

**TEXT** Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 25:35-40; Luke 21:1-4

**OBJECTIVE** The students will ascertain that when one fulfills his obligations to God he will reap the benefits of divine favor. They will be able to relate several ways they can give of their money, self, and time.

**KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER** It is more blessed to give than to receive. — Acts 20:35

**KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH** Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. — Malachi 3:10

**RESOURCE MATERIAL** Tract No. 31 — Tithing — God’s Plan of Financing  
Booklet No. 237 — Tithing

**ANSWER TITLE: Having and Giving**  
**SEARCH TITLE: Give to God First**

**REFERENCE INFORMATION**

In thankfulness for God’s goodness to them, and in acknowledgment of the fact that all the products of the land came from God, the Israelites brought an offering to Him of a portion of the fruits that ripened first. These were looked upon as an earnest of the coming harvest. Such an offering was made both on behalf of the nation (Leviticus 23:10-17) and by individuals (Exodus 23:19; Deuteronomy 26:1-11). These offerings were for the support of the priesthood.

Malachi 3:10, in which God promises to “open you the windows of heaven,” is a promise of abundant rain and fruitful seasons, so that “there shall not be room enough to receive it.” In other words, the barns and granaries would not be large enough to store the harvest. The “de-

vourer” mentioned in verse 11 is the locust, a pest which often destroys a whole crop.

Encourage your students not to hold on to their lives, time, and money so tightly that they are of no use to God. A future minister of the Gospel, or a future missionary, may be part of your present class. Or, it may be you have in your class a future housewife who will put God first in the home, taking time out to teach her children these same principles. Just so did Susanna Wesley, mother of John, who became God’s undauntable minister of holiness to all of England, and later to the world. His brother Charles wrote about 6500 hymns, many of which have lasted to the present time.

**YOUR OPENER**

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# Give to God First

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**KEY VERSE:** Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. — Malachi 3:10

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## RESPONSES

1. After having your students discuss their interpretations, focus on the words, "shalt not delay." God wanted the earliest gathering of their fruits. Possibly one reason for this was that if one puts off his giving, it is likely not to get done. Another reason might have been that after the gathering, a use would have been found for all of it, and there would have been none left to give. If delayed too long, the feeling of the need to give goes away.

2. Our tithes belong to the Lord. The tithes are "holy unto the LORD." Ask your class to enumerate some of the ways God blesses those who are obedient to Him in the paying of their tithes.

3. God's plan was that the tithes were to be given to the children of Levi. Bring out in discussion who the children of Levi were and what their duties and obligations were. Because they did the service of ministering to the people, God ordained they should use the tithes for their own sustenance.

The Lord does not need anything that man has accumulated. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10), the silver and gold (Haggai 2:8), the earth and everything in it (Psalm 24:1). However, He expects us to be good stewards of what He permits us to acquire. From Abraham's time on, God has blessed those who have given tithes and freewill offerings to the Lord. The tithe and certain offerings were required under the Old Testament Law of Moses. Tithing is not dwelt upon in the New Testament, but it was still approved of by Jesus. At one point, as He was giving a warning to the scribes and Pharisees, He called them hypocrites. They did tithe, but neglected more important matters like justice, mercy, and faithfulness. If the plan of tithing were to be done away with, Jesus would not have told them they should do these vital things *as well as* give tithes. See Matthew 23:23.

1. Shortly after their deliverance from Egypt, the Children of Israel were told by God to be prompt in offering the first part of all their increase (Exodus 22:29). What do you think this meant?

2. The first written record we have of anyone's paying tithes was when Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20). To whom do our tithes belong and why? See Leviticus 27:30.

3. The Israelites could not give their tithes to the Lord in person, but God had a plan for the tithes. In reading Numbers 18:21, what do you feel that plan was?

## ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

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4. Since we are not Israelites with a priesthood to support, where should our tithes and offerings go?

5. What do you think is meant by Malachi 3:8?

6. What was God's promise to those who did bring in their tithes?

7. Do you think the "poor widow" mentioned in Luke 21:2 was foolish to do what she did? Give a reason for your answer.

8. How do you relate Matthew 25:35-40 with the thought of the title of this lesson?

4. Our text says, "into the storehouse." The students, knowing they cannot give directly to God, should recognize that they must follow the example established in the Old Testament and taught in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul says, "they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). Since there are many and varied expenses in connection with the spreading of the Gospel, we should be diligent to pay our tithes promptly. We should also give freewill offerings whenever the Lord lays it upon our hearts to do so.

5. Ask a couple of your students to give their thoughts. Discuss with your class how most people would say that what they own or acquire belongs to them. In reality, we bring nothing into the world, nor will we take anything with us when we leave this world. What we have while here God has permitted, and He expects us to give a tenth as well as freewill offerings to Him. Anything less is robbing God.

6. God promised to abundantly bless if they brought all the tithes into the storehouse. Perhaps these Israelites felt that they were just having bad luck when insects devoured their crops and there was little or no rain. But they had ignored God's warning that He would make the rain as powder and dust (Deuteronomy 28:24). They paid no heed when He said that the insects which devoured their crops were His army (Joel 2:25). God told them to prove for themselves that if they would do what He required, the insects and worms would disappear and the rains would fall.

7. After your class has offered their answers, remind them of another widow, the one God had instructed to feed Elijah during the time when there was no rain in the land (1 Kings 17:8-16). If God was able to provide for that widow and her son in time of famine, He could certainly provide for this widow, who gave all she had. We do not know if she had knowledge of the Sermon on the Mount, but she was unquestionably putting the principle into practice. See Matthew 6:31-34.

8. The student's answers will be varied, but one thought which should be brought out is that a Christian must offer more to God than just his money. Paul said to "present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1). This would include using our time to visit shut-ins, the elderly, those in institutions and prisons, and helping the sick. Jesus said to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 19:19). To do this will cause one to sacrifice his time and strength in using his talents for the Lord.

### YOUR WRAP-UP

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## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

How does one “rob” God?

What does God command us to do, according to Malachi 3:10?

At what age should a person begin tithing?

What are some ways the Lord and the church use our tithes?

Is God poor? Could God get along without your money? How would this affect you? Would you win or lose?

What other things besides money does God expect from us?

What are some of the ways God blesses those who willingly and freely give to Him?

What is of even greater value to God than our tithes and offerings?

Since God expected the firstfruits from the Children of Israel, what does that imply about the importance of our giving to God first? How does this relate to our priorities regarding our time and money?

In the ANSWER story, what did Tom say was the reason he gave money to his church?

## THINGS TO DO

Take ten coins or dollars to illustrate tithes, or take random change and figure ten percent. Talk about the widow’s mite. A mite equals approximately 1/8 of a cent. A day’s wage was about one cent. This means she gave even more than the ten percent of one day’s wage.

Make a list of things a child can do for or give to the Lord’s service as an offering.

Bring a piece of flint, a hammer, a flashlight, a candle, and matches. Explain to your students that flint gives light only when hit with a hammer (forced to give). A flashlight button must be pressed (urged, begged) to give light. It will not give unless pressure is applied. A candle gives its life as it gives light and does not need to

be struck or pressured, only lit. We want to be “candles,” lit by God, and give willingly.

Present one envelope to each of three students. In one envelope, make up an I.O.U. slip; in another, a make-believe letter from a friend telling you that he cannot come to help you with your problems because he doesn’t have the time; and in the third envelope (should be large in size) place a small wrapped gift box, soiled and torn. Ask the students how they would react if they received these things from friends. Relate this to our lesson. How would God feel if He received poor or half-hearted efforts from us?

Have your students list the most important things in their lives. Discuss how these things can be given to the Lord.

## Answers for ANSWER

### Giving to God

Starting with number one, write on the lines below, each word according to the clue given. Go through all 16 clues. When you have finished you will have a verse that agrees with today’s lesson.

**Answer:** Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase. Proverbs 3:9