

First Fruits

The Bible has quite a bit to say about the topic of first

- Some Bible teachers say there is a principal of “firsts”
- Putting God first in everything in our lives whether our time, talents or possessions is very important

Starting with our money and giving what we do with the “first fruits” affects every aspect of our lives

If you want to have a *God Blessed Life* you must put *God First*

- There are more than 500 verses in the Bible concerning prayer
- Nearly 500 concerning faith
- More than 2000 concerning money and possessions
- Jesus talked about money in 16 of His 38 parables
- Money is a test from God
- How you handle money reveals volumes about your priorities, loyalties and affection

Exodus 23:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.

- The first of your first fruits
- Give it before you pay the bills
- It requires faith to give first
- The tithe comes to the house of the Lord
- The place where a community of believer’s worship together

Malachi 3:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ **In tithes and offerings.** ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, *even* this whole nation.

- Did God Change?

Malachi 3:6 (NKJV)

⁶ “For I *am* the LORD, I do not change;

Life, Not Law

- Tithing is a principle that runs throughout scripture
- Before, during and after the law

What most Christians fail to understand is the tithing is a test

Matthew 6:21 (NKJV)

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The text doesn’t say “*where you heart is your treasure will be*”

- **Your heart follows your treasure**
- The tithe is a test for every Christian
- Where your tithe goes, your heart will follow
- In fact, the tithe will cause you to be more heaven minded
- 80-20 principal

The word “*tithe*” literally means “*tenth*” or “*tenth part*”

The number ten in the Bible represents *testing*

Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

Malachi 3:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the LORD of hosts;

- When we obey, God rebukes the devourer on our behalf

Some may say that because I’m under grace I don’t have to give a tithe

Matthew 5:17–20 (NKJV)

¹⁷ “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Principle of Multiplication

Ever wish you could multiply your money?

- The wonderful news is God can do it
- He multiplied the oil and flour for a widow
- He multiplied the strength of the outnumbered Israeli army time and time again
- He multiplied the fishes and the loaves
- God is the master of multiplication
- 100% will get A-B – 90% will get B-C

Luke 9:12–17 (NLT)

¹² Late in the afternoon the twelve disciples came to him and said, “Send the crowds away to the nearby villages and farms, so they can find food and lodging for the night. There is nothing to eat here in this remote place.” ¹³ But Jesus said, “You feed them.” “But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered. “Or are you expecting us to go and buy enough food for this whole crowd?” ¹⁴ For there were about 5,000 men there. Jesus replied, “Tell them to sit down in groups of about fifty each.” ¹⁵ So the people all sat down. ¹⁶ Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread and fish to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people. ¹⁷ They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers!

Put yourself in the disciple's position

- You have left your families and businesses to follow the Messiah
- You are still trying to figure out for yourself if that's true
- You are traveling around with Him on a nationwide speaking tour

One day an enormous crowd gathers

- You are excited because it's the most people you have ever seen attend one of these speaking engagements
- 5,000 men plus women and children
- More like 15,000 to 20,000 total in attendance

He preaches all morning and you expect Him to finish about noon

- Yet, He keeps right on preaching
- 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00, 5:00
- You begin hearing that the people are hungry
- You're pretty hungry yourself

So, you go to Jesus and tell Him, *"Sir, the people are getting hungry, umm maybe we should think about dismissing?"*

- He says, *"You feed them."* And keeps on preaching

You go back to the committee and tell them what He said

- You start to fan out to see how much food you can scrounge up
- 30 minutes later you take an inventory

You report back to Jesus

- *“We have two fish sticks, five hushpuppies, and a Long John Silver’s kid’s meal, complete with a Sponge Bob SquarePants action figure”*
- He says, *“Great have them sit down in groups of fifty”*
- Jesus takes the meal, looks toward heaven and blesses it

After Jesus blesses the food, He begins breaking it in half and handing it to the disciple’s

- Peter, and the others would have walked away with that half piece in hand and obediently, broke it in half the same way they saw the Master do
- And again, and again, and again

Key: The miracle didn’t happen in the Master’s hands it happened in the disciple’s hands

- When they were finished, there were 12 baskets left over

Principle: something must be blessed before it can be multiplied

Romans 11:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches.

- We must give what we have, our first fruits, to Jesus
- Only then does it have the ability to be multiplied
- Jesus, the one who receives our tithes, is the only one who has the power to bless it so it can multiply

Principle: Only what is given away can multiply

If the disciples would have eaten what they were given it would not have multiplied

- They had to give it away so it could multiply
- Many who tithe give nothing above the tithe
- When we *Tithe*, and give *Offerings* God multiplies what we have sown
- The tithe goes to Jesus
- You can't give what truly doesn't belong to you
- When we choose to give out of the 90 % God multiplies what we have given

Remember the “wicked” servant in **Matthew 25:25**

- He returned what belonged to his master
- The others had theirs multiply and they received even more

The tithe is a place to start because it removes the curse

Offerings is the place where multiplication comes

- Tithes and offerings remove the curse
- Tithes and offerings bring the blessings
- Tithes and offerings rebuke the devourer

Principal: We give to the Lord first so that our finances are blessed

Principle: We give over and above our tithes because only that which is shared can be multiplied

Breaking the Spirit of Mammon

Matthew 6:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

- “Mammon” is an Aramaic word that essentially means “riches”
- The Assyrians got the concept of a god of wealth from the Babylonians
- Babylon was a city founded on pride and arrogance
- At its heart, it is an attitude that is self sufficient
- A heart that doesn’t need God
- A heart that trusts in riches

All money has a spirit on it

- Either the Spirit of God or the spirit of mammon
- There is no half and half
- It’s one or the other

Money that is submitted to God and His purposes has the Spirit of God on it

- Which is why it multiplies and cannot be consumed by the devourer
- Money that is submitted to God and devoted to serving Him rather than trying to replace Him – is blessed by God
- God’s Spirit blesses it

Money that is not submitted to God has the spirit of mammon on it by default

- That is why people often try to control and manipulate through money
- Its why people think riches and wealth can produce happiness or fulfillment
- Mammon is basically the spirit of the world and that spirit is a liar

Mammon promises us those things that only God can truly give

- Security, significance, identity, independence, power, and freedom
- Money tells us it can insulate us from life's problems
- Money tells us it is the answer to all of life's problems

Mammon is nothing more than this worlds system that stands in sharp opposition to God and His ways

- Mammon says, Cheat and steal
 - God says, give and receive
- Mammon says take
 - God says give
- Mammon is selfish
 - God is generous

The Antichrist will try to get people to submit to him through the use of economics – **Revelation 13:17**

The spirit of mammon stands in direct opposition of the Spirit of God

1 Timothy 6:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

- Money and mammon are not synonymous
- Money is not inherently evil
- The “love” of money is evil
- It will try to make you serve it
- Who you serve (obey) becomes your master – **Romans 6:16**

Mammon is a spirit and, as such it will talk to you:

- *“if you had the right credit cards, the right clothes and the right car, and you lived in the right neighborhood and know the right people, you’ll be happy and fulfilled”*
- *“if you had more money people would listen to you, your relationship problems would go away, and life would be so sweet”*
- *“you could do what you want, go where you want, and live the way you want”*

It can also be religious:

- *“if you just had more money then you could really start to help people”*
- *“you either need God to work a miracle right now or you need more money”*

Money is never the answer – God is

Money cannot fix problems – only God can

True Riches

Luke 16:9–13 (NKJV)

⁹ “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, (*earthly possessions are gone – NLT*) they may receive you into an everlasting home. ¹⁰ He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much. ¹¹ Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own? ¹³ “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

- Money is not unrighteous mammon is
- Money can be used for either good or evil purposes
- It can be used for either temporal or eternal purposes
- What is eternal in our lives? – PEOPLE!

The only lasting thing we will ever encounter in this life is people

- We should be using money to affect people
- To help them hear the Gospel
- Notice Jesus says, *they* will welcome you not money
- *Friends* not money will receive you into your everlasting home
- I want my money to be used in helping people, loving people, feeding people, and caring for people

Matthew 6:19–21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- Just as Jesus turned water into wine He can turn your money into souls
- He is the only one that can transform unrighteous mammon into true riches
- It doesn't matter how much we have or don't have
- If we belong to God then our money is His, not ours
- He that is faithful with little – **Luke 16:10**
- Where your treasure is, your heart will be

How can I know where my heart is?

- Am I looking to God or money to meet my needs?
- Do I get angry or resentful when people don't help me the way I want them to?
- Do I look to my job or boss or investments as my source?
- Do I blame others for my circumstances?
- Do I compare my life with others?

Deuteronomy 8:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ “And you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.