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# GIVING AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

STEWARDSHIP KALEIDOSCOPE 2021

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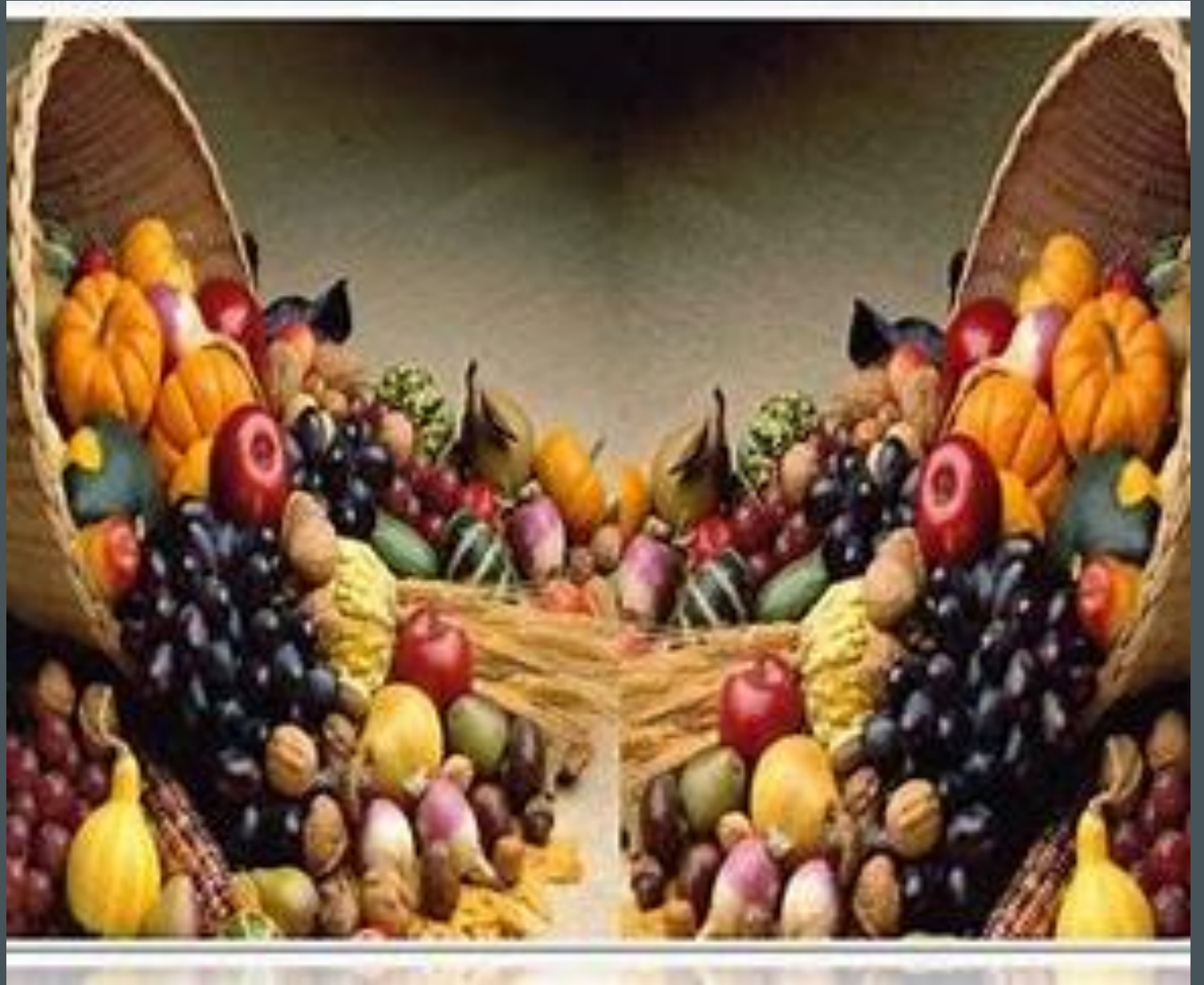
# FIRST FRUITS

“When you come into the land which I give you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest.”  
Leviticus 23:10

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops.”  
Proverbs 3:9

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# FIRST FRUITS



# FIRST FRUITS

“Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and olive oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work.”

(Nehemiah 10:37)



# WHAT DOES THE OFFERING OF FIRST FRUITS MEAN?

In the case of First Fruits, the “spiritual meaning” behind the precept is the belief that **everything one receives is given to us by God and given to us for a purpose**. In expression of this belief, the first fruits are brought as an offering to God.



# TITHING BARN

# TITHING

“You must be sure to set aside a tenth of all the produce brought forth each year from your fields.”

Deuteronomy 14:22

“Every tithe of the herd and flock – every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod will be holy to the Lord.”

Leviticus 27:32

# ARE FIRST FRUITS AND TITHING THE SAME?

To give a tithe means that you give a tenth of your income to your church.

**A Sense of Obedience**

First fruit offerings are typically an annual gift to the church done at “harvest time.”

**A Sense of Abundance**





## THE OFFERING

# THE OFFERING

- People “offered” food for the eucharist.
- Worship leaders “offered” prayers of praise and thanksgiving over these gifts in remembrance of Christ and in gratitude for God’s gracious provision.
- As the bread and wine were brought to the table, people also brought contributions for those in need.

# WHAT CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED?

- Luther objected to the whole notion of human beings “offering” anything to God because God is the one who offers gifts to us.
- In the Book of Common Prayer, the offering became a collection of money.
- Reformed churches rejected any liturgical act of “offering.”
- The Book of Common Prayer directed that the offertory monies be brought to the table.





# AN ACT OF WORSHIP



# CURRENT TRADITION

The practice of a monetary offering became a “solemn act of worship to God” and was an essential element in nearly all Protestant worship.

The ritual of a weekly collection, the singing of the doxology, and a procession of ushers bringing forward our gifts to be “offered” to God became the practice.

# WHAT IS IT THAT WE ARE “OFFERING?”

- Gratitude
- Prayers of thanksgiving
- A response to God’s self-giving
- All of ourselves
- Time
- Work
- Worship
- Resources



**DISCIPLINES**

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Spiritual disciplines help us shed our superficial habits and “bring the abundance of God into our lives.”

- Richard Foster

*Celebration of Discipline*

- Inward – meditation, prayer, fasting, and study
- Outward – simplicity, solitude, submission, and service (giving)
- Corporate – confession, worship (giving), guidance, and celebration



# WHY SHOULD GIVING BE A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE?

- “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)
- Where you put your treasure is where your heart will end up.
- Jesus talked about money a lot, but not because he wanted people to give to a particular cause.
- Jesus talked about money because he cared about us and knew that what we do with our money affects who we are spiritually.



**GIVING**

# GIVING

## 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

<sup>8</sup>We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; <sup>2</sup>for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup>For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, <sup>4</sup>begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints <sup>5</sup>and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, <sup>6</sup>so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you.

# HOW ARE WE CALLED TO GIVE?

- **Sacrificially** – give beyond what is expected of you.
- **Joyfully** – give so that you can experience the joy that comes from giving.
- **Voluntarily** – give freely, not out of obligation.
- **Persistently** – give regularly with a sense of urgency for you and those to whom you give.
- **All of ourselves** – give yourself first to God and then to others.





**DISCIPLESHIP**

# **GIVING AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

Helps us grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Become more like Christ as we grow in godliness.

# HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE THE DISCIPLINE OF GIVING?

- Broaden the understanding of Stewardship as giving all that we are and all that we have.
- Share stories of the ways that giving is making a difference and transforming our lives and others.
- Enable people to give consistently.
- Invite people to make a Covenant.
- Celebrate annually with a Covenant Renewal.

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# COVENANT





# COVENANT

## A New Covenant

“The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt - a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

**Jeremiah 31:31-33**

# HOW IS A COVENANT DIFFERENT THAN A PLEDGE?

I/We pledge \$\_\_\_\_ to the ministries of our church.

**A Sense of Obedience**

With a grateful heart for God's abundance and loving care, and as an expression of my/our gratitude for the ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

My/Our covenant is to...

**A Sense of Abundance**

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a forest. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, likely from a low sun, creating a misty or hazy atmosphere. The trees are silhouetted against the bright light, and the path leads towards a bright opening in the distance. The text "OUR CALLING" is centered over the path in a bold, white, sans-serif font, with a thin white horizontal line underneath it.

# OUR CALLING

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What are your thoughts on “first fruits” and “tithing?”
- How do you think your congregation perceives the “offering?”
- Why do people choose to give?
- When would the practice of making a Covenant be most helpful?
- Where do you see your congregation in the coming months financially and spiritually?



# WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE OF OUR CALLING?

To be able to declare...

“We have a vision that is amazing and exciting. We are inviting you to invest yourself through the resources that God has given you – your energy, your prayers, and your money – in this work to which God has called us.”

- Henri J. M. Nouwen  
*A Spirituality of Fundraising*



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## RESOURCES

- A Spirituality of Fundraising by Henri J. M. Nouwen
- Beyond the Offering Plate: A Holistic Approach to Stewardship by Adam J. Copeland
- Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth by Richard J. Foster
- Giving to God: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life by Mark Allan Powell