

Serving through giving

Does anyone in the group have testimony they're prepared to share of God providing for their needs miraculously, of blessing that's come to them through being obedient to God's calling to give: or of God turning round their circumstances when they've finally decided to follow God's calling to give?

There are around 2,350 references to money in Scripture (twice as many as on faith and prayer combined!). Why do you think this might be?

Read Malachi 3: 6-12

Is tithing just for the Old Testament; did Jesus sweep it away?

(Talk this through first but, if you need them, here a couple of pointers that might help in this discussion:

- i. Matthew 23:23 - Jesus admonishes the teachers of the law and Pharisees for tithing their herbs but neglecting justice, mercy and faithfulness: he tells them they need to practise those things without neglecting to tithe;
- ii. In Luke 7, Jesus has been invited to eat with a Pharisee, who would not, under the law, be permitted to eat with someone who didn't tithe. So it seems Jesus must have practised tithing;
- iii. Nowhere does it say we need no longer tithe: and the necessity to support the work of the church has not diminished.)

What does the word 'tithe' mean? How does it apply to our lives?

What is God saying when he says 'test me in this?' Are we prepared to test him?

Taking *the whole* of Malachi 3:6-12 - is this passage preaching law or grace? How does God turn our economy upside down?

The effect of tithing on the work of the church is obvious. But is the benefit all one way? What benefit comes to the giver?

Christmas is coming, the retailers are getting fat... What is the reality of tithing and having a good Christmas? It may seem to some that tithing places an unrealistic expectation on us. In our society, which places the greater unrealistic expectation on us: Christmas or tithing?

What do you think Jesus might want us to do to celebrate his birthday?

As a church we don't preach 'prosperity theology': tithing is not a handy 'get-rich-quick scheme'! But do you believe that God will provide your needs if you give generously? Do you think the widow who gave her two copper coins was left with nothing, though she'd given everything? It is often said that if you try to hang on to the 10% Satan will take it anyway: what do you think of this?

It's also sometimes said 'the church is just after your money'; is that what tithing's about? What about giving to the poor and other good causes?

Finally: we're not beating people with a big stick (and fear not, we won't be checking up who's tithing and who isn't!). **Giving is our heart response to God, recognising His goodness to us and our dependence on Him.** God wants us to give freely and cheerfully, from our own open hearts, actually finding it a real blessing: not because someone says we must. Pray that God will increase our faith individually and will bless the work of the church with good resource.