

Firstfruits Living – Countering a Consumerist Society

Proverbs 3:9

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INTRODUCTION

The principle of first fruits is clearly seen in an early story in the Bible-

Genesis 4:2b- 5: “...Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.”

Both men brought gifts to God, each with their own motives. We see God’s response as well as Cain’s response.

Key Thoughts: _____

Today’s Key Verse:

Proverbs 3:9 – “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops.”

Two Key Issues:

- What does it mean to honor God with your Wealth?
- What does it mean to give a firstfruit gift?

1. What honoring God with your wealth DOES NOT mean:

Help the Lord pay _____ bills with your _____.
(See Psalm 50:12!)

2. What honoring God with your wealth DOES mean:

Being generous towards God is the most _____ way of using _____ to bring honor to God.

“Putting your offering in the offering box should not feel like paying your electricity bill! It should feel more like singing the most heartfelt worship song!”

3. What does it Mean to Give a Firstfruit Gift?

1. **First:** Making _____ towards God our first _____ priority!
2. **Second:** A firstfruits gift is a _____ gift!
 - ✓ Proportionate – starting point is 10%
 - ✓ NT examples exceed this, the tithe concept was affirmed by Jesus (Matthew 23:23 – “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”)
 - ✓ 10% is a great starting point, but it’s not the intended stopping point!
3. **Third:** Firstfruits giving is giving with the recipient’s _____ in mind! God’s interests include:
 - ✓ Proverbs 14:21 – “Blessed is he that is kind to the poor.”
 - ✓ James 1:27: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”
 - ✓ Matthew 28:19: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.”

- ✓ Galatians 6:6 & 10: "The one that is taught the message must share all his good things with the teacher. Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith."

4. Where Should I give my Firstfruit Gift to God?

If you are part of the SMC Community and receive the benefits of being here, then you should give _____.

Why should my gifts be primarily here at SMC? That sounds pretty self serving! Not at all, simply because Shadow Mountain Church and other Christian churches like SMC, are "one stop shops" of God's priorities and interests:

- Kindness to the poor
- Looking after widows and orphans
- Fulfilling the Great Commission
- Supporting and blessing those that directly teach, lead and minister to us.

FINAL THOUGHTS

1. The greatest gift we've been **given** is God's firstfruit gift described in John 3:16.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. "

2. The greatest gifts we **give** are firstfruits that are eternity shaping gifts we give to further God's work on earth.

This is in keeping with how Jesus said we ought to pray in Matthew 6:9-10:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Jesus also said "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

With these thoughts and challenges before us,

Will you commit that from this day forward you will honor the Lord with all your wealth, with firstfruits of all that God has generously entrusted to your care?

SMALL GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, describe why God was not pleased with Cain's offering. How were Cain and Abel's attitudes different? (II Samuel 24:24)
2. Give examples of how each person "sows and reaps" even if they have nothing to do with farming.
3. What does it mean to honor God with your wealth? (Proverbs 3:9) How do you know when you have given the amount He wants you to give? What do you do if you cannot give 10% financially right now? (Not because it would be inconvenient but that you REALLY CANNOT GIVE RIGHT NOW) What are other ways you can give in the meanwhile? Why does God need your money anyway?
4. We should give in line with the interests of the person we are giving to. What are some things that God is interested in? Why is giving to Shadow Mountain in line with supporting God's interests? Proverbs 14:21, James 1:27, Matthew 28:19, Galatians 6:6 & 10
5. What was God's "firstfruit" gift mentioned in John 3:16? How is giving your money to SMC an "eternity shaping" gift?