Timeless
Part 2

Series Idea
In a trendy world, the best things in life are timeless.

Key Idea
The financial world promises us great returns on our investment. And yet, there’s always this: “Past performance is not an indicator of future results.” When it comes to financial investments, we always hope for a great R.O.I. We want a great return on our investment. Today, we are going to talk about the greatest financial advice you will ever receive. This advice has a strong history of past success AND the past is an indicator of future results. This is the best financial advice you will ever receive because it impacts your life today, tomorrow and forever. This financial advice is timeless.

Bottom Line
When you are a caretaker of God’s Kingdom,
He becomes a caretaker of your kingdom.

Text: Malachi 3: 7 – 10, Matthew 6:20

Visuals: Your High School Senior Picture

I. Introduction.
A. Recap of the series.
B. In a trendy world, the best things in life are timeless. (Show your High School Senior picture.)
C. Today's trait will never go out of style. This one trait, at least according to Jesus, shows up in eternity. Jesus is really clear about this. Not only will this timeless trait never go out of style, it actually shows up in forever. It's one of the reasons why we have to talk about this.

D. That said, I want to be honest with you and tell you why I shy away from a talk like this. When we are done here today, it would be easy to walk away and think, "Well, that's exactly what I was expecting a preacher at a church to say." I understand. If I don't do my job well today, this could sound like a self-serving talk for the church. If that happens, I apologize. But, let me tell you what drove me to talk about this today. It's a timeless trait that shows up in eternity. For example, I don't want you to bump into me in heaven and say, "Why didn't you teach this when you had the opportunity?" I want you to say, "I'm so glad we not only talked about this but I am so glad I implemented this into my life." That's why I want to talk about this today. I don't want something from you. I want something for you.

Let me set up where we’re going by saying this: Today, we are going to be talking about what is known as R.O.I. Return on Investment.

E. **R.O.I.**

For example, if you had invested $990 into Apple when it went public your investment would be worth $313,740
On the other hand, how many of you remember Webvan? It was an online grocery store where you have your groceries delivered to you. If you invested $1,000 in Webvan, your investment would be worth ZERO. They went out of business.

We’re familiar with Return on Investment. In fact, the financial world promises us great returns on our investment. And yet, there’s always this disclaimer: “Past performance in no guarantee of future results.” When it comes to financial investments, we always hope for a great R.O.I. We want a great return on our investment but there’s always a chance it won’t work out. #Webvan.

Here’s why I bring this up. Today, we are going to talk about the greatest financial advice you will ever receive because today we are going to talk about the greatest Return on Investment possible. This financial advice has a strong history of past success AND the past is an indicator of future results. This is the best financial advice you will ever receive because it impacts your life today, tomorrow and forever. This financial advice is timeless.

This financial advice comes not from me. It comes from your Heavenly Father. To understand how to apply this advice, we are going to eavesdrop into a conversation God has with the Nation of Israel in the first last book of the Old Testament. And, it’s a rather tense conversation at first. For example, have you ever walked up to a couple of friends only to realize they are in a serious, heated conversation? That’s a bit awkward, right? Well, that is in essence what we’re going to do today. We’re walking into a conversation that has been going and we’re about to discover that it’s a tense conversation.
In this conversation, God provides a command and an invitation. But, as we’re about to discover, this command and invitation isn’t reserved for Israel. The great news is that both are offered to us, as well. If you have your Bibles, turn to Malachi 3, starting in Verse 7.

II. Financial Advice from God.
   A. Malachi 3: 7 - 10.

"Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty.

God is pleading with His people to return to Him but the response of Israel reveals there is a problem. They didn’t know that they had left. They respond with:

"But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ Malachi 3:7 NIV

God’s response to this question turns up the intensity and tension in the conversation:

"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.

Wait, what? We are robbing God? How does that happen? That’s the response of the people. The next verse reveals it:

"But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’

How do you rob God? Here, according to God is how:

"In tithes and offerings.” Malachi 3:8 NIV
God goes further…

"You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.” Malachi 3:9 NIV

And then the conversation begins to shift. God begins to show His love, care and the potential of what can happen when you put Him first in your financial life.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.” Malachi 3:10 NIV

So, to recap, we have a command and an invitation.

First, the command:

"Don’t rob Me of tithes and offerings." God

And then an invitation:

“Test me in this.” says the Lord Almighty.. Malachi 3:10 NIV

This is the Biblical version of “I triple dog dare you.”

This is the ONLY time in the Bible when God asks us to test Him. This is amazing.

B. Now, the pushback to all of this is an understandable
statement:

“If I made more money, I could give more.”

In other words, we’re all generous. And if I made more money I would be more generous. Well, what’s interesting is that the research is in on the connection between more money and more generosity, and let me show you what the research shows. This chart shows annual income levels. The first group made $25,000 or less in the calendar year. Our theory that the more money you make the more money you give would show that as income grows so does generosity. Let’s see how this plays out:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25 - 50,000</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50 - 75,000</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75 - $100,000</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100 - $200,000</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 plus</td>
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So, you would think the higher income bracket gave more, right? Makes sense.

$25,000 gave 7.7%
$25 - 50,000 gave 4.8%

Let’s keep going.

$25,000 gave 7.7%
$25 - 50,000 gave 4.8%
$50 - 75,000 gave 3.5%
$75 - 100,000 gave 3.0%
$100 - 200,000 gave 2.6%
C. So, while the theory is, “The more money you make the more money you give away” the reality is “the more money you make the less money you give away. Why is that???

D. PIE illustration. (See video for illustration.)

The reason people give less the more money they make is because they are prioritizing giving. Our giving is left with leftovers. And if you are a Jesus follower you need to understand one important truth when it comes to leftover giving:

God isn’t satisfied with being in your leftovers.

F. God has made it perfectly clear. He wants to bless you financially AND grow your faith at the same time. But, if our approach is giving God the left-overs, He has made it clear: You are trusting in your resources and not trusting in Him.

G. Let me show you how God teaches us how to prioritize Him and how we invite Him into our finances.

PIE ILLUSTRATION. SECOND ROUND. (SEE VIDEO.)

You start first with God. God asks you to give Him a tithe – a tenth. The tithe belongs you to God. It’s why God teaches us that we don’t give a tithe. We bring a tithe:

You bring a tithe because the tithe belongs to God. You give an offering because it is above the tithe.
But that's not all:

H. There is a principle known as the principle of first fruits.

A tithe isn’t a tenth.
A tithe is the first tenth.

Before you pay the mortgage, the power bill, the grocery bill, you bring your tithe to God, the Church. Why don’t you start with the mortgage company? Good question. The reason you don’t start there is because the mortgage company hasn’t promised to bless you financially. In fact, the mortgage company has made one promise to you – if you don’t pay us we will show you who actually owns your home.

I. What is an offering? An offering is above the 10%. Challenge: If you’ve been a Christian for more than 10 years and you are still at 10%, you need to trust God more.

J. Again, the only place that God says to test Him is here. God is “triple-dog daring you.”

Here’s what God is saying:

K. “90% of your income with my blessing > 100% of your income without my blessing.”

So, where do you start?

Maybe you hear that today and it doesn’t seem like freedom. It seems like pressure. It seems guilt-ridden. Maybe you are experiencing such financial pressure that giving a slice of your
income just creates a mild or not-so-mild panic. I understand.

So, where do you start?

You come back next week. That’s what you do.

Next week, we are going to break this down in simple steps and we are going together put many of you on the pathway to financial freedom and all of us on a pathway of generosity and faith-building that will mark our lives forever more.

And here’s why you don’t want to miss next week: This really isn’t about money. It’s about faith. But God knows when it comes to faith and money, money can either build or restrict our faith. God understands. He’s not being unfair. He’s not being mean. God understands. It’s why He says, “Test me in this.”

And if that weren’t enough reason to come back next week, here’s one more, and this might be the biggest reason. It’s our bottom line of the day:

*When you become a caretaker of God’s Kingdom, God becomes a caretaker of your kingdom.*

III. Conclusion.

A. But it starts first with a desire to put God first in your finances. It starts first understanding that God isn’t satisfied with your leftovers. It starts with understanding that God understands. This is personal. It’s hard. It’s scary. That’s why He says, “Trust me and see if I will open up the floodgates of heaven.” It’s why the best financial advice you will ever receive is found by first investing in God’s Kingdom. It will impact your life today, tomorrow and forever. This financial advice is timeless.

Jesus had something to say about this, by the way. In fact, it’s so good, we’re going to give Him the final word. Here’s what Jesus had to say:

B. “..store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” Matthew 6:20 NIV

C. CLOSE WITH A PERSONAL EXAMPLE OF WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT TO YOU.

D. In a trendy world, the best things in life are timeless.

When you invest in the Kingdom of God, your investment grows in value, greater and greater. Moths can’t eat it. Rust can’t destroy it. Thieves can’t break in and steal it.
Don’t miss this opportunity. Come back next week and let’s together experience a timeless, exciting and faith-building journey as we put God first. This is a timeless way to live.