

Giving to God, part 1
Genesis 4:2-12

- I. I want to talk with you today (and for the next couple of weeks) about giving.
 - a. I want us to spend some time thinking about giving to God.
 - i. The why's, the how's, the what's.
 - ii. But also the blessings, the joys and the growth we experience when we give.
 - b. Let's begin by looking at a familiar story from Genesis 4 – the story of Cain and Abel.
 - i. Genesis 4:2-12.
 - ii. Let's walk through the story together and notice three things.
- II. First, **both men make offerings without beings asked or instructed to do so.**
 - a. There's no indication that either one had been instructed to make an offering to the Lord.
 - i. They just do it.
 - ii. Something moves them to make an offering.
 - b. Giving is an act of worship.
 - i. Sacrifice and offering are at the heart of worship.
 - 1. You can talk a lot about other theological, technical things, but bottom line – sacrifice and offering.
 - 2. Offering ourselves to God.
 - 3. Receiving God's sacrifice in Christ for us.
- III. Second, **each man brings a different offering.**
 - a. Cain brings "some of the fruits of the soil." Abel brings "some of the firstborn of the flock."
 - i. The only indication in the text that would give us any hint of why God accepted one offering and not the other is here.
 - ii. One brings "some of the fruits," the other brings "the firstborn."
 - b. God is pleased with first fruits – our best.
 - i. Missionary story.
 - 1. "beggars can't be choosers."
 - 2. Perhaps not, but givers can. And should be!
 - ii. The first check you write ...
 - 1. The first thought of your day ...
 - 2. The first action you take ...
 - iii. Your first fruits given to God.
- IV. Third, **note God's continual concern for Cain.**
 - a. Cain's reaction is to focus on himself and his situation.
 - b. God's response is to focus on Cain's heart.
 - i. God never abandons Cain or scolds.
 - ii. God loves – God is not just loving, God is love.
- V. Here are some things for us to think about. First, **at its best, giving is spontaneous, freely offered and unprovoked.**
 - a. Giving isn't born out of obligation.
 - i. It's born out of celebration and gratitude.
 - ii. Giving is not a compulsion – it is an opportunity.
 - b. I think both Cain and Abel got this part right.
 - i. A natural outcome of receiving is giving.

- ii. Someone called it paying forward.
 - 1. I call it paying upward.
 - 2. A way to put before God your gratitude by being a blessing to someone else.
- VI. Second, **God is pleased when we give our best.**
 - a. Giving changes our orientation.
 - i. This is the vertical dimension of giving.
 - ii. Giving takes our minds off of ourselves, and shifts them toward God.
 - b. You always recognize someone's best.
 - i. When you have someone's full attention ...
 - ii. When you see that they've gone out of their way ...
 - iii. When they reach out to you without really even knowing that you're in need.
- VII. Third, **when we fall short {and we all fall short}, God does not abandon or condemn us.**
 - a. God knows us better than we know ourselves – our sin doesn't surprise him.
 - i. He doesn't like it.
 - ii. But it doesn't surprise him.
 - b. God loves us more than anyone else; God loves us more than we love ourselves.
 - i. God wants the best for us.
 - ii. God knows that when we give our best, we receive the best.
- VIII. What this means for your giving.
 - a. **Do you give grudgingly or reluctantly?**
 - i. Why?
 - ii. What's holding you back from the joy of giving?
 - iii. Why does this bring out such resentment toward God and the church?
 - iv. Are you trapped by your stuff, your talents, your money?
 - 1. Sometimes these are all symptoms of a greater problem.
 - 2. We want to build our kingdom rather than God's.
 - a. {Building – being a part of something bigger}
 - b. {Soup kitchen, worldchangers – being a part of something with impact}
 - 3. We have “long term” memory loss.
 - a. We are impulsive – we jump rather than think.
 - b. We are now oriented – it's an instant world.
 - c. God is a long term planner.
 - d. We need to adopt that posture.
 - b. **Are you giving God your best (your first fruits) or your leftovers?**
 - i. Are you holding on too tight? {The seagull syndrome: mine, mine, mine.}
 - ii. Are you addicted to control? {The “master and commander” syndrome}
 - c. **As you struggle with giving, God neither abandons you nor condemns you.**
 - i. God wants you to experience the blessings of giving.
 - ii. He'll remind you, he's not going to go away or let you off the hook.
 - iii. But, bottom line – regardless, he loves you!
- IX. **God wants you to give because its good for you!**
 - a. Not good for you like your mom saying, “Take your medicine, it's good for you.”
 - b. But truly good – it the best, fullest, most complete sense of the word.
 - c. Do you really think God needs your money?
 - d. God can accomplish his purposes – with us, without us, or in spite of us.
 - i. God doesn't need you to be a giver.
 - ii. God wants you to be a giver because he knows what you will receive.

1. You will know joy.
 2. You will be blessed in return.
- e. God is the example setter: He gave His best in Jesus.
- i. Not to give us an impossibly high standard to shoot for.
 - ii. But to give us a crystal clear picture of the joy and blessing in being the giver.