HAVING AND GIVING

LESSON 11 → Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 25:35-40; Luke 21:1-4

Jackson and Oliver were walking home from school. It was cold! "Let's stop at Starbuck's and get some hot chocolate to drink," Jackson suggested.

"I can't," Oliver replied. "I don't have any of my allowance left and I don't get paid till tonight." He looked at Jackson with a puzzled expression. "Hey, how come you always seem to have money? I know you get the same allowance I do and you even have to give some to your church!"

The poor widow who gave God all she had knew the secret about having and giving.

KEY VERSE

IT MAKES US FEEL GOOD WHEN WE GIVE TO OTHERS!

It is more blessed to give than to receive. — Acts 20:35

Jackson smiled. "You don't understand, Oliver. I don't have to give any to my church, but I give God ten cents of every dollar I earn because I know it belongs to Him. We call it tithing."

"I don't understand why you think it belongs to God."

"Well," Jackson said slowly, "God gives me the strength to work so He's really giving me the allowance. It's only right that I give part of it back to Him or else I'd be robbing God. When I tithe, God blesses me and it always seems like my money lasts longer."

Oliver shook his head. "I don't know . . . You must love God an awful lot to give away your money."

"You're right about that, Oliver. I do love Him a lot. But I don't feel like I am giving away my money—it belongs to God. I'm just giving back to Him what is actually His in the first place."

Tithing is giving a tenth of our earnings to God. God started this plan way back in the time of Abraham. In fact, Abraham was the first person to tithe. He didn't give just money, but also a tenth of all the goods he gained. Often the people of Bible times gave from the firstfruits of their harvest—the first tenth of their livestock and crops were given to the Lord. In Leviticus 27:32 we find, "And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, . . . the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD." Today, the tithes of God's people help keep His church operating.

Some people think we only need to tithe if we have lots of money, but this is not so. A true story was told of a young couple who were having trouble paying their bills. They didn't pay tithes because they felt they didn't have enough money. When things got worse instead of better, they realized it was because they were robbing God. With the next paycheck, they chose to tithe first. Their money ran out before the bills were all paid. But that month they received an envelope in the mail containing enough money to pay their bills! So you see, it pays to give God what is His.

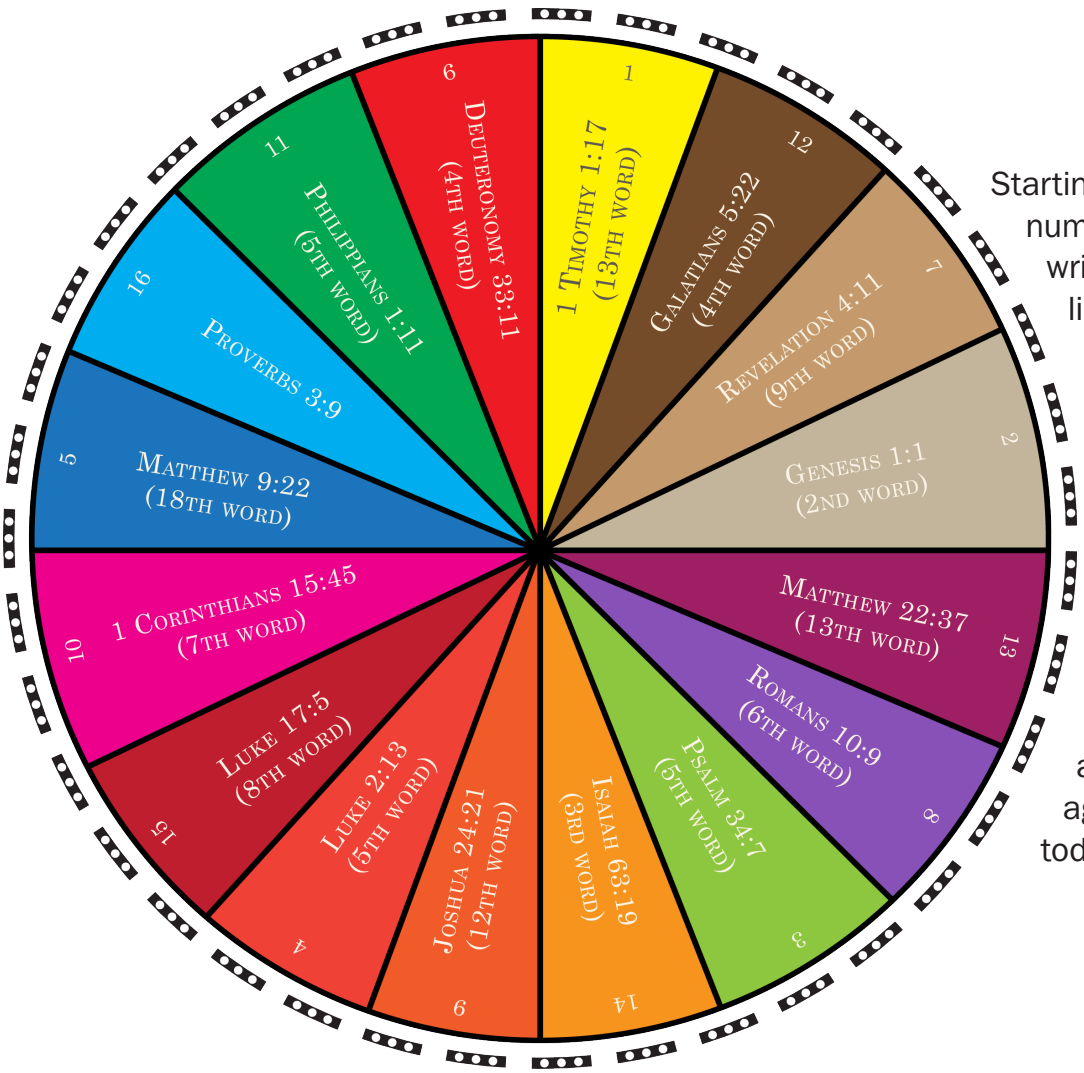
The blessings we receive from God are not based on how much we give. The Gospels of Mark and Luke both tell the story of men coming into the Temple and putting large amounts of money into the treasury. They gave only a small portion of their wealth and had plenty left over. As Jesus watched them, He also saw a poor widow come and drop two mites (small copper coins worth less than four cents) into the treasury. This was not much compared with the great amount the rich men had put in, but it was all she had. Jesus told His disciples later that "this poor widow hath cast in more than they all" (Luke 21:3). Maybe others didn't notice, but God did.

God is interested in more than our money, though. He knows what we give in other ways. Not only does He want us to give tithes and offerings of our earnings, but also of our time and talents. Who gave us our health and strength? Or our abilities, our mental powers, and our talents? The Lord, of course! It just makes sense to give this back to Him.

Think for a moment—you have twenty-four hours each day. How much of that time should belong to God? Certainly a part of it should. But you might ask, "How do I give time to God?" The moments spent prayer, studying your Bible, doing things for others, attending church and Sunday school—this is the part you are giving to God. How does it balance with the way you spend the rest of your time? Are you giving God as much as you should in this area?

We need to realize that it's not just how much or what we give that the Lord notices. It's also how we give. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it says, "God loveth a cheerful giver." In the story about Jackson, he didn't have to give—He wanted to! He was a cheerful giver! In the story of the widow it wasn't the size of her gift, but her willingness that counted. How do you feel about giving to the Lord? Do you give freely, from a thankful heart? That's the way to enjoy God's blessings!

GIVING TO GOD!



Starting with number one, write on the lines below, each word according to the clue given. Go through all 16 clues. When you have finished you will have a verse that agrees with today's lesson.

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