

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: SESSION

THE DOMINO EFFECT
THE WHY BEHIND THE WHAT
LUKE 16:1-13
02/05/2017



MAIN POINT

Tithing changes lives.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

If they did, how did your parents teach you about money when you were a kid?

What is one thing about money that you wish someone had taught you earlier on?

Why is it important that we talk about money at church? Why do you think we don't do so very often?

Jesus talked about money in 16 of His 38 parables. In fact, He talked about money more than any other subject except the kingdom of God. He didn't do this because He is after people's money; He taught so much about money because He is after our hearts. Giving is not a money issue, it's a spiritual issue. We need to make sure we are fully committed to God in all parts of our lives, and that includes money. The way we spend our money is a window into our hearts. Our spending shows us what we believe about God. Today we will discuss why it is so important that we trust God by giving, especially by tithing (giving God the first 10% of our income).

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 16:1-13.

How does tithing keep us from being mastered by our money? How does that make us free?

Have you ever tried to have it both ways—to be in a devoted relationship with God and master of your own wallet? What tensions came from that?

What stuff in your life tends to pull your attention away from God most easily? How can you counteract that tendency?

First, it is important that we tithe because it is the antidote for materialism and greed (v. 13). When we stop seeing money as the ultimate good and final means to achieve what we need, we recognize that money is temporary. However, we can use it for eternal good. In other words, we are to treat our money as a tool for investing in eternity. When we tithe we are investing in something bigger than this world. It is an investment that will not come up void and will always last.

Share your personal experience with tithing. What has the practice taught you about your money?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 6:38.

The second reason it is important we tithe is because giving and blessing are proportional. This is the principle Jesus taught His disciples in Luke 6:38.

What activities does Jesus commend in verse 38?

What does it mean that a “good measure” will be “poured into your lap”?

What did Jesus promise to those who give well? How does that help us to do what Jesus would do?

In a positive command Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given to you.” This charge went beyond the others Jesus gave in this sermon. He ordered His disciples to make provision for those who might otherwise receive judgment or condemnation. A merciful God exemplifies generous giving. Jesus told the story of a grain purchase to illustrate the point. An honest merchant provided a “good measure”—that is, a generous amount of grain in return for what the buyer paid. The merchant pressed down and shook the grain to get the full amount inside the container, even to the point of running over. Often people folded the front of their loose fitting outer garment into a pocket. When the seller poured the grain into the lap of the customer, it was never short. A generous person opens up to receive God’s generosity.

The third reason it is important we tithe is because tithing changes lives. In what forms have you seen God’s generosity poured out in your own life or others’ lives recently?

Read 2 Chronicles 16:9. How do we become the type of people the Lord wants to bless according to this verse?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What do your spending habits right now reveal about your heart?

How should God’s ultimate gift to us—Jesus Christ, His Son—compel us to tithe? What can you do to keep this truth in your thoughts this week?

What could God do if everyone gave their tithe? How many lives would be changed?

PRAY

Praise God for all that He has given us. Ask that you would have a heart to steward His resources well and help as you learn to love and serve Him more.

LUKE 16:1-13

16:1-4. Jesus focused his teaching back on his disciples (cf. 15:1-3). He shifted them to a place in society they had never occupied—the realm of the rich. This echelon centered attention on maintaining and increasing wealth. A poor manager raised concern. A crooked manager was cause for alarm. This one apparently managed a farm for a landowner who lived in the city. The manager managed to squander the landowner's assets much as the prodigal son had squandered his father's (see 15:13). A pink slip was in order. What did a manager without a job do? He knew he was too old and out of shape to go back to manual labor. He was too proud to beg for help from his friends, or worse, to sit on the street corner, hat in hand. Using all his managerial skills, he developed a plan. He would not have to beg. Friends would welcome him with open arms.

16:5-7. The plan was simple: a fire sale on debt. Perhaps the men he called in were tenant farmers who worked the land and gave a percentage of the crop to the landowner. The first owed one hundred baths of olive oil, a bath being about nine gallons. The manager reduced the 900-gallon debt to 450. The second tenant owed one hundred kors of wheat. The precise equivalent of a kor is not known. Scholarly estimates vary from six and one-half to twelve bushels. This debt was reduced by twenty percent. Certainly these were simply examples. Other people also took advantage of the manager's situation and his debt fire sale.

What was happening here? Another example of squandering his master's wealth? Perhaps. The manager may have been illegally reducing debt. He may have been subtracting interest that had accrued on the debt in violation of biblical teaching (see Deut. 23:19-20). He may have been sacrificing his own commission for long-term gains. Jesus did not condone the man's business practice as legal or one to be imitated by others. This was a long-term plan by the manager to have friends indebted to him when he needed them. But how would the landowner react when he heard the news or saw the books?

16:8. Ironically, the landowner praised the man. Why? Because his business plan was smart and it accomplished the purposes the manager set out for it. First, it made the landowner look good in the eyes of those who were indebted to him and who continued to do business with him. Second, it looked forward to the long term rather than being limited to the present moment. Third, it assured people would be indebted to the manager and thus honor bound to help him when he would need it, much sooner than they suspected.

Jesus put the parable in context. In this world the children of light—those who have become lamps letting God's light shine through them (11:35-36)—often are much more foolish in their dealings with other people than are the secular people who have no concern for God. God's people should be as dedicated to living out kingdom living with other people in this world as the people of this world are in living out their own values to their own advantage in this world. The world's citizens, however, are only of this age. They have no future beyond the here and now. Children of light will shine through all the ages of eternity. Live now so you are assured of eternity.

16:9. Jesus drove the point home to his disciples: "Make use of the world's resources so friends will be there to help you when you need it most. Things of this world may be unrighteous in themselves, but they can be used for good. To do so, you must recognize that such worldly resources are temporary. One day they will no longer be available. Use them while you can, but do not make them the end, only the means. Used in this way, unrighteous worldly resources can help you prepare for eternity. By being generous with secular resources, particularly by sharing them with the poor, blind, lame, and crippled, you can store up treasures in heaven. Just as the grateful debtors would welcome the manager into their homes when he needed them (v. 4), so you will be welcomed to your eternal home when you die and material resources are no longer of value. Meeting you there will be those friends with whom you shared unrighteous worldly resources. They will show you to your heavenly resources."

16:10-11. The disciples dismissed this parable as not applicable to them. They had no worldly resources, so the message of this parable did not apply to them. Jesus disagreed. No matter how few resources you have, be trustworthy with them, he said. Only as you get in the habit of generous, trustworthy use of resources can you be trusted with more. That habit will lead you to continue to be trustworthy, no matter how high the value of your resources. Look out for the other side of this truth. You may think that it does not make much difference how you handle the little that you have. You can cheat and mislead and squander such resources. After all, it is just unrighteous money, not worth anything. Again, Jesus emphasized, the habit you form now stays with you. Be faithful in little; you will be faithful in much. Be unfaithful in little, you will be unfaithful and unrighteous if you get the opportunity to manage many resources. If you are unfaithful in unrighteous worldly goods, no one will trust you with heavenly goods.

16:12. Take the picture one step further. If you cannot prove trustworthy and faithful at managing someone else's money, what will happen when you receive money of your own? Will you mismanage, squander, and be unrighteous in

dealing with personal funds? Who would ever trust you with them?

16:13. Take your choice: God or money. You cannot have both. One or the other will control you. Which is it? You cannot take orders from two masters, although apparently in Jesus' day some slaves were owned by two people and tried hard to please both. You have to listen to just one master. You cannot, likewise, do what attains wealth and what demonstrates kingdom living. Attaining wealth and attaining the kingdom represent two opposing goals. You must focus either on the kingdom or on wealth. Which will it be?

LUKE 6:38

Perhaps you had a different job description in mind when you decided to follow Jesus. You would join him in judging the world. You would point out all the evil people to God so he could give them what they deserve. God's ways are different. You experienced them from him. No judgment. No condemnation. No heaping punishment on others. Forgive! Give! Use fair, generous measuring cups to sell something to someone else. Yes, be generous in what you give to others. God will give you the same kind of measure you give others.