

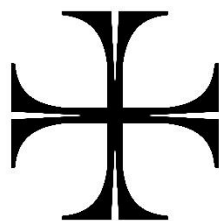


Living Generously – Week One

“The Lord Wants Much More Than a Man’s Money!”

Welcome!

Good morning and welcome to worship. This weekend is the first in a three-week stewardship emphasis. Did you know that God speaks about worldly wealth in over 2,300 passages in the Bible? In other words, this is an issue close to the Lord's heart! What blessings come from using God's material gifts wisely: a strong faith, help for my fellow man, playing a part in helping God's "kingdom come." While we may see only a dollar. God knows how to put that dollar to work - paying dividends forever. May the Lord bless us as we prayerfully consider just how good God has been to us.



ORDER OF SERVICE

Hymn:

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”
Hymn #624 v.1-3



1 Praise to the Lord, the Al - might - y, the King of cre -
2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is won - drous - ly
3 Praise to the Lord, who has fear - ful - ly, won - drous - ly,



a - tion! O my soul, praise him, for he is your
reign - ing and, as on wings of an ea - gle, up -
made you, health has be - stowed and, when heed - less - ly



health and sal - va - tion! Let all who hear now to his
lift - ing, sus - tain - ing. Have you not seen how all that's
fall - ing, has stayed you. What need or grief ev - er has



tem - ple draw near, join - ing in glad ad - o - ra - tion!
need - ful has been sent by his gra - cious or - dain - ing?
failed of re - lief? Wings of his mer - cy did shade you.

Text: Joachim Neander, 1650–1680; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.

Tune: Ander Theil Des Erneueren Gesang-Buchs, Stralsund, 1665, alt

Text and tune: Public domain

Stand

Minister: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

Lift high Your saving name, my God and my King! I will bless Your name into eternity.

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.
Generation after generation stand in awe of Your work; each one tells stories of Your mighty acts.

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.
My life is filled with God's praise. Let everything living bless Him; bless His holy name from now to eternity.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Lord, we humbly come before You knowing that we have failed to speak, think, or act rightly. Hear our confession, Lord, for we have sinned and failed You

(a moment for personal reflection/confession follows each statement)

... in the use of the time You give us

... in our slowness to spread Your Gospel

... in the faithful care of our relationships

... in the careless use of the possessions You give us

... in our non-stop preoccupation with worldly wealth

... in caring for the bodies and minds, You have given us

... in our refusal to make You our first priority

Hear our confession, for we have sinned and are in need of Your mercy and forgiveness.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us. Amen.

Fellow stewards of all God's gifts, chosen disciples, dearly loved children of God: It is impossible for anyone to love you more than Jesus loves you. In His great love for us, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world He created to save us from the sin that would destroy us forever. He died so that we could live. He lives that we might never die! His forgiveness empowers us to turn away from our sins and live as His redeemed children, putting our earthly lives to heavenly use. As His called servant, it is with great joy and by God's command that I forgive you all your sins, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. You are forgiven and empowered to a new life as faithful managers and disciples.
(spoken) **Amen.**

PRAYER AND PRAISE

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

O taste and see that the Lord is good. Bless - ed are they who take

ref - uge in him. Your Word, O Lord, is e - ter - nal; it

stands firm in the heav - ens. Your faith - ful - ness con -

tin - ues for - ev - er. O taste and see that the

Lord is good. Bless - ed are they who take ref - uge in him.

Prayer of the Day

The Lord be with you.

(spoken) **And also with you.**

We pray:

O Lord, giver of life and source of all love, we know that all we have received comes from Your gracious hand. You call us to be managers of Your bounty, the caretakers of all You have entrusted to us. Help us to always use Your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously. Send Your Holy Spirit to work through us, that many more might come to know the saving riches of Your Son. May our faithful management bear witness to the love of Your Son in our hearts. Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.

The Word of the Lord

First Lesson

2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-14 (NIV84)

Early Christians Eagerly Gave Beyond Their Ability

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. ⁵ And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. ⁶ So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But just as you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving. ⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich... ¹³ Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴ At the present ⁴time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need.

Verse of the Day

Luke 24:32

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. Our hearts were burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us. Alleluia.

Stand

Gospel

Matthew 23: 23-28 (NIV84)

The Lord Takes Aim At the Heart

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices-- mint, dill and cummin. 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. ²⁴ You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. ²⁵ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. ²⁷ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, He came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake, He was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day, He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, Who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen

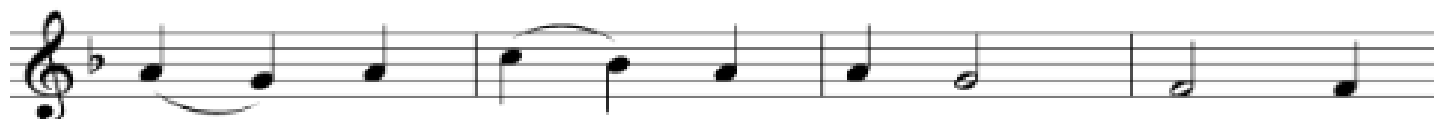
Hymn of the Day

"Holy God, We Praise Your Name"

Hymn #953



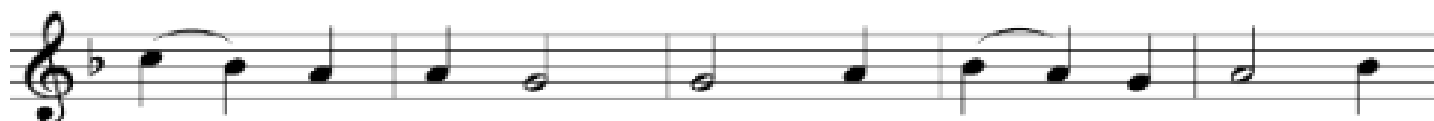
1 Ho - ly God, we praise your name; Lord of
 2 Hark! The glad ce - les - tial hymn an - gel
 3 All a - pos - tles join the strain as your
 4 You are King of glo - ry, Christ, Son of
 5 Ho - ly Fa - ther, ho - ly Son, Ho - ly



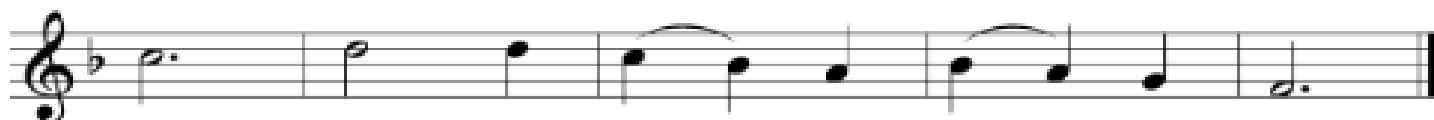
all, we bow be - fore you. All on
 choirs a - bove are rais - ing; cher - u -
 sa - cred name they hal - low; proph - ets
 God, yet born of Mar - y, for us
 Spir - it, three we name you, though in



earth your scep - ter claim; all in heav'n a -
 bim and ser - a - phim, in un - ceas - ing
 swell the glad re - frain, and the white - robed
 sin - ners sac - ri - ficed, on the cross our
 es - sence on - ly one, un - di - vid - ed



bove a - dore you. In - fi - nite your vast do -
 cho - rus prais - ing, fill the heav'ns with sweet ac -
 mar - tyrs fol - low, and from morn to set of
 sins did car - ry; first to break the bars of
 God we claim you, and, a - dor - ing, bend the



main, ev - er - last - ing is your reign.
 cord: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord!"
 sun through the Church the song goes on.
 death, you have o - pened heav'n to faith.
 knee while we own the mys - ter - y.

SHOULD JESUS REALLY BE TALKING ABOUT MONEY?

He hammers on dead hearts

He was hammered to the cross so dead hearts could live

Gathering of Our Offering

Please read the following devotion as the offering is gathered:

DOES GOD COMMAND TITHING?

Jesus said, *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them"* (Matthew 5:17). Because Jesus kept the law of tithing (10% giving) perfectly for us, we are no longer living under a command to tithe. However, living in the grace and forgiveness of Christ, we are asked to give freely (Matthew 10:8) and generously (1 Corinthians 16:2). The tithe can serve as a *joyful benchmark* instead of a *burdensome command*.

When we give, we are responding to God's grace. Tithing can serve as a guide to our giving. Without the tithe, we would lack guidance as to what would be an appropriate response to God's goodness. By grace and through faith, many brothers and sisters even give well beyond the tithe.

In the book *Holy Smoke! Whatever Happened to Tithing?* J. Cliff Christopher and Herb Mather wrote, "The tithe is a benchmark along a journey rather than a mark of having arrived at the destination. When we travel on highways today, we need roads, signposts, and other benchmarks such as motels, restaurants, and gas stations. These are institutions. Their purpose is to serve the public on its journey.

Likewise, benchmarks such as tithing serve the person on the spiritual journey."

Tithing is no longer a requirement, but it can still serve as a proper benchmark for our faithful response to God for Who He is and what He has done for us. The big issue for us today? *God doesn't FORCE us to give a single cent! Instead, through Christ, He gives us the gift – yes, the PRIVILEGE – of being able to give. May God help us to see this key difference!*

O Christ, our true and only Light, Enlighten those who sit in night; Let those afar now hear Your voice, And in Your fold with us rejoice. Lord, give us always generous hearts, to use what You have given, To spread Your gospel near and far, And bring souls into heaven. Amen

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O God, through Jesus' sacrifice, You have restored us as Your forgiven children.
In His Name we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven.

Help us to know You through Your inspired Word and to live by it as children
in Your family.

Hallowed be Thy Name.

Give us Your Holy Spirit to rule in our hearts, and use us to extend Your
kingdom of grace to others.

Thy kingdom come.

Make us zealous to carry out Your will as gladly as the angels do, and to
conform our will to Yours.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Merciful Lord, since You are the provider of all things necessary for our bodies;
fill us with trust.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Continue to erase our sins, and help us gladly to forgive and to do good to those
who wrong us.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

We know the devil seeks to destroy our souls and the world lures us to ruin by
appealing to the desires of our flesh. Guard us from the poison of misbelief and
the trap of unrepented sin.

And lead us not into temptation.

Keep safe our bodies and souls, our property and honor, and above all send the
Holy Spirit to preserve our faith in Christ which leads to life everlasting.

But deliver us from evil.

For all these petitions we look to you as King of Kings and Lord of your church.

For Thine is the kingdom,

You alone hold the power to grant our requests.

and the power,

We worship you from whom all blessings flow.

and the glory forever and ever.

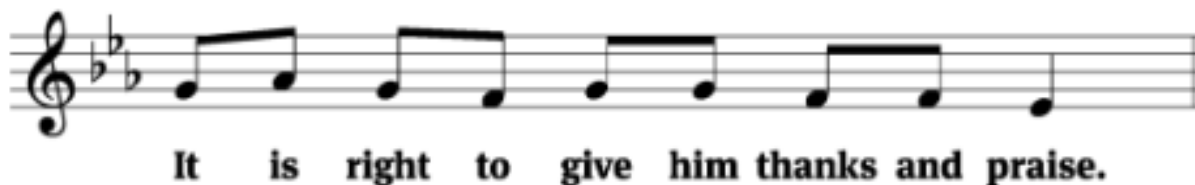
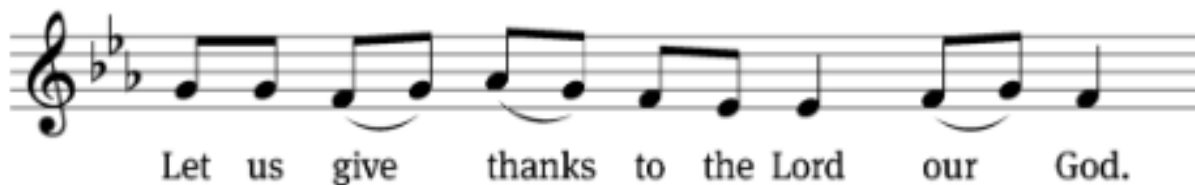
Prays the petitions of the week.

We ask these petitions, relying on Jesus, Who cancelled our sins and made us acceptable in Your sight, we pray with confidence:
Amen. It shall be so.

THE SACRAMENT

Preface

CW 165



It is truly Good and right that we should at all times ... we praise Your holy Name and join their glorious song.

Holy, Holy, Holy

CW 167



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of heav - en - ly hosts:
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho-san - na, ho -
san - na, ho-san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he,
bless - ed is he, bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Ho-san - na, ho-san - na, ho-san - na in the high - est.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me."

Then He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

O CHRIST, LAMB OF GOD

AGNUS DEI

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;

have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God,

you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;

grant us your peace. A - men.

Distribution

COMMUNION HYMN

"I Come O Savior, to Your Table"

Hymn #670:1-5



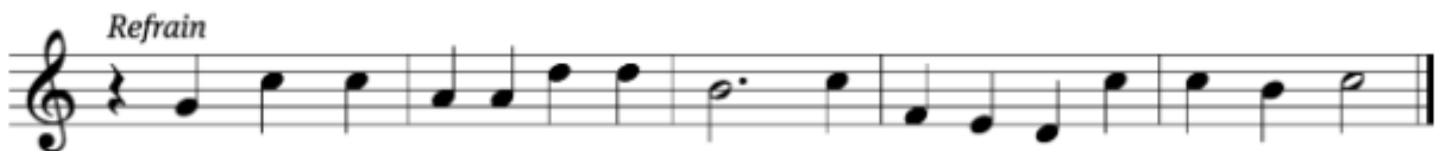
1 I come, O Sav - ior, to your ta - ble, for weak and
 2 O grant that I in man - ner wor - thy may eat and
 3 I should not be your sheep, dear Sav - ior; I stray in
 4 O let me loathe all sin for - ev - er as death and
 5 Your ho - ly heart has one ob - ses - sion, one bless - ed



wea - ry is my soul; O Je - sus, you a -
 drink and be re - stored, and, dwell - ing on your
 sin's ac - cursed ter - rain. And yet you par - don
 poi - son to my soul, that I through will - ful
 thing it burns to do— to cleanse the sin - ner



lone are a - ble to sat - is - fy and make me whole.
 bound - less mer - cy, look on - ly un - to you, O Lord.
 my be - hav - ior; my faith - ful Shep - herd you re - main.
 sin - ning nev - er may see your judg - ment take its toll!
 from trans - gres - sion; so I, a sin - ner, come to you.



Lord, may your bod - y and your blood be for my soul the high - est good.

COMMUNION HYMN

"I Come O Savior, to Your Table"

Hymn #670:6-10



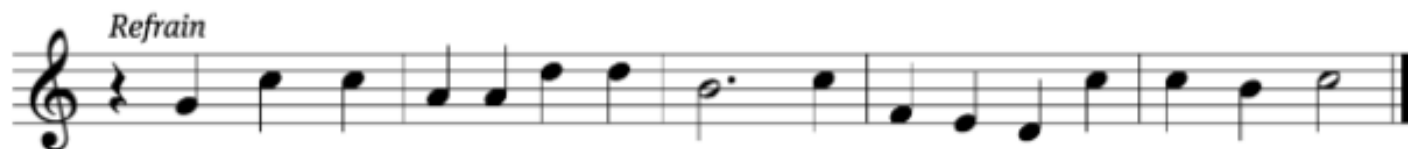
6 My soul is bur-dened; Lord, re - lieve me, by all this
 7 With - in me, Lord, your vi - sion trac - es a heart of
 8 By faith I call your ho - ly ta - ble the tes - ta -
 9 This meal with bless - ing is a - bound-ing: to poor ones
 10 My heart has now be - come your dwell-ing, O bless - ed,



weight of sin op - pressed! Though sin - ful, yet, in
 deep hu - mil - i - ty that mourns its sin and
 ment of your deep love, for by your gift I
 wealth, to weak ones pow'r, to an - gels joy, to
 ho - ly Trin - i - ty. With an - gels I, your



grace re - ceive me and feed me as your grate - ful guest.
 yet em - brac - es the mer - it you have earned for me.
 now am a - ble to know the heart of God a - bove.
 hell con - found-ing, and life for me in death's dark hour.
 prais - es tell - ing, shall live in joy e - ter - nal - ly.



Refrain

Lord, may your bod-y and your blood be for my soul the high-est good.

Please stand at Pastors direction after communion.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good

His mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,

We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We give thanks almighty God that You have refreshed us with this saving gift. We pray that through it You will strengthen our faith in You and increase our love for one another. We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

"Praise to the Lord Almighty"

Hymn #624 v.4-5

See next page



CLOSING HYMN

"Praise to the Lord Almighty"

Hymn #624 v.4-5

4 Praise to the Lord, who will pros - per your work and de -
5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me a -

fend you; sure - ly his good - ness and mer - cy shall
dore him! All that has life and breath, come now with

dai - ly at - tend you. Pon - der a - new what the Al -
prais - es be - fore him! Let the a - men sound from his

might - y can do as with his love he be - friends you.
peo - ple a - gain; glad - ly for - ev - er a - dore him!

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Praise to the Lord Almighty". It consists of four staves of music in a single system, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff has two lines of lyrics, numbered 4 and 5. The second staff has two lines of lyrics. The third staff has two lines of lyrics. The fourth staff has two lines of lyrics. The music is written in a simple, clear style, suitable for a hymn book.

Text: Joachim Neander, 1650–1680; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.

Tune: Ander Theil Des Erneueren Gesang-Buchs, Stralsund, 1665, alt

Text and tune: Public domain

GETTING STARTED:

Some statistical analysis was recently done. We broke down our active giving units (no names) into the following four groups. See if you can match each group of givers with the total percent (%) of offerings given last year.

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- a. 9% (23) ____ gave \$39,852 or 5% of offerings last year.
- b. 11% (27) ____ gave \$224,163 or 28% of offerings last year.
- c. 38% (97) ____ gave \$193,030 or 24% of offerings last year.
- d. 43% (109) ____ gave \$353,586 or 44% of offerings last year.



Now circle what you think is the greatest temptation for us:

- For the 9% to be *disappointed* with the 11%, *upset* with the 38%, and *ANGRY* with the 43%.
- For the 43% to hope that the 9% can do what they did last year.
- For the 11% and 38% to assume they're just fine. "Not too hot, not too cold. Just right."
- For 100% of us to wonder "Where is this all going?"

Think about:

The devil wins if he can use information like this to create *divisions* in our midst. Instead of a seedbed for division, let's make these statistics a seedbed for ACTION - *Biblical action*. Let's propose the following action for our church family: The 11% to use the 9% as an encouragement. The 38% to do the same with the 11%. The 43% to use the 38% as goal to shoot for. The 9% to ask, "How can I continue to grow in the grace of giving?" This advice has been around for centuries. Listen to the Holy Spirit: "*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds*" (Hebrews 10:24).

Key Reality

Like any area of the Christian life, some brothers and sisters regularly practice first fruits giving. Others *want* to practice this truth. There are possibly some who are *afraid* of this truth.

KEY TRUTHS

Truth #1: The focus of Firstfruits Giving is not the *amount* but the *attitude*.

"So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me." (Deuteronomy 26:8-10)

Characterize the attitude of the Israelite when he brought his firstfruits offering to the Lord.

"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" (Proverbs 3:9-10).

In this passage, identify key words that describe a proper giving attitude.

"Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this, the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth" (Mark 10:21-22).

Why did Jesus ask him to sell everything and give it away?

Truth #2: The focus of Firstfruits Giving is not on *me* but on *God*.

Combine the biblical account of God's work of creation with Psalm 24: *"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live it..." (Psalm 24:1).*

Is there really anything that doesn't belong to God? Is this literally true or just a nice thing to say in church?

Combine the facts of John 3:16 with Romans 5: “*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

We learn a lot about God’s giving. God gave first and gave his best.

Combine the fact that the Holy Spirit brought you to faith: “*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:24).

Through my sinful nature, greed assures that God will always come anywhere but first.

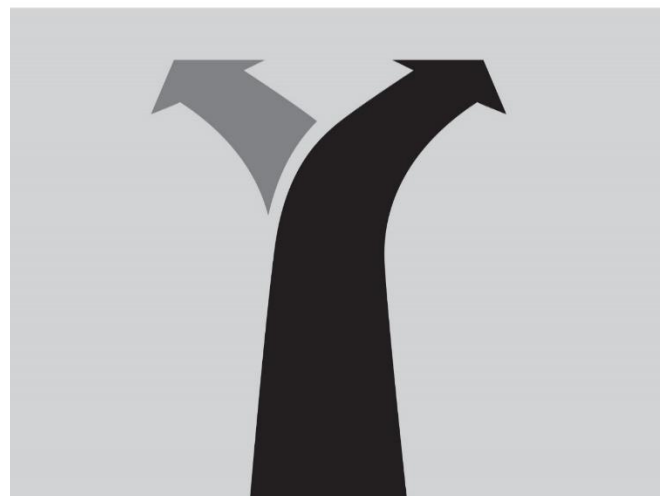
Through the Spirit, we are empowered to give in a way that glorifies God.

Key Challenge:

If you are not in the *spiritual habit* of giving to the Lord first, is it time to reconsider that habit? The First Commandment says that we are to *fear, love, and trust in God above all things*. Firstfruits giving helps us do exactly that. (Besides, try telling your wife that you really do love and cherish her, but instead of taking her out to dinner on your anniversary, you purchased a new ice auger for yourself! Or, a husband is told that his birthday gift is a new pair of high-heeled shoes instead of the latest tool for the garage). Firstfruits giving tangibly places God first.

If you are in the habit of giving firstfruits, don’t let the temptations of this world or the pull of your old self desires knock you off track. Persevere and continually place God first in your life, including giving.

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TAKING IT HOME:

A wise Christian said, “The congregation that loves its members will ask those members to give.” Your leaders believe this statement. They have requested an effort like this because they have your best spiritual interests at heart. We thank you for being open to this process. This type of willingness is an indication that the Holy Spirit is alive and active in your heart!

The first step in a journey often is the most difficult.
Identify some of the challenges to *beginning* a new giving plan.

Once we begin a giving plan, it is easy to “fall off” the plan and not *follow through*. Think back to earlier times with past giving plans. What were some things that knocked those plans “off the track”?

Beginning and *following through* are two important obstacles to overcome in reaching any goals. This is especially true for giving. We do have some spiritual help on our side to meet these obstacles head-on. Explain how the following words give comfort and assurance for the implementation of a new giving plan:

“*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*”
Galatians 5:24

Don’t worry about giving amounts right now. Instead, invest yourself in praying about why you do - or do not - practice firstfruits giving. Think about this: does God ever command something that isn’t meant to be a *blessing*? That’s God’s promise to you! “⁹ *Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;* ¹⁰ *then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine*” (Proverbs 3:9-10).

Think of times in your past in which the above verse was true. If you are with someone, share those times with that person. Then, pray by:

- 1) Thanking God for those past blessings and
- 2) Asking Him for guidance as you begin to design a new giving plan.