

Understanding First Fruits – In-Forming the Future

I. Thinking Like God

Wrong Thinking can get us in trouble. We can prime our thoughts toward power and love or toward fear.

The Beggar & the King - "Give me something." Resentfully, the beggar gave the king 2 grains of rice. Then the king reached into a pouch within his robes and with a smile, dropped 2 small diamonds into the beggars bowl.

We can mistake an opportunity for a demand.

*If we could instruct the future how to treat us, how we would want to live, what we would hope for our children, **would we do it?***

The beggar could have, but he didn't.

Gideon's Transformation!

Gideon's initial thoughts were that the Lord had abandoned his people.

Judg 6.11 **NLT** Then the angel of the LORD came and sat beneath the great tree at Ophrah, Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat **at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites.** 12 The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, "**Mighty hero, the LORD is with you!**"

13 "Sir," Gideon replied, "**if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?** And **where** are all the miracles? ... But **now the LORD has abandoned us**"

14 Then the LORD turned to him and said, "**Go with the strength you have,** and **rescue** Israel from the Midianites. I am **sending** you!"

15 "**But Lord,**" Gideon replied, "**how can I** rescue Israel? My clan is **the weakest** in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am **the least** in my entire family!"

- 16 The LORD said to him, "**I will be with you.** And **you** will destroy the Midianites **as if you were fighting against one man.**"
- 17 Gideon replied, "If you are truly going to help me, show me a sign to prove that it is really the LORD speaking to me. [Mal 3](#)
- 18 Don't go away until I come back and **bring my offering** to you." He answered, "I will stay here until you return."
- 19 Gideon hurried home. He cooked a **young goat**, and ... he baked some **bread** without yeast... and the **broth** in a pot, he brought them out and presented them... 21 fire ... from the rock!

*Gideon could, and he participated in the Divine Nature ... **change!**
... personal, national, & global*

II. The Potential of a Renewed Mind

Rom 12.2 ESV Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewal¹ of your mind**, that **by testing** you may discern what is the will of God,

Ps 40.4 **Blessed** is the man who makes
the LORD his trust,...

5 You have **multiplied**, O LORD my God,
your **wondrous deeds** and your **thoughts toward us**;
none can compare with you!
I will proclaim and tell of them,
yet **they are more than can be told.**

Psa. 139:17 How **precious** to me are your **thoughts**, O God!
How **vast is the sum** of them!

18 If I would count them, they are **more than the sand.**
I awake, and I am still with you.

III. 7 Principles FF at the Beginning (Tithe after the Harvest)

1. Given at the Beginning – Through FF we **sanctify** our whole life and all we love.

¹ anakainosis— return to the new, superior, unheard of

Rom 11:16 NIV If the part of the dough offered as **firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy**; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

2. It's a **Pattern not Legalism** - We honor the King of Kings with the First and the Best — and He honors us

Heb 11:4 *By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice* than Cain did...And *by faith he still speaks*, even though he is dead.

3. Generosity Indicates **Grace and Love** at Work in our lives

2 Cor 8:7 NIV 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 other

Do you **want** this GRACE of GIVING?

4. We Give **According to What We Have**. In offerings give part of ourselves— *our offerings take us beyond our present circumstances. FEAR NOT!*

2 Cor 8:12 NIV For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to **what one has**, not according to **what he does not have**.

Mark 12:41 NKJ Now Jesus... **saw** (*theoreo*) how the people put money into the treasury. ... 42 Then one **poor widow** came and threw in two mites...

Sometimes we think we have nothing, but we actually do

Elijah & the Widow 1 Kgs 17:9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, ... Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." ...
12 "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing..."

Our last can be a new FIRST. What we think is nothing, God can make something!

Elijah & the Widow 2 Kgs 4.2 And Elisha ... “What shall I do for you? Tell me; what do you have in the house?” And she said, “...nothing ... except a jar of oil.”

5. Giving is **Analogous to Planting Seeds**

2 Cor 9:6 NIV Remember this: Whoever **sows**...⁷ Each man should **give** what he has decided in his heart to **give**, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

The seed we sow **connects our lives to the soil of God’s love** — and His Great and Precious Promises

A seed an embryonic information capsule, carrying all the instructions needed for increase and multiplication. A seed is alive and packed with almost limitless potential.

Seeds are God’s “future containers.” Seeds contain God’s blueprint for the future. Apple seed -- not just an apple, but a tree that gives for years and years!

a. **Our children are seeds.** The *Creator Himself became a seed* of His creation and *as a seed broke the bondage of decay* and released the power of an endless life!

b. **Seeds are part of the Time Structure** of creation!

Gen 8:22 “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat, Winter and summer,
And day and night Shall not cease.” NKJV

c. **Words are Seeds**, containing a potential future. Every word contains in a future reality in an immature form:

Luke 8:11 NKJ “... **The seed is the word of God.**

d. **Offerings are Seeds**, containing a potential future. **Every offering contains in a future reality in an immature form.**

6. **Receiving is PROPORTIONAL.** (participation)

Luke 6:38 NKJ Give, and it will be given to you:... For with the **same measure** that you use, it will be **measured back** to you.”

This is very personal. The same **measure** I use, is how it is measured back to me!

When I use a teaspoon... 100 Wheelbarrow... 10 Ton Truck ...

Gen 22:16 NKJ and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, **because you have done this thing**, and have not withheld your son, your only son— 17 **blessing** I will **bless** you, and **multiply-**
ing I will **multiply** your descendants ...stars... sand; and your descendants shall **possess the gate** of their enemies. 18 **In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed**, because you have obeyed My voice."

7. Our Giving Releases God's Creative Ability

2 Cor 9:8 NKJ And **God is able** to make **all grace abound** toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance **for every good work**.

God works with what we have! Don't let what you don't have overrule what you do have! Mustard Seed has all the instructions.

Our sowing can **initiate the Miracle**

OUR TESTIMONY — 1977 starving ... increased our giving... change began to overtake us. By 1984 built a house w/o debt

Be thankful and begin to joyfully use what you do have!

Gen 26:12 NKJ Then **Isaac sowed** in that land, and **reaped** in the same year a **hundredfold**; and the LORD **blessed** him. 13 The man **began to prosper**, and **continued prospering** until he **became very prosperous**; 14 ... the Philistines envied him.

IV. 4 Keys to First Fruits:

1. **Cyclical** —Annual basis or at the beginning of a new endeavor.
2. **In Faith** –

- a) **Comfort** – you just do it, in the budget, etc.
 - b) **Faith** – a stretch to that which is beyond our ability. We increase our “measure”
 - c) **Presumption**— trying to manipulate God
3. **Sacrificial** – if it doesn’t move you, it probably won’t move God.
- 2 Sam 24:24 ESV “...I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen...
4. **Focused** — create a list of the areas you are sowing in for breakthrough.
- a. **Reflects the godly passions of your heart**
 - b. **Based on God’s Word.**
 - c. **Pray, Believe, Decree, Stand. You will reap if you don’t faint. You have seed in the ground!**
 - d. **This is a time to sow, to consecrate the dreams for our lives and the promises of God we hold in our hearts.**

(Anonymous Testimony – Last year a man gave a FF offering for the first time. He received an unexpected gift that was 200 times what he had given!)

V. Instructions for First Fruits Offering

1. **Pray for God’s Direction (desire discipline delight)**
Pray for hearing hearts.
2. **Have a Target, or Ask God for One (Gates held by the enemy)**
3. **Set an amount, or ask for one.**

4. Write a check or a pledge (next two months)

No Fear — Refunds for 2 weeks!

5. Bring it on First Fruits Sunday

Pray for Congregation: HEARING HEARTS

**Hear the Word of the Lord Regarding Your Household,
Your Goals for 2014.**

Kingdom of God released. All the “added to” things.

Phil 4:19 NKJ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

There are **NO LIMITS** on the effects of even a **SMALL CHANGE** in our thinking and behavior.

What we contribute to life today can fill eternity.