



Group Guide: Week 2

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

There are four crucial components for a group to maintain its health: Word, prayer, relationships, and reaching out. In this guide, you will study Malachi 3:6-12 in three steps: observation, interpretation, and application. As the group leader, you are free to use any part of this guide that can assist you in achieving this goal.

CONNECT *BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING*

- Some of us are spenders and some are savers. Which are you?
- When you think about tithing, what comes to mind? Why?

INTRODUCTION

This week, we continue our theme of Moneyology. In this passage, we are introduced to the concept of tithing. Tithing literally means “tenth-ing,” and it describes how Christians are to return to God the first tenth of what He has given them. The big idea this week is this: When we close our hands around God’s tithe, we close our lives to God’s purposes. When we open our hands with God’s tithe, we open our lives to God’s blessing. Remember: God doesn’t need our money, but we desperately need God’s blessing.

OBSERVATIONS & INTERPRETATION

SCRIPTURE: Malachi 3:6-12

- What is the nature of Malachi’s complaint against the people of Israel? What have they failed to do? Why is this important?
- One important matter about tithing to remember is that it is a principle before the giving of the law. Read Genesis 4:2-5. According to the principle of “first and best,” why was Abel’s sacrifice accepted and not Cain’s?

- What are some of the promises that God makes in this passage? What unusual command does God give through Malachi?
- What would be the result if Israel brought the tithe into the storehouse?

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 12:12-13 (The Principle of the Firstborn)

- Tithing was also commanded in the law. Sixteen times, Scripture says that the firstborn is His! Read Exodus 13:12-13. According to OT law, the firstborn must either be sacrificed or redeemed. There was no third option. The clean firstborn had to be sacrificed, and the unclean firstborn had to be redeemed. "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine." (Exodus 13:2). "The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God." (Ex 23:19, c.f, 34:26)
- Notice that the Scripture designates "the house of the Lord" as the proper place to give firstfruits. What does this mean for where the tithe should be directed?

JESUS: The Meaning of Tithing

Here are some important matters to remember about Jesus and tithing:

- Jesus tithed - He fulfilled the law, which means he definitely tithed.
- Jesus TAUGHT the tithe - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others." (Matthew 23:23)
 - Jesus did not denounce tithing, even scrupulous tithing.
 - He did denounce using tithing as a way of evading "the weightier matters of the law," which demand real sacrifice. Indeed, the Lord says that tithing, even in small matters, is something not to be neglected.
- Yet, Jesus was robbed. - They took his last earthly belonging, his robe. Though he had perfectly obeyed his entire life.
- Jesus died a thief's death. - He took the covenant curse for robbing God upon himself so that God might forgive us of that sin.
 - Jesus was God's firstborn (Col. 1:15) Jesus was clean—perfect and unblemished in every way. On the other hand, every one of us was born unclean. We were all born sinners with a fully active sin nature.
 - Parallel: Jesus Christ was God's firstborn Son, and He was born clean. He was born a pure, spotless lamb. But every one of us was born unclean; therefore, Jesus was sacrificed to redeem us. When He redeemed us by His sacrifice, He bought us back for God. He was literally a first-fruits offering. In a very real sense, Jesus was God's tithe.
- Jesus became, in a manner of speaking, God's tithe... That is, he was firstborn son, sacrificed for our redemption. (Rom 5:8, 8:29)

APPLICATION WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

- What is God teaching you in this lesson? How are you called to think differently about tithing?
- Are you tithing? Why or why not? What would need to change in your life for you to obey this command?

PRAYER

Spend time praising Jesus for being our ultimate provision.

Spend time asking God to give you the strength to trust him more everyday.