

## **The Gift that Keeps Giving**

### **Linda Howard**

*Central Theme: One of the greatest gift God has given to us is the ability to give.*

Call to Worship: This is what real love is: It is not our love for God; it is God's love for us. He sent his Son to die in our place to take away our sins. (I John 4:10).

*"Bring to the storehouse a full tenth of what you earn so there will be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord All-Powerful. "I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour out all the blessings you need (Malachi 3:10).*

Introduction—I love the Old Testament. There is so much there that we don't see. It is like a treasure hunt. Hidden in the genealogies are treasures. The prayer of Jabez. There is also parabolic language which points to salvation and our Savior. One treasure that I believe is becoming lost is the importance of the Title. **Have member read Malachi 3:10-12.**

- I. The author of the book of Malachi is a mystery. Was this the name of the author or the title of the group of sermons. Malachi means My Messenger or Messenger of God. The time when the book was written is some time after the Jews' return from Babylon and after the temple has been built.
  - A. Through Malachi, God gives his people a stern rebuke. He says, "You have robbed me."
  - B. He says, "You can't prosper because you have taken what is mine."
  - C. Then the Lord declares, "Bring to the storehouse (or the church) a full tenth and I will open the windows of heaven for you."
  - D. I'll take away the pests that destroy, and your vines will have abundant fruit.
  - E. It's a simple principle. 1/10 of everything you earn belongs to God.
- II. This the one time in the scriptures that God says, "Test me."
  - A. Testimony of people who don't tithe, "I can't afford it." FSH—10 apples-1 apple=9 apples
  - B. Testimony of people who do tithe, "We can't afford not to tithe."
  - C. FSH picked the worst time in our marriage to begin to tithe but that week we sold our house and got a settlement on a car that was wrecked with our move to Florida.
- III. (Matthew 5:17) The Tithe was well established in the time of Jesus. He said, "I didn't come to destroy the Law and the prophets. I came to fulfill them. So you can be blessed."
  - A. As a child, my parents didn't ever give us money to put in the church. We earned money with jobs and we were told to give 1/10 of whatever we earned.
  - B. The principle that we often miss is that we are giving back to God a small portion—the word tithe means tenth.

- C. The money we earn represents our time, our talents and our value. We are allowed to give a small amount back to the Lord.
  - C. In a real way, we are giving of ourselves.
- IV. Yet, the paradox is that everything belongs to the Lord. All things are his. He lends what we have to us (Read the scriptures)
- A. Thinking that we can keep what God tells us belongs to him is the ultimate insult and conceit.
    - 1. The tenth is no more than a tip. We tip waiters/waitresses, people who carry our luggage, uber drivers. It's a thank you for good service.
  - B. Doesn't God deserve this small thank you for all he has given to us.
  - C. When my grandson was a teenager, he acquired things that belonged to his father.
    - 1. I had to remind my son of the things he didn't realize were important to me that he also acquired.
- V. Perhaps the best gift God has given to us is the ability to give back to him and give to others.
- A. In a unique way we are able to participate in the creative wonder of the Lord when we give.

Conclusion—The Father wants to pour out blessings to us. The tithe is a test so he can bless us. He wants to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves and that is multiple—pressed down, running over.

### **Deuteronomy 10:14**

"Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.

### **Psalms 89:11**

The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all it contains, You have founded them.

### **Genesis 14:19**

He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

### **Genesis 14:22**

Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth,

### **Exodus 9:29**

Moses said to him, "As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease and there will be hail no longer, that you may know that the earth is the LORD'S.

### **Exodus 19:5**

'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine;

**Psalm 24:1**

The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.

**1 Corinthians 10:26**

FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS.

**Psalm 50:12. God speaks to us:**

"If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains.

**Psalm 104:24**

O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions.

**Leviticus 25:23. God speaks about Israel**

'The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me.

**Job 41:11. God speaks to Job:**

"Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.

**Psalm 95:4**

In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains are His also.

**Psalm 95:5**

The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands formed the dry land.

**Psalm 50:10**

"For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills.

**Psalm 50:11**

"I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine.

**Leviticus 27:26**

'However, a firstborn among animals, which as a firstborn belongs to the LORD, no man may consecrate it; whether ox or sheep, it is the LORD'S.

**Leviticus 27:30**

'Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S; it is holy to the LORD.

**Haggai 2:8**

'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,' declares the LORD of hosts.

This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God. (I John 4:10)