

**Intro:** Anyone know the topics that Jesus addressed more than anything else in His ministry?

- Kingdom/God                      Faith/Salvation                      Money                      Hell

It's interesting to note that many people will tell you that Jesus talked about money more than anything else. In fact, he did talk about it a lot. But many times the money itself isn't the POINT of what he is talking about...it's just an illustration! Like the parable of the Lost Coin ...yes they include the topic of money and value...but the POINT is something different.

That is true about money in the bible as a whole. Money in and of itself...is NOT the point of the conversation...EVEN when Jesus is talking about money...and giving...and how you give. The money...is just a SYMBOL of something more important

~Heart                      ~Values                      ~Attitude                      ~Priorities

Today I want to start a new series. But, it's not really a series on money...or giving...It is a biblical look at HOW we should view the financial resources God has entrusted to our care. What does God think we should do with the money He gives us?

In order to get a comprehensive understanding...we are going to start at the beginning, and follow along as the bible reveals to us the way God views money...and finances...and giving. As we do so we are going to develop a biblical theology of money...and giving...and finances. No better place to start...than in the Beginning!

Genesis 4

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**1. Cain and Abel: ATTITUDE: God Is To Be Given Our First And Our Best.**

Gen 4:1-7

- First mention in the bible of giving something to God (First time is almost always significant...sets tone for rest)  
Both brothers brought an offering: At first glance it seems to be hard to understand the difference  
Many different explanations: Here is what I think makes the difference:

**ATTITUDE**

~Cain brought an "offering" Lit = *a gift, a donation, a sacrifice, an offering*

~Abel brought Firstborn...Fat Portions (Considered the best most valuable portion) (richest and choicest part)

~God Looked: With Respect: Lit = *to look upon with favor and/or positive regard*

~God Said: Do Well: Lit = *if you do your BEST!*

**Applic:** So here is what I want you to see.

Both men brought an offering

Both men brought what they had to offer

Both men were probably sincere...truly wanting to honor and bless God...IN fact, Cain initiated the offering!

The difference we see here is that Cain brought "something" And Abel brought...His best...and His first!

That I think is what caused Abel's offerings to be looked upon with favor

**2. Noah: PURPOSE: Giving Is An Act Of Thankfulness and Appreciation.**

Gen 8:20-22

- Second time someone made an offering it was an expression of Thankfulness and appreciation to God for His care  
~Immediately after Noah left the Ark: First thing he did was build an altar and make an offering  
~Offered: Lit = *to offer up, to sacrifice, to lift up to*  
~Burnt Offering: Lit = *a sacrifice that is offered and consumed by fire*  
(This is the same word used over in Lev: Typically used to talk about the METHOD of offering:  
The PURPOSE of the offering is clearly an offering of Thanksgiving)

**Applic:** When we Give to God...it is an expression of Thanksgiving

~God you have protected me and my family...And I realize that

~God I am looking for a way to express my appreciation for your lovingkindness

~God, I am going to take some of the most important and valuable things I have...totally give to YOU...THANK YOU!

~We are not yet in the OT sacrificial system...and we are already seeing the foundations

We are seeing the acts of Giving/Sacrifice/Thanks Offering

**3. Abram: BLESSING: Giving Is a Response to God's Blessing In Our Life.**

Gen 14:17-24

- Two pieces of information are added in this account. Both are important.

**1. Response to God's Blessing:**

~The story: Lot, Abram's nephew captured and carried off in war

Abraham goes and rescues him, defeats enemy, takes plunder

On way back...A priest of God (Melchizedek) comes out and BLESSES ABRAM!

Abram RESPONDS: By Giving the Priest an offering

Notice...Abram doesn't keep the rest! Gives it back to the King that initially defeated!

**Applic:** First, notice...Abram's giving was a DIRECT response to God's Blessing: Both Victory, and Safe Return!

**2. Proportional Gift:**

Abram chose a very specific amount: 10% as the "right amount" of offering (TITHE)

This gift was to the Priest...and notice...He didn't keep anything for himself!

Long before you get to the OT Law...This is a BIBLICAL, NOT an OT Law item!

**Applic:** Our giving should be proportional to God's Blessing! Stop and think...What Does your giving say?

Illus: (NO accounting Office) God's Response To Abram's Giving: The Desires Of His heart! SON

#### 4. Abraham: Giving Is An Act of Faith and Obedience:

Gen 22:1-14

Notice this takes place AFTER Abraham is in Covenant relationship with God.

As a result of his honoring God earlier, (Ch 14) God made a covenant w Abraham: Give Him the desires of his heart  
As a sign of that covenant relationship He changed Abraham's name....

And...As He promised Abraham the Desires of his heart: (Land, Seed, Blessing) Israel, Isaac, God's Favor in his life  
Having all those things...Possessing them...God now tests Abraham's Faith and His obedience: Through act of Giving

(READ)

a. Giving is an act of OBEDIENCE: Will I do...what God asks me to do?

Over the next couple of weeks we are going to look at a lot of what God has to say:

~Honor me with the first fruits

~Return a portion of my blessing

~Use the REST of what you keep for me

And here we see God testing Abraham:

*Abraham...do you love me...or do you JUST love the things I give you?*

Will you hold my blessings loosely...or will you latch onto them and love my blessings MORE than you love me?

Vs 1-2: Take your son...and offer him to me

Vs 3ff: Rose early...took donkey...men...Son Cut the wood needed and He went to the place Every step an Act of Obedience

Applic: God has a LOT to say in the balance of His word about giving...One issue is...Will I be obedient

Am I willing to follow in obedience to the things that He has called me to do...in every area of life

b. Giving is an act of Faith: God is the one who provides: Both what I have...and What I need

*Do I REALLY believe that He is the one owns all I have...and will give me what I need?*

Do I believe it enough to actually put myself in the position of TRUSTING Him?

Vs 4-5: Look at his incredible statement of Faith: "We will go and worship...we will return!"

Vs 7-8 Isaac: Fire...and The wood: But where is the Lamb?

God will provide! Lit = *to meet a need; to present; to provide; to cause to be or to be seen*

Applic: Every single time we give...What we should be saying is: I know I can give...because I know God will provide!

I don't have to worry, I don't have to sweat, I don't have to calculate:

I am going to trust God to do what He has said he will do: He will meet my needs

I am in covenant relationship with Him.

I am His child! I can **DEPEND** upon Him... God will meet my every need!

Applic: Yes, sometimes He puts me to the test!

Sometimes He stretches me, asks more of me than I think I can give

Sometimes He allows the trials, tribulations...struggles to come...

But He **ALWAYS** comes through...He always meets our needs!

CONCL: As we begin this series on giving...I want to close today the way I opened.

This isn't really a series on giving: It is SO much more than that!

Yes, it **INCLUDES** that aspect: But Giving is about so much more than Money...

So...what is it **REALLY** about? A couple of places where the scripture challenges us this morning

1. Attitude? Are you giving God your **FIRST**...and your **BEST**?

Are you giving like Cain: Just whatever is convenient? Whatever is laying around? Left over?

Or like Abel: From the very best you have...the first of His blessings...not the last and leftover

2. Thankful? When you give: Are you giving from a heart of Thankfulness and Appreciation?

Do you pause to say Father...You have given me so much...blessed me so richly...I'm so thankful

Is your giving like Noah: God...you have protected, you have blessed, you have sheltered...Say Thank You!

3. Response to God's Blessing? Is your giving like Abram's?

Are you giving in response to God's blessing:

Are you giving proportionally? Does your giving even remotely reflect the level of His blessing in your life?

Or, if someone looked at it...Does it look like He hasn't blessed you at all?

4. Is your giving an act of Faith and Obedience?

Do you give at all? We are told to...Do you listen? Or do you think of giving as optional

Do you give in Faith: Trusting that God will provide: Acknowledging it all came from Him...All still belongs to Him