

What Happened When This Christian Comedian Really Took Malachi 3:10 to Heart

Almost every sermon about tithing references Malachi 3:10. That verse says to test the Lord. If we test the Lord, He will open up the floodgates of heaven.

One Sunday morning I was visiting a church where the pastor read from Malachi and then offered a tithing challenge. He said, "If you tithe for 90 days to our church and at the end you aren't better off financially, then we'll give you your money back."

That inspired me to create and film my own tithing challenge. I would call it, *The Tithe Project* (). I set out to find someone who had never tithed before, get him or her to give 10 percent of his or her income away to a local church and document the journey on film. Easy enough, right?

Not so easy. It took almost six months to find someone who would agree to do it. Most people said they couldn't afford to give away 10 percent of their income. A few married couples almost said yes, but inevitably one of the spouses would back out.

After nearly giving up, I found someone: an independent film producer who was working with me on another project!

Beverly is a single mom of two who lives in Colorado Springs and had been inspired to start tithing after reading several books on generosity.

At the outset, we set some rules. Beverly would tithe 10 percent of any income she received during the ninety days. She would give it to the church she attended.

To help keep track of Beverly's finances each month, I enlisted the help of a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). A third-party would give an objective opinion during the experiment. We met with the CPA a few days before the experiment began to establish her financial numbers.

Day one of the experiment was very traditional. Beverly headed to her church on Sunday morning and dropped a check in the offering bucket.

Everything was going as planned until she got back home and opened the mail from the previous week. A disconnection notice from her utility company let her know that power in her house would be shut off if the balance she owed wasn't paid almost immediately. It turns out that the amount she tithed that morning could have paid her utility bill.

At this point, I considered stopping the experiment. I didn't want to be the guy who was responsible for a single mom having no heat and no water in her house.

Day two of the experiment is when she saw God remain true to His word.

I received a voicemail from Beverly that afternoon. In the mail that day, she had received a check from one of her previous clients whose payment was seriously overdue. She had written the invoice off months ago and completely forgotten about it. The check was large enough to cover her utility bill.

During the 90-day tithing experiment, several more miraculous events happened. For instance, Beverly had previously signed up for a non-related, home-based business but had never put any work into it. Halfway through the experiment, she began receiving commission checks from the company.

The miracles didn't stop there. A friend from Beverly's church needed a place to stay as she transitioned into moving to

another state. Instead of paying rent, the friend offered to provide childcare for free, which ended up saving Beverly more than \$1,000 a month.

We captured it all on film. Some of the most entertaining scenes are the meetings with the CPA. Each month he would try to figure out how Beverly's giving away 10 percent of her income was actually increasing her cash flow.

Not only does the film follow the story of Beverly and her tithing journey, it also discusses the history of tithing and money with historians, authors and money experts. It takes an in-depth look at some of the reasons why people don't tithe, and why most pastors have such a difficult time talking about money to their congregations.

As I traveled the country talking to and filming experts, two common themes kept popping up. First, people don't give to a church budget; people give to a compelling vision. Second, the church needs to help people win with money—either teaching wise financial practices or job skills. If the church can help its members with that, the church would see an increase in its giving.

I created *The Tithe Project* film to literally test God as it's written in Malachi 3:10. In the end, He did prove faithful. Let me be clear though, this is not a formula for increasing your net worth or a type of prosperity teaching. This experiment showed that we are all designed to be generous and God will prove His faithfulness time and again.

Are you ready to take God at His word? Will you accept the challenge to test Him?

As for Malachi 3:10, yes, when we have generous hearts, God does open His floodgates—sometimes in surprising ways. {eoa}

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perfect for your church event or comedy night.