

# Prospering God's Way: First things First

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## Intro

1. We know the saying. Do the most important thing first and everything else will fall into place..
2. In our spiritual growth many things can increase our spiritual maturity and facilitate greater activity in our lives but one of the quickest most foundational ways with some of the most far reaching implications is learning the principle of firstfruits. Putting God first with our money.
3. **Big Idea: God should get the first portion of our income.**
4. It has been said the Bible has over 2000 verses about money; 500 about faith; 500 about prayer. 16 - 38 of Jesus' parables had a money theme. Clearly God wants us to learn how to handle money and understand.
5. Money is actually a test from God. What we do with money is a clear revelation of the depth of our faith and values. It directly impacts the blessings you will and will not receive in this life and next.
6. We are going to look at the principle of firstfruits also known as the firstborn or the tithe.

## **The firstborn is either sacrificed or redeemed - Ex.13.2, 12-13.**

- **Ex.13.2: Dedicate to me every firstborn among the Israelites. The firstborn offspring to be born, of both humans and animals, belongs to me.** the firstborn belong to God.
- Ex.13.12f - firstborn animals are to be sacrificed; firstborn humans and unclean animals are to be redeemed. Redemption meant that another a pure, spotless lamb or goat was to die in its place.
- Appl - John 1. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We were unclean and the Lamb redeemed us.
- Correlation to the firstborn belonging to God: Jesus is also the firstborn of all creation - Col.1.15, 18. God gave Jesus as a firstfruits offering so that all of mankind could be redeemed.
- Note: The Father gave Jesus as a firstfruit's offering before anyone positively responded to Jesus. Likewise, we give our firstfruit offering first before we see any response. Before we experience blessing we must give in faith first.
- Note: The firstborn of Egypt died b/c there was no redemption through the sacrifice of a spotless, perfect lamb; the firstborn of Isr lived b/c there was redemption through the sacrifice of a perfect, spotless lamb. We were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Jesus was God's tithe to redeem mankind. Jesus was the first fruits offering and mankind is redeemed.
  - God will get the first part. Either you will voluntarily give it or He'll take it.
- The first belongs to God. On the first day of the week, we give him our time. With our wealth, we give him the first part of it. Like firstfruits in Exodus, we give our tithe as an offering and our time and God redeems the rest of our wealth and week.

- Appl - It always requires faith to give the first part b/c you don't know if you will have enough to cover everything else. It is trusting God to redeem everything. It is a huge act of faith.

### **The First of the first - Prov.3.9-10.**

- Prov.3.9-10: Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. We honor the Lord by giving him the first. God doesn't tell them to accumulate a lot of grain and then take a tenth of it, but at the very beginning before everything is accumulated give him a tenth.
- Firstfruits Festival - Lev.23. Before the harvest is fully received they would give the first portion of the harvest to the tabernacle or Temple and give it to the Lord. By giving God the very first portion of the crop they were saying: God it all belongs to you; I have faith that you will make up the difference and bless the rest of the crops; It was an act of faith and obedience.
- Josh.6 - all the treasures of Jericho belonged to God. Jericho was the first city they conquered and in the first city all the wealth was His. He didn't tell them to conquer 10 cities and then give me a tenth of the spoils or the spoils from the 10th city. No. He got the spoils from the very first city. They gave him the first and the other cities they took the rest. The wealth of Jericho was a firstfruits offering as they entered into the PL. They were giving the first part of the wealth of the land to God believing he would give them victory over all of it.
- Achan's sin was that he stole some of the consecrated items from Jericho and brought a curse on the whole nation. I believe when we keep the first portion we are opening the door to a curse in our lives. Instead of having our lives and finances blessed we are putting ourselves in a position of being harassed and affected by the devil.
- Consecrated or cursed; set apart for God's blessings and open to the devil's attack that is what the tithe is about. When we take the tithe for ourselves it becomes a curse because it is stolen.
- Mal.3.6-12 - When we don't tithe, we are stealing from God and we are under a curse. Our lives are open to being devoured. There is a gap that the enemy can get in to affect our lives. The very opposite is true when we give God the firstfruits.
- Some may say that is part of the OT Law code, but consider Mal.3.6 - God does not change.
  - It goes back to Cain & Abel in Gen.4.
- The principle of the firstborn, firstfruits and tithe has been around since the beginning. Would you say that you can now commit adultery, be abusive to your parents and steal b/c that was part of the OT Law code and now we are under grace? No. They are clear principles that run through the Bible.

### **Abel the tither - Gen.4.**

- Note how Malachi 3 is experienced by both Cain & Abel. One is blessed (Heb.11.4) and the other is rejected. One gave the tithe and the other gave "some".
- We don't give God the leftovers.
- Like Abel, we give him the first portion. Consider the principle of Rom.11.16: For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

- Jesus was given as our firstfruit offering and we are all holy.
- The first portion carries the blessing; it is what redeems the rest. Putting God first is what initiates the blessing. The tither says: I have a stack of bills, but I'm going to give to God first and trust Him to bless the rest of the lump.
- Abraham with Isaac. How many other sons did Abraham have with Sarah when he offered Isaac as a sacrifice to God? He gave Isaac as a firstfruit believing that God would redeem Isaac... raise up his son. It took faith to offer his son, but from Abraham comes the true family of faith.

## True tithing.

- Giving your firstfruit offering with no back up plan. When they gave that first livestock, they were trusting God would cause that sheep to produce another lamb.
- Is God first in your life? All I have to do is look at your bank statement to see how true that statement is. **Your faith level is revealed in your bank account.**
- If you are truly tithing and Satan comes against you with fear and doubt and says, "You're going die; your marriage will fail; you'll never get out of this place in your life", you can say in full confidence, "No, I am a tither and God will not allow the devourer to destroy my life. I resist you in Jesus' name. My life is protected by God and you must take your hands off me."
- Would you rather make it through life with 100% of your income and it be cursed b/c you don't tithe or on 90% of your income that is blessed and protected by God?
- It is estimated that Christians around the world have cumulative annual income of almost 20 trillion dollars and yet only \$300 billion is given to ministry related causes - churches, missions, etc. This is approximately 1.5% of the possible income.
- How sad that the vast majority of Christians live under a curse rather than God's blessings. Think about all that could be done if Christians would tithe, but even more importantly, think about the blessings Christians would live under if they did tithe. Their lives would be distinctly blessed. I believed it would be witnessed in their relationships, health, finances, mental state, businesses and general well being.
- All of this is possible by placing him first in our finances.

## Conclusion

- Some maybe upset. You think, "all that preacher wants is my money." You have missed the message entirely. It all belongs to Him. He gave you life, a mind, the physical ability, basic skills, and the blessing of living in this nation. You stand accountable to Him for all that He has given you. If you want to live under the fullness of His blessing, then learn that it all belongs to Him and given Him the firstfruits.
- Make a commitment to put Him first in your finances
  - Develop a plan and record His blessings
  - Teenagers begin now to tithe
- Look at ways of cutting back on your lifestyle and living a simpler life so that you have more to give.

- Others give over 10% b/c tithing isn't stretching you.
- Get Robert Morris' book, The Blessed Life