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MY NEW LIFE:
WELCOME TO FIRSTSTEP

You are probably in FirstStep for at least one of three reasons: you are new to the faith, you're re-establishing your relationship with God, or you simply want to strengthen the basics in your walk with God.

Whatever your reason, it's great that you're a part of this FirstStep Small Group. We know your participation will bring significant blessings to your life. That's why we encourage you to make it a point to attend all four sessions.

FirstStep is the first of three Small Groups which together constitute our **Growth Track**. We encourage you to participate in all the Steps in our Growth Track. These other Steps are:

NextStep helps you discover how Manna "does church," why we exist, what we are passionate about, where we are going, and how you can be part of this adventure. NextStep is also a four-week Small Group.

LeaderStep helps you be more fully equipped to bring Kingdom leadership and influence in your family, in your workplace, in your community, and at Manna Church. LeaderStep is an eight-week Small Group.

Our goal for the next four weeks is to discover what a balanced, integrated, and healthy life of a disciple of Jesus looks like, specifically within the context of Manna Church.

In particular, we're going to discuss three **values** that define our walk with God, explore six specific **applications** that express those values, and examine nine **healthy habits** which, as we develop them, will form a sound spiritual foundation throughout the rest of our lives.

The two people most responsible for your growth as a Christian are Jesus and you!

3 VALUES

1. Love God (Luke 10:27)
2. Love Each Other (Luke 10:27)
3. Love the World (Matthew 28:19–20)

6 APPLICATIONS

LOVE GOD: Inspiring Worship Experiences

1. Attend one
2. SERVE one

LOVE EACH OTHER: Life-Giving Small Groups

3. Attend one
4. Lead one

LOVE THE WORLD: World-Changing Outreach

5. Bring others in
6. Go out

9 HEALTHY HABITS

LOVE GOD: A Life of Devotion

1. Bible reading
2. Prayer
3. Worship (including tithing)

LOVE EACH OTHER: It's All About Relationships

4. Fellowship
5. Accountability
6. Forgiveness

LOVE THE WORLD: Catching God's Heart for the Lost

7. Evangelism (witnessing/sharing your story)
8. Serving the needy
9. Generosity

OUR 3 BASIC VALUES

1. LOVE GOD
2. LOVE EACH OTHER
3. LOVE THE WORLD

Jesus Himself instructed us to embrace three fundamental values through the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

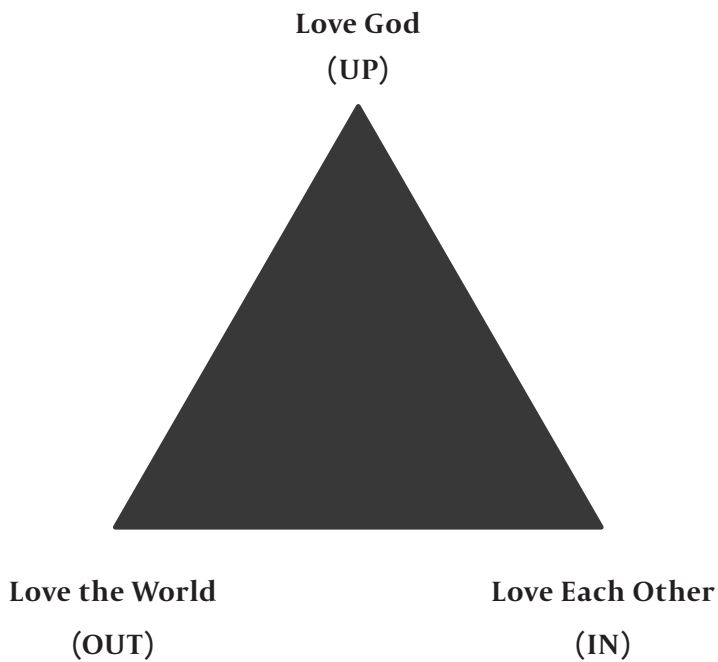
THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered, “**‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’**; and, **‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**”*
Luke 10:25-27 (NIV)

THE GREAT COMMISSION

*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore **go and make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*
Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

*These basic values
are reflected in a triangle:*



YOUR STORY

Each of us has a story. Each of us has lived a unique life with a wide variety of experiences, joys, heartaches, successes, failures, challenges, plans, hopes, and dreams. All of these are important aspects of your journey here on earth. Understanding your story within the framework of your relationship with Jesus provides your story with incredible meaning and purpose.

You have a story: who you were, who you are, and who you are becoming.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world... But now in Christ Jesus you...have been brought near through the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:1–2, 13 (NIV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. Revelation 1:5–6 (NIV)

We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

*...You show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.
2 Corinthians 3:3 (ESV)*

...I press on to lay ahold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Philippians 3:12 (NIV)

In light of these Scriptures, how might you answer the following questions? Your answers may give you remarkable and perhaps surprising insights into the unique nature, purpose, and direction of your journey with God.

1. What were you like before you became a Christian? What was your life like?
2. How did you come to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
3. What changes has God brought to your life as you have yielded to and followed Him?
4. What passions, purposes, goals, and plans has God brought into your life?
5. What is God currently doing in your life?
6. What blessings and breakthroughs are you experiencing?

7. What challenges are you currently facing?
8. How is God leading you to face and overcome these challenges?

YOU CAN SHARE YOUR STORY

Sharing your story can build your faith and strengthen your relationship with Jesus. But, your story is not just for you. Your story can also be a source of inspiration and hope to others. Your story can be an inspiring example of the love and power of Jesus.

Share to Grow:

*I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, **so that** you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Philemon 1:6 (NIV)*

Share to Win:

*And they **overcame** him (the enemy) by the blood of the Lamb and **by the word of their testimony**, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Revelation 12:11 (NIV 84)*

Share to Bless:

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, **so** we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV 84)*

GOING DEEPER

Take some time to think about and write down how you would answer the following questions:

1. What were you like before you became a Christian? What was your life like?
2. How did you come to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
3. What changes has God brought to your life as you have yielded to and followed Him?
4. What passions, purposes, goals, and plans has God brought into your life?
5. What is God currently doing in your life?
6. What blessings and breakthroughs are you experiencing?
7. What challenges are you facing?
8. How is God leading you to face and overcome these challenges?

Resources:

<https://billygraham.org/grow-your-faith/how-to-share-your-faith/tools>

<https://billygraham.org/story/sharing-your-faith-101>

MY STORY

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LOVE GOD:
A LIFE OF DEVOTION



Remember: our overall goal in FirstStep is to discover what a balanced, integrated, and healthy life of a disciple of Jesus looks like, specifically within the context of Manna Church. We believe that, over time, as you incorporate Manna's 3 Values, 6 Applications, and 9 Healthy Habits into your life, your life will be transformed. As you put them into practice, they will form sure foundations from which you can effectively follow and glorify Jesus throughout your life.

Each week, we'll look at 1 Value, 2 Applications, and 3 Healthy Habits.

VALUE 1: Love God

A Life of Devotion

...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind...

Luke 10:27 (ESV)

APPLICATIONS 1 & 2

Inspiring Worship Experiences

1. Attend one: Find the site and service time that fits best for you, and commit to attend as often as you possibly can. Don't let the weather, your feelings, fatigue, or other distractions keep you from coming. We believe that when we gather together during Manna's Worship Experiences, we are not just having a group meeting. We are gathering in the Presence of the Lord. Once in the proximity of His Presence, anything can happen. It is in the Presence of God that our lives can be transformed.

2. SERVE one: In addition to attending a Worship Experience, we encourage everyone to serve in some way during a Worship Experience. Join our SERVE Team, which is comprised of a number of different teams: the VIP Team, Worship Team, Children's Ministry, Production—just to name a few. This is a great opportunity to get more connected, to explore and develop your particular talents and gifts, and to contribute to our overall goal of helping people experience all that God has for them during our Worship Experiences.

HEALTHY HABITS 1-3

“We first make our habits, and then our habits make us.” Anonymous

1. Bible Reading: Engaging God's Word

Eternal truth, healthy food for our souls, and trustworthy direction for how to live are all to be found in the Bible. You want your marriage to change, it's here; you want your nation to change, it's here. Economics, war, government, morals, joy, parenting, education, truth—it's **all** in the Bible. God will teach you, equip you, speak to you, and transform you as you engage with His Word on a regular basis.

*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will **never** pass away. Matthew 24:35 (NIV)*

*Man does not live on bread alone but on every **word** that comes from the mouth of God. Matthew 4:4 (NIV)*

*All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV)*

*Your word is a **lamp** to my feet and a **light** to my path. Psalm 119:105 (ESV)*

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)

Helpful ways to develop a healthy habit of engaging with God's word:

- Learn from the Bible (from teachers/preachers, discussion in Small Groups)
- Listen to the Bible (online, audio Bibles, Bible apps)
- Read the Bible on your own (personal devotions, reading plans)
- Read the Bible with others (Small Groups, family)
- Memorize verses from the Bible
- Meditate on verses from the Bible
- Obey what is written in the Bible

2. Prayer: Communicating with God

The quality of our relationships often depends on the quality of our communication. Communicating is a fundamental part of our everyday lives. We communicate with many different people for many different reasons. We make requests, exchange ideas, and listen to what others are saying. It's very natural to us. God wants communication with Him to also be natural to us. It is His desire that we develop a life-giving prayer life. At its core, prayer is communication and conversation with God. God wants us to cultivate our ability to communicate and converse with Him. He wants us to learn to hear what He is saying to us. Growing in our prayer life will enhance the quality of our relationship with Him.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Mark 1:35 (NIV)

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. John 10:27 (NIV)

...Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving ["thank you" are the two greatest words of faith] let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6 (ESV)

*Pray then like this: Our **Father** in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our **daily** bread, and **forgive** us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but **deliver** us from evil.*
Matthew 6:9–13 (ESV)

When you pray:

P—Praise God: Choose to focus on God, and establish right positioning. He is God; you are not.

R—Repent: Turn from or surrender anything the Lord brings to mind, especially any areas of unforgiveness.

A—Ask

Y—Yield: “Your will, not mine.”

E—Expect: Expect to hear from Him and for Him to move in your life.

R—Respond: When He prompts you, respond to Him; do what He tells you.

3. Worship: Enjoying God

“Worship is our response, both personal and corporate, to God for Who He is, and what He has done, expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live.” Louie Giglio

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Psalm 150:6 (ESV)

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans 12:1 (ESV)

*Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, “How have we robbed you?” In your tithes and offerings.
Malachi 3:8 (NIV)*

“Devotion to Christ is where the human heart is most satisfied.” Michael Fletcher (Manna Church LeaderStep, Week 2)

Crucial to our growth in the above disciplines is our relationship with the Holy Spirit! We are all encouraged to **“be filled with the Holy Spirit”** (Ephesians 5:18, NIV). For believers, this simply means that we are to be continually and increasingly surrendered to and dependent on the Person and ministries of the Holy Spirit. We can ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit any time. We can surrender to Him and His ministries any time, especially as we read our Bibles, develop our prayer lives, and cultivate a lifestyle of worship. Consider asking the Holy Spirit to fill you when you wake up each morning or in important circumstances. See what He will do!

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26 (NIV)

...When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. John 16:13–14 (NIV)

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! Luke 11:13 (NIV)

For more on the Holy Spirit's ministries, see Ephesians 6:18, Romans 8:26, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:1–4, Acts 2:38–39, Acts 4:31, Acts 8:14–17, Acts 19:1–7, 1 Corinthians 12, and 1 Corinthians 14.

GOING DEEPER

- What weak spots or obstacles do you see in you establishing and strengthening a strong foundation in personal Bible reading, prayer, and worship?
- What simple, practical steps is God leading you to take to overcome those obstacles?

Bible:

Prayer:

Worship:

- As you study Scriptures concerning the Holy Spirit, what do you learn about Who He is and His various ministries.

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LOVE EACH OTHER:
IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS



Our overall goal in FirstStep is to discover what a balanced, integrated, and healthy life of a disciple of Jesus looks like, specifically within the context of Manna Church.

In the last session, we talked about Bible reading, prayer, and worship. In this session, we will explore important aspects of living a life in which we learn to genuinely love each other.

VALUE 2: Love Each Other It's All About Relationships

This is a core value for us. It is to be a core value for all Christians.

...You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:39 (ESV)

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:35 (ESV)

APPLICATIONS 3 & 4 Small Groups

We believe Small Groups are the environments in which we learn to live out the next three Healthy Habits. Small Groups are where we grow as Christians.

3. Attend one: Find a Small Group that interests you and fits your season of life.

4. Lead one: Use what God has put in your life and lead one yourself... Attend and complete LeaderStep! (Note: completing NextStep and becoming a member of Manna Church are prerequisites for participating in LeaderStep.)

HEALTHY HABITS 4-6

4. Fellowship: Quality Time with Other Christians

The Acts 2 Model

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were **together** and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet **together** in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate **together** with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*
Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but **encouraging one another**—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*
Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”

1 Corinthians 15:33 (ESV)

5. Accountability: Learning to Be Open and Real with Other Christians

It takes effort and ongoing fellowship to develop genuine accountability. Though sometimes challenging, developing accountability relationships has incredible benefits.

*As iron sharpens iron, so one person **sharpens** another.*

Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

*Therefore, **confess** your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.* James 5:16 (ESV)

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is **alone** when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.* Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 (ESV)

We need trusted friends who know us, love us, and help us deal well with our secrets, our weaknesses, and our life challenges.

6. Forgiveness

All of us, at one time or another, have been significantly wounded, offended, inconvenienced, betrayed, abandoned, rejected, mistreated, and disappointed. The consequences of others' hurtful behavior and words often have far-reaching and ongoing impacts on our lives. Nevertheless, as Christians, we are commanded to forgive.

Forgiving people for what they have done is often very difficult. Forgiveness involves turning over to God the person who hurt us and what they did (or didn't do). It involves handing over to God the "cases" we have built against other people. It involves trusting God with our pain.

Learning to forgive is necessary for us to grow in our relationship with Jesus and to develop healthy relationships with other people. A healthy habit of forgiving people is perhaps the most difficult of healthy habits to cultivate. But, the freedom it produces is well worth it.

Someone once said, "When we refuse to forgive someone, it's like drinking **poison** and expecting the other person to die."

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:31-32 (ESV)

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Luke 6:37 (NIV)

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive someone who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV 84)

...Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Luke 6:28 (NIV)

"A refusal to forgive means that God stands back and lets you cope with your problems in your own strength." R.T. Kendall (Total Forgiveness)

How to Go About Forgiving: It's not always easy, but it is simple.

Ask God: "Who do I need to forgive?"

Ask God to give you strength to choose to forgive them for what they have done (or failed to do).

Then, choose to forgive and release them for what they have done. Just do it!

GOING DEEPER

- In what areas of my life do I need accountability?
- What people in my life can hold me genuinely accountable?
- Ask the Lord to show you who you need to forgive. Make a list of the people, what they did (or didn't do) that hurt or offended you, and how their behavior impacted you.
- Choose to forgive each person for what they did and how it impacted you.
- Ask God to forgive you for harboring unforgiveness toward that person.
- Ask God to bring strength, healing, and restoration to the areas in which you were hurt.

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LOVE THE WORLD:
CATCHING GOD'S HEART FOR THE LOST



Our overall goal in FirstStep is to discover what a balanced, integrated, and healthy life of a disciple of Jesus looks like, specifically within the context of Manna Church.

In this session, we will discuss Loving the World. We will explore important aspects of living a life that catches and reveals God's heart for the lost.

VALUE 3: Love the World **Catching God's Heart for the Lost**

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...
Matthew 28:19a (NIV)*

APPLICATIONS 5 & 6 **World-Changing Outreach**

5. Bring Others In: Learn to be an “inviter.” Invite people to Worship Experiences, Small Groups, your home and other activities.

6. Go Out: Be “outward-focused.” You bring the Kingdom with you wherever you go. Pray for and look for opportunities to tell your story. Be involved in outreaches.

HEALTHY HABITS 7-9

7. Evangelism: Being a Witness by Telling Others About Jesus

Be willing to tell your story. There will be times when the Holy Spirit prompts you to tell others about Jesus—to share your story. Your story is a unique, powerful expression of the love of God. There is someone in your sphere of influence who is looking for your story.

*...Go into all the world and **proclaim** the gospel to the whole creation. Mark 16:15 (ESV)*

*...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, **always being prepared** to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect... 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)*

*For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without **someone preaching?** And how are they to preach unless they are sent? Romans 10:13–15a (ESV)*

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8 (ESV)*

8. Serve the Needy: Be a Witness by Showing Others the Love of Jesus

Sometimes, people need to **hear** the Message; but, sometimes, people need to **see** the Message. (Evangelism = telling, serving = showing.)

We are called to be visible expressions of the love and kindness of God. We are called to be a source of help for the needy.

We are also called to bring help in areas of social injustice. Our voices need to be heard where people are oppressed. And, our words need to be backed by practical deeds.

*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father in heaven.*
Matthew 5:16 (NASB)

*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for **me**.*
Matthew 25:35-36, 40 (NIV)

*...learn to **do good**; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.* Isaiah 1:17 (ESV)

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their **distress** and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27 (NIV)*

Connect with your Manna Church site leaders to learn how you can serve those in need.

9. Generosity: The Way to Get Is to Give

We are to love the world by reaching the lost and serving those in need. Naturally, when you think about loving the world, these two come to mind. But, if we want to accomplish these things well, it will often involve financial resources.

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a **cheerful** giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: “They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.” Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9:6–11 (NIV)*

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Timothy 6:10 (NIV)

...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you. Luke 6:38 (ESV)

The tithe is returning to God what is already His.

“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In tithes and offerings. 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 3:8,10 (NIV)

Giving offerings displays our generosity, as well as our commitment to advancing God’s Kingdom.

GOING DEEPER

- In what ways are you prepared to share your story with others?
- In what ways are you prepared to be involved in reaching out to people who don't have a relationship with Jesus?
- Is your attitude more focused on giving or on getting? How can you strengthen your giving attitude?
- Are you satisfied with your current financial situation? Do you believe that God has a plan to improve your financial situation? Do you have a working budget? Are you in debt? What are your strategies and plans to develop financial stability in your life?
- What and where are you “sowing”?
- How is God leading you to become more generous?

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NEXT STEPS AFTER FIRSTSTEP

Consider:

- Becoming a member of the Manna Church family.
- Attending and participating in NextStep.
- Getting involved in a Manna Small Group.
- Joining a Manna SERVE Team.
- Signing up to be water-baptized (if you haven't been baptized already).

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