
Chapter 16

Opening the Windows of Heaven

“Test 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 a blessing until it overflows.”
Malachi 3:10

This is a pretty powerful statement from God. Nowhere else in Scripture does God tell us to test Him, except in this verse. What is it that God says will cause Him to open the windows of heaven, pouring out His blessing on us until it overflows?

“‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows’” (Mal. 3:10).

Did you see it? It’s tithing. Tithing will cause God to open the windows of heaven and shower His blessings over your life!

Many Christians shy away from learning as much as they can about this important principle, but please don’t miss this! God wants us to be faithful and obedient in **all** things, and when we neglect or choose to be disobedient in one area of our lives, it spills over into other areas as well.

What exactly is tithing? It is giving back to God ten percent of the first of your increase.

Our society as a whole is ignorant of this principle. Many churches fail their people by neglecting to teach the importance of tithing. Why is it so serious? God is angry when we fail to give back to Him what is rightfully His. “The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it” (Ps. 24:1). Tithing is an act of worship.

There are too many Christians who either live in poverty or are in as much debt as the unbeliever. God wants to make every believer “the head and not the tail.” He wants you to be “above” and “not be underneath” debt or anything else that will rule or control your life (Deut. 28:13). We are told, “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another . . .” (Rom. 13:8). “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender’s slave” (Prov. 22:7).

Most Christians are blessed with so much, especially if we look at other nations and the level of poverty at which most people of the world live. We spend our earnings on pleasures while our churches, missionaries, and ministries struggle to make ends meet. Why? Because we try to hold onto what is not rightfully ours to keep.

We take but give little. “Now this I say, he who **sows sparingly** shall also **reap sparingly**; and he who **sows bountifully** shall also **reap bountifully**. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:6).

We ask and wonder why we don’t receive. “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may **spend it on your pleasures**” (James 4:3).

God wanted to **bless** His people, but He did not because they were unwilling to give into His storehouse. He tells them in Haggai 1:6–7, ““You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes. Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Consider your ways!’”

““You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, **I blow it away**. Why?’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house’” (Hag. 1:9).

Understanding Tithing

It is ironic that so many Christians erroneously believe that they are not able to “afford” to tithe and bless God through offerings. The truth is that they are simply caught in a vicious cycle that only obedience and faith can cure. They can’t afford to give because they rob God to pay men, thereby robbing themselves of being blessed!

As a matter of fact, it is when we are in deep poverty that God asks us to give. The Christians in Macedonia understood and applied this principle of giving: “Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity” (2 Cor. 8:2). Sounds a bit like many of us, doesn’t it?

Why 10%?

The word tithe in the Hebrew is “**ma‘asrah**,” which translates to “a tenth.” So whenever God speaks to us in His Word and says to “tithe,” He is saying to give Him a tenth.

Why should I give my tithe *first*, before paying my bills?

This is the principle of “first fruits” of our labor. Deuteronomy 18:4 tells us, “You shall give him the **first fruits** of your grain, your new wine, and your oil, and the first shearing of your sheep.” Then, in Exodus 34:24 and 26, God says, “For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders . . . You shall bring the **very first** of the **first fruits** of your soil into the house of the Lord your God . . .”

This also is confirmed in the New Testament when Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33, “But seek **first** His kingdom and His righteousness; and **all** these things shall be added to you.”

Where should I tithe?

Malachi 3:10 tells us, “‘Bring the whole tithe into the **storehouse**, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows.’”

Your **storehouse** is where you are spiritually fed. Many Christians make the mistake of giving where they are **not** spiritually fed or would rather give where they see there is a need—but this is foolishness. It is like going to a restaurant, ordering a meal, but when the check comes telling the cashier that you would rather give to the restaurant down the street that is not doing too well!

If you are attending a church where you are being spiritually fed, then you should be tithing at least a tenth of your income to your home church. That means that if you attend church elsewhere and feel led to sow financially into our ministry (or any other ministry or missions), then this would be an offering “above and beyond” your tithe. We don’t want you to steal from your church to sow into our ministry “for this would be unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17).

However, many of our fellowship members who are **not** attending a church (for a variety of reasons) *and* are being fed through our ministry tithe by sowing into restoring marriages, since this is where they are being spiritually fed.

Again, as I have encouraged you throughout this book, seek **God**. This goes for everything, including your finances. Then be obedient and faithful to **Him!**

Don’t make the mistake of diligently following all the principles on restoring your marriage yet fail to tithe, lest you find your marriage not restored because you are stealing from God.

Remember, Malachi 3:8–10 tells us, “**Will a man rob God?** Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed Thee?’ In **tithes and offerings**. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!”

But since I am not under the law and I live by grace, 10% is no longer required, is it?

God’s grace warrants giving more, not less. When we have experienced His forgiveness, His mercy, His compassion, and His sacrifice of His shed blood whereby we become partakers of His glory, it will increase our willingness to give more, certainly not less.

“ . . . Freely you received, **freely give**” (Matt. 10:8).

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him **freely give** us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

However, “. . . he who **sows bountifully** shall also **reap bountifully**. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:6).

If we are double-minded and don't really trust that God will provide for us, “let this man expect that he will receive nothing from the Lord.” When we hold onto what we have to try to take care of ourselves, we will never see God's awesome power on our behalf.

God's desire is to pour His power and His blessings into our lives. When we tithe, we are being obedient. When, out of utter gratitude and worship, we freely give offerings beyond what is commanded, we are truly opening the door for God to pour out His blessings and do His pleasure in our lives.

We know He “is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph. 3:20 KJV).

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33 KJV). Do we take God at His Word or not?

Principles of Stewardship

As we have seen, tithing is an important principle in the Bible. God expects us to tithe back to Him a portion of what He has so generously given to us. Indeed, all that He has given us is still His—we are stewards that He has entrusted to care for the earth and all that is in it. How we handle what He has entrusted to us—our money, our talents, our time—demonstrates our obedience to His Word, our trust in His promise to provide, and most importantly, our faith in Him.

The way you view and handle your finances is basic to your Christian growth, and understanding God's principles of stewardship will enable you to mature in your spiritual walk and inherit the blessings God has for your life.

As you have read thus far in this book, God deals with many areas in our lives that indirectly affect our marriage. It is not enough to concentrate on marriage principles exclusively, but again God is using this trial in your marriage to transform you more into His image as He draws you out of the world's destruction and shows you the pathway to life.

The riches of God are not in order for us to “get rich” in the way the world seeks riches, but instead His blessings are part of our heritage. God wants to prosper us (Jer. 29:11) as long as He knows that we will use our inheritance wisely, without allowing prosperity to bring us to ruin. Giving a car to a child who is too young will most certainly end in tragedy. It is not until a parent sees maturity is he willing to turn over the keys of the car.

God wants us to have a mature attitude toward money for it has the power to affect our ability to make wise decisions: “Two things I asked of You, do not refuse me before I die: keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion,

that I not be full and deny You and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God” (Prov. 30:7–9).

It is clear that it is God’s desire to bless His children. Here are more verses that show God’s heart toward you as one of His:

“It is the *blessing of the Lord* that **makes rich** , and He adds no sorrow to it” (Prov. 10:22).

“The *reward of humility* and the *fear of the Lord* are riches, honor and life” (Prov. 22:4).

“And by *knowledge* the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant **riches** ” (Prov. 24:4).

“A *faithful man* will **abound with blessings** , but he who *makes haste to be rich* will not go unpunished” (Prov. 28:20).

These verses maintain that there are conditions to financial blessings (spiritual maturity) and that this is truly a heart issue (an absence of greed).

All of us want God’s blessings upon our life, but did you know that how you handle your financial blessings has a great deal to do with how you grow in the Lord and to what degree God is able to work in your life?

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stand by and be devoted to the one and despise and be against the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (deceitful riches, money, possessions, or whatever is trusted in)” (Matt. 6:24 AMP).

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Luke 16:10–11).

To grow in our ability to be used of God, which is spiritual wealth, and gain the *greater* things (having the power and presence of God in our lives) depends in part on how we handle our finances.

To prove this further, there are roughly 500 references in the Bible to faith and 500 to prayer, but there are over 2,000 verses that refer to our finances! In addition to the spiritual laws that were set in place when God created the universe (see chapter 1), God has also established financial laws, which He has shared with us in His Word. We benefit from following the laws or suffer the consequences if we don’t. It doesn’t matter if we are ignorant of them or have chosen to reject them; these laws, like gravity, exist and cannot be debated.

Principle #1: We reap what we sow.

One of the most important principles of stewardship is sowing and reaping. To reap a harvest, we must sow seed first. There are many Scriptures that give us insight into the subject of sowing and reaping. Here a just a few:

“Now this I say, he who **sows sparingly** shall also **reap sparingly**; and he who **sows bountifully** shall also **reap bountifully**” (2 Cor 9:6).

“Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting” (Ps. 126:5).

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man **sows**, this he will also **reap**” (Gal. 6:7).

“For the one who **sows to his own flesh** shall from the flesh **reap corruption**, but the one who **sows to the Spirit** shall from the Spirit **reap eternal life**” (Gal. 6:8).

“And let us not lose heart in **doing good**, for in due time we **shall reap** if we do **not grow weary**” (Gal. 6:9).

When we sow with the understanding of this principle and with faith in the Lord and His Word, we should **expect** to reap a harvest in and where we have sown! This is really exciting!

No farmer would take the time or the money to sow seed if he did **not** expect to **reap** a harvest. In addition, if he wanted to **reap** a harvest of corn, he would **sow** corn. If he wanted to **reap** wheat, he would **sow** wheat.

Therefore, if you want to reap kindness, sow kindness. If you want to reap forgiveness, forgive! If you want to reap restoration in your marriage, then **sow** into **restoration** by ministering and/or financially—then **anticipate** a harvest, since God’s principles and His promises are true and He is faithful!!

We can also believe God’s promise that sowing into His work means we are investing in our eternal future. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:19–21). More importantly, what we do with money here on earth is a true indicator of where our hearts are.

“Now 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 everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God” (2 Cor. 9:10–11).

In other words, when God gives us a bountiful harvest, it is not so we can keep it selfishly for ourselves but so we can sow even more into the kingdom of heaven.

The very wealthy Christians of today are the channels that keep ministries going, send missionaries to foreign lands, and keep our churches flourishing so that they can reach the lost for the Lord. They do not use their finances for their own pleasures but have found that in sowing into the things of God they have true joy and contentment.

However, we must also remember that poverty and prosperity are relative terms. What we call the “poverty level” in the United States would seem like affluence to those in many other countries.

As Christians, we must find contentment in any and every situation. The apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:12: “I know how to get along with *humble means*, and I also know how to live in **prosperity**; in any and every circumstance I have learned the **secret** of being filled and going hungry, both of having **abundance** and suffering *need*.”

Indeed, there are times when God calls His saints to suffering, martyrdom, or poverty (like the poor widow who gave two coins—all she owned) in order to glorify Himself. When He calls us to poverty or suffering, He gives us the grace to bear it with joy and thanksgiving (and without grumbling or complaining).

While we can't understand all of God's reasons for allowing poverty, we can trust that His ways are higher than our ways. “Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their **extreme poverty** welled up in **rich generosity**. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability” (2 Cor. 2:8). Sometimes those who suffer the greatest need become the most generous! For someone with a love of money, a loss of riches may be one of the ways God breaks us, draws us to Himself, and teaches us to rely solely on Him.

However, in our country, poverty and debt do not usually draw the interest or attention of your family, friends, and neighbors. If we have been blessed with much, we must witness to others not by self-righteously preaching to them or condemning their lifestyle but by allowing them to “read” **God** in our lives! “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men” (2 Cor. 3:2). We must exhibit the fruits of our Father. We must be at peace in the midst of troubles, bless our enemies, freely forgive, and walk in whatever prosperity the Lord allows. Our generosity should glorify Him and may be the very kindness that God uses to draw others to Himself!

“. . . And let them say continually, ‘The *Lord* be magnified, **who delights in the prosperity of His servant**’ (Ps. 35:27).

Principle #2: God owns everything.

Psalm 24:1 (NIV) says simply, “The earth is the Lord's, and **everything in it . . .**” Everything we have belongs to God.

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for **everything** in heaven and earth is **Yours**” (1 Chron. 29:11).

“‘The silver is **Mine** and the gold is **Mine,**’ declares the Lord Almighty” (Hag. 2:8).

All we have, whether much or little, is on loan to us—we are stewards. Again, it is how we handle what has been entrusted to us (as explained in the Luke 16 parable) that will determine whether He blesses us with more or if He takes away what we already have.

Principle #3: God provides everything.

“Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ But you shall remember the Lord your God, **for it is He who is giving you power to make**

wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. It shall come about if you ever forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish” (Deut. 8:17–19).

“But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For **all things** come from **You**, and from **Your** hand *we have given* You. For we are sojourners before You, and tenants, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope. O Lord our God, **all this abundance** that we have provided to build **You** a house for Your holy name, **it is from Your hand, and all is Yours**” (1 Chron. 29:14–16).

“And **my God** will supply all your needs according to *His riches* in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).

Whether you earned it in your job or it was given to you, who was the Source of everything that you have? God.

Principle #4: God wants the first portion of what He gives you.

Many Christians give to their church and other charitable organizations but are not blessed because they don’t understand this very important principle. God is clear throughout the entire Bible that He wants to be **first** in every area of your life.

If you pay your bills before returning the first back to Him, God is not first in your life and you will have missed the blessing. We learned in chapter 5, “First Love,” that God removes from us what we have put ahead of Him.

“Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the **first** of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine” (Prov. 3:9). The principle is clear; we **must give to God first**.

Often when Christians begin to consider tithing, they cannot see how they can possibly tithe since they are barely making ends meet. This is because they are also ignorant to what has been happening in their finances. Haggai 1:9 says that God “blows away” what you bring home, and He also allows the **devourer** to come and take what was rightfully His.

“‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows. **Then I will rebuke the devourer** for you, so that it may **not destroy** the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 3:10–11).

Every month non-tithing Christians are met with “unexpected” expenses, things like repairs or other needs they did not foresee. It is only because they are ignorant of this principle. For if God is **first** in your life—first in your heart, first in your day, and first in your finances—then (and only then) God will “open for you the windows of heaven, pour out for you a blessing until it overflows,” and faithfully “rebuke the devourer for you.”

Those who humble themselves by giving God their tithe and offerings will delight themselves in **abundant** prosperity! “But the *humble* will inherit the land, and will delight themselves in **abundant prosperity**” (Ps. 37:11). His Word tells us, “Adversity pursues sinners, but the *righteous* will be **rewarded** with prosperity” (Prov. 13:21).

Principle #5: What you do with the first portion determines what God does with the rest.

When God asked Abraham for His son, he did not withhold him; as a result, God tells him, “for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me . . . because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will **greatly bless you . . .**” (Gen. 22:12, 17).

God told the army who took Jericho that they were not to take the spoil of the first city, and God would then give them the rest. God always wants to first to test our hearts. “The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests hearts” (Prov. 17:3). However, one of the soldiers, Akin, could not resist and took some of the spoil. When they were to take the next city, Ai, in a battle that was much smaller and should have easily been won, they were defeated. (See Joshua 6.)

This principle is not just in your finances, or in your restoration, but in every area of your life. When we fail to give to God first, we are robbing God of what He has asked for. He wants no other gods before Him: not our money, our spouses, our marriages, or our careers. What you do with the first of everything will determine what God will do with the rest—bless it or curse it.

Are you in a financial crisis?

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).

Have you sought the Lord about your finances? In Philippians 4:19, the Bible clearly teaches that the Lord is the One who will supply **all** our needs. However, if we go to others with our needs rather than seeking the Lord—if we fail to “seek Him **first**”—then “all these things” will *not* be “added unto” us.

Are you following the principles for financial security in the Lord? The Scriptures teach us that we are to tithe in order to be “filled with plenty” and “overflow” (Prov. 3:9–10). We are also encouraged to “sow” if we want to reap (Gal. 6:7 and 2 Cor. 9:6). Have you been sowing and faithfully tithing? Take the time to read these passages of Scripture again and again, then pray for how the Lord wants to change the way that you are trusting Him while fulfilling His command to all believers, beginning by giving a portion back to Him.

If you are tithing faithfully and still in a financial crisis, make sure that you are following all of God’s statutes. There are many references in Scripture to actions that lead to poverty, including not asking (James 4:2), asking with wrong motive (James 4:3), adultery (Prov. 6:26), heavy drinking or gluttonous behavior (Prov. 21:17, Prov. 23:21), laziness (Prov. 10:4, Prov. 14:23, Prov.

28:18–20), not accepting rebuke or correction (Prov. 13:18), making hasty decisions (Prov. 21:5), oppressing the poor (Prov. 22:16), and, of course, withholding from God what is rightfully His.

While we are giving back to God in tithes and offerings, we also need to be sure we are giving our husbands the honor they deserve. “The heart of her husband **safely trusts in her; so he will have no lack of gain**” (Prov. 31:11). If your husband has had a difficult time providing, are you sure he can trust you? Has he told you to get rid of your credit cards, but you kept them? Are you responsible with the purchases you make, and do you look well to the ways of your household? Have you shamed him to others? Be sure you are pure in heart and faithful to your husband in every way.

When I was in financial ruin as a single mother of four young children, I learned the principle of tithing. Even though I lived close to poverty level, I began tithing for the first time in my life. Not only did I sow by tithing ten percent of the meager amount of the money I received, but I also sowed into the lives of women who were experiencing tragedy in their lives (telling them about God’s ability to restore their marriages).

My giving to the Lord set the standard in our home when my husband was gone. God honored this by leading my husband to tithe soon after he came home without my telling him! If you are struggling with giving that much, it may help you to know that God owns everything we have, and it is only because of Him that we have been given the “power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant” with us. (Deut. 8:18). Therefore you need to make sure that you give to Him **first** to confirm that He is **first** in your life!

Will you serve God or mammon (money)?

Too many shy away from teaching on giving because of the abuses and because they don’t want to be considered “money seekers,” but it doesn’t eliminate the truth in the message. Search for the truth yourself. Test Him to see if He is faithful to His promise. Give to God first, tithe to your storehouse (where you are spiritually fed), and see if your life changes and you are blessed in all areas of your life.

God is the one who provides for our ministry and for our family. We sow into the lives of those who are brokenhearted and water with ongoing support through our fellowship, but it is God who brings the increase. We look to no one to supply our needs but God alone.

Failing to properly teach such an important principle would be to neglect to feed the sheep and shepherd those who are coming to us for help, support, and direction.

Jesus said to feed His sheep, and God said in Hosea that His people perished for a lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). Many who come to us are new Christians or have been attending a church where this principle, and other principles of restoration, is not taught. Our job is to make disciples of the Lord, to give them the tools they need to transform their lives.

For those of you who have never given God His tithe, may God prove to you that you can do more with 90% of your income than the 100% that you used to control. It will take a step of faith, but just like when you chose to restore your marriage rather than moving on, your life will never be the same.

For those of you who do give (but God is not first), may you rearrange your priorities in every area of your life to show God that He has first place.

God is a God who longs to be gracious to us; He longs to bless us!“. . . And let them say continually, “the Lord be magnified, **who delights in the prosperity of His servant**” (Ps. 35:27).

Let me close with this wonderful **promise**: “Those who **sow** in tears shall **reap** with joyful shouting” (Ps. 126:5). **Hallelujah!!**

Personal commitment: to give. “Based on what I have learned in Scripture, I commit to trusting and blessing the Lord with my finances. I will seek the Lord regarding how and where to tithe. I will sow into restoring marriages through sharing the good news about restoration with those whom God brings into my life and through my financial giving as God leads and faithfully provides for me.”

Date: _____ Signed: _____