

A FINANCIALLY PRUDENT DISCIPLE PRT 3

Two weeks ago, I started talking about financial prudence and this is still under our main theme **HIS COMMISSION, OUR MISSION PRT 29**. Today, I am doing **A FINANCIALLY PRUDENT DISCIPLE PRT 3**.

- Lets look at what we have covered so far:

1. **Develop a healthy relationship with money (wealth)**
2. **Acknowledge God as your source.**
3. **Exercise good financial Stewardship**
 - a) **Honestly earn your income**
 - b) **Pay your debts**
 - c) **Increase your earning capacity**

- For the rest of this money talk, I will continue unpacking principles of financial stewardship.
- Now that you have increased your earning capacity and you have grown financially, the big question that you need to answer is this: What do you do with the money you have gathered?
- What you do with money speaks of your level of stewardship.
- Let me answer that for you.

d) Prioritize God in your finances.

- You prioritize what you honor and honor has to do with putting weight and correct value on something. What you honour, you put first, you consider it seriously.
- Whatever you want God to bless, put Him first in that thing. If you want God to bless your marriage, put Him first in your marriage. If you want God to bless your work, put Him first at work.
- The same applies to your finances; if you want God to bless your finances, put Him first in your finances.
- Many people have been giving, but there is a way in which God wants you to give. God wants to be prioritized. Simply giving to God does not mean you prioritize Him.
- Giving is foundational to God and therefore to a believer. A good steward knows how to give, and therefore, we must establish the foundations of prioritizing God by looking what the scriptures have to say in his regard.

The Biblical foundation of prioritizing God

- Now, establishing a biblical principle goes beyond something that is written in the Bible because you can force the word to say what it is not saying (You can find a verse to support your desire to marry multiple wives, a verse that supports killing your enemies etc.)

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- If you want to establish a biblical doctrine, it is not enough just to find a verse, but rather you must find a principle that remains true across the bible.
- Usually, to understand God's mind about something, you must look for when it was first mentioned, and this is a rule of bible interpretation called the principle of first mention.
- If you want to learn how to prioritize God and to give an offering that is acceptable to God, you must look at the first time that God was pleased by an offering and learn the principles found there.

Genesis 4:4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,

- Here we have Abel offering the first acceptable offering in the Bible, the first acceptable offering, and not necessarily the first offering. The first offering was Cain's, which God did not accept.
- This occasion can help us identify principles in prioritizing God in our giving.
- How does God want me to give? What is the kind of offering that God blesses? What type of offering does God accept and honor?

1. Abel gave from his flock – give what you worked for.

- Abel gave the firstborn from his flock. This referred to the animals he reared.
- So, it just tells us that an offering comes from somewhere; you don't give an offering out of nothing.
- It comes from somewhere, and for Abel, it was the work of his hand as an animal farmer. That is why we spoke about increasing your earning capacity, because God wants to receive something for which you have laid down your life.
- We all must become enterprising in life – sell merchandise, get a job, apply yourself instead of waiting for handouts.
- Some people find it easy to give what they did not work for. Anything they worked for is difficult to release, and yet that is what brings honor to God.

2. Abel gave his first - God comes first.

- The second principle we have is that Abel gave the firstborn of the flock – take note; it was the first and not the second.
- The word "firstborn" describes the kind of offering that he gave. The first one.
- So, Abel establishes that the offering God respects comes from what we have worked hard for and must be the first.

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- When you give God the first, He comes and stands between you and the rest. It means that He stands to guard, to increase, and to preserve what remains.
- So, the offering you give must be the first, and I will explain this a little later.

3. He gave with all the fat – Give God the best

- And the third principle we find is that he gave the firstborn with all its fat. The fat describes the quality of the offering he gave.
- It means that if a firstborn was good-looking and fat, Abel would give it to the Lord instead of keeping it for himself.
- Abel gave the fattest of his flock, the best lambs he had; the fattest and plumpest, and which were most free from defects and blemishes; not the torn, nor lame, nor sick, but that which was perfect and without spot; for God is to be served with the best we have.
- God knows what you have, and He does not demand it but rather waits to see what value you place on Him.
- Abel establishes for us the basis for every offering that we give to the Lord; it must be measured in this way.
- Now, if you look through the Bible, you realize that after Abel's offering, all other offerings followed the same process. Noah gave an offering later on, and he gave the same offering. Abraham's offering was the first and best, which he had received after a long time of waiting, and God honored it.
- Prioritizing God in giving is not just giving anything and anyhow – it must meet these three requirements.
- Giving God the first fruit underlies the principle of prioritizing God.
- When you look through the Old Testament, the word first fruit occurs many times, but there are two different words that are translated as first fruits.
- The first one I want to consider is in Proverbs.

Proverbs 3:9 Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase;

- Now, in Hebrew, the word that is translated as firstfruit is rê'shîyth, which means the first, in place, time, order or rank.
- It means the beginning and the foremost, and this makes something the most important thing among others.
- An acceptable and honorable offering is given first.

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- In other words, an offering that is respected by God and attracts God's blessing is an offering that is given first before anything else.
- It's not something you do as an afterthought. In other words, if you are going to give an acceptable offering to God, it is not something you do after paying your bills.
- Many well-meaning believers give God their leftovers. If you go to a party, you will feel dishonored if they serve you from the leftovers – they give you an ice cream bowl that is half eaten, or a drumstick with portions missing because someone was full and left some behind.
- rê'shîyt is not the only Hebrew word for firstfruit. There is another Hebrew word that will shed more light on prioritizing God in your finances.

Exodus 23:18 You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, neither shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until the morning. 19 The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of Jehovah your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

- Earlier, we saw the same word as rê'shîyt, but here it means something different in Hebrew.
- The word that is translated firstfruit here is bikkûr.
- Bikkûr refers to something that is ripe and ready.
- In other words, the firstfruit is something that is well done and well developed.
- An acceptable offering is of a great quality among the rest. You don't take the best for yourself and give God anything that you are not happy with.
- An acceptable and honorable offering is both qualitatively and quantitatively excellent.
- What we give to the Lord matters and before giving, we must ask ourselves whether the quality is worth a king.
- Let's not fool ourselves into thinking that God does not pay attention. The devil has lied to many of us into thinking that giving is just a religious act.
- God looks at what you give, and it either brings joy or grieves His heart. How do you spend 90% on yourself and only 2% on God?

Malachi 1:6 A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My fear? says Jehovah of Hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. And you say, In what way have we despised Your name? 7 You offer defiled bread upon My altar; and you say, In what way have we defiled You? In your saying, The table of Jehovah, it is a thing to be despised. 8 And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it

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not evil? And if you offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Bring it now to your governor. Will he accept you, or lift up your face, says Jehovah of Hosts?

- David, a man after God's own had a right attitude towards his God and Lord. He considered his lifestyle and realized that he was not going to God crumbs.

2 Samuel 24:24 And the king said to Araunah, No, but I will surely buy from you at a price. And I will not offer burnt offerings to Jehovah my God of that which costs me nothing. And David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. 25 And David built there an altar to Jehovah, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. And Jehovah was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

- David could have taken advantage of his position but he knew that this has to do with his great God and wanted to offer God a worthwhile offering.
- God saw his heart and responded by stopping the plague, and the people were saved from death.
- What is the byproduct of prioritizing God in your finances?

Proverbs 3:9 Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.

- Two things will happen; the first one is that you will have enough for yourself. God will ensure that you are well provided for – your barns will be filled with plenty.
- This is a blessing for everyone who prioritizes God in their finances.
- The second thing that happens is that you will have more than enough. God will ensure that you will have enough to supply for others around you – your vats will overflow.