

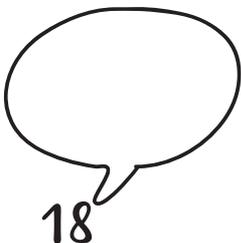
INSPIRATION

Luke 6:46-49 ⁴⁶ "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" ⁴⁷ As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. ⁴⁸ They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed, and its destruction was complete."

In Luke 6, Christ explains what it is like when we do, or do not do, what He has asked of us. Jesus is saying that the person who does what He says is wise. The person that hears, yet does not do as He says is, indeed, foolish.

Many Christians struggle with the subject of tithing, wondering if they are required to give financially and, if so, how much. In 1 Corinthians, Paul explains to the church in Corinth that they are to set aside a sum of money each week to give (1 Corinthians 16:2). The Old Testament specifically refers to this required giving as the tithe, which literally means ten percent of one's income. Jesus himself affirms this expectation in Matthew 23:23 when He tells the religious leaders "You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things", like justice, mercy, and faith. His emphasis was on the heart with which we give, but His point is if

God truly has our hearts, tithing only scratches the surface of building our lives on His foundation.



APPLICATION

Think about a doctor. There are many disciplines in this profession that are related to maintaining the skill, knowledge, and even genuine concern about his or her patients. We all know that doctors are held to very high standards and if the doctor performs all facets of the job well, they would likely be deemed excellent in the field. Isn't this the kind of doctor you want, one that you know really cares about you and is completely committed to acquiring and maintaining every discipline needed to truly care for your physical needs? You may even arrive at the conclusion that this doctor loves you as their patient because of their commitment to you. However, if the doctor is lacking in any area, you may have concerns about being their patient.

Like a doctor, there are also many disciplines involved in being a Christian. If we truly love God, then we will want Him to be pleased with what we bring to our relationship with Him. If we love Him with our whole heart, then wouldn't we want to give Him all of us? What makes us hold back parts of our lives from God? Does God despair at our lack of commitment to Him when we do not submit ourselves wholly to Him?

Tithing is not a financial issue, rather it is one of many disciplines that shows God that we love Him fully and truly. Tithing is a spiritual issue. If you are not currently tithing, please consider it for the purpose of growing your relationship with God and growing His kingdom. Sit down with your budget and ask God to show you how you can give. Sometimes it takes practicing a skill to become excellent at it, just like an experienced doctor. Start small with your tithing if you need to. But just get started. You may need to work your way up to ten percent. Or maybe you already tithe, but God wants

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you to give a gift above your ten percent. Pray and ask God what He wants you to do, then act on it! Show God that you trust and love Him and that He is your treasure!

CONTEMPLATION

1. Are you aware of what you treasure in this life? You will know by reflecting on where you spend your time and by what you are willing to give up. Are you willing to give your treasure(s) to God?

2. Do you long to know God more? Do you truly hunger after Him? If not, what is stopping you?

3. Are there areas in your life that you know God has blessed you and shown you how much He loves you?

4. What can you do to show God or continue to show God that you want to be closer to Him?

5. Do you feel like your relationship with God is built well, like the one who dug down and built on solid rock? What steps can you take to have the security that when trouble comes, your relationship with God will stand firm?

ELABORATION

I Timothy 6:10 talks about the love of money. Paul tells Timothy that the love of money is the root of all evil. Obviously the love of money could be something that might affect a person's tithing, but what other things may get in the way? Fear is often a culprit that interrupts giving to the church and other organizations. A family might be afraid of not having enough money to sustain itself because of giving. Giving can become a real faith issue. "Do I believe that God will take care of me if I give everything up for Him?" God speaks through Paul in II Corinthians 9:7 "God loves a cheerful giver." It's hard to be fearful and cheerful at the same time. How does God want us to overcome our fear or our love of money? Why are fear and love of money even temptations? How do we overcome these things?

Further Reading - Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:26; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Genesis 14:20; Malachi 3:9-10

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