

# *The Principle of First*



**Focus** Giving God the *first* is an act of faith that gives Him the opportunity to protect and provide for you.

**Open** Do you have a morning routine? What do you do when you first get up?

**Read** In 1 Kings 17:8–14, God sent the prophet Elijah to visit a widow and her son who were about to eat their last meal in the midst of a nationwide drought and famine. Elijah asked the widow to give him food before feeding herself and her son. She responded in faith, sacrificially giving her *first* to Elijah as God had directed. Previous scriptures show that God had provided for Elijah in the past, proving that God did not send Elijah to the widow to provide for him, but to provide for the widow.

In Genesis 4:1–8, God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's. Why? Cain brought *an* offering, but not the firstfruits of His crop—his offering was given on his own terms. Jude 11 says Cain had greed and rebellion in his heart. His attitude said, "I'll give what I want, when I want." He did not honor God in his offering.

On the other hand, Hebrews 11:4 says that Abel brought the firstfruits of his increase, *by faith*. He demonstrated a heart of honor toward God, bringing Him the first and best of what he had.

It does not require faith to give the *last* ten percent of our income, or to bring *an* offering on our own terms, in our own time. It takes faith in God to obey Him and give the *first* ten percent. God gave His first and best for us in Jesus. When we, by faith, give God our *first* with a humble and grateful heart, we honor Him, and it opens the door for Him to give us His provision and protection.

## Talk

1. Read 1 Kings 17:8–14. What stood out most to you in this story? In what ways did you find it challenging and/or inspiring? Why?
2. Think about a relationship in your own life. What does it say to you when the other person seeks to honor you (by giving, serving, paying attention to you, etc.) *first*, before other things? Why do you think God places such high importance on what is *first* in our lives?
3. Read the following verses. In each verse, describe what it tells us to do, the promise given, and for whose benefit. What do these verses tell you about the nature of God and His intentions for you?

Matthew 6:33

Proverbs 3:9–10

Malachi 3:10–11

4. The Bible says that Cain's offering was unacceptable to God because it was not the first of his crop and it was given out of a heart of greed and rebellion.
  - a. Why would we choose to give to God on our own terms and/or in our own time?
  - b. Specifically, what reasons for *not* giving the first—for tithing the first ten percent of our income to the church—actually seem to be “reasonable”? In the end, what do our “reasonable reasons” reveal about our heart and/or what we believe about God?

## Live

1. Proverbs 19:3 (NLT) says, *People ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the Lord.* Have you ever gone your own way and been angry with God afterward? What happened, and how has it changed you?
2. In what places of your life do you sense that God is asking you to give to Him *first* (financially, service, attention, prayer, etc.) when, like the widow, there seems to be barely enough to survive? Based on what you have learned about the Principle of First, what do you believe God wants to do in your life as you obey Him in faith?

## Pray

Thank God that He gives us opportunities to open the door for Him to provide for us and protect us. Ask Him to help you see His goodness and faithfulness so your faith will increase. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to obey, even in the face of fear. Repent for areas in which you have not put God first.