

## WEEK 3 - GENEROSITY IN THE PROPHETS

### OVERVIEW

With the provocative calls for generosity in the law of Moses as a background, it is disappointing to see how quickly the people of Israel began to ignore these important commands. As time went on, wealthy Israelites started routinely ignoring the needs of the poor and skimping on their tithes to God. However, the prophets of Israel wanted none of this. They came out guns blazing with passionate calls for the Israelites to get back on track with the open-handed generosity which was meant to define their nation. The prophets' message went beyond simple condemnation of Israel's disobedience, however. They painted a powerful picture of the abundance and fruit that would surely come from God in the wake of the people's obedient generosity. According to the prophets, God blesses those who live with a spirit of generosity.

Unfortunately, some of these ideas have been warped and co-opted by "prosperity gospel" teachers today, who use God's promises in the Bible as a rationale for amassing vast wealth through the donations of those seeking such abundance. Because of this, it can be a touchy topic to approach. However, if we strip away these false teachings and look at the overarching narrative of Scripture, we can rediscover the provocative truth that when we give generously to God's purposes in this world, he does, in fact, bless us in return – just not always in the way we might expect!

*Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!*

Malachi 3:10

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you think of God's blessing in your life, what comes to mind?
2. What did the prophets have to say about the generosity of the Israelites? ([Isaiah 5:8-10](#), [Malachi 3:5-9](#))
3. According to what Barry said, what forms could God's blessing take?
4. Have you ever put God to the test as He says to "try it!" in [Malachi 3:10-12](#)? If so, what happened?
5. Explain the difference between the "prosperity gospel" and God's vision for Israel.
6. How will God bless you if you give?
7. How do you determine how much to give?
8. How do you think our generosity today will show the world another way to live?

### RESOURCES

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