



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Vision Sunday | *August 31-September 6* | *Luke 10:2*

Things to Know

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

Luke 10 records Jesus sending out seventy-two of His followers ahead of Him into the towns and places He intended to visit. Before Jesus tells them what to say or where to go, He tells them what to see: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." There are people everywhere who need the gospel. The problem is not that there is a shortage of people who need Jesus. The problem is that there is a shortage of people willing to labor for the sake of the gospel.

Read

Read Luke 10:1-3 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

Luke 10:1-3

“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. ² And he said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’ ³ Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Living on Mission In Community

Luke 10:2 reminds us that mission is not something reserved for pastors, missionaries, or ministry leaders. Every follower of Jesus is called to live on mission wherever God has placed them. There are opportunities to make disciples all around us. The people we encounter each day are not interruptions to our mission—they are often the very people God has placed in our lives for the sake of the gospel. Living on mission as a group begins by living on mission as an individual. Instead of simply seeing a coworker, neighbor, classmate, teammate, or friend, we begin to see them as someone who needs Jesus and whom God has intentionally placed in our sphere of influence. We don't have to manufacture opportunities; we need to be attentive to the opportunities God has already given us. Furthermore, living on mission as a group means intentionally leveraging your group to be a place of both authentic belonging and focused discipleship together.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- August 31- September 6

Small Group Curriculum - Luke 10:2

1. Session Overview

Luke 10:2 captures the urgency and simplicity of Jesus' vision for His followers: there is more gospel opportunity than there are people willing to embrace it. Jesus describes the world around His disciples as a harvest, shifting their attention from what they lack to what God is already doing. The need is not for a better mission strategy as much as it is for more people willing to participate in the mission. Jesus' command to pray for laborers reminds us that gospel ministry begins with dependence on the Lord of the harvest. He is the One who owns the harvest, raises up workers, and sends them where they are needed.

For a church, this passage calls us to move from being a gathered people to a sent people. We gather to worship, grow, and be equipped, but we are sent into our neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, campuses, and relationships to make Jesus known. The challenge is not simply to recognize that people need Christ, but to ask whether we are willing to be personally involved in reaching them. We are not waiting for someone else to take responsibility for the mission; Jesus has called all of us to participate.

2. Opening

Ask:

Have you ever met someone who became an important part of your life simply because you happened to be in the same place?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read Luke 10:1-3.

4. Historical, Literary, and Theological Context

Historical and Literary Context

Luke 10:2 sits within Jesus' preparation of His disciples for mission as He journeys toward Jerusalem. In Luke 10:1, Jesus appoints seventy-two disciples and sends them ahead of Him into the towns and places He intends to visit. This reflects the larger pattern of Jesus forming disciples who will eventually continue His mission after His death, resurrection, and ascension. The imagery of a harvest would have been immediately familiar in the agricultural world of first-century Judaism. Harvest was a

time of urgency: when crops were ready, workers were needed immediately. Jesus uses this familiar picture to communicate that there is an abundant spiritual opportunity but an insufficient number of workers. The mission is therefore urgent, dependent upon God, and carried out through His people. The reference to God as “the Lord of the harvest” also establishes that the harvest ultimately belongs to Him. The disciples are not creating the harvest; they are being called to participate in God's work of gathering people to Himself. Furthermore, Luke 10:2 must be read within the progression of Luke 10:1–3. Verse 1 establishes the mission: Jesus appoints and sends the seventy-two ahead of Him. Verse 2 identifies the need: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” Jesus then commands them to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out laborers. Verse 3 immediately gives the answer to that prayer: “Go your way; behold, I am sending you.” This progression is crucial.

Theological Context

Luke 10:2 presents several foundational truths about the mission of God. Ultimately, God is the Lord of the harvest and the mission begins with God, belongs to God, and depends upon God. It is what theologians call the “*missio Dei*” or the “Mission of God.” The church does not create the harvest or manufacture spiritual life; God is sovereignly working to bring people to Himself. Second, prayer is foundational to mission. Jesus commands His disciples to pray because successful mission requires dependence upon God rather than confidence in human ability. Finally, those who pray for laborers must be willing to become laborers themselves. The same disciples Jesus tells to pray in verse 2 are the disciples He sends in verse 3. This gives Luke 10:2 a powerful theological tension: we ask God to send workers while remaining available to be sent ourselves. The gospel creates a people who have been saved by Christ, formed as His disciples, and sent as His witnesses. We do not participate in mission to earn God's grace; we participate because, having received His grace, we have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18–20). It will also be helpful to note that the greek word used for “send out” is the greek word ἐκβάλλω (*ekballō*); the idea here is to be thrown or ejected out. The emphasis here is on the urgency of going.

5. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1. We Are Surrounded by People Who Need Jesus

Jesus begins by directing His disciples' attention outward. The harvest is not scarce; it is plentiful. Jesus calls His disciples to lift their eyes and see the harvest. The challenge is that we can become so consumed with our own schedules, responsibilities, and spiritual lives that we stop noticing the spiritual condition of the people around us. The mission field is not somewhere else; God has already placed us in it. Living on mission begins when we stop seeing people merely as people we encounter and start seeing them as people God has placed within our sphere of influence for the sake of the gospel.

2. We Have a Shortage of Disciple-Makers

This challenges the idea that ministry belongs primarily to pastors, staff, or a select group of highly gifted Christians. According to Ephesians 4:11–12, leaders are given to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Every believer is called to participate in the mission of making disciples. Some will lead groups, some will disciple students, some will lead overseas mission trips—but every believer should be moving toward spiritual maturity and helping others move toward Christ. The issue is not simply that we need more volunteers. We

need more disciples who are willing to make disciples. A church can have full rooms and still have too few laborers if most people are consuming rather than contributing.

3. We Are Praying That You Will Step Up

Now, more than ever, the mission of connection people in the Upstate with Jesus to change their world falls into your hands. If the people of God don't take the mission of God seriously, then the Church of Christ ceases to be the church. There are thousands of people all around you who are in desperate need of the life changing message of the gospel. Furthermore, they are in desperate need for you to walk with them, teach them, and disciple them. The feeling of not being ready or equipped is universal. Don't let this stop you from doing what God has called you

6. Discussion Questions

1. What does "the harvest is plentiful" reveal about how Jesus views the people around us?
2. What does Luke 10:2-3 teach us about the connection between prayer and obedience?
3. How does this passage challenge a consumer mentality toward church?
4. God is the "Lord of the harvest" and gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:6-7). Why are we still responsible to labor faithfully?
5. Why should every disciple be moving toward making disciples?
6. How do we make disciples?
7. What would it look like for you to step up and participate in God's mission?

7. Application

This week, ask God to show you one person He has placed in your life who needs Jesus. Pray for that person by name, look for an opportunity to have a gospel conversation, and consider one way you can intentionally invest in their life. Be bold enough to pray to God, "Here I am. Send me."

Also consider: Am I simply receiving ministry, or am I helping make disciples? Take one practical step toward becoming a laborer in the harvest—join a group, disciple someone, serve, invite someone to church, or share the gospel.

8. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, you are the Lord of the harvest. The harvest is abundant but the workers are few. Send workers into the harvest, Lord. Give us boldness and a readiness to go ourselves. We are your hands and feet, Lord. Use us. We ask in the name of Jesus, Amen.

9. Memory Verse

“And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Luke 10:2





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Stewardship

September 7-13

Psalm 50:1-23

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

Psalm 50 confronts one of the most basic assumptions we make about our possessions: "What I have belongs to me." The psalm gives us a radically different picture. God is the Creator, King, and owner of everything. He does not depend upon His people to provide for Him, because everything already belongs to Him. The psalm begins with God summoning His people before Him as Judge. He then exposes the inadequacy of a merely external understanding of worship. Israel had been bringing sacrifices, but they had begun treating their sacrifices as though God needed something from them. God reminds them that He owns every animal, every mountain, and every resource in creation. The result is a profound theology of stewardship: we do not give because God lacks; we give because God owns. Our possessions, resources, time, abilities, relationships, and opportunities are gifts entrusted to us by God. Stewardship is therefore not primarily about money. It is about recognizing God's ownership and responding to Him faithfully.

Read

Read Psalm 50:1-23 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

Psalm 50:1-23

¹“The Mighty One, God the Lord,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

²Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.

³Our God comes; he does not keep silence;
before him is a devouring fire,
around him a mighty tempest.

⁴He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:

⁵“Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”

⁶The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge! *Selah*

⁷“Hear, O my people, and I will speak;
O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am God, your God.

⁸Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt offerings are continually before me.

⁹I will not accept a bull from your house
or goats from your folds.

¹⁰For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.

¹¹I know all the birds of the hills,
and all that moves in the field is mine.

¹²“If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for the world and its fullness are mine.

¹³Do I eat the flesh of bulls
or drink the blood of goats?

¹⁴Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,

and perform your vows to the Most High,
¹⁵ and call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”

¹⁶ But to the wicked God says:
“What right have you to recite my statutes
or take my covenant on your lips?

¹⁷ For you hate discipline,
and you cast my words behind you.

¹⁸ If you see a thief, you are pleased with him,
and you keep company with adulterers.

¹⁹ “You give your mouth free rein for evil,
and your tongue frames deceit.

²⁰ You sit and speak against your brother;
you slander your own mother's son.

²¹ These things you have done, and I have been silent;
you thought that I was one like yourself.
But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.

²² “Mark this, then, you who forget God,
lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!

²³ The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me;
to one who orders his way rightly
I will show the salvation of God!”

[The Holy Bible, English Standard Version](#). ESV® Text Edition: 2016.

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Living on Mission In Community

Psalm 50 reminds us that everything belongs to God. That means stewardship is not simply about what happens when we give money to the church, but about how we use everything God has entrusted to us for His purposes. Our resources become tools for mission when we stop asking, “What can I keep?” and begin asking, “How can I use what God has given me to bless others and make Christ known?” Our homes can become places of hospitality. Our finances can become means of generosity. Our time can be invested in people. Our abilities can serve the church and our community. Our influence can open doors for gospel conversations. Biblical stewardship turns ordinary resources into opportunities for kingdom ministry.

What resources has God given you that you need to use for a Kingdom impact?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- September 7-13

Small Group Curriculum - Psalm 50:1-23

1. Session Overview

In Psalm 50, God confronts a distorted understanding of worship and exposes what happens when religious activity becomes disconnected from genuine devotion. Israel had brought sacrifices to God, but they had forgotten the One to whom they were bringing them. God reminds them that He is not sustained by their offerings; He is the Lord over all creation. True worship, then, is not about giving God something He lacks but responding appropriately to who He is. For the believer, this means stewardship is ultimately an issue of lordship. What we do with our resources reveals what we believe about God and our relationship to Him. As we recognize His authority over every area of life, our response should be thanksgiving, trust, obedience, and a willingness to use what He has entrusted to us for His glory.

2. Opening

Ask:

Growing up, what is one lesson your family taught you about money or possessions?

What is something you own that you would have a really hard time giving away?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read Psalm 50:1-23 out loud.

4. Literary, Historical, and Theological Context

Literary and Historical Context

Psalm 50 is a covenant lawsuit psalm, sometimes called a *rib* psalm (from the Hebrew word for a legal dispute). God, identified as El, Elohim, and Yahweh, convenes a divine courtroom with the heavens and earth as witnesses (vv. 1–6). He is not absent or indifferent — He shines forth and comes to judge His people. Critically, the charge is not that Israel failed to offer sacrifices (v. 8). They brought the offerings. The problem was what they believed those offerings accomplished.

The psalm divides into four clear movements:

- **The Courtroom Scene (vv. 1–6):** God summons the cosmos as witnesses and announces He is coming in judgment — not silence, but fire and storm.

- **The Accusation (vv. 7–15):** God clarifies that He does not need animal sacrifices. He owns everything. What He desires is a thankful heart and genuine dependence.
- **The Indictment (vv. 16–21):** God rebukes the hypocritical worshiper who recites His statutes but practices theft, adultery, and slander — assuming God is indifferent.
- **The Verdict (vv. 22–23):** Those who forget God will face destruction; those who offer true worship — gratitude and ordered lives — will experience His salvation.

Verses 11-12 sit at the heart of God's declaration of absolute ownership. Following His indictment of ritual worship detached from genuine devotion (vv. 8–10), God makes two pointed assertions: (1) He has intimate, complete knowledge of all creation, and (2) He is not dependent on anything His people bring to Him. The sacrifice was never about meeting a need in God — it was always a response of gratitude and acknowledgment from the worshiper.

Theological Context

Psalm 50 presents stewardship within the larger biblical theology of God's absolute ownership and humanity's role as stewards. God is not merely the greatest owner among many; He is the Creator and therefore the rightful Lord of everything that exists. This truth dismantles the illusion that human beings possess anything independently of God. Scripture consistently teaches that the earth and everything in it belong to Him (Ps. 24:1; 1 Chron. 29:11–14), while humanity is entrusted with the responsibility to cultivate, manage, and faithfully use what God provides (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:15). Psalm 50 also corrects a transactional view of worship. Israel's sacrifices were never intended to meet some deficiency in God, as though He depended upon their offerings; rather, true worship flows from recognizing God's provision and responding with thanksgiving, trust, and obedience. This anticipates the New Testament's broader understanding of stewardship, where believers recognize that they themselves belong to Christ and that everything entrusted to them—including their bodies, possessions, time, abilities, and resources—is ultimately for God's glory (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 4:1–2; 6:19–20). Therefore, biblical stewardship is not fundamentally about giving God a portion of what belongs to us; it is about faithfully managing everything that already belongs to Him. Our generosity is not an attempt to satisfy a needy God but a grateful response to a generous God who has already given us everything we have and, ultimately, has given us Himself in Christ.

5. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

The Reality of God's Economy

Psalm 50 begins by establishing who is in charge. God is the “Mighty One,” the Judge, and the Lord of all creation. Before God addresses what His people should do with their possessions, He establishes the reality that everything already belongs to Him. In verses 10–12, God declares that every beast of the forest, the cattle on a thousand hills, and the entire world belong to Him. This completely changes the way we understand ownership. We often think in terms of “my money,” “my house,” “my time,” “my abilities,” or “my possessions,” but Psalm 50 reminds us that everything we have ultimately comes from and belongs to God. We are not autonomous owners; we are stewards of what the Creator has entrusted to us. God even makes clear that He does not need our resources—He is not dependent upon our sacrifices because He already owns everything. The reality of God's economy is therefore simple but

profound: God is the owner, and we are the stewards. Stewardship begins when we stop asking, “What do I have that I can give God?” and start asking, “What has God entrusted to me, and how does He want me to use it?”

The Response of God’s People

Once God establishes His ownership, He then shows His people how they should respond. In verses 14–15, God calls them to offer thanksgiving, depend upon Him, and glorify Him. Their response to God's provision should not be an attempt to repay or satisfy a God who lacks anything. Instead, stewardship flows from gratitude, trust, and worship. God has given us everything we have, so we respond by giving ourselves and our resources back to Him for His purposes. Verse 23 brings this to its conclusion: the phrase “orders his way rightly” demonstrates that stewardship is not merely about financial giving—it is about bringing our entire lives under God's authority. Our money, time, possessions, abilities, homes, careers, and influence are all opportunities to glorify Him. The proper response to God's ownership is faithful stewardship. We don't simply give God a portion of our resources while keeping control of the rest; we recognize that our entire lives belong to Him.

6. Discussion Questions

1. Why is recognizing God's ownership foundational to biblical stewardship?
2. What is the difference between ownership and stewardship?
3. Why does God reject the idea that He needs Israel's sacrifices?
4. How can possessions become a source of security, identity, and idolatry rather than depending on God?
5. What does thanksgiving have to do with faithful stewardship?
6. What would change if you viewed everything you have as something God has entrusted to you?
7. What area of your life is hardest for you to surrender to God's ownership?

7. Application

For many of us, this passage challenges the way we think about life, resources, and money. This week, we can practice thanksgiving by writing out all the ways God has blessed us spiritually, financially, physically, emotionally, etc. But we must not stop at thanksgiving: if our gratitude never leads to action, we fail to actually be grateful. Take some time to identify areas in your life that need to be invested into Kingdom causes. For some, that looks like investing your time by serving. For others, that means creating a discipline of financial giving. The bottom line is that we are to steward God's resources faithfully so that others might encounter the God to whom everything belongs.

8. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, the world is yours and the fullness thereof. Everything we have belongs to you, for you are our creator, master, and sustainer. Help us to see our time, our resources, our gifts, and our very life as an investment to be made for your gospel and for your kingdom. We ask in the name of Jesus, Amen.

9. Memory Verse

“I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fulness are mine.”

Psalm 50:11-12





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Stewardship

September 14-20

Malachi 3:6-15

Things to Know

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

Malachi 3:6-15 challenges us to examine what our giving reveals about our trust in God. God begins by reminding His people, "I the LORD do not change," establishing that His faithfulness remains constant even when His people are unfaithful. The tithe was an intentional portion given within Israel's covenant relationship with God, and their refusal to give revealed a deeper problem of misplaced trust. They were withholding from God because they had forgotten that everything they possessed ultimately came from Him. God calls His people to return to Him through faithful obedience and invites them to trust His provision. While we do not live under the same covenantal system, the question for us is why would we ever want to give anything less? We give because He has given to us, and we can live generously because

our security rests not in what we possess but in the God who faithfully provides and saves.

Read

Read Malachi 3:6-15 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
- What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
- Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
- What do you need help understanding about this passage?

Scripture

Malachi 3:6-15

“For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. ⁷ From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ ⁸ Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰ Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. ¹¹ I will rebuke the devourer^[a] for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. ¹² Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

¹³ “Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ ¹⁴ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts?’ ¹⁵ And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evil-doers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.”

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Living on Mission In Community

God's resources are not given to us merely for personal consumption. Generosity allows us to meet tangible needs, practice hospitality, support gospel ministry, and create opportunities for relationships that point people toward Christ. Living on mission requires trusting that God's provision is greater than our possessions. We can hold our resources with open hands because our security does not ultimately come from what we have; it comes from the God who faithfully provides. Look for opportunities this week to use something God has entrusted to you—your money, time, home, skills, or influence to serve someone else. Furthermore, tithing is a discipline every believer should practice for the sole reason that we should delight to do so. Why would we not want to give generously to the God who made us and saves us by his grace?

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- September 14-20

Small Group Curriculum - Malachi 3:6-15

1. Session Overview

Malachi 3:6–15 addresses a people who had returned from exile but were struggling with spiritual apathy and covenant unfaithfulness. Their failure to bring the full tithe to God was not merely a financial problem; it revealed a deeper problem of trust and worship. God reminds them that He has not changed even though they have. Their giving had become a reflection of their relationship with Him. The passage challenges God's people to recognize that what we do with our resources reveals what we believe about God. The tithe in Malachi belonged within Israel's covenant system and supported the worship and ministry of the temple. For Christians today, the New Testament does not simply transfer every element of Israel's tithing legislation directly into the church. Yet the underlying principles remain deeply relevant: God owns what we possess, God's people are called to give generously and intentionally, and faithful giving is an expression of trust in God's provision. Malachi ultimately points us beyond a percentage toward the character of God: He is faithful, unchanging, and trustworthy.

2. Opening

Ask:

If you unexpectedly received \$1,000 today, what would you do with it?

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “tithe?”

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read Malachi 3:6-15 out loud.

4. Historical, Literary, and Theological Context

Historical and Literary Context

Malachi ministered to the people of Israel after the Babylonian exile. The temple had been rebuilt, sacrifices had resumed, and the people had returned to the land, but spiritual renewal had not fully followed. The book of Malachi is structured around a series of disputes between God and His people. Again and again, God confronts their covenant unfaithfulness while the people respond with skeptical questions such as, “How have we despised your name?” and “How have we robbed you?” In Malachi 3:6–15, the issue is their failure to bring

the required tithes and offerings. Under the Mosaic covenant, Israel was instructed to give a tenth of agricultural produce and livestock, with the tithe supporting the Levites, festivals, and care for vulnerable members of the community (Lev. 27:30–33; Num. 18:21–24; Deut. 14:22–29). The phrase “storehouse” in Malachi 3:10 refers to the temple storehouses where offerings were collected and distributed for the service of God's house. The issue was therefore not simply that individual Israelites had less money in their bank accounts. Their withholding of the tithe was disrupting the covenant community's worship and the provision for those serving in the temple. This makes the charge “you are robbing me” particularly significant. Their withholding was ultimately an offense against God because the tithe represented their covenant responsibility to Him.

Theological Context

Malachi 3:6–15 is ultimately about covenant faithfulness and trust in God, expressed through stewardship. Verse 6 provides the theological foundation: “I the LORD do not change.” Israel's circumstances, emotions, and faithfulness have changed, but God's covenant character has not. Their withholding of the tithe was therefore more than a financial failure; it revealed a failure to trust the God who had faithfully provided for them. Christians should therefore be careful not to treat Malachi 3 as though the Mosaic covenant's entire tithing system has simply been transferred unchanged into the New Testament church. The New Testament emphasizes generous, willing, cheerful, sacrificial, and proportionate giving (2 Cor. 8–9), rather than presenting a single passage requiring Christians to reproduce Israel's covenant taxation system. Nevertheless, the theological principle remains: God's people are called to respond to God's grace with faithful stewardship. The tithe can serve as a meaningful biblical pattern and discipline for generosity, but Christian giving ultimately flows from the gospel, not legalism. We give because God has first given to us, and the clearest demonstration of His generosity is found in Christ, who “though he was rich, yet for your sake became poor” (2 Cor. 8:9). Therefore, we should operate with the understanding that the 10% tithe is a great starting point, but we should strive to always be more generous than that.

5. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1. What Is a Tithe?

A tithe is a tenth given to God as an act of worship and obedience. The bottom line is this: Put God first, not last. Tithing gives us a tangible way to practice putting God at the center of our priorities. Rather than waiting to see what remains at the end of the month, intentionally set aside what belongs to God first. Let your giving become a regular reminder that both your finances and your entire life are ordered around Him.

2. What Happens When We Don't Tithe?

Malachi shows that withholding the tithe was ultimately a matter of disobedience and misplaced trust. Any time we fail to put our full trust and dependence in Christ, we are setting ourselves up for failure, sin, and judgment. Examine what competes with God for your trust. Our spending habits can reveal what we value, what we fear, and where we find security.

3. How Do We See God's Faithfulness?

God invites His people to obey Him and experience His faithfulness. We don't give because we can guarantee what God will do in return, but because we know that God is faithful to provide. God's faithfulness is often experienced in the places where we are willing to trust Him beyond what feels comfortable or predictable. Take a step of obedience in your stewardship this week, trusting that God is faithful even when you cannot see how He will provide.

6. Discussion Questions

1. What does the word “tithe” mean, and what was its purpose in Israel's covenant life?
2. Why does God describe withholding the tithe as “robbing” Him?
3. What can our giving reveal about what we trust?
4. How should Christians understand Malachi 3 in light of the New Testament's teaching on generosity?
5. Why is God's faithfulness essential to our willingness to give?
6. What is the difference between giving to get from God and giving because we trust God?
7. What fears can make it difficult to trust God with our finances?
8. How does the gospel motivate us toward generosity?

7. Application

Ask yourself: Am I fully trusting God with what He has entrusted to me? Stewardship is an opportunity to put our trust into action through obedience. This week, examine your giving and ask God to reveal any areas where fear, comfort, or control may be keeping you from faithful generosity. Then take one practical step toward greater obedience and generosity, trusting that God is faithful.

8. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, you are worthy of it all. You laid down your life for me, so give us hearts that are willing to lay it all down for you. Help us to be faithful to you in every area of life, including our finances. We trust you. In Jesus name, Amen.

9. Memory Verse

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”

Malachi 3:10





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Stewardship

| *September 21-27*

| *Matthew 25:14-30*

Things to Know

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word In Community

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

Matthew 25:14–30 reminds us that God has entrusted each of us with resources, abilities, opportunities, and responsibilities that are ultimately His. The servants were given different amounts, but each was expected to faithfully manage what had been placed in his hands. The faithful servants understood that what they received was not theirs to simply preserve or consume; it was theirs to use for the purposes of their master. The warning of the third servant shows that faithfulness is not merely avoiding failure—it requires actively putting what God has given us to work. And because the master eventually returned to settle accounts, Jesus reminds us that our stewardship has eternal significance. We will not be held accountable for having what someone else had, but we will give an account for what we did

with what God entrusted to us. The goal of stewardship is not to accumulate more, but to faithfully invest what God has given us for His glory.

Read

Read Matthew 25:14-30 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
- What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
- Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
- What do you need help understanding about this passage?

Scripture

Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants^l and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ ²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ ²⁶ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.’ ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness.

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

[The Holy Bible, English Standard Version](#). ESV® Text Edition: 2016.

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Living on Mission In Community

Faithful stewardship means recognizing that people are one of God's greatest assignments give to us. We are called to invest in the people God has placed around us—not simply by meeting their physical needs, but by helping them take steps toward Jesus. This may mean slowing down to listen, walking with someone through a difficult season, sharing what Christ has done in your life, or intentionally discipling someone in the faith. Who is someone God has placed in your life that you can intentionally invest in for the sake of the gospel?

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- September 21-27

Small Group Curriculum - Matthew 25:14-30

1. Session Overview

Matthew 25:14–30 places us in the tension of waiting for the Master to return. Jesus describes a master who entrusts his wealth to three servants before leaving on a journey. The amounts are enormous, reminding us that what God places in our hands carries real significance, even though what He gives each person may look different. Two servants put what they received to work, while the third buries his talent. Interestingly, burying money was not viewed as reckless in the ancient world; it could actually be considered a safe and responsible way to protect entrusted property. His problem, then, was not simply that he made a bad decision with the money. He chose preservation over participation. He protected what had been given to him but never used it for the purposes of his master.

When the master returns after a long absence, he settles accounts with each servant. The first two are commended, not because they received the same amount or produced identical results, but because they took what belonged to the master and put it to work. The third servant's response exposes something deeper: his view of the master shaped the way he handled what the master entrusted to him. Jesus is teaching us that stewardship is ultimately about how we live in light of who God is and the certainty that Christ will return. We have not been given resources, abilities, relationships, and opportunities merely to protect them or consume them for ourselves. We have been entrusted with them for a purpose.

2. Opening

Ask:

If you had to leave town for a year, what is one thing you would want someone you trust to take care of for you?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read Matthew 25:14-30 out loud.

4. Historical and Literary Context

Literary Context

Matthew 25:14–30 is the second of three units that close the Olivet Discourse, Jesus's final major teaching block before the Passion narrative. It sits between the Parable of the Ten

Virgins (25:1–13) and the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats (25:31–46), and it shares their controlling concern: how disciples are to live during the interval between the Master's departure and his return. The three parables are not interchangeable illustrations of the same point. The Virgins address readiness in the sense of ongoing spiritual preparedness (oil in the lamps). The Talents address readiness in the sense of active, productive stewardship during the waiting period. The Sheep and Goats address the final basis of judgment, mercy shown to “the least of these.” Read together, the sequence moves from watchfulness, to faithful labor, to the ultimate criterion of judgment. Matthew 25:14–30 is the hinge that keeps watchfulness from collapsing into passivity.

Historical Context

Matthew 25:14–30 reflects a world where wealthy landowners and masters could entrust significant portions of their property to servants while they were away. The talent was a large unit of weight that came to function as a monetary measure, representing an enormous sum of money—roughly twenty years of a laborer's wages. Jesus' audience would have immediately recognized that the master was entrusting his servants with something of tremendous value. Even more interesting is the third servant's decision to bury his talent. In the ancient world, burying money was considered a legitimate and relatively safe way to protect someone's property. His choice was therefore not necessarily foolish or careless; he chose the safest option available. In fact, if the money the servant had buried was stolen, he would not have been held liable for the money because it was buried.

5. Systematic Walkthrough (Teaching Points)

Recognize What You've Been Given

The master entrusted each servant with something valuable, but not everyone received the same amount. This should never cause us to be jealous or compare ourselves to what others have been given. Rather, we should seek to be faithful in glorifying God through what we have already been given.

Invest What's Been Entrusted to You

The faithful servants didn't simply protect what they received, but rather they put it to work. Stewardship requires more than possession; it requires purposeful action. God intends for what He has given us to accomplish something beyond ourselves. Our time, gifts, resources, and influence become valuable kingdom investments when we intentionally use them for God's purposes.

Expect to Give an Account

The master's return reminds us that our stewardship has an endpoint: we will answer for how we handled what was entrusted to us. Living with accountability in view changes the way we use what we have today because we know our choices matter beyond this life.

6. Discussion Questions

1. What has God entrusted to you that you sometimes view as simply “yours”?
2. Why is it important that the servants received different amounts?
3. What does faithfulness look like when your assignment is different from someone else's?
4. What does it mean to invest what God has given you?
5. What keeps people from using the gifts and opportunities God has given them?
6. Why should the reality of giving an account affect how we live today?
7. What is one thing God has entrusted to you that you could use more intentionally for His kingdom?
8. If Jesus returned today, what would you want Him to find you doing with what He has given you?

7. Application

Stewardship often means doing something with what God has given us before we know exactly what the outcome will be. This week, look for one opportunity to use what you already have rather than waiting for more time, more resources, or a better opportunity. Faithfulness begins with recognizing that what is in your hands today is enough for the assignment God has given you today.

8. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, your word makes clear to make the best use of the time. You have entrusted to each of us so much, so we pray that we would make much of the gospel. Give us wisdom to know how you want us to invest every part of our lives in the advancement of the gospel in the world. We ask in Jesus name, Amen.

9. Memory Verse

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’”

Matthew 25:21

