



Sugar and Spice, but Not Everything Nice

Adapted from "Stumbling Blocks" series by Dennis Marquardt

If you met a person who claimed to be a "born-again" Christian, but then told you how he met his daily needs by robbing a bank using a revolver and mask, what would you think of them? If you met a person who claimed to be a "born-again" Christian that told you he worked hard for a living and were honest, but to other people they were cruel and insensitive, and were unfaithful to commitments they had made to others, what would you think?

It would probably be best to consider them one of the poorest examples of being a Christian, or still worse, you would doubt the reality of their salvation. Of course, you would not likely see yourself as one of these examples but would likely think of someone else you think matches these examples.

The scriptures teach us that we are to be balanced in our walk with God. We must be balanced in the material realm and the spiritual realm. We need to let God affect the giving of our tithes and our temperament. The healthy believer is the one who does both!

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COURAGE

C1: When you hear the word “tithe,” what do you think? What has been your teaching in regard to tithe?

C2: Tithing emphasizes two things: First, God’s ownership. Second, man’s stewardship. Read and answer the following.

Matthew 23:23–24 (ESV) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!”

2 Corinthians 9:6–11 (ESV) The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

- What can you glean from these verses about giving?

- What are three things one is to give other than money?

- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate how well you give in the following areas:
 - Money
 - Justice
 - Mercy
 - Faithfulness
- Write out a plan to improve in each of these areas.

- What does it mean to you that you are a **steward** of God's resources?

C3: Describe a time in your life when you received a blessing or blessings after you were obedient in your giving.

STRENGTH

S1: Is there a difference between **paying** your tithe and **giving** your tithe to God? What is the difference?

S2: Read and answer the following.

Malachi 3:8-12 (ESV)

- What can you glean from these verses about giving?
- What does the question, “will a man rob God?” mean to you in this context?

Matthew 23:23-24 (ESV)

- What can you glean from these verses about giving?
- How does giving justice, mercy, and faithfulness intertwine with giving of money?

S3: On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very cheerful and 4 being not very cheerful, rate yourself on how cheerful a giver you are? Write out a plan to improve. Chart your giving (money, justice, mercy, faithfulness to God) for the next thirty days. What did you glean?

S4: In the next thirty days, find three men and discuss what the Bible says about giving. What did you glean from these conversations?

ENDURANCE

E1: One of the hardest areas of church life to in which disciple another man is tithing.

- Why do you think it's hard to explain the importance of tithing?
- If you were to share with another man the principles of tithing to the storehouse of the Lord, what would you include and why?

E2: Read and answer the following.

Proverbs 11:24 (ESV)

Malachi 3:8-12 (ESV)

Matthew 23:23-24 (ESV)

2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (ESV)

- Create a lesson to teach to your men's group about giving from these verses. What did you learn?

E3: Over the next sixty days find three men to do the following.

- Read Matthew, Mark, and Luke and underline every reference to giving. What did you glean?

- From the study, how many more times did Jesus talk about money than He did:
 - Heaven and Hell – what can you glean?

 - Baptism – what can you glean?