

BIBLE STUDY - CONTINUED

The New Testament (in particular 2 Corinthians 9:7) encourages us to be cheerful givers. In Galatians 3:13 we read that because of Jesus' death, we are not under the curse of the law, so the curse of Malachi 3:9 doesn't apply to Christians.

Here are some questions to think and work through.

- Does it matter then how much we give? Isn't £1 given cheerfully better than £10 given grudgingly?
- When it comes to the blessing that comes from giving, God asks us to test him in this (Malachi 3:10). However, to do so, we have to reveal where our treasure is (Matthew 6:21). What would encourage you to take this test?
- Looking at verses 11 and 12, who suffers when we are not giving as God expects?
- Verse 6 reminds us that God is unchanging in his faithfulness towards us. How might this encourage you to think differently about giving or returning to the Lord?

When we consider tithing seriously, many people just think it is not possible, that it cannot be done.

When Apollo 13 ran in to difficulty, it seemed impossible to get it back.

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TA8SXpyg4O4>

This clip ends with the wonderful line "failure is not an option."

Time to think and pray things over:

Giving is a really challenging thing for all of us. However, we have learnt that with God anything is possible. We are also reminded that God's faithfulness and love is unchanging.

What steps might God be asking you to take?

What are the barriers that you need to overcome?

Is there a first step that you need to take?

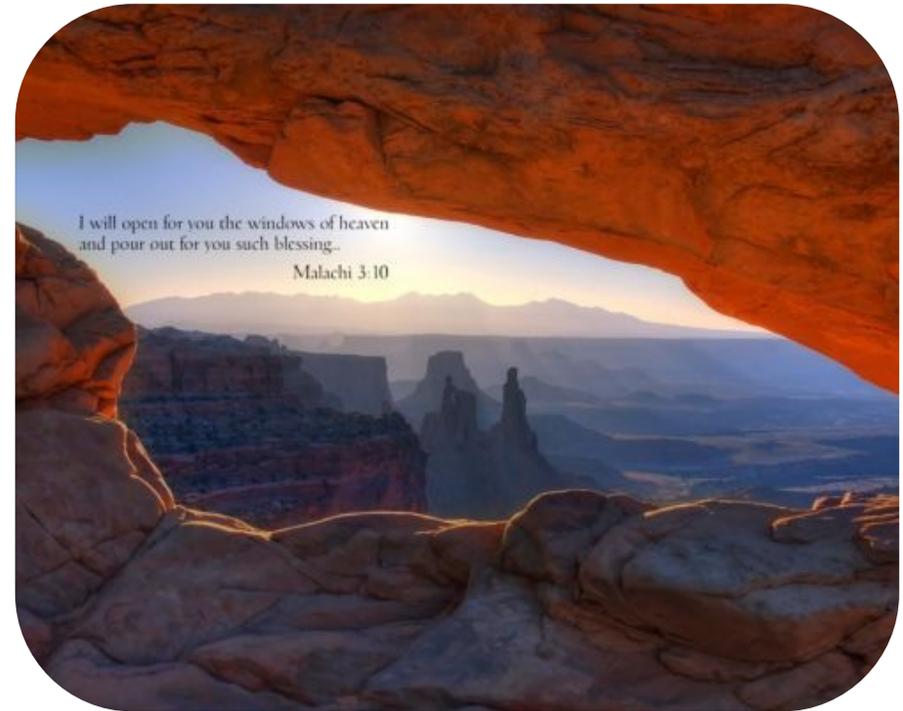
The challenge of tithing in particular is a difficult one. Take some time to pray that God would speak in to your heart, so that you may hear him clearly and be obedient to his Word.

Remember that God's faithfulness towards us is unchanging:

I the Lord do not change (Malachi 3:6)

Resourcing God's Mission

Week 3



Our vision is to be an inviting community, welcoming people to know Jesus Christ, equipping them to live and serve, and sending them to proclaim His love.

I love skiing and used to think I could do it anywhere there was snow. Yet I could never do freestyle. Not sure why? Then check out this clip:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdIskBX7cyw>

It's amazing brave and mad all at the same time!

Some of the lyrics of the song were:

"How long will my heart and reality stay apart?"

What's the bravest thing you think you've done? Is there something you wish you'd done but didn't? What would enable you to do it?

We're going to look at the parable of the rich young ruler.

Read Luke 18:18-30

- ❖ What was the greatest barrier for the young ruler?
- ❖ Does God require everyone to give away all they have? (Recall the story of another wealthy man whom Jesus meets – Zacchaeus)
- ❖ What might be the reason he asks the young man in this Bible passage to do so?
- ❖ Does anything else strike you about this story?

This story causes us to reflect on two things. How much do we value our relationship with God? What are the things in our own lives that might cause a barrier in our relationship with God?

Now Read: Luke 18:15-17

- ❖ Why do you think Luke puts this story before the one about the rich young ruler?
- ❖ With this in mind, does the story of the children suggest something else that may have been a barrier to the rich young ruler?
- ❖ Does the story of the children show a different way of living?

Time to think things over:

Earlier we thought about brave things we had done or wished to do. So far in the study, we've been looking at the challenge the rich young ruler faced. In Luke 18:27 we read "What is impossible with human beings is possible with God."

Could this enable you to be brave when facing the questions of giving, perhaps to engage with this in ways you haven't previously?

This was written at a time that has many echoes with today. God's people continually cried out to him:



Why aren't you doing anything?



Why are we suffering such economic hardship?



Why is the church and its influence in such decline?



Why don't you stop the atrocities going on around us?

The answer they received shocked them. God was not impressed with the attitudes of their hearts, and God was withholding his hand of blessing on his people (the church) and the nations. In particular, he highlights their unwillingness to give to God the proper tithes and offerings (verse 8)



Verse 10 speaks of bringing the entire tithe (10%) to the Temple Storehouse. Do you think God expects the same of us today in bringing 10% to church (for those who are able?)



If the tithe was the 10% for the temple, what do you think the offerings were for? What might the equivalent be today?



Some have argued that in Western Europe today with social security benefits, the tithe for the poor is unnecessary, as we pay it through our taxes. What responsibility then does the church have today in meeting the needs of the poor?



What are the things you think we should do with this tithe?

Malachi 3 makes very challenging reading. The verse that stands out above all others is verse 10. "Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty." God is saying to his people – if you trust me, and give as you should I will be faithful to you, and you will know my blessing.

Of course, the whole idea behind this passage builds on what we have learnt in week 2 – that everything we have comes from, that all that we have is his. This explains the accusation from God – "you rob me." His people were withholding from him what was rightly his.



Have you thought of giving in these terms before?