

Dollars & Sense Pt. 3

The Principle of First Things

I. Intro:

- Story of my neck being out of alignment.
- Chronic symptoms of a back out of alignment
 - Headaches, back, and joint pain
 - Lack of mobility and stiffness
 - Numbness or tingling in your hands or feet
 - Fatigue
 - Weakened immune system (because the central nervous system is the communication center of the body)
- When our priorities are out of alignment it affects our whole life.
- We need to be aligned with God's word so we can experience God's blessing.
- When we're out of alignment spiritually, we...
 - Have an undue need to succeed and exalt progress over God's Presence.
 - Put projects of over people
 - Pressure reigns instead of peace
 - In short, we begin to WORRY.
- Proper alignment is putting God first in everything.
 - **So** do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **But seek FIRST his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** - Matthew 6:25-33
 - When God is first everything else falls into line.
 - When God is first His blessing GIVES us what we're trying to EARN.
 - "The blessing of the Lord makes one rich and He adds no sorrow with it." - Proverbs 10:22 NKJV
- Haggai: God's people realigned
- **Now** this is what the Lord Almighty says: "**Give careful thought to your ways.** You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." This is what the Lord Almighty says: "**Give careful thought to your ways.** Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and *build my house*, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the Lord." -Haggai 1:5-8
- Background:
 - These are the returning exiles who were given a job— rebuild the temple.
 - Because of opposition, they became distracted and discouraged.
 - Stopped building God's house and started building their own.
 - They got out of alignment.
 - God raises up Haggai to both confront and encourage the people to begin putting God first.

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- God asks them to evaluate their lives.
 - (The quickest way to change is to face reality).
 - They worked hard but had little to show for it.
 - They were dissatisfied with life—nothing seemed to fulfill them.
 - Their finances never seemed to flourish.
- God was readjusting their priorities.
- **"If you will take care of my house—I'll take care of yours." -God**

THE PRINCIPLE OF FIRST

(Thank you to Pastor Robert Morris for much of this material)

II. The first belongs to God—it's either consecrated or cursed.

- a. **"Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine."** -Exodus 13:2 NKJV
- b. God declares that the firstborn is His 16 times in Scripture.
- c. **"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. 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."** - Exodus 13:12-13 NKJV
- d. According to scripture the firstborn was either to be sacrificed or redeemed.
 - i. A clean animal (lamb) had to be sacrificed.
 - ii. An unclean animal (donkey) had to be redeemed.
 - iii. The tithe is a picture of the gospel.
 - iv. We who were unclean were redeemed by the "lamb who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)—Jesus.
 - v. Jesus was God's tithe. He was the "firstborn"
- e. The tithe is the first ten percent of our income.
 - i. Goes to the "storehouse" or the place where we're being fed spiritually

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- ii. Usually to the local church
- iii. This is the principle of *firstfruits*
- iv. The key to tithing is that it's given *first*, or given in faith
- v. It its not first its not faith

III. **What happens to the first happens to the rest.**

a. God operates from the principle of representation

- i. When Adam sinned, the whole world sinned.
 - ii. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." - Romans 5:19 NKJV
 - iii. When Jesus obeyed the whole world was justified.
 - 1. Note: The essence of the gospel (good news) is that *all* men have been forgiven.
 - 2. However, just as a gift must be received, the message of the gospel must be received by faith.
 - 3. Only those who "receive" this gracious gift are saved and become the "children of God." (John 1:12)
 - iv. Jesus didn't just die FOR us he died AS us.
 - 1. "***I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.***" -Galatians 2:20 NKJV
 - 2. "*Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*" - Romans 6:3-4 NIV
- b. "*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.*" -Romans 11:16 NIV

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c. Story of Jericho

- i. "The city and all that is in it are to be **devoted to the Lord**. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are **sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury.**" - Joshua 6:17-19 NIV
 1. Achan disobeys
 2. Israel suffers defeat at Ai
 3. God held the whole nation responsible because what was sacred was stolen.
 4. "**Israel** has sinned; **they** have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. **They** have taken some of the devoted things; **they** have stolen, **they** have lied, **they** have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because **they have been made liable to destruction.**" -Joshua 7:11-12 NIV

IV. The blessing only applies to tithing not tipping.

- a. Are you giving God your best or just the rest?
- b. "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." -Malachi 3:8-10 NIV
- c. Are you robbing God of the ability to bless you?
- d. Get realigned today. Put God first and watch what HE can do in your life.

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- e. Note: The Bible says a righteous “fall seven times” but “rise again”. You’re not righteous because you never fall, you’re righteous because you keep getting up.