

This is Who We Are Part 2

We Put God First

Intro: We are continuing a series focused on our core value **We practice gratefulness and generosity in everything we do.** This is all about you walking in God's very best for your life and generosity has always been His plan. **Generosity begins with putting God first with all of my increase.**

Isaiah 32:8 (NLT)

But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity.

GENEROUS: arranging my life around the thrill of being used by God to make a difference.

2 Corinthians 9:10-11 (NLT)

10 For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. 11 Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

"Blessed": Happy, fortunate, to be envied

- This is what God wants for His people
- God's people shouldn't be miserable, grumpy, and stingy
- Living in GOD'S SUPPLY and no longer in SCARECITY
- We are blessed and we are a blessing. This is what we do and who we are because this is who He is.

God's Blessing Rests Where He Is Put First.

Malachi 3:6-12 (NKJV)

⁶ "For I am the Lord, I do not change; Therefore, you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. ⁷ Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?' Do Not Rob God 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. ¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. 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; ¹² "And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts.

- **My ordinances:** principles of ordinary behavior THIS IS WHO WE ARE!

- Malachi is a book about returning to God in our faith, family, and finances!
 - Chapter 1 – Faith; 2- Family; 3 Finances; 4 - God returns to us!
 - Tithing is an ordinance, a principle of ordinary behavior, with God!
 - Giving the first portion is ordinary behavior for redeemed people to thank God!
 - This passage is so simple: If I tithe, I'm under a blessing. If I don't, I'm under a curse

1. IT TEACHES US TO PUT GOD FIRST

Deut. 14:23 TLB

The purpose of tithing is to teach you to always put God first in your lives.

- Tithe (the first and best 10%) percentages are applicable to everyone
- A test: Every pay day, there's a test. Who is our boss? Who will we worship? Testing in Scripture:
 - How many plagues were there in Egypt? 10
 - How many commandments are there? 10
 - How many times did God test Israel in the wilderness? 10
 - How many times were Jacob's wages changed? 10
 - How many days was Daniel tested? 10
 - How many virgins were tested in Matthew 25? 10
 - How many days of testing are mentioned in Revelation? 10
 - How many disciples were there? 12
- It's not LAW, it's LOVE. Abraham tithed. The tree in Eden- Adam tended it but didn't eat it...until later.
- 90% blessed or 100% cursed

Object lesson with 10 dollar bills. The one that leaves my hand first is the tithe.

2. IT BUILDS OUR FAITH

- **Faith Foundation**

Matthew 23:23 (NKJV)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

Object Lesson: Give someone a \$100 before church and ask for it. It's already God's so we bring it instead of giving it.

- Jesus says, "This is very basic faith."
 - We are first BRINGERS then, GIVERS
 - It takes faith to bring God the tithe first. It doesn't take faith to give Him what's left over.
 - Give me your first and best, I'll bless the rest!
- **Faith Investment**

Matthew 6:21 (NKJV) "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

- My Heart Always Goes Where I Put God's Money
- Notice the order. Invest your treasure, and your heart will follow.
- We don't give by feeling, we give by faith (It's a covenant-relational agreement between God and His people.) When we give people an opportunity to give, it's an open door to the blessed life!

3. IT PROVIDES FOR THE WORK OF THE LOCAL CHURCH.

Malachi 3:10 (NKJV) Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.

- The nation is in a recession and Hezekiah reads the law and finds that they were supposed to be tithing
- The King commanded them to contribute support to the priests that they might devote themselves to the Word of God!

2 Chronicles 31:4 (NKJV)

Moreover, He commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the Lord.

- **The storehouse is my local church.**
 - Christ builds His church, and He uses His money in our pockets to build it. Someone is paying for it. Facilities, utilities, staff.
 - Not only this (That there may be food in my house), but that excellent ministry happens.... Making Jesus famous in our homes, communities, and the world. This is what we do! What an honor and privilege.

- **The storehouse/supply/church is His bride**

Illustration: *If I were going away and asked 3 men to be stewards for me and to take care of my wife while I was gone: \$10,000 each. They can keep the other \$9,000. I'm just asking for 10%*

1st man: gives the \$1,000 every month

2nd man: gives \$2,000 every month.

3rd man: \$700 the first month, \$400, the second and nothing the last month!

- I'm learning a lot about their character: how much they value me and my bride
- Tithing might be more personal than you thought. This is His bride we are talking about.
- He's going to bless those who will value what He values.

RESPONSE:

Hebrews 7:8 (NKJV) Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

- At LifeGate, mortal people receive and handle the tithe but in Heaven Jesus Himself receives it! That makes me want to tithe!
- Globally, 5% of people tithe....Put God first. Imagine the impact the body of Christ can have if every Christian tithed?
- God commands it! Jesus was it! That's enough for me. This is what we do, this is who we are! **WE PUT GOD FIRST!! Are you part of the WE?**
- If you are a tither, THANK YOU! If you aren't yet, IT'S TIME!

90 Day Tithing Challenge

LIVE IT:

1. Be a Bringer: Begin the 90 Day Tithe Challenge. This isn't a tool to get something from you. It will help you experience God's best.
2. Be a Giver: Begin giving over and above the tithe. Create room in your budget to invest in what God is doing.