



## Lesson 4

To Begin ...

*God has promised to bless us when we give back to Him. How has God been generous to you when you've been generous to others?*

Hey Life Group Leaders! Welcome to Week 4 of our new Life Group Video Series, "Built Faith Tough," where we will study through several different Scripture passages dealing with building faith in Jesus! We hope that this series will be uplifting, challenging, and help you find your next step in your journey with God!

You have seven questions based the video lesson this week! Remember that these Leader Notes are to serve as a guide for further and deepening conversation with your Life Group, not as the answers! Enjoy this week's discussion and always remember to ask an extra question such as "Why do you believe that?" to draw out some more conversation from your group members!

To start off this lesson, you have a question above that everyone in your group should be able to answer. This seems like a very simple question that does not appear to be too invasive, but some may take this as very personal. This may give you some indication as to how to proceed with certain people in your group for this lesson. Please make sure that your group feels the safety of sharing within the group. There is no right or wrong answer here. No snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

### Discussion Prompts

1. Read Malachi 3:6-12 and Psalm 24:1. What is the difference between a tithe and an offering? How were the people robbing God? What are the benefits of faithfully giving to God?

Malachi 3:6-12 reads, "I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'

"In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that

that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the Lord Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty."

Psalms 24:1 reads, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;"

Some answers may include that a tithe is a specific amount (10% of your income) that you give first, and an offering is anything extra that you give beyond that. After you've tithed and paid all your bills and expenses for the month, you can use any extra money in your budget to give even more! The tithing system began during the time of Moses. The tithe was a requirement of the Mosaic Law in which all Israelites were to give 10% of everything they earned and/or grew to the tabernacle/temple (Leviticus 27:30-34; Numbers 18:26; Deuteronomy 14:22-24; 2 Chronicles 31:5). The Levites received some of the tithe because they could not possess land on their own (Number 18:20-21). During Malachi's time, the people were NOT giving tithes, so the Levites went to work to earn a living and support their families, thereby neglecting their God-given responsibilities to care for the temple and for the service of worship.

Some answers to the second part of this question may include that the people were not being faithful in their tithing, nor were they giving other gifts above and beyond their 10% requirements. This shows the lack of faith in God and generosity in their hearts. They may have feared losing what they had worked so hard to get, but in this they misjudged God.

Some answers to the last part of this question may include that when we give, we must remember that the blessings God promises are not always material and may not be experienced completely here on earth, but we will certainly receive them in our future life with him. God will remember those who remain faithful to him, and who love, fear, honor, and respect him.

2. Kawika quotes Luke 6:38 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. Are Jesus

and Paul agreeing with each other or contradicting each other? According to these verses, why are cheerfulness and generosity conjoined with the idea of effective giving?

Luke 6:38 reads, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 reads, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

Some answers to the first part of this question may include that Jesus and Paul do agree with each other in principle, although the context of Jesus' teaching in Luke 6 has more to do with how people treat one another; judging people; forgiving people; loving your enemies; the status of one's heart towards others. Jesus uses the picture of measuring grain in a basket to ensure the full amount of care and compassion is used. If we are critical rather than compassionate, we will also receive criticism. If we treat others generously, graciously, and compassionately, however, these qualities will come back to us in full measure. We are to love others, not judge them. The section in Paul's letter to the Corinthian church is specifically talking about a gift of money given to another church, but then he connects that teaching to how one group of people is to treat another group of people; loving them through their generosity and service.

Some answers to the second part of this question may include that you are examine your attitudes as you give to charity or your church. Do you give generously and cheerfully or reluctantly and under compulsion? Why do you give? Guilt? Hoping to increase your favorable rating with God? Trying to make an impression on your friends? Why should we give sacrificially? People may hesitate to give generously to God if they worry about having enough money left over to meet their own needs. God is able to meet all of

your needs. The person who gives only a little will receive only a little in return. Don't let a lack of faith keep you from giving freely and generously.

3. Malachi 3:14-15 reveals the Israelites' rationale for their lack of giving. If Malachi wrote these 2 verses to us today, what do you believe he would say? What examples would he give? (In other words: what are some modern excuses for a lack of giving?)

Malachi 3:14-15 reads, "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it.'"

Some answers may include that these verses describe the people's arrogant attitude toward God. When we ask, "What good does it do to serve God?" we are really asking, "What good does it do for me?" Our focus is selfish. Our real question should be, "What good does it do for God?" We must serve God just because he is God and deserves to be served. AND it does our hearts, minds, and souls a great deal of good to put ourselves near the end of the line. Humility is an incredible trait that many in our society neglect.

The last part of this question is one that everyone in your group should be able to answer because it is asking them to share their experiences and opinions. Have some fun putting these verses into your own words and context. How would you write them? Be very encouraging as you allow people to share. Remember please, no snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

4. What is the "fear of the Lord" according to Malachi 3:16; Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 22:4? How can we show the Lord that we fear Him?

Malachi 3:16 reads, "Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name."

Job 28:28 reads, "And he said to the human race, "The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.""

Proverbs 1:7 reads, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 9:10 reads, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

Proverbs 22:4 reads, "Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life."

Some answers to this question may include that the fear of the Lord means to have respect and reverence for God and to be in awe of his majesty and power. This is the starting point to finding real wisdom. In this age of information, knowledge is plentiful, but wisdom is scarce. Wisdom means far more than simply knowing a lot. It is a basic attitude that affect every aspect of life. The foundation of knowledge is to fear the Lord – to honor and respect God, to live in awe of his power, and to obey his word. Faith in God should be the controlling principle for your understanding of the world, your attitudes, and your actions. Trust in God – he will make you truly wise.

Some answers to the last part of this question may include that in biblical usage, the "fear of the Lord" does not convey fright, being afraid of God. Instead, it means living in reverential awe of God's sovereignty, goodness, and mercy and in disciplined obedience to and relationship with him. Discipline in this case, is not punishment, but rather training or formation in good or righteous living. What might that look like to you?

5. Read Malachi 3:18. Why is serving a distinction between the wicked and the righteous? (HINT: read Mark 9:35 and Acts 20:35)

Malachi 3:18 reads, "And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not."

Mark 9:35 reads, "Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the

servant of all.”

Acts 20:35 reads, “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Some answers may include that in this case, the difference between the righteous and the wicked has to do with how people view themselves compared to God and other people. If you place yourself above others, God views that as a selfish act that actually distances you from God. Generosity and humility bring you closer to God.

6. In the video, Kawika said, “Living generously means a spirit of generosity permeates every area of our lives.” How have you seen this statement to be true in your life and/or in the lives of others?

This is another question that everyone in your group should be able to answer because it is asking for their opinions. Allow people to share. Remember please, no snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

7. As followers of Jesus who attend a specific church, it’s important for us to invite others, serve, and give financially. As with most things in life, giving requires us to have an intentional plan to support the church we love. If you feel comfortable, respond to one of the following prompts:

- Share about when you first felt convicted to give back to God.
- Briefly share your current plan to financially support the church that you love.
- If you don’t have a plan, share about how you can develop a plan.

This is another question that everyone in your group should be able to answer because it is asking for their next steps. Encourage your group members to write down these steps to help them pray about them and keep their commitments to God. Even if some in your group have never taken steps like this, encourage them to take a

small step in putting their trust in God. And really cheer them on as they do! Allow your group members to share. Remember please, no snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

Pray out your time together as a group. Remember to ask for prayer requests. Encourage one another to take steps, regardless of how small, toward Jesus and his kingdom.