt 6:19-21, 24

Luke 12:32-34

Physical provision can be a part (Matt 6:30, Luke 12:30)

b. In fact, giving to get material things can go awry because of greed.

Heb. 13:5, 1 Tim 6:10

c. The Bible's mindset is that we get in order to give. In fact, it even points to giving up (ie- contentment) in order to give.

2 Cor. 9:10, Eph 4:28, Heb 13:5

The point is this: God will bless us beyond our ability to take in if we will give. And this can bring us to a place of giving joyfully. And this is not just for the rich! This is for us all, even in our poverty.

2 Cor 8:1-2

*4. There is a need to beware of being legalistic, and also of making excuses*

Excuses:

"whole tithe"

"I bought dinner for church people that day, for my community group."

"The bills are too tight."

"I really need this."

"When I get a raise."

"This is just for the extremely spiritual."

\*\*Look at sheet\*\*

Legalism:

Can I not have a TV? How many pairs of new shoes? Used or new?

We have to constantly let the Scriptures sharpen us. And if we, at the end of the day find that we are actually not giving generously or sacrificially, then something else has got to go. Our spirituality is at stake, remember, the well-being of our soul and relationship with God.

Dennis Bakke's Story...

Tax return story...

Q and A?

**Challenge:**

- What do you treasure more- God or money?

- Will you take the challenge to give generously, sacrificially?

**Communion**