

## What Shall I Render?

Sonia Paul, Director, Career Development & Testing, Oakwood University, Huntsville, Alabama

Summary: A greater accountability is required of those who claim God's promises to be the provider of every good gift. Can God trust you to be a good steward of all your spiritual endowments?

As a young girl growing up in a Caribbean culture, I was taught to always give God my best. Best as defined by my Christian mother required a special dress and shoes that were exclusively Sabbath attire only. Additionally, my Sabbath School lesson was to be studied daily. And it didn't end there, for I was not permitted to leave food on my plate, as an expression of gratitude for God's provision. I was encouraged to "let others know about Jesus" whenever the opportunity presented itself. In retrospect, these memories remind me of how specific and intentional my training in spiritual responsibility was.

Despite my mother's best efforts, I have since learned that God wants us to rend our hearts, and not our garments. As such, greater accountability is required of those who claim God's promises to be the provider of every good gift. Likewise, "to whom much is given, much is required." Each week during the worship service, we are challenged with the question from Malachi 3:8: "Will a man rob God?" Perhaps a visitor hearing this verse might be aghast and ponder, who would rob God? How absurd! Absurd? Maybe. Nevertheless, we congregants, with the passion and haste of Peter would exclaim, "Oh, no Lord, I would never...."

In defense of the well meaning "Peters," I don't believe people openly plan to "rob God;" but, our overall posture as stewards (or the lack thereof), paints a very incriminating picture. This causes me to ponder, "Will a man rob God?" With thunderous retort God responds, "Yet, ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."

And we say, but "Lord, wherein have we robbed thee?"

## TIME

Have you considered your time? You spend no time in personal devotion, but are excessively overburdened with the duties of your life. Then when you fall behind and are running late, time with God is the first appointment to be dropped or cancelled. Read Psalm 5:3.

But ye say, "Wherein have we robbed thee?"

## TALENTS

You fail to utilize your talents. Gifts specifically designed for you. Instead you “sit” on them week after week. In business, the law of economics dictates no investment—no returns! However, God promises the benefit of increased talents according to our faith. Read Psalm 90:17.

“But ye say, “Wherein have we robbed thee?”

## SERVICE

God’s kingdom is robbed of souls, every time we fail to witness. Our preoccupation with reaching in far exceeds the pursuit of opportunities of reaching out to suffering humanity. Read Luke 17:10.

“But ye say, “Wherein have we robbed thee?”

## HEALTH

Violation of the health laws by poorly caring for our body temple is a major form of robbery. Failure to care for our body temple results in (to borrow a medical term) “failure to thrive” or in layman’s term “failure to spiritually develop.” God’s clarity on this subject is affirmed by the servant of the Lord, as she emphatically states, “The spirit of God cannot come to our help and assist us in perfecting Christian characters, while we indulge our appetites to the injury of health” CD:57.

“But ye say, “Wherein have we robbed thee?”

## GIVING

In tithes and offering. You see, many of us place God on a lay-away plan. You know how it works—you pay a small amount this week and pledge to pay the balance in subsequent installments. Then we spend the rest of the year playing catch up. God does not take IOU’s for he has already instructed us on this principle. And he certainly does not need our tips, because He “owns the cattle on a thousand hills.” However, what he does want from us is our loyalty and obedience. He wants us to give our “all.” Inclusive is our commitment of time, talents, body temple, service and specifically our tithes and offering.

Are you robbing God? Can God trust you to be a good steward of all your spiritual endowments? If you are desirous of a balanced life in God, then commit with me today to pursue stewardship revival in gratitude of His marvelous grace. Read Malachi 3:10.

