

than we can comprehend; therefore, how can we stand before Him, having little love in our hearts for the One who has done everything for us?

- How much should we give?
- The Jews were required to give 10%, but that was just the starting point.
- In addition, there were freewill offerings and other sacrifices on special occasions.

Most Christians think they are poor. Of course, that is a very relative term. The amount we give is dependent upon how God has prospered us. The poor widow had nothing left after she gave. The Macedonians gave even while in deep poverty. We should never use the excuse of being poor to justify our lack of generosity. God looks upon the heart and judges us, not just on the size of our gift, but on how we have been blessed, and how selflessly we are willing to give.

When we give *ourselves* to the Lord, how much we should give is not a big question. We give all we can, sometimes even more than others might think we should. After all, if we have really given ourselves, then **God already has everything anyway.**

God has promised to bless us if we first give to Him. Jesus said, *“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom.*

*For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38). Malachi 3:10 was God’s promise: “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.’”*

This is not a promise of prosperity, but it is simply God’s assurance that He will bless us with the things we need in this life.

**Will a man rob God?** That is a serious question, and the answer is just as relevant today as it was in Malachi’s day. I doubt that any Christian consciously thinks he is robbing God. However, when we fail to give as He intended, that is exactly what we are doing.

### **Don’t be guilty of robbing God!**

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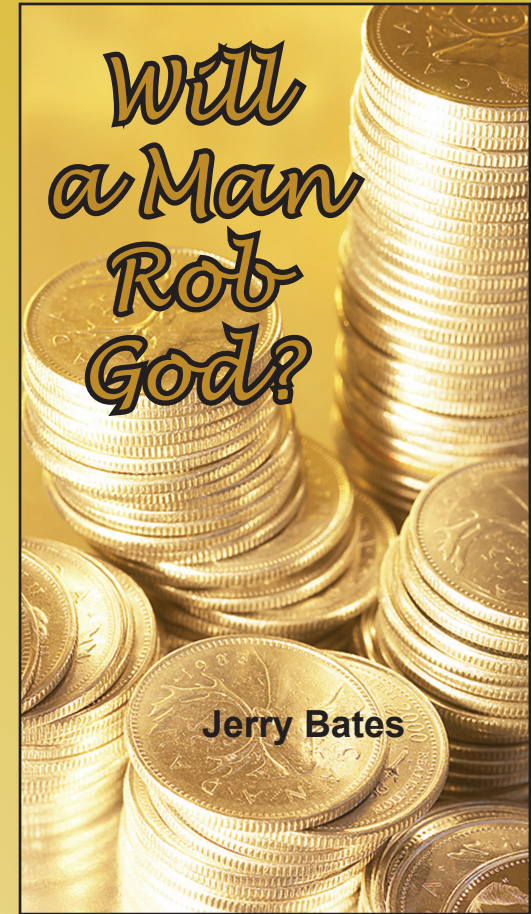
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# Will a Man Rob God?

Jerry Bates

“Will a man rob God?” These words were asked by Malachi to the people of Israel (3:8), charging them with the sin of robbing God. I am sure they did not think they were actually stealing from God. In fact, the very idea would undoubtedly have been appalling to Israel. After all, one of the Ten Commandments was, “*You shall not steal*” (Exodus 20:15). Yet, that is exactly what Malachi says they were doing.

How had they robbed God? Malachi answers they had robbed Him in their tithes and offerings (3:8,9). They had not brought the tithes that God had commanded, and even while giving their offerings, they had robbed Him by sacrificing the lame and sick (1:8), animals that they would not have offered to a secular ruler (1:8). When they refused to give what rightfully belonged to God, they were robbing Him.

In contrast to their covetous attitude, Malachi reminded them of God’s promise to bless them materially if they would only first give to Him (3:10-12).

We need to consider this same question: **Will a man rob God?** It is common to hear Christians justify their lack of generosity in contributions by saying that neither Jesus nor the apostles ever commanded us to *tithe*. That is true, but silence on that subject does not mean that we are not commanded to *give*. By instruction of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.*” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Christ had much to say about our material goods because He knew that concern over money and possessions would be one of the strongest temptations that could be offered to man in Satan’s war against God. Close to half of Christ’s recorded sayings concern man’s attitude toward stewardship over his possessions.

In Luke 21, Jesus observed some rich men giving their offerings to the Lord. He also saw a poor widow who contributed only two mites. A mite was the smallest Jewish coin in circulation and was worth very little. In comparison to the relatively large amounts contributed by the rich, it was insignificant. Yet, Jesus commended her by saying that she had given more than everyone else because she gave all she had (21:3,4). Why was she willing to give so much? Obviously, the

two mites were given out of love. Her gift was small, but her love was great.

The poor widow is not the only liberal giver in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 8 the Apostle Paul commended the Macedonia Christians for generously giving to help the afflicted Christians in Jerusalem. These Macedonians were described by Paul as being in affliction and deep poverty (8:2). Those words carry the idea of being about as poor as you can get. One commentator described it as “rock bottom poverty.” Yet in spite of their poverty, they gave liberally. Paul even thought they had given too much! Imagine this: Gentiles gave generously to help some poor Jews, most of whom initially did not even want to accept them! Why did they give so generously? They gave because of their great love for God. They gave generously because they first gave themselves to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5).

Why do we give? We do not give to accomplish a great work. If that was true most of us would not give anything, because we cannot give enough, by ourselves, to accomplish very much.

- We give for the glory and honor of God.
- We give because of our great love for God, and we simply express that love in our giving. If we give little, then our love and trust in God are correspondingly small. God’s love for us is greater