

**BEGIN WITH THE TITHE**  
**BY ANDY MANNING**  
**BUILD TO EQUIP – WEEK THREE**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Our vision at Church Acadiana is to reach the lost and equip them to disciple their kids. I hope to see our church grow to five hundred people in worship on Sundays – families worshipping together. I hope to see hundreds of men gathering each month to learn how to be better spiritual leaders in their homes. I hope to see dozens of Home Groups scattered throughout Acadiana – people doing fellowship, Bible study, and prayer together. I hope to see hundreds of students committed to memorizing Scripture and learning how to navigate their Bibles with confidence.
2. The next step for us as a church is to build our first facility. We paid cash for some property in Youngsville, the fastest growing city in the state. All around our property there are new neighborhoods under construction, and no churches anywhere around. Our architect has designed for us a 7,000 square foot building that can hold close to three hundred people. It's a multi-purpose facility that will serve as both a worship auditorium and a fellowship hall. According to the architect, the building will cost \$1,000,000. After we take out a loan and receive some help from the Mission Builders, our church will need to raise \$350,000.
3. To raise that money, we are going to have to give over and above our normal tithes and offerings. Way above. It's going to take crazy generosity. Strong faith.
4. At the end of this sermon series we're going to have a Commitment Day. We're going to ask you to make a pledge – to commit to giving whatever God is calling you to give for the next two years. That might be 50% more than your normal tithe; it might be 100% more. For Lydia and I, we're going to double our tithe for the next twenty-four months, and on top of that we're going to take \$25,000 out of our housing fund and give that as well. That's the kind of generosity this is going to take.
5. To help us get ready for this kind of generosity, we are doing a sermon series called "The Generosity Ladder." A ladder helps you

get to a higher level. This sermon series is designed to help you get to a higher level of giving.

6. Take a look at the picture. Notice that at the bottom of the ladder is a stingy person. Nobody wants to be this person because they live in a place of financial stress and curse. At the top of the ladder is where God wants us – generous. And that’s where we want to be too. We all want to be known as generous, not stingy. And we all want the benefits of generosity – financial peace and blessing.
7. The generosity ladder shows you the steps you have to take to move from stingy to generous.
8. The first step is to see God as a giver. Everything good in our lives is a gift from God. God is generous, and He wants us to be like Him.
9. The second step is to see yourself as a steward. A steward is simply a manager. You need to see that God owns it all, and you are simply God’s money manager. Your job is to use your money to advance God’s kingdom.
10. Today we’re going to look at the third step on the generosity ladder, “Start With the Tithe.”
11. Turn with me to Malachi 3:8-12.

## II. **TEXT: Malachi 3:8-12**

1. 8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me!”
2. “How do we rob you?” you ask. “By not making the payments of the tenth and the contributions. 9 You are suffering under a curse, yet you—the whole nation—are still robbing me.
3. 10 Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,” says the LORD of Armies. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure. 11 I will rebuke the devourer, for you, so that it will not ruin the produce of your land and your vine in your field will not fail to produce fruit,” says the LORD of Armies. 12 “Then all the nations will consider you fortunate, for you will be a delightful land,” says the LORD of Armies.

## III. **CONTEXT**

1. Malachi was written after the exile. The Jews were disobedient to God for hundreds of years, so after countless warnings the Lord finally punished them by sending the Babylonians to destroy them, and to take thousands of them away to live in Babylon. After seventy

years, God allowed them to gradually migrate back to Israel. In 516 BC they rebuilt the temple. In 458 BC Ezra the priest led them to a period of revival. Fourteen years later, in 444 BC, Nehemiah led the people to build the wall around Jerusalem. But after Nehemiah left and went back to Persia, the Jews fell into a period of moral and spiritual decline. Tithes were being ignored. The Sabbath was broken. They were intermarrying with foreigners. The priests were corrupt. So God sent the prophet Malachi to wake them up and lead them back to the Lord.

2. As I said, one of the problems with the Jews is that they had stopped tithing. So Malachi addresses it. Let's look at three truths about the tithe.

#### **IV. THREE TRUTHS ABOUT THE TITHE**

##### **1. If we are not tithing, we are robbing God.**

- i. Being robbed is one of the worst feelings.
  1. When I was a kid, we lived on the north side of Lafayette, and things got stolen all the time. One Christmas my parents bought me a new BMX bike. It had hand brakes, and pegs on the wheels so I could do tricks. I was probably in the fourth grade. It only took a few weeks before it was stolen.
  2. When I was in high school I played on the basketball team for Comeaux. For Christmas my parents bought me a Sony Discman. I took it with me to an away game, and during the game I left it on the bus. When I got back to the bus after the game, it was gone. It hurt me so deeply to think that one of my own teammates had stolen from me.
- ii. But here's what the Bible says. If we are not tithing, we are robbing God. We are stealing from God. We are ripping God off.
- iii. Many Christians don't tithe simply because they are uninformed. They haven't been taught. They haven't been instructed. They haven't been disciplined. But this is what the Bible says. When you fail to tithe, you are robbing God of what belongs to Him.

- iv. If you fear God, then you don't want to upset Him. You don't want to offend Him. You don't want to anger Him. But even more so, if you love God, then you want to please Him. You definitely don't want to do anything that hurts Him. But tithing hurts God. It is stealing from God.
- v. **Malachi 3:10** "Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house."
- vi. Notice that tithing is a command. That means if you don't tithe, then you are being disobedient.
- vii. What is a tithe? The word tithe means a tenth. You can't tithe five percent, or eight percent. A tithe is giving the first ten percent of your gross income (before taxes) to God.
- viii. Tithing is not dependent on income. God didn't say tithe if you make a lot of money; if you are rich; if you are upper class. Whether you are rich or poor, young or old, retired or working, you should tithe. My parents started tithing when they were newly married. Now they are retired and they still tithe. My younger children don't have a steady income, but whenever they earn a little money, they tithe. God isn't looking at the amount. He's looking at the percentage.
- ix. Tithing should be the first check that you write. **Proverbs 3:9-10** "9 Honor the LORD with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest; 10 then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine." Notice the word "first produce." In other words, tithing should be the first check you write when you get paid. You don't pay all your other bills and then give God the leftovers; pay God first, and He will bless the rest.
- x. Where do you give the tithe? Notice it says "the storehouse." The storehouse was the temple, the place of worship. Today, the storehouse is the local church – the church where you belong.
- xi. There are two kinds of donations. There are tithes and offerings. The tithe, the first ten percent, goes to your local church. An offering is anything above and beyond the tithe. An offering can be given to other organizations or individuals, but the tithe must go to the local church where you worship.

- xii. The title of this sermon is “Start With the Tithe.” Why did I call it that? The goal is to become generous, but generosity doesn’t even start until after you’ve tithed.
- xiii. There are three types givers:
  - 1. The thieves – giving less than ten percent. Some of you may be giving, but you’re not giving a tithe. I’m glad you are giving something, but you need to know that you are robbing God. You are living in sin. Your goal needs to be to become a tither.
  - 2. The obedient – giving ten percent. Some of you are tithing, and that’s good, but that’s not the ultimate goal. You’re just doing the bare minimum. You’re just doing what you’re expected to do. Your goal needs to be to be generous.
  - 3. The generous – giving more than ten percent. That’s our goal. That’s the top of the generosity ladder. But to get to this point, you have to start with the tithe.
- xiv. Ed Young Jr. tells a story of taking his daughter to high school football game. His daughter asked him for some money to buy some Skittles. She went to the concession stand and bought them, and when she came back Ed said, “Can I have some of your Skittles.” She said, “No, they’re for me.” Ed goes on to say that there were three things that didn’t seem to realize.
  - 1. He bought the Skittles. In reality, they belong to him.
  - 2. If he wanted to, he could buy her more Skittles than she could ever imagine.
  - 3. If he wanted to, he was strong enough to physically take her Skittles away and not give her any.
- xv. It’s like that with God, isn’t it? He gives each of us some Skittles, and then He says, “Can I have some of your Skittles?” He just asks for ten percent of our income. And many of us say, “No, it’s all for me.” But don’t forget.
  - 1. All your money comes from God and belongs to Him.
  - 2. If He wants to, He can give you more money than you can possibly imagine.
  - 3. If He wants to, He can take all of your money away from you and leave you with nothing.

xvi. Don't rob God.

**2. Those who are not tithing are not being fully blessed by God.**

- i. Not tithing is a sin. And when you disobey God, you can expect consequences.
- ii. **Malachi 3:9** "You are suffering under a curse, yet you—the whole nation—are still robbing me."
- iii. Because they were neglecting the tithe, they were under a curse. They were experiencing the wrath of God. They were missing out on God's blessings.
- iv. When you don't tithe, God will discipline you. What might this look like?
  1. Going to bed every night worried about money.
  2. Arguing with your spouse over money.
  3. Living in fear of losing everything.
  4. Not being able to get a promotion.
  5. Getting laid off.
  6. Struggling in school.
- v. On the flip side, notice God's promise for those who do tithe.
- vi. **Malachi 3:10-12** "10 See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure. 11 I will rebuke the devourer, for you, so that it will not ruin the produce of your land and your vine in your field will not fail to produce fruit," says the LORD of Armies. 12 "Then all the nations will consider you fortunate, for you will be a delightful land," says the LORD of Armies.
- vii. A Three-fold Blessing:
  1. "a blessing without measure." God will enormously increase your finances.
  2. "I will rebuke the devourer for you." God will protect your finances from bad times.
  3. "all the nations will consider you fortunate." God will use your prosperity to draw unbelievers to Christ.
- viii. God is looking to bless someone so that unbelievers will look on and say, "Wow! Christians are blessed!" Tithe if you want to be that person.
- ix. To me, tithing is a no-brainer:
  1. It is a command.

2. If you obey, God will bless your finances.
  3. If you disobey, God will curse your finances.
- x. In other words, you have a choice. You can live on 90% with God's blessing, or 100% with God's curse. Which do you think is better?
  - xi. Sometimes people say, "I can't afford to tithe." There are three answers to that question:
    1. You can't afford to tithe because your finances are cursed. If you would tithe, you would be able to afford to tithe because your finances would be blessed.
    2. You can't afford to tithe because your budget needs to be readjusted. Following Jesus requires faith and sacrifice. It means rearranging your life; and Jesus is worth rearranging your life for. When you first start tithing, you will have to make some changes. You might have to put less into your 401k. You might have to cancel cable TV. You might have to stop eating out as much. When you say you can't afford to tithe, it's like saying I can't afford to be obedient. But you can always afford to be obedient.
    3. You can't afford to not tithe. If you continue to disobey God, you will not only miss out on blessings, but you will fall under a curse. And you can't afford that. Do you really want to miss out on God's blessings? Or do you want God's best?
  - xii. According to one study, 21% of consistent church members don't give anything to their church, and 71% give less than 2 percent. Can you imagine all the blessings that people are missing out on because they aren't tithing? Can you imagine all the blessings the church is missing out on because people aren't tithing?
  - xiii. There's a man in our church who told me his tithing story. When he got married, he was a Christian, but he wasn't a tither. But his wife said, "We have to tithe." So, like any good husband, he obeyed. After three months, his income went up by 33%. God wants to bless you, but you have to be obedient with the tithe.

**3. This is the only place in all of Scripture where God says “test me” in a positive way.**

- i. Throughout the Bible it says to not test God. Jesus even said it when the devil tempted Him in the wilderness. “It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God (Mt 4:7).” But here in Malachi 3 God does something different. He says, “When it comes to tithing, I want you test me. If you have doubts, then just give it a try and see if I’m telling the truth. See if you’re not better off.” Let’s look at it again.
- ii. **Malachi 3:10** “Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,” says the LORD of Armies. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.”
- iii. It’s like God is saying, “I dare you,” but in a positive way.
- iv. In 2017 a couple in our church said they were being faithful in every way but tithing. Under conviction, they decided to start tithing. Within a week or two, the husband got an offer for a promotion at work with better hours, better work, and better pay.
- v. A pastor friend of mine told me this story. He said that one of his members, Jansen, who also happened to be his fishing buddy, refused to tithe. He used to call it “the stupid tithe.” But then the pastor preached a sermon on tithing and said to test God for three months, and if God hasn’t blessed you, then stop. So Jansen agreed to take the tithing challenge just to get his wife off his back. The first week, the trolling motor on his boat went out. The second week, he had a blowout on his truck. Each week, one thing after another. When week 12 came along, he told the pastor, “I’m so glad this is my last week to tithe.” The pastor said, “Every three months there are 13 weeks, not 12.” The next week he came up to the pastor and said, “I’ve got to tell you about the wonderful tithe.” He was a nurse at Brady Hospital in Alexandria, and at that week’s staff meeting they were told that the hospital was giving a ten percent raise to the entire nursing staff. He stood up in the meeting and said, “The reason we’re all getting a raise is because I started tithing, and God said he would pour out a

blessing so great I wouldn't be able to contain it, so it is overflowing to you." So then he asked the pastor, "Do you think it would be okay if I gave more than a tithe? So they started giving more and more of their income to God. Eventually the pastor moved away, but ten years later they ran into each other. Jansen said, giving 20% was so good that we started giving 25%, and then 30%. Now we're retired and give 50% of our income to the Lord. Our net worth keeps increasing every year and we can't explain it other than that God has been faithful."

- vi. I've never met anyone who regretted tithing. I've never met anyone who thinks that tithing is a burden.
- vii. Lydia and I have tithed since day one of our marriage. We tithed when we were poor college students. We tithed when we were poor seminary students. We tithed when we had three babies in diapers. We tithed when we started a brand new church from scratch. No matter our income, we've always tithed, and God has always blessed us beyond our imagination.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

1. And so today, I want to challenge you to start tithing.
2. For many of you, that's the next step on the generosity ladder.
3. Start giving the first ten percent of your gross income to the local church.
4. Put God to the test.
5. Watch Him bless you. And watch Him bless our church.
6. Because ultimately the tithe comes down to this: Is Jesus Lord of your life or not? If He's not Lord of all, then He's not Lord at all.