



KINGDOM STEWARDSHIP

SESSION 6: THE PRIORITY

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.”

Matthew 6:33

CONNECT Open your group time by creating an environment in which you begin to develop a community of connection. Get to know one another through sharing prayer requests and experiences that provide members with an opportunity to engage.

CONNECTING IN PRAYER: Begin your time together with prayer and praise.

CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER: Explore common thoughts and worldviews on the Biblical tithe, and how it relates (or doesn't relate) to cultural norms in our contemporary church society. What are some major reasons people resist the concept of tithing?

GROW Watch the DVD for Session 6 now. Use the space below to record your thoughts, key points and questions you would like to remember or discuss.

GROWTH THROUGH UNDERSTANDING: When you honor God first with your finances, He says He will open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much on you that you won't have enough room to put it all. God longs to bless you. But first and foremost, God wants to know that you recognize Him as your source - that you fear Him, delight in Him and have faith in Him. When God sees that He is your source, He will fight for you against your enemies. One of the ways we place God first is through how we handle our resources. A common word for this is “tithe.”

While the tithe was instituted in the Old Testament, the principles of the tithe transcend time. One of the principles is found in Deuteronomy 14:23, “You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.”

Notice that God says fearing Him is a learned trait - so that you may learn to fear the LORD. Just like children have to be taught to save their allowance or they will spend it all, God teaches us to fear Him by honoring Him as Ruler and Owner of all that He's given us. Another principle is found in Deuteronomy 14:25-26 where God instructed the Israelites to throw a thanksgiving party and eat in His presence and "spend the money for whatever your heart desires." There is only one reason why a person throws a party when they are giving away a portion of what they own - it's because they are grateful for the portion that they get to keep. Honoring God through tithes and offerings recognizes His position of authority and as our Provider of all that we spend on ourselves outside of what is given to Him. When we manage our finances this way, it gives us reason to celebrate.

Lastly, God says to bring the "whole tithe" into the storehouse. He is referring to the first fruits, the best of what He has given us. Now I can hear some of your objections already. You're saying, "But didn't the practice of the tithe stop when Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament law?" That's a fair question; however, the tithe was first mentioned in Genesis 14, before the law, with regard to Abraham showing gratitude to a priest named Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). Hebrews tells us that Jesus came as the high priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," (Hebrews 7:11) and also references the continuation of the tithe in Hebrews 7:8. While the law has been fulfilled, both the principles behind and the Priest over the tithe have continued.

The greatest truth you can learn regarding your finances is that God is your source. Everything else is a resource. Never treat the resource like it is the source because then the resource will control you. Not only that, the resource will get the honor, time and attention that should be going to God. God says when you honor Him with your finances, He will then do things for you that you could never do for yourself. God will turn things around that you didn't know could be turned around (Malachi 3:7-12).

NOTES

GROWTH THROUGH DISCUSSION: As you dive into the heart of Dr. Evans' teaching, use the following questions to generate discussion among your group.

1. Describe a time in your life when God "opened the floodgates of heaven" on you. How did that make you feel toward Him? If you have not experience this, what does "open the floodgates of heaven" mean to you? What might you to do to bring about such blessings?
 2. In Deuteronomy, we come across God instructing His people to eat of their tithe in a celebratory manner at a place designated to bring Him worship. Name a celebration that is used to worship God in our culture today and how we might be more intentional in our celebration with honoring God for His provision.
 3. In the teaching portion of our lesson, what is our heart and mindset toward God when we honor Him with our tithes and offerings?
 4. What is the difference between first fruits and all other things in our non-agrarian society? How can we identify first fruits of our resources (time, talents and treasures) to give God? Do you give God first fruits or left overs or a mixture of both?
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SERVE Now is the time to apply the wisdom of what you have learned to your life, as you express the depth of your relationship with God through service to Him and others.

SERVING GOD: God is your Source. Acknowledge that truth tangibly this week through choosing to give God something of value to you. It doesn't have to be money, but let it be symbolic of identifying His ownership over all.

SERVING OTHERS: When Abraham gave the tithe to Melchizedek, Melchizedek had come with a blessing and some food. The sharing of food was frequently done in Biblical times as a form of blessing and bonding. This month, seek an opportunity to bless someone with a meal. Invite the person over for a home-cooked meal or bring a home-cooked meal to their home or go out to a restaurant.

DAY ONE

MEDITATE:
1 Corinthians 16:2

MOVE: Paul instructs the Corinthians to set aside money on the first day of the week, which is the designated day for the Body of Christ to come together. Paul didn't set an amount but left it up to each individual to give in accordance with their level of wealth. We don't know from the verse if the church held the funds or each individual put aside the money until the time of giving. One way to encourage your personal giving is to set aside a personal place (a drawer, an envelope or special account) to keep the funds until it's time to give. This is a tangible and visual way to encourage you in your personal giving.

DAY THREE

MEDITATE:
Deuteronomy 14:23

MOVE: The law of the tithe or tenth was another way of reminding the Israelites that everything they had came from the gracious hand of God. They were to bring their tithes from their crops and livestock to the central sanctuary and eat part of it in a collective meal as they rejoiced in thanksgiving before the Lord. The part of the tithe that was not eaten was set aside to provide for the needs of the Levites. Every third year, the entire tithe was stored away for the Levite, the resident alien, the fatherless and the widow (also see chapter 14:23-29). Spend some time writing down how the contemporary church uses tithes and offerings to help or support the work of the ministry both locally and abroad.



DAILY STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLE:

Live out God's Kingdom principles here on earth by putting feet to your faith. Over the next 5 days, use the Daily Stewardship Principle to help you meditate on God's word.

DAY FOUR

MEDITATE: Hebrews 7:8

MOVE: Melchizedek was the king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. Now notice that Abraham did not tithe to get a blessing. Instead he tithed from a heart of thanksgiving for the blessing he received. Because Jesus is the Great High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, it is appropriate for today's church to receive tithes - the first fruits of what we receive from God. What is more, the priesthood of Christ is superior because, though the Levitical priests died, Scripture testifies that Melchizedek lives. And wherever in Scripture Melchizedek is spoken of, it is a prototype of Jesus Christ, who is all of these things and so much more. Jesus Christ, both king and priest forever, has the spiritual authority and responsibility to dispense blessings. Therefore, ask Him to identify the portion of your resources from Him that He wants you to give back to Him in a manner He chooses.

DAY TWO

MEDITATE: Proverbs 3:9-10

MOVE: One of the ways God calls you to trust Him with all your heart and think about Him in all your ways is to honor the LORD with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest. Giving to the work of the Lord and honoring Him with how you spend your money is crucial because it's a tangible expression of your faith. It demonstrates how much you value Him. We must have an attitude that recognizes God as the source of all we have and as the one who will provide for all our needs. Write down three ways giving to God demonstrates that you trust Him, and describe how you think it makes God feel to know that you trust Him.

DAY FIVE

MEDITATE: Malachi 3:11

MOVE: One of the benefits that comes when you give freely and cheerfully to God is His protection over your resources. Many people choose not to give to God or to give Him their leftovers. Consequently, they start to lose their resources of time, abilities, and treasures through a variety of negative circumstances that either God creates or allows. Since God is the source, He is also the one to protect and preserve what He gives us. Honoring Him through our giving opens the opportunity for Him to bestow greater blessings. Now, think about any area(s) in your life where you are putting your resources into a "bag of holes," consistently losing time, skills or treasures. Ask God for wisdom in how you can repair your "bag of holes" and begin the process of honoring Him with your resources.