

THE ANCIENT PRACTICES SERIES



douglas leblanc

TITHING

test me in this

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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Study Guide

TITHING: TEST ME IN THIS

Douglas LeBlanc

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”

—Jeremiah 6:16

INTRODUCTION

Do you believe that every part of our lives comes from God and belongs to him? If so, how does tithing fit into his work in our lives? In what ways does it express our thankfulness to him in the same way that regular prayer or partaking in communion does?

How is tithing a reflection of the compassion that God shows us?

CHAPTER 1: CONTINUITY IN THE TRADITION: GREGORY AND FREDERICA MATHEWES-GREEN

The life-long commitment of the Mathewes-Greens to tithing continued even when they were impoverished students. In what ways does this reflect their idea that regular practices—such as tithing—are like training wheels on our faith?

If tithing became as second-nature to us as prayer, how could this affect our relationship with God and our compassion to those around us?

CHAPTER 2: SO THAT OTHERS MAY SIMPLY LIVE: RON AND ARBUTUS SIDER

The Siders practice a simple way of life in order to give more to the church and their community. In what ways could living simply change your view of the world and those around you? What benefits could a simpler life have other than the ability to give more?

Ron Sider points out that the focus of a simple life is not deprivation and hardship but balance in a world out

of control with consumerism. In what areas of your life could simpler choices mean less stress and more openness with your family and faith?

CHAPTER 3: MISSIONAL LIVING AFTER KATRINA: JERRY AND STACY KRAMER

The Kramers had already committed to tithing prior to Katrina, pointing out that they had once “worshiped” Blockbuster and Domino’s Pizza. If you broke down your budget, where would your biggest expenditures fall? Are there focus points in your life that distract you from your faith journey?

After Katrina, survival meant sacrifice, dedication, and renewed commitments. In what ways do smaller crises in our lives reorder our thinking about what’s important? How does tithing remind us that the point of our faith is to serve God, not persuade him to give to us?

CHAPTER 4: EARNEST MONEY: JOHN SCHWIEBERT

For John Schwiebert and the members of the Metanoia congregation, tithing is akin to putting earnest money

down on a house—a recognizable commitment to follow through with your promised purchase . . . or commitment to the faith.

In what ways is this belief reflected in the stories they share of financial rescues and blessings?

How does tithing fit in with other disciplines—fasting, prayer, etc.—taken on as a commitment to serving God?

CHAPTER 5: TREASURES IN HEAVEN: RANDY ALCORN

How is committing to a tithe, or only 10 percent of our income, a reflection of “where our treasures are”? Do other “treasures” overshadow the investment or focus of that 10 percent?

What do the financial choices Randy Alcorn has made tell us about his commitment to God and his pro-life work? Could you make a similar commitment to a cause you believe in?

CHAPTER 6: "NEVER TELL ME WHAT YOU WON'T DO": JERALD JANUARY

In the early part of his life, despite his commitment to God, Jerald January stood in God's way. What lessons can each of us take from the message: never tell God what you won't do? In what ways have you seen these lessons play out in your own life?

How do you think a commitment to tithing would reflect a renewed commitment to God?

CHAPTER 7: DEEP GLADNESS MEETS DEEP HUNGER: KEVIN JONES

Kevin Jones developed his attitudes toward money and social activism during his childhood, as part of the only blue-collar home in a large but otherwise white-collar family. In what ways has your upbringing affected your attitudes toward money and tithing?

Kevin also sees the use of money and other resources as a relationship issue, a way of stewarding the gifts God

has bestowed on us. When you consider tithing or other gifts, where do you place the priorities?

CHAPTER 8: A SENSE OF COMMUNITY: MARK KELLNER

Mark Kellner believes that tithing is a commitment to community as well as to God. In what ways can you see the tithes of your faith community working to spread the word and work of God?

How does dedicating yourself to the practice of tithing help bond you with the church and the work they do in the world?

CHAPTER 9: "THE ESSENCE OF GOD IS ALWAYS TO BE GIVING": ED BACON

Ed Bacon believes that professing believers are colleagues of God—we are in this with him, and showing up is not enough. We should desire to give to others as he does, with our time, talent, and resources.

Tithing isn't always about finances. In what ways do you

give back to the church, to God, with the other gifts in your life?

How do you think that making a choice for constant and committed giving changes your relationship with those around you?

CHAPTER 10: "DO THEY TELL SUCH STORIES ABOUT ME AND YOU?": YISRAEL MILLER

How do the stories about the charity of others encourage us to follow the practice of tithing? Why do we admire those who sacrifice for others when we are reluctant to make the same choices? In what way does fear prevent us from giving of our own resources?

CHAPTER 11: RIGHTEOUS NUMBERS CRUNCHING: JOHN AND SYLVIA RONSVALLE

John and Sylvia Ronsvalle present some amazing figures in their reports, including how little each believer would have to give to evangelize the world. When you tithe, do you equate the money with service to God or just to your local church?

Are you aware of how your local church uses funds in the local community or for global missions?

EPILOGUE: STEWARDSHIP IS A THANKSGIVING TO
GOD: THOMAS MCGREAD

How do best express your thanks to God for all he has given you?