SEA CHANGE CHURCH

THE CURRENT

The Spirituality of Giving · S1E1

Giving Before the Law

A 7-Day Study

"Now Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.' And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, and you must rule over it.'"

Genesis 4:1–7 ESV

Pastor Adam Stadtmiller · September 20, 2026

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

"And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering."

Genesis 4:4

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each week, The Current walks through a piece of Sunday's passage: a short verse study, encouragement, journal questions, and a daily prayer.

Take one day at a time. There's no need to rush.

DAY 1

Worship Before a Word Was Spoken

> **GENESIS 4:3–4 ESV**
>
> *"In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions."*

VERSE STUDY

Before the Law, before the tabernacle, before anyone was ever commanded to tithe, two brothers just brought God something. That is where this series begins, and it is worth sitting with: giving did not start as a rule to follow. It started as an instinct to worship.

This pattern repeats before Sinai ever shows up. Noah steps off the ark in Genesis 8 and builds an altar, unprompted, no one told him to. Long before there was a law demanding it, something in the earliest human hearts reached for God with whatever was in their hands. That changes later. Abraham is actually the first person in Scripture God ever directly commands to give something, in Genesis 22, and we will sit with that command later in this series.

One detail worth noticing: God never wanted giving to come from obligation. The law came later, and it revealed what people needed to learn, but it was never the origin of the impulse to give. The origin is worship, plain and simple, and it showed up before a single command existed.

TAKE HEART

You do not need permission, a formula, or a fully worked-out theology of giving to bring something to God this week. Abel did not have one either. He just brought his best, freely, because that is what worship does.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Before today, did you think of giving mainly as a rule to follow, or as a connection to God's sacrifice of his son? How does this change your perspective?
2. What is one financial or provisional offering you could bring to God this week purely because you want to, not because anyone required it?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

"What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD, I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving

and call on the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!"

Psalm 116:12–14, 16–19

ACTION CHALLENGE

This week, before payday or your next "harvest," set aside one gift, financial or otherwise, that no one asked you for. Give it simply because you want to.

NOTES

DAY 2

The Lord Had Regard for Abel

> **GENESIS 4:4–5 ESV**
>
> *"And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard."*

VERSE STUDY

Notice exactly what the text says. It does not say the LORD had regard for the offering. It says he had regard for Abel and his offering. Scripture ties the giver's own person to the gift itself, from the very first offering ever recorded.

The text never explains why Cain's offering was rejected. Maybe it was quality, his second-best barley instead of his first. Maybe it was posture, a gift brought grudgingly rather than gladly. Either reading lands in the same place: God will not separate the heart of the giver from the gift he gives.

That connection runs all the way through Scripture. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life" (Leviticus 17:11). Even the sacrificial system God later established for atonement was never just a transaction. It was always tied to life, to the heart, to the person offering it.

TAKE HEART

God is not grading your giving on a curve of dollar amounts. He is not separable from your heart in it. That should feel like good news, not pressure: he already sees past the size of the gift to the person bringing it.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever made a financial or provisional gift and felt like your heart genuinely was not in it? What was going on underneath that?
2. What would it look like this week to give financially, even a small amount, with a fully present heart, rather than a large gift given grudgingly?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

"Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name; through Christ our Lord."

Book of Common Prayer, A Collect for Purity

ACTION CHALLENGE

Before you give anything this week, whether time, money, or attention, pause for one moment and name honestly what is actually in your heart as you give it.

NOTES

DAY 3

One Sacrifice, Once for All

> **HEBREWS 10:11–14 ESV**
>
> *"And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified."*

VERSE STUDY

Giving in Scripture moves through three distinct periods that build on one another: before the Mosaic law, when Cain, Abel, and Noah gave without ever being commanded to; under the Mosaic law, when giving became required and offerings were made again and again; and the new covenant, fulfilled in Jesus, where the requirement itself is fulfilled completely.

One image from the message is worth holding onto: the picture of a priest standing daily, offering the same sacrifices over and over, because none of them could ever fully deal with sin. That repetition was the point. It kept showing people that something more was still needed.

Christ's offering broke that pattern entirely. He offered one sacrifice, one time, and then sat down. Sitting down is significant. It is the posture of finished work, not ongoing labor. Under the old system, sacrifice for sin never actually stops. Under the new covenant, it already has.

This changes what giving is for. You are not adding to a finished sacrifice when you give. You are responding to it. There is a real difference between giving to earn something from God and giving because something has already been fully secured on your behalf.

TAKE HEART

If any part of your giving still feels like it is trying to catch up on a debt, take heart: the debt Christ addressed was paid in full, once, and it does not need your help finishing it.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Does anything about your financial giving feel like you are still trying to pay off something with God? Where might that come from?
2. How does knowing Christ's sacrifice was final change what your own financial giving is actually for?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

"We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us."

Book of Common Prayer, The Prayer of Humble Access

ACTION CHALLENGE

Give something this week, money, time, an apology, whatever fits, without trying to make up for anything. Give it simply as a response to a debt that is already paid.

NOTES

DAY 4

Give Freely, Not Under Command

> **2 CORINTHIANS 9:7 ESV**
>
> *"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

VERSE STUDY

Picture telling a five-year-old that every day at three o'clock, they have to come hug you, by law. At first they would love it. By the time they are nine, it would feel like an obligation they are running to get through, not affection they are choosing. That is roughly what a command-based relationship with God looks like from the inside.

That is also, in a sense, what the Mosaic law was for. It was never God's ideal ending point. It existed to reveal what was required and to show that our own efforts could not be sufficient on their own, all while pointing toward the day Christ would fulfill it completely, freeing people to come to God without a command standing between them.

There is no New Testament command telling you to give a specific percentage. That is not permission to disengage. It is an invitation into something more voluntary and more honest than a rule ever could be, giving that actually reflects your heart instead of a box you are checking.

TAKE HEART

Freedom from a command is not freedom from love. Take heart this week in noticing, without judgment, whether your giving currently feels like duty or delight, and bring whatever you find honestly to God.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Where in your life does obedience currently feel more like obligation than relationship? What might it look like to shift that?
2. If no one required anything financially of you this week, what would you still want to give, and to whom?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

"I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God… In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not

required. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'"

Psalm 40:1–3, 6–8

ACTION CHALLENGE

Pick one act of obedience this week, in giving or otherwise, and do it purely because you want to, not because you are being watched or graded.

NOTES

DAY 5

First and Best, Not What's Left

> **PROVERBS 3:9–10 ESV**
>
> *"Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine."*

VERSE STUDY

Abel brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions, the best cuts, not the leftovers. Whatever Cain brought, Scripture never says it was his first or his best. That contrast is the whole hinge of the story.

The sermon framed giving around the idea of a harvest: believers gave in season, when the lambs were born or the grain came in, tied to when provision actually arrived rather than whenever they happened to remember. Whatever your version of a harvest looks like, a paycheck, a bonus, a season of unexpected provision, that is the natural moment to give first.

Giving first, before anything else gets paid or spent, is an act of trust that God provides, rather than a hedge you place after you have already secured everything else for yourself.

This is not a formula for guaranteed return, and it is worth being honest about that. The promise in Proverbs is real, but it is not a transaction you can force. It is a matter of trust and priority, not a vending machine.

TAKE HEART

Giving first is not about proving anything to God. It is a small, repeatable way of telling the truth about who actually provides for you.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. In practice, does your financial giving usually come from your "first" portion or from what is left after everything else? What would need to change to shift that?
2. What is your version of a harvest, a paycheck, a bonus, an unexpected gift, where you could practice giving first?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of

my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Psalm 23

ACTION CHALLENGE

This week, before you pay a single other bill or make a single other purchase, set aside your gift first, then let everything else follow.

NOTES

DAY 6

A Gift That Costs Something

> **2 SAMUEL 24:24 ESV**
>
> *"But the king said to Araunah, 'No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.' So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver."*

VERSE STUDY

The offerings Cain and Abel brought were goats and grain, actual provision, actually given up. Compare that to how easy giving can be now: an automatic transfer that leaves your account without you ever quite feeling it, just a line item.

When Araunah offered David a threshing floor and oxen for free, David refused. He insisted on paying full price, because he understood something worth remembering: worship that costs nothing is not really worship. It is a gesture.

None of this is about manufacturing pain for its own sake. It is about giving in a way substantial enough that you actually notice God provided, and you actually noticed yourself responding.

TAKE HEART

If your giving has become so automatic that you barely register it anymore, that is not a failure, it is just an invitation to reintroduce something you can actually feel.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Is there a way your financial giving currently happens so automatically that you never really feel it anymore?
2. What would it look like to reintroduce a felt, noticed financial gift into your rhythm this week, even a small one?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

"Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To thee, O Lord, I return it. All is thine, dispose of it wholly according to thy will. Give me thy love and thy grace, for this is sufficient for me."

The Suscipe, Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola

ACTION CHALLENGE

Give one gift this week you will actually notice missing, not to prove anything, but to practice worship that costs you something.

NOTES

DAY 7

Not Burned Up, But Given Life

> **ROMANS 12:1 ESV**
> *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."*

VERSE STUDY

Old Testament sacrifices were largely burned up, destroyed, because they pointed forward to a sacrifice that would itself be destroyed: Christ, given over to death on the cross. But Christ was raised. And once he was, everything done in his name after that no longer has to be destroyed to matter. It gets to give life instead.

That is the thread running under this whole week. Giving began as worship before it was ever commanded (Day 1), tied inseparably to the heart of the giver (Day 2), pointed toward Christ's finished sacrifice (Day 3), no longer offered under compulsion but freely (Day 4), given from our first and best rather than what is left (Day 5), and substantial enough to actually cost us something (Day 6). Today it lands here: your whole self, your whole life, including your goats and your grain, is a living offering now, not a burned one.

One concrete picture of what regenerative giving can look like: this church's own plans to build a children's building and preschool are meant to work exactly this way, provision given now so that something else, someone else's formation, someone else's children, can grow because of it.

TAKE HEART

Giving, done freely and from the heart, may become one of the most spiritually formative things in your life, not because it is required of you, but because of what it quietly grows in you over time.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Looking back over this week, what shifted in how you think about giving as worship, not just obligation?
2. What is one way, financial or otherwise, that you sense God inviting you to give so that something else might have life?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

"Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of

glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up our selves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days."

Book of Common Prayer, A General Thanksgiving

ACTION CHALLENGE

As this series continues, identify one regenerative gift you can give this month, something that helps someone or something else start to grow, and take the first concrete step toward it this week.

NOTES

MEMORY VERSE

"And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering."

Genesis 4:4

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