

SERIES: DISCOVERING THE BLESSINGS AND FAVOR OF GOD
PART I: PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST – Pastor Alton Trimble
Sunday, June 10, 2018

II Corinthians 8:7 (NLT)

Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.

I. GOD MUST BE FIRST.

Matthew 6:31-33 (NKJV)

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

A. God sets an important precedence with regards to first things in Exodus 13:2

Exodus 13:2 (NKJV)

“Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine.”

Exodus 13:12-13 (NKJV)

...that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the LORD’s. ¹³ But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

1. Sacrificed or redeemed.

- a. Remember what John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus as he baptized folks on the banks of the Jordan River.

John 1:29 (NKJV)

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

- b. John defined the role Jesus came to fulfill.

Exodus 13:12-13 (NKJV)

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you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- c. We give the same way God gave

Romans 8:29 (NLT)

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

- d. Holding versus losing

Exodus 12:3-7 (NKJV)

Matthew 16:25 (NKJV)

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

2. Understanding the Principle of First.

- a. The first belongs to God
- b. It always requires faith to give the first.
- c. Tithing is our primary way of acknowledging God as first in our lives.

Romans 11:16 (NKJV)

For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

B. The First of the First.

1. The first fruit, like the firstborn, belongs to God.

Exodus 23:19 (NKJV)

The first of the first fruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.

- a. Last of your first fruit is not acceptable

Exodus 23:19 (NKJV)

The first of the first fruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.

- b. Note that the scripture designates the house of the Lord as the proper place to give your first fruits.
- c. There is a connection to first of fruits and you ‘Discovering God’s Blessings and Favor.’

Proverbs 3:9-10 (NKJV)

*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.*

2. Jericho a first fruit reality

- a. You got much to conquer but God must be first.

Joshua 6:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. ¹⁹ But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.”

- b. It takes faith to do what He asked them.
- c. Israel’s failure to honor God’s principle of first.

Joshua 6:20-21 (NKJV)

So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. ²¹ And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

- d. Serving God pays huge dividends.

Joshua 6:22-25 (NKJV)

²² But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, “Go into the harlot’s house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her.” ²³ And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out

Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴ But they burned the city and all that was in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. ²⁵ And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

- e. Need and greed will destroy your seed.

Joshua 7:1 (NKJV)

But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.

- The challenge you are experiencing may be the result of an Ai situation.

Joshua 7:2-5 (NKJV)

² Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. ³ And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few." ⁴ So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. ⁵ And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

- Follow Joshua's pattern of correction.

Joshua 7:6-9 (NKJV)

⁶ Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. ⁷ And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! ⁸ O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? ⁹ For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"

- Theft, deception and mixing what belongs to God with what belongs to you is a recipe for destruction.

Joshua 7:10-11 (NKJV)

So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff.

- Failure to correct creates impotence.

Joshua 7:12 (NKJV)

Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.

- Greed and wrong perception of need.

Joshua 7:20-21 (NKJV)

And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: ²¹ When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

- What a difference a day makes.

Joshua 8:1-2 (NKJV)

Now the LORD said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. ² And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it."