

The Heart of Our Father

Part 2: He's a Rewarder

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Full Text (for reading on your own)

Encouragement to Prepare Offerings

One of the things that I will want to do when we are in the new space is to bring other 5-fold ministers in from around the country and world to speak and impart the grace that they carry to us. Jesus carried all the 5-fold gifts. Ephesians 4 says that Jesus gave gifts to men and that the gifts that He gave to men were actually 5-fold ministers for the equipping of the rains for the works of service.

When you receive a 5-fold minister you receive the grace, enablement, revelation that God has placed on their life. Jesus had ALL of that grace, but He didn't give ALL of that to any one man or woman. So He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the works of service.

We have such great friends with such gifting and it is going to be great to have them in to share and exchange life with us! If we hear mostly from one person we start to presume that person represents the fullness. We would not think that consciously, but we will subconsciously presume that a bit such that when we hear someone from a slightly different stream and we are apt to think "well it kind of strikes me the wrong way ..." I don't know, does it strike Holy Spirit the wrong way?

How do we protect against that? Simply by hearing from some different people!

2 Corinthians 9:3-5 "Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation."

This is Scriptural Finances 201. We are not talking about tithes here. We are talking about offerings. Tithes are for the local church that there would be food in His house. 1/10th is what tithe means in the Hebrew and now we have offerings that are beyond that 10%. The Biblical foundation of finances is tithing. People say "I don't want churches teaching me about tithing; they just want my money." WRONG! They want to see you blessed.

Paul taught about finances not so that it would go to him but so that the grace and provision would come to them. Philippians 4:15-17 shows that they uniquely partnered with Paul financially: *“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.”*

Philippians 1:3-7 shows that they also were partakers of grace with Paul! *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, **you all are partakers with me of grace.**”*

When you receive or honor a prophet, you receive a prophet's reward. How do you honor a prophet? Do you walk up to them and say “I honor you, I honor you, I honor you”? Heart stance is part of it. But if you have a heart stance of honor toward a prophet and they travel across the country to impart what they carry to you, what else would honor look like? It would look like giving them some money!

In other spheres, consultants are paid well because of the value that they bring. Yet we get stiff about these sorts of things in the church. I'm saying we ought to bless visiting ministers! And this is what Paul was saying too in 2 Corinthians 9:3-5. He was saying “don't wait until the opportunity for an offering shows up to have prepared your offering.” Budget for it.

I'm encouraging you, if you do not already do this, to budget for offerings. When we are in the new space I am going to want to start bringing people in. And like Paul I am going to be bragging to them about you - about how wonderful you are and your spiritual maturity. Spiritually mature people know about sowing and reaping because the next verse (v.6) says *“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows [a]bountifully will also reap bountifully.”*

An offering budget, planning for offerings, planning for places to sow, is a really smart thing spiritually!

A little while ago some people were over at our house and asked us “how do you decide where to give your offerings? How do you pray about that?” I answered that we don't really pray about it!

We commit ourselves to the Lord in it and in acknowledging Him we expect that He will direct our steps and lead us. Let me ask you ... if Megan and I felt to give \$1000 to Joseph Prince, do you think that was the devil telling me to do it? That's funny!

It's not really hard to discern the will of God here! So how do we decide where to give? First, by the peace of God because we've committed our finances to Him. I don't need God to give me a huge prophetic word about giving. It's a life-style. Secondly, we give to the soil that produces the sort of fruit that we want to see more of in our lives.

If you want a greater revelation of grace in your life, give into Joseph Prince's ministry. He is carrying the message of grace so strongly! Similarly, if you want a more line-upon-line understanding of the Word, give into Andrew Wommack's ministry. If you want a fiery burden for souls, give to Christ for All Nations (Reinhard Bonnke).

You are not buying spiritual blessings, but not only will you be rewarded financially as a sower but you will also become a partaker / sharer in the grace that is upon that ministry. (Phil. 1:7)

Erin shared that years ago Mark Crawford was in and not only did she honor him as a prophet by drinking in every word he shared, but they also sowed into his ministry financially. Believing she would receive, about a month later, Erin got the largest download she has ever received from God!

All that to say, if you have a heart to do so (cheerful givers, nothing by compulsion!), I want to encourage you to get your offerings ready!

Decide you are going to sow into the Kingdom beyond your tithes. Next decide who's ministry is producing the fruit that you want to see more of in your life. Finally, sow your money right there! It will catapult your spiritual life and your financial life!

Fellowship is REALLY Important

I am really looking forward to church at Don and Sheri's lake house. I have a teaching to do on this at some point, but fellowship is REALLY important!

I recently read this: When church becomes a performance ... the pastor is an actor. The body of Christ is an audience. The sanctuary is a theater.

I would add to that then the whole thing is somehow fiction.

That is not meant to be a scathing word. I am just saying we need to be careful not to perform. It's not a performance. I'm not just saying that it's not a performance for righteousness-sake. We know that. I'm saying it's not a performance for performance-sake.

That's why we are going to enjoy grilled meats and each other's company at the lake house! Yes that will be church. And I can guarantee you something ... you are not going to leave there feeling any less built up than if I had given a message. Everyone in our body is a minister.

So, that's how I see it and I think it is a BIG deal that we see things like that because I think that's how it is scripturally and I know from experience it is 100% true. When you get together with a body of believers like our church family I can promise that either Ana is going to say something to you that opens up a revelation, or Olin is going to minister something to you or say something off-the-cuff that's totally a word of knowledge ... that's the sort of thing that happens when our family comes together.

"How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." (1 Cor. 14:26) We are all ministers. Everybody plays a part.

Re-Cap

We can have strongholds IN THE LORD. He after all is our refuge and strong tower! This message from Hebrews 11:6 is a new stronghold in the Lord for me! I believe this is a message that will take you about a month to unpack / practice. How much this message impacts your life will be based on how much time you spend unpacking it. You cannot form a stronghold (picture a fortified tower) by looking at a blueprint or listening to someone tell you about a blueprint. Instead you build up that strong tower by tending to it day-by-day over a month or more and thereby allowing that truth to be built up in your life.

This message is meant to be a blueprint of a stronghold in the Lord that is available to you and at the end of the message I am going to give you a practical way to follow through on it.

John 15 shows us that we can produce nothing apart from abiding. But what if you are not abiding currently, how do you get back to a place of abiding? James 4:8 gives you a promise that IF you draw near to God, He WILL draw near to you!

The enemy (and sometimes bad theology) will tell you that He will draw near to you unless it is meant to be a dry season in your walk with God. If what you mean by a dry season is that God somehow is going to try to teach you something in this season through your disconnection from Him, then I would propose to you that is a perverted theology.

I am not saying you can't go through difficult circumstances, but I am telling you that He is the lover of your soul and there is not a moment that He doesn't want to be with you. That's also why He promises emphatically that if you will draw near to Him He WILL draw near to you.

So let's settle that at the outset. If you want to be more connected to God, He wants to be connected to you even more than you want to be connected!

But what if we don't even want to draw near to Him?

He who comes to God MUST ...

Hebrews 11:6 says *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”*

So what if we don't even want to draw near to Him? Well Hebrews 11:6 says that he who comes to God MUST (1) believe that He is & believe (2) that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him!

So if you want to draw near to God, what must you do? Believe that He is and the He's the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him!

If you are not currently in the place of hunger to draw near to God, who are you believing that He is? Secondly, do you think He is a rewarder - or not? *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits ...”* (Ps. 103:2)

Maybe you've met a Christian that says they don't seek God for anything ... they just seek Him for Him! Well, scripturally, we are supposed to seek Him knowing that He's the rewarder! That sort of no-reward approach to Christianity will not last. He wants to be your provision. He wants to be your supply - and He wants that to motivate you!

His supply is limitless, don't worry - meeting your need is not a big deal to Him!

Without faith, it is impossible to please Him! Faith is not an a la carte item in the Christian life; it is the main dish! The righteous shall live by faith! Not have faith sometimes; we will actually LIVE by faith!

I am not condemning you if you are not in the place of faith. What I am condemning is the thought that says “you don't want to have too much faith.” You think “I've never thought that thought.” OK, but what about when someone else says “I'm believing God for _____” and everything in you says “I don't think so!” But without faith it is impossible to please Him! It's a big deal to not operate in faith!

Why is it impossible to please God apart from faith? Watch this progression:

- John 3:16 shows that He sent His Son for the purpose of us having eternal life!
- What's eternal life? John 17:3 shows us that eternal life is that we may know Him! His Son was given for your eternal life ... and what is eternal life? To have a relationship with Him. God so valued your relationship with Him that He killed His Son for it.
- I've discovered that faith (and the grace that it accesses) is ALWAYS an invitation to greater relationship with God. Every ounce of His grace is an invitation to relationship. Every new facet

or perspective on His provision, sufficiency, and supply, is actually an invitation to closer relationship. This is why the “name and claim” concept of operating in faith is not the Father’s heart. Remember in Matthew 7 we read about some who had cast out demons and prophesied in Jesus’ Name but He never knew them. By the way, satanists will actually use the Name of Jesus to tell a spirit that has gotten out of hand to stop. I’m guessing those might be some of the people coming to Jesus where He says “I never knew you.” Faith is always meant to be an invitation for relationship. John 15:7 says this *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”* You can name and claim something out of a place of ABIDING in Him! You may watch someone else name and claim something in faith and you say “ah, that’s the formula!?! I’ll do it to! I’m speaking to the mountain! God give me this! God give me that!” OK ... but are you abiding in Him? Was that the heart of the Father? Was that hatched out of a place of intimacy? Because if it is, then you will speak thus, it will be given to you, and it will glorify God. To take faith and grace out of the context of relationship is to defeat the entire purpose God had for the faith and the grace.

He sent His Son so that you would have eternal life, which is to know Him, and faith and grace is meant to draw you into closer relationship with Him! If you see God move in a miraculous way and you don’t draw nearer to Him in relationship, then something is a little bit out of order in your priorities; just ask God to help you with that. He’s wanting every aspect of His provision to be a new revelation of relationship in Him.

God is a Rewarder

God is a rewarder. The first point is that you cannot please God apart from *faith*. *The second point is that God is a rewarder. In Luke 15:29 we see the older son say to his father “Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.”*

I provide for myself. I did it! I did it! To rely on yourself is to accuse God. *“I ... I ... and yet you never ...”*

Look at the father’s response in v. 31 *“Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.”* Do you notice the 2 priorities of the father? Intimacy (you’re always with me) and provision (all that I have is yours). Religion is trying to do for God what you’ve not yet allowed Him to do for you.

The older son was saying all the things he was “doing for his father” yet the father was saying “I’m always with you and all that I have is yours!” The Father is not against your service, He just wants it to be out of His provision and out of intimacy with Him ... and not in order to either earn intimacy with Him or to earn provision. It’s supply; it’s our response.

The Kingdom is not “change” but instead “Exchange!”

Mark Crawford says is not about changed - it's not about you changing; the kingdom of God is about exchange. Everything in the kingdom is about exchange! He became sin who knew no sin in order that I might become the righteousness of God in Him! Does that truth transform me? Absolutely! But HOW did it transform me? Not through me changing me, but through the Word of God changing me - through exchange! He became everything I was and I get to become everything that He is! That's the kingdom.

Religion is about change. Change yourself. Change yourself. Will power. Change yourself. Check yourself. If you are a little depressed ... not really wanting to seek God are you operating in “change” or “exchange?”

If you are thinking the Kingdom is one of “exchange” you will want to seek Him all the time because it's the best thing ever! You give Him the lint from your pocket and He gives you the \$100 bill from His pocket! That's the whole thing. He said “bring Me your lint!” He who draws near to God MUST believe that He's a rewarder!

The Kingdom is exchange. Religion is change (yourself). The secular humanist, liberal agenda is not about changing yourself, it is about changing others. That's how foul that agenda is. It's a socialist agenda about changing others. The religious agenda is still not from God but it at least has a personal morality about changing yourself ... it is still about your will power, is not actually from God, and won't produce true transformation. Because the liberal model is not even change of yourself, but instead change of others, when you give yourself to that system, policy becomes your God. “Being that others cannot change themselves and I cannot change my self, and circumstances are responsible for everything”, the liberal, secular humanism mindset says “therefore we will change policy about everything.” That is obviously a failing approach.

So, religion is trying to do for God what we've not yet allowed Him to do for us. Remember that He loves us first (1 John 4). He's the provider; we're the responder. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 that is supposed to come from me is EXACTLY who HE is to me! He is love to me! He is joy towards me. God is not asking you to be anything to anyone else that He is not willing to first and continually be for you!

Mark 10:15 shows us that children receive the Kingdom. What's the essence of childhood? Dependency! Dependency is about receiving. So how do you receive the Kingdom? As a child ... as one who is totally dependent ... as one who receives!

The entire Kingdom is exchange, respond, and receive!

What about us doing for Him?

What about us doing for God? In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul said *“I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?”*

Paul had previously told the Corinthians that he had *“labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”*

Again I am painting a blueprint of a revelation that will cause you to come to God - because you will believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

So, I am addressing an important question here: but, Peter, what about us doing for God!?! Look at Paul! You are going to start going into the place of knowing that Kingdom is receive, exchange, respond, but then this thought ...”what about me doing for Him???” I want to address that at the outset for you.

This is a “chicken or egg” question. God knows that when we receive from Him we will become like Him! We will lay down our life because He laid down His!

David slayed Goliath for God and the Israelites. That was bold act of service for God! Remember ... God had slayed a lion and a bear for David! God did it first. David told Saul in 1 Samuel 17 about how God had previously delivered him from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear and that now God would also deliver him from this Philistine.

What about Stephen who was brutally martyred? That guy had such a revelation of Jesus being brutally martyred for him - and he had truly received the sacrifice of Christ!

Moses led the obstinate people of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness; how did he possibly do it? Is it possible that Moses might have been that obstinate person in the wilderness for 40 years after taking the killing of the Egyptian into his own hands? He had experienced God’s tender leadership for 40 years until God said “go and set my people free.” Moses was leading out of what he had received from the Father.

I've heard a story of this pastor - a very high level pastor - who actually ended up rejecting Jesus publicly. After rejecting Jesus publicly he had a literal visitation from the risen Lord while he was fishing of all things. After being reinstated by that visitation from Jesus who showed him nothing but love, this guy became such a beautiful hearted shepherd of the flock of God. How did he have such patience to shepherd the flock like that? Because Jesus was the one who had reinstated him. This pastor's name was Peter.

Peter writes "*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock ...*" Where did Peter get that heart from? That's exactly the heart that Jesus had shown him.

Matthew 10:8 says "freely you have received, freely give." Do not minister what you've not freely received. If you didn't freely receive it, it means it's not from grace which means it won't have the power of God upon it. This is, I believe, the biggest problem in all of ministry - trying to give away something that you don't actually have.

Believing that He is

You have to believe God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:6 says we also must believe that He is! I am going to teach you a method for reading the Psalms that can open up tremendous revelation of how He is!

Who is He? "Well He's God!" Yes, yes. But you probably know that there are so many names for God in the Old Testament. Why? Because He is so big! You can try to pick one name for Him but you are just left with "I AM!"

I would encourage you to read all the Psalms of David like this. I want to see who God is to me according to the Psalms. For instance, read in this manner, Psalms 23 is going to sound like this:

You are the ONE who is my shepherd.

You are the ONE who makes me not want.

You are the ONLY ONE who makes me to lie down in green pastures. I've run around crazy my whole life never having peace but You are the ONE that has caused me to lie down in green pastures!

You are the ONE who leads me beside still waters.

Nobody else restores my soul. YOU are the ONE who restores my soul!

You are the ONE (not me - we don't lead ourselves in paths of righteousness) that leads me in paths of righteousness for Your Name's sake. I may say "I want to make your name great God!" but you say to me "let me just lead you!"

You are the ONE that causes me to fear NO evil.

You are the ONE Who's protective rod works on my behalf.

You are the ONE Who's staff shepherds me into the path on which you have for me to go.

You are the ONE who prepares a table right in front of me ... even in difficult circumstances ... even in the presence of my enemies ... no one else does this for me ... You are the ONE that does this for me.

You are the ONE who causes me to be anointed! "I just want to be anointed when I minister." You are the ONE that causes me to be anointed!

You are the ONE that causes me to be as a cup that is running over. You are the ONE that is the author of all abundance in my life.

You are the ONE who's goodness and mercy are tracking me down, hunting me down every single day - from the moment I get up until the moment I go to sleep, and even all night long - You're the ONE that is so adamant about my blessing that your goodness and mercy are tracking me down like a highly trained hunter 24/7/365!

You are the ONE that likes me so much that You've made eternal provision for me to dwell with you forever.

If anyone would come to God, he must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Who is God? I believe David was a man after God's own heart because He understood many of the facets of who God is.

The Lord spoke to me early this summer and then I started reading the Psalms like this for a month or two - looking for everything in the Psalms that said who God is to me! My relationship with God grew and this became a stronghold for me in Him. Here's the phrase God gave me:

All of who I AM is who I want to be for you!

But son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours!

I was at a men's retreat about 10 years ago and the minister gave us a homework assignment ... "if your dad is living, go find him and tell him something he can do to help you, and then let him help you." He said "if you don't understand why that's important, go do it, and you will understand later."

He said “your earthly father will be blessed - guaranteed. And your relationship will be strengthened - guaranteed - by you asking him for help. That would please him.

Faith is spelled R-E-C-E-I-V-E. The only way to please the Father is to receive. Said shortly:

Receive to Please

Go ahead and start building this stronghold in your life! Read the Psalms looking for who God is and therefore who He wants to be for you!

(Note that there is one stipulation to this ... some places in Psalms David speaks of God killing his enemies. Of course we live in the new covenant. Rightly divide the Word God.)

There is so much in the Psalms that shows that David really knew who God is. So read them in order to see “All of who I AM is who I want to be for you!”