

PREEMINENCE

Colossians 1:16-18 AMPC

[16] For it was in Him that all things were created, in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities; all things were created and exist through Him [by His service, intervention] and in and for Him. [17] And He Himself existed before all things, and in Him all things consist (cohere, are held together). [18] He also is the Head of [His] body, the church; seeing He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead, so that He alone in everything and in every respect might occupy the chief place [stand first and be preeminent].

Death by Disengagement, were the words of author Andrew Sherman. He titled his book the *Crises of Disengagement*. Where he reports that two thirds of the American workforce is not engaged with their jobs on a daily basis according to the George gallup poll. He calls it, the silent killer, on the job. He calls it a societal epidemic that is costing employers 500 billion dollars each year. In his book, he writes, 51% of the American workforce is not engaged or connected in way they give their best. Their just going through the motions. 17.5% are are actively disengaged. They show up on time and turn the wheels of productivity until 5 o'clock and then they are excited to get out of their work environment. Disengagement is lethal to our workplaces because it creates an under current where we don't give our employers the best of our potential. The dissatisfaction from disengagement in the workplace has caused low morale, terminal boredom and little sense of purpose. Where true pride, passion and enthusiasm for what we do never gets tapped to its max. 87% of our nation's workforce work for a paycheck where 13% work for a higher purpose.

We all deep down crave for relational engagement!

Workers search for passion and the real meaning for their lives through engagement. Teachers want engagement business owners want their customers engaging for repeat business. This dissatisfaction and disengagement is rooted in the fear of an employee feeling marginalized or becoming irrelevant, or feeling ignored by their boss for contributing innovative ideas. Others feel mistreated and over looked when they put forth their best efforts. This all leaves a void of trust and passion, loyalty and demonstrating trust. Unrealistic expectations and impatience breed complacent and destroys creativity. Yet when we are truly engaged giving our best we become very productive and innovative with our skill sets because God made us to derive long term satisfaction from developing deeper experiences relationally one to Another, as opposed to being paid more or getting a raise to make us more motivated to engage.

The crises of disengagement causes:

- Too much apathy
- Complacency
- Boredom
- Selfishness
- Disconnectedness
- And disenchantment

AND NOT ENOUGH:

- Appreciation and gratefulness
- Not enough humility and honor
- Or respect for others with empathizing with them
- Not enough passion and excitement
- Causing people to spend half their lives not giving their best.

Not giving my best with this mindset spills over into my religious culture in the local church.

A famous athlete who was known for giving his best and pulverizing his opponents once said, *"I AM THE DISTURBANCE IN YOUR SEA OF COMPLACENCY... AND I WILL NEVER STOP SHAKING YOUR WAVES"*. That man was Muhammad Ali.

We as God fearing Americans of the Apostolic faith cannot allow our countries epidemic crisis of disengagement to influence giving God our very best because giving God our best is tied directly into His expensive intimate love for us. For Jesus is preeminent! Giving God our best is tied into responding to this expensive love in three ways:

- All that we are
- All that we do
- And all that we have

Giving God your best is about remembering His deep provision of love He has already giving you. Because Jesus is preeminent! And then facing your present problems knowing this same preeminent love will prevail for you now!

Col. 2:18 says again 18] He also is the Head of [His] body, the church; seeing He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead, so that He alone in everything and in every respect might occupy the chief place [stand first and be Preeminent].

This includes guest here today whom God is saying let me trade you my beauty for your ashes. Let me give you my spirit in exchange for the things you are battling right now. So when I think back on how His rich and deep love brought me to this day I now live in-I am compelled to give God the best of my first fruits living, in my attitude, in my relationships to others, in my service work to the Kingdom. And in my financial giving for the first fruits harvest next Sunday because how I give my first and my best reveals my engagement or disengagement with God's very best love towards me. For Jesus is preeminent!

King David kept giving God the best of his expensive worship because this is how he fought the selfishness and fresh wounds and disappointments within himself.

Psalms 69:29-36 AMPC

[29] But I am poor, sorrowful, and in pain; let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high. [30] I will praise the name of God with a song and will magnify Him with thanksgiving, [31] And it will please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock that has horns and hoofs. [32] The humble shall see it and be glad; you who seek God, inquiring for and requiring Him [as

your first need], let your hearts revive and live! [33] For the Lord hears the poor and needy and despises not His prisoners (His miserable and wounded ones). [34] Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them. [35] For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah; and [His servants] shall remain and dwell there and have it in their possession; [36] The children of His servants shall inherit it, and those who love His name shall dwell in it.

Giving God my best in first fruits starts with activating a thankful attitude towards what He has already done for you, because Jesus is preeminent!

Why should God be obligate to do more for us if we are not happy and disengaged with what he already has done? I am talking about the job you have now. I am talking about thankfulness for the car you have, the apartment you live in, the marriage you have, the singleness you are living in right now. I am talking about the pay you get on your job right now.

David said in *Psalms 27:12-14:*

Psalm 27:12-14 AMPC

[12] Give me not up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen up against me; they breathe out cruelty and violence. [13] [What, what would have become of me] had I not believed that I would see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living! [14] Wait and hope for and expect the Lord; be brave and of good courage and let your heart be stout and enduring. Yes, wait for and hope for and expect the Lord.

My thankfulness is based on Jesus giving His best in a love at Calvary unparalleled to any other kind of love. Because Jesus is preeminent! I deserve hell and not the entitlement to creature comforts, better this or that. You will only give God your first and your best when you activate this kind of attitude in your intimacy with Him.

Job 23:9-16 AMPC

[9] On the left hand [and to the north] where He works [I seek Him], but I cannot behold Him; He turns Himself to the right hand [and to the south], but I cannot see Him. [10] But He knows the way that I take [He has concern for it, appreciates, and pays attention to it]. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as refined gold [pure and luminous]. [11] My foot has held fast to His steps; His ways have I kept and not turned aside. [12] I have not gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed and treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. [13] But He is unchangeable, and who can turn Him? And what He wants to do, that He does. [14] For He performs [that which He has] planned for me, and of many such matters He is mindful. [15] Therefore am I troubled and terrified at His presence; when I consider, I am in dread and afraid of Him. [16] For God has made my heart faint, timid, and broken, and the Almighty has terrified.

Job offered God his best while sick and dying and God gave him twice as much as to what he had previously. He worshipped God knowing he is preeminent!

I give Jesus my best and first today because in Him that all things were created, in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities; all things were created and exist through Him and by Him.

17] And He Himself existed before all things, and in Him all things consist 18] He also is the Head of [His] body, the

church; seeing He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead, so that He alone in everything and in every respect might occupy the chief place [stand first and be preeminent].

All because of this immeasurable preeminent suffering love that keeps suffering for my selfishness. God has been merciful and patient and blessing us not to condone our current lack of faith. But to provoke us to changing our second best attitudes when giving for the love of Christ constrains us to give our best.

Deuteronomy 6:4-6 AMPC says it best is the schema.

[4] Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord [the only Lord]. [5] And you shall love the Lord your God with all your [mind and] heart and with your entire being and with all your might. [6] And these words which I am commanding you this day shall be [first] in your [own] minds and hearts; [then]

You practice this when you are, poor, when you are lonely. You practice this when you are rejected by others or when you are limited in finances or suffered losses financially. I lived across the street from the projects in New Orleans and I remember like it was yesterday my wife and I deciding to give very large sums of monies to our local church capital stewardship because of the goodness of God to the new company I just started. I'm talking sums of \$400 to \$1000 at a time back in 1984. God moved on an employer to pay for my wife's complete teachers licensed education course of \$12,000. We never quit giving in global missions facing a bankruptcy and a home foreclosure. It was always about giving God our best. Jesus is preeminent! Our children never had prescription medicine all throughout grade school and high school. We never had hospital bills during this whole time. We kept giving God our best because giving God your best is tied into how you value God's intimacy towards you. You do this assessment when you are in trouble and broke and disappointed. That's when you give God your best, because Jesus is preeminent!

On the other hand Moses forsook the riches of Egypt for the wealth of God's love. Moses did not put his career, material possessions, or his affluence over his intimacy with his God.

Hebrews 11:24-27 AMPC

[24] [Aroused] by faith Moses, when he had grown to maturity and become great, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, [25] Because he preferred to share the oppression [suffer the hardships] and bear the shame of the people of God rather than to have the fleeting enjoyment of a sinful life. [26] He considered the contempt and abuse and shame [borne for] the Christ (the Messiah Who was to come) to be greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt, for he looked forward and away to the reward (recompense). [27] [Motivated] by faith he left Egypt behind him, being unawed and undismayed by the wrath of the king; for he never flinched but held staunchly to his purpose and endured steadfastly as one who gazed on Him Who is invisible.

Practicing first fruits with us next Sunday will:

1. Run out selfishness in your life.
2. It will renew your faith in God's love.
3. God releases a different kind of grace and favor upon your substance and possessions.

4. You grow in intimacy with God.

We get this term, first fruits, from the Jewish festival, called The Feast of First Fruits. It foreshadows the day of Pentecost-where we are His first fruits. That's another message.

The firstfruits is not the same as the tithe. When a firstborn lamb was born in your flock, you didn't know how many more lambs that ewe might produce. Even so, God did not say, "Let your ewe produce nine lambs first and then give me the next one." Instead He says, "Give me the very first." It always requires faith to give the first. And faith works by intimate love between you and Jesus. Firstfruits means giving to God before you see if you're going to have enough.

WHAT DOES FIRST FRUITS LOOK LIKE?

We see in scripture that God calls us to bring our tithes and offerings into the house of the Lord (Malachi 3:10). A first fruits offering could be the first check from your new job, or if you get a raise, you can give the first portion of your increase. It can be your tax refund check. See the pledge worksheet we gave you and ask God based on His best what should be your best.

The Hebrew word for first fruit is bikkurim—literally translated to "promise to come." The Israelites saw these first fruits as an investment into their future. God told them that if they brought their first fruits to him, he would bless all that came afterward.

The church is the vehicle by which the world is transformed and this includes the neighborhoods where we live and the people we work alongside. Our giving goes back into the community we belong to. (CFC, SFC, mothers memorial, and global missions).

1. Who spreads the love of God around Who blesses the poor and helps the broken find healing?
2. Who shapes the next generation in the ways of Christ?
3. Then why wouldn't we bring the first and best of our fruit into the house of God?
4. We are making a statement for the year.

1 Chronicles 29:11-14 AMPC

[11] Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and the earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and Yours it is to be exalted as Head over all. [12] Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hands are power and might; in Your hands it is to make great and to give strength to all. [13] Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name and those attributes which that name denotes. [14] But who am I, and what are my people, that we should retain strength and be able to offer thus so willingly? For all things come from You, and out of Your own [hand] we have given You.

Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine." (Proverbs 3:9-10). God fills our lives to overflowing!

He was given a name that was above every name because He gave His best-He was the first fruits of them that slept.

And we are His first fruits that have come from His best sacrifice!

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