

# GRACE GIVING

## A Devotional Prayer Guide on the Subject of Financial Stewardship

Prayer Time #5

Trying God

Focal Passage: Malachi 3:8-12

*<sup>8</sup> “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup> You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! <sup>10</sup> Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows. <sup>11</sup> Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the LORD of hosts. <sup>12</sup> “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts.*

When our daughter Ellen was a little girl, she was quite the clever one. I suppose somewhere, someday, she heard her mother or I say something to the effect, “your trying me.” I can’t recall what the occasion was, but she was likely up to no good, and I must have been showing my frustration over whatever it was she was doing, or not doing that she was told to do. She picked up on it, being the sharp child she was, and with a wry grin, she looked at me and said, “I’m trying you!” I can’t recall how I responded to her “cutesy” little remark. I don’t think I liked it in principle, but I had to give the girl points for being bold and original. She and I have rehashed that little encounter in jest more than once thru the years. You know what they say, what goes around comes around. I think her two little ones have “tried her” a few times! Ah, what a joy it is to see your children get a good dose of what they gave you. Can I get an amen, grandparents?

All kidding aside, the Bible is clear that God’s people are not to “try Him.” Moses commanded the people: “*You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah* (Deut. 6:16). The reference to ‘Massah’ related to a time when the Lord was bringing the people through the wilderness and they grumbled against Him. That wasn’t the only time they tested the Lord. They tried His patience on plenty of occasions. They just could not trust the Lord, despite the great faithfulness, mercy, and grace He extended to them. The command to not test the Lord was an important one. They were to trust the Lord. He was proven, and He was good, and they should have walked by faith.

Likewise, we are not to put the Lord to the test. We are not to try His patience or question His faithfulness and glorious character. The Lord has nothing to prove, and He never leaves His people without what they need to follow in faith.

There is an occasion in the Bible where the Lord told His people they can “try Him.” It is found in our focal passage from the Book of Malachi. This passage contains several key teaching points about financial stewardship and giving. We will focus this devotional writing on only this one: in the area of financial stewardship, we are encouraged to “try the Lord.”

Understanding the context of this passage is critical to right application. God’s people were not being obedient in bringing their tithes and offerings to the storehouse. As a result, worship in the Temple was hampered; the priests and Levites were unable to perform the duties they were commanded to do because they were out seeking to scratch out an existence. This was not primarily an accounting

problem, it was a “heart problem.” The people were not concerned with obedience to the Lord. They had their priorities out of whack. Jesus taught on priority regarding the subject of material goods. He said, “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” (Mat. 6:21)

To encourage His people to be faithful in giving, the Lord invited them to try Him. He commanded them to bring their tithes and offerings to the storehouse, and then observe and see how He would bless them. Their crops would be good, and they would enjoy great blessings. We must exercise great caution when applying this passage. Some believe this passage teaches that when we give to Lord as we should, we are promised financial blessing in return. The Lord may bless the person for their sacrificial giving with an abundance that causes their bank account to be overflowing. But He may not. The Bible is not a source of contradiction or confusion. The general teaching of the Bible is not that we give and can expect to get more, but what exactly is the “more.” The Bible teaches that we will have a “spiritual abundance.” I need to move on from this, but let me give you one Scripture to use when gauging the return you can expect when you give obediently. Philippians 4:19 says, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Now back to this principle of trying God. Let’s take the Lord up on His gracious proposal, which I believe can be viewed in some sense as a command. In the area of giving, we are to do so in such a manner than puts the Lord to the test. What would that look like? That would look like giving an amount that stretches your faith. It would look like trusting that you can be obedient when your bank account is stretched to the limit, or beyond. Think of it this way: when your giving “tries God,” you are by faith indicating in your heart that you trust the Lord, and you believe He will be faithful. When you think of it that way, this isn’t a test for God at all. He’s faithful, and He loves to give good gifts to His children. I promise you this: when you try the Lord in this area, the real test will be on you, and after you see His faithfulness, you won’t see this as a hard test for yourself! We will consider Malachi 3 again in our next devotional. Thanks for reading, and please, please be praying through these Scriptural truths.

### **Suggestions for your prayer time:**

- Give praise to the Lord for the faithfulness He has shown you.
- As you pray, ask the Lord to show you areas regarding finances where you struggle to trust Him.
- Make a specific commitment regarding your giving that puts the Lord to the test.
- Ask the Lord to test you as you try Him.
- Confess occasions when you failed to trust the Lord in the area of stewardship.
- Meditate upon the focal passage and the supporting texts within this devotional piece.