

“First in Everything” // Col 3:16–24 // First #4

(CP’s are going to ask everyone to stand, pray, and then clap after “amen” - straight to you.)

Summit family, at all of our campuses, you may be seated.

- It’s **inspiring** to think about more than 11K people asking God for big things... God builds his church through faith
- We took cards from ACN and put them into **foundation**, so that in a few months we open the campus and people come in, many of whom don’t know Jesus, they will literally be standing on the faith of believers here who are expecting great things of God.

Colossians 3. Our hope in this season is that you will have a defining moment where you put Jesus FIRST in the area of your resources.

*I heard about a dad here at TSC whose son was having some behavioral issues. The man tried everything he knew to get his son’s attention, but nothing worked. Well, he was a pilot so he decided to take his son for a ride on his airplane—to **give him** a different perspective; to talk to him about his need to grow up and make better decisions. **He discovered that these high altitude conversations put his son in a totally different frame of mind, and after they returned from the flight the son was much more cooperative and respectful.***

*So, whenever the boy’s **behavior began to deteriorate**, the he’d take him up on **another plane ride**, look him in the eye, and tell him what he expected of him.*

Works consulted:

“When You Have Some,” Kyle Idleman
“When You Have a Little,” Dave Stone
“In My Day to Day,” Ryan Stone

*Well, one of this man’s friends was amazed at this technique so he asked if he could come with him on one of these father son **airplane rides**. “I want to see if this might work with my son.”*

*Well the dad agreed and during the flight, the second man took this photograph—which might help explain why the technique was so successful. **[[PICTURE OF BOY ON JET]]***

We are **working our way through the book of Colossians**, because Paul’s theme in that book is that Jesus should be first in lives because he is first (in creation); he went first (in salvation); and therefore he should be first (in prioritization).

This is week 4 of 5 (and if you missed a week, let me encourage you to go back and listen to the podcast... I want you to be here for every week of every sermon, obviously, but this is a particularly important series in the life of our church, and there are certain, essential elements I cover in some weeks that you need to get to see how the whole fits together.)

Today in week 4, we’re going to see **how Paul instructs the Colossians** to put Jesus first in the 90% of their lives that don’t take place in church and religious activities.

If you **remember from last week**, Paul explains that **the Colossians thought of their lives in buckets**. (not Paul’s term, it is mine, but his concept)

- There was the eternal salvation bucket—that’s where Jesus lived—
- and then there was the other stuff bucket—security, prosperity, happiness, etc.
- They didn’t altogether forget Jesus in these, he just didn’t seem as relevant.

- So, **Paul explains in Colossians 3** how Jesus is the whole bucket, and that in literally every relationship, every decision, Jesus should come first.
- (This has **profound implications for us** during this season we're in called *FIRST* as we think about how to make Jesus first in our time, treasure, and talents. If you take notes, write down the title of this message as "*First in Everything.*")

He begins in vs. 12 explaining that we have a **new identity**:

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience ¹³bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive... We should **in every relationship** try to look and live like Jesus.

Then **jump down to vs. 17** because here's the key: ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do *everything* (how many things? *Everything*) in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- **In every interaction**—not just the spiritual ones or the church ones—you should be able to say, "I am doing this **in the name of the Lord Jesus.**"
- Christians will **typically end their prayers by saying**, "In Jesus's name, Amen." A little insider secret here: Most Christians don't know what they mean when they say it. They think it is just a **signal to God** that they are about done—the prayer equivalent of saying, "OK, I guess I'll let you go! TTYL."
- But that's **not the point** of saying that. **When you, 'In Jesus's name,'** you are saying, "*I am asking for these things according to Jesus's will, for his glory, and in his power.*"
- Paul is saying: we should be able to say that over **literally everything** we do:
 - You **sit down at your desk chair** and open your inbox to start your day, you should say, "In Jesus' name."

- You **meet up with a friend** for lunch, you should think, "In Jesus's name."
- A **person tries to merge in traffic ahead** of you, "In Jesus's name."
- You **get off work early to go play golf** or catch a movie with a friend: "I'm here to play In Jesus' name."
- You **kiss your wife** when you get home from work: "In Jesus' name."
- You kill someone in FORTNIGHT: "in Jesus's name" (maybe not that). No, even that. *Everything.*
- Note: I'm **not advocating you actually start saying that** at every turn—that might be weird. **People think Christians** are strange enough without you doing weird stuff like that. Just that **you should think of every interaction** as done in Jesus's name—that is, first and foremost as an offering to him.

In **every word** you say, even **breath you breathe**, every **move you make**—yes, he's watching you—but you should do it first and foremost *for him*.

Paul then goes on to **outline what that looks** like in a series of typical, **rather mundane** relationships the Colossians would have experienced every day: wives with husbands; husbands to wives; children to parents... servants to masters; masters to servants; employees to bosses... **Basically, err'body to err'body.**

And the point is, every interaction in every one of these relationships is done first and foremost *to Jesus*. You may look like you're doing things for them and to them, but you're actually doing things **for and to him**. **You actually live for an audience of ONE.**

He brings this section to a **powerful close** in vs. 23: ²³**Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord** and not for people, ²⁴ knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance

from the Lord. **You serve the Lord Christ.** ...At church? ...When you are doing religious things? No.

- **You serve the Lord Christ** in every second of every day. Every single thing we do, every step we take, every word we utter, should be thought of first and foremost as an offering to Jesus.
- When you are making a **decision about how to respond to that person that cut you off in traffic**—you are responding first and foremost to Jesus. You **may feel like that person doesn't deserve** your patience; you may even think he deserves your one finger salute—but the question is what *Jesus deserves*, and what you do is first and foremost an offering to him.
- When **you are doing your job (vs. 22)**, you are doing it first and foremost as an offering to him. Your boss might be a jerk and may not even be paying you what you deserve—and there's certainly a time to address that—but you are doing your work first and foremost for Jesus. Your boss not deserve my best, but Jesus does.
- When I am **figuring out how to respond to my wife** (vs. 19) who has been unfairly impatient with me all day, I am responding first and foremost to Jesus. I may not feel like she deserves a kind and tender response, but he does.
 - (This is **not a real example**, of course, my wife is 'perfect in every way.')
 - Here's **more of a real example**: She may feel like her husband doesn't deserve **another day** of your faithful, patient service and love... that he has taken her for granted again for the 1000th time and he doesn't deserve any more of her patience, but Jesus does. She responds first and foremost to him, not me.
- **Children (vs. 20)**, your **parent or parents may not be perfect**—I'm sure they're not, but they are the God-appointed authority in your life at this time, and how you obey them, how you respect them, is how you respect and respond to him. **You respond to them** first and foremost as a response to him.

- (Please understand that **none of this is instructing you** to ever stay in some kind of abusive relationship. If you are in one of those, you need to let someone know immediately. Enabling abuse is neither loving to the abuser nor honoring to God. **It simply means that in the course of normal relationships, we do what do first and foremost as an offering to God.**

This applies to everything—²³ **Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people,** (how you do your schoolwork, what you choose to do with your career and how you pursue it is all done for Jesus.

- Not just the **spiritual, church** parts of your life.
- There is **not one square inch of your entire life** over which Jesus does not emphatically declare MINE!
- (*I've told you before the dilemma of people trying to figure out how to **serve Jesus** in their jobs. I've told you the true story about the American Airlines pilot... sure, you should look for places to share Christ. But **doing your job in Jesus's name** is about more than sneaking in stealthy evangelism strikes.*
- **How you fly the plane**—metaphorically speaking—how you take off and land, how you treat others while you're doing it, even how you are committed to training up others and sharing your knowledge and power with others—are all to be done for Jesus and in the name of Jesus).

See, here's the alternative: You compartmentalize your life, which is what the Colossians did. You **think of your life in BUCKETS***. You have the salvation/religious life bucket. Jesus comes first there.

But in all this other stuff—success in your relationships, career; your happiness, security—you're **not thinking about Jesus first** and foremost there. You might be **thinking of him a little there**, but he's not FIRST.

Paul says, **“No, HE IS FIRST, he WENT FIRST in salvation (you’d be lost without him), so he should COME FIRST in everything!”**

When you think of your life in buckets, you tend to think of religion as a set of obligations you have to fulfill so you can freedom, autonomy and blessing in these other areas. You **tend to think of** questions like:

- How much do I have **go to church** to keep God happy?
- How **morally do I have to live** so I don’t get on his bad side? (You assume God grades on some kind of curve: what is that curve?)
- Or, you think, “How **much of my money** do I have to give to keep God off of my back?” You think of your giving like a “God-tax” you have to pay so you can go on in freedom with life.
 - That’s how I see my **regular taxes**, right? I never think, “Hey, IRS, I joyfully offer this to you as a statement of your worthiness—and really it all belongs to you: how do you want me to spend the rest of net?” I only think, “What do I have to pay so I can stay out of jail and go on with my life?”
- Paul says, **“No! Christ owns it all!** You should be doing his will as **much in these areas** (right bucket) as you are seeking to do it in this (religious/left) one.”
- BUCKET*
- **Everything is to be done** in the name of the Lord Jesus—first and foremost for an **audience of one!**
- **AGAIN: He is first; he went first;** therefore he should be first in *everything*.

(Case Study in the Buckets Approach: King Saul)

*There’s a story in the OT of a man who exemplifies the buckets approach... His name is Saul, and he was **Israel’s first king**.*

I want to walk you through his story for a few minutes, because he exemplifies the bucket relationship with God and shows you what happens to you when you live this way

(**1 Sam 15** if you can turn there)

By all accounts, Saul was an impressive guy.

- He was **chosen to be king because** of his good looks, his good reputation, his upstanding moral character, and because he literally stood head and shoulders above everyone.
- He was the **obvious choice** for king, and when he was chosen, no one was surprised.
- And at first, things went well—a lot of victories, everyone was happy—but then we come to **1 Samuel 15**—

[1] And Samuel said to Saul... [2] Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. [3] Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have.’

- **Little background here:** the Amalekites had been the perpetual antagonists of Israel going all the way back to the Exodus. (**As Israel was on their way** out of Egypt to the Promised Land—alone and defenseless in the wilderness, with barely enough provision to make it through the day—the Amalekites attacked them.)¹
- **God delivered them**, but for the next 3-400 years, the **Amalekites kept at it**. Read through the history of Israel in Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and the first chapters of 1 Samuel—and you’ll see that the Amalekites are constantly raiding and pillaging Israel. They were a cruel, violent, and exploitive people.
- **Finally, 1 Sam 15**, God says, **“I’ve had enough**. The Amalekites are finished.”
- **Important:** This was **not a revenge war for Israel**—it was **divine judgment**; God had simply chosen Israel to be his instrument in

¹ Exodus 17:8–16; Deut 25:17–19

that. This was **not a war of conquest** for them, **so**, God says, “**Do not take anything that belongs to them. No spoils of war.** This is not about you, it’s about me. **So don’t touch** a single thing that is theirs or take it for yourself. Destroy it all.”

- BTW, in case you are wondering, **God doesn’t do this anymore** with nations or individuals (i.e. tell them to go to war *for him*). This was a **situation unique** to Israel in the OT.

So, vs. 7, **King Saul went and did** what God said... sort of. [7] And Saul defeated the Amalekites... [9] But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them.”

- Now, realize that **sparing Agag the King was not an act of mercy**. In those days, keeping enemy kings in your dungeon was like sporting trophies, or like mounting the head of a deer that you’ve shot. You’d bring them out at parties to show people how powerful you were! This is **what Saul plans** to do.
- And, an **important textual note**: In Hebrew, the verb **spared** is **singular** even though the subjects here are plural: “Saul and the people.” In Hebrew that indicates that the first subject, Saul, was the actor here. This was all his decision.

So, vs 10, God speaks to Samuel, his spokesperson, and says, [10] “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.”

[12] And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And as Samuel gets close, it was told Samuel, “Saul came to Carmel, and (get this) **behold, he set up a monument for himself...**”

- A monument *to himself*? In Saul’s mind, who is this whole thing about? Saul.

So, Saul hears that Samuel is coming and so he goes out to meet him and says, “**Blessed be you to the LORD. I have performed the commandment of the LORD.**” (15:13)

Samuel, who is a “get right down to business” kind of guy skips all the pleasantries and just says, “**Well then, if you have performed the commandment of the Lord** (to destroy everything that belongs to the Amalekites), “**What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?”** (15:14)

[15] Saul said, “They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen (First, **WHO does Saul say did it?** The people. But remember what I showed you? The verb for spared was “singular” which meant the decision was Saul’s, not theirs.)

But, WATCH THIS: (*we spared the best of the sheep and oxen...*) **to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction.**” “Don’t worry, Samuel! We tithed on it! We **gave God his God-tax.**”

[16] Then Samuel said to Saul, “Stop!... [18] The LORD sent you on a mission and said, ‘Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.’ [19] Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?” Why did you **seize for yourself what rightfully belongs** to God?

[20] And Saul said to Samuel, (No, no, no, but...) “I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me. (I did 98% of what God asked me to do, and I even tithed to him on the rest!)

[22] And Samuel said, Saul (this statement always chills my bones) “**Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in**

obeying the voice of the LORD? Is **this what God wants**, Saul? Sacrifices? Is God sitting in heaven so bored and poor that he needs you to offer sheep to him?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.

And then one of the **most jolting verses** in all of Scripture: [23] For rebellion is as the sin of divination (sorcery, many translations say 'witchcraft'), and presumption (doing what you want with what God has given you instead of what God wants) **is as iniquity and idolatry.**

Let this sink in: **To take any part of what belongs to God and act like it belongs to you** is tantamount to worshipping the devil (it's in the same category in God's eyes).

Even if you tithe on it. Even if you are **religiously active and come to church every week.** Even if you are a **really good person** in every other area of your life.

God doesn't want **your religion** or your **moral behavior** or your **tithes and offerings**. He wants **your surrender**.

He deserves the **first place**. In **everything**. He wants to be the **one you are obeying, living for, and seeking to glorify** in every dimension of your life, the one you **serve and respond to** in every relationship.

Colossians 3:17, And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do **everything** in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

²³ Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as *something done for the Lord* and not for people,

Jesus told a **story in the New Testament about 3 servants** who received from their Master an amount of money to invest. There were given different amounts...

- What wicked thing had he done?
- There's **more than one way to be wicked**). You can be wicked by an egregious violation of the 10 commandments: you can also be wicked by failing to use your time, talents and treasure for the purposes God gave them to you.
- **Commission/Omission**
- It is possible to be in church regularly, a good moral person and still be wicked in God's eyes because you are not using your time, talents and treasures for the reasons God gave them to you!

The question is not how religiously active you are, or how much you give, but have you surrendered everything to God?

The CARD

In this **FIRST** season we are asking not how much you are in church, or how Christian your behavior is, or if you are generous... but **if God is first** in your time, talents and treasures.

We are giving especial attention to your finances.

Why finances?

- **Jesus said it is the anchor point!** He said, "It's the anchor point. Until it becomes real here, it's not real."
- And, where your treasure is, there your heart will follow: (your time and talents!)

Here's the question:

- In your generosity, **are you tipping your hat to God**, attempting to pay God a tax so you can fulfill your obligation and keep him off your back, or do you look at *every penny* as belonging to God and have asked him, "**What do you want me to do with it?**"
- That's **what STEWARDSHIP IS!**

- **Have you ever asked God**, BLANK CHECK: “WHY did you give me what you gave me?”
 - What do you want me to do with my success?
 - What do you want me to do with my resources?”
 - Have you ever **laid them out** before the HS and asked him, what do you want me to do?
- Not **‘let me spend what I want and save what I need** and then think about **giving to God from what’s left...** but **putting him first** before spending and before saving.’
 - **MANY OF US HAVE AN ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD** WHERE we give to him from the leftovers...
 - We **sacrifice for other** things...
 - But **if Jesus is first and comes first**, then before we think about spending and saving we should listen to him.

Not about raising money—it’s about Jesus taking total control!

- I’ve told you: if **someone wrote a check for it all**, we’d still do this! And if they made their gift conditional on not doing this, we’d turn their money down and do it anyway! This is about us having Jesus in the right place!
- I **heard about a couple** pretty middle class in their jobs—he worked in the government sector and made about 60K/yr; she was an assistant at a staffing firm and made about 30K. **God was really working in their lives**, and one day the husband came to his wife and said, “I just feel like God has told us to give 10K next year.” They hadn’t talked, but she said, “You know, it’s interesting you say that. I feel like he told me the exact same number.” They didn’t know how it was all going to work, but they trusted God and not only did they do it, it brought so much joy and blessing to them and they saw God work so faithfully in it that they got addicted to it.

- Well, a few years later, the husband came to his wife and said, **“I feel have been disobedient to the Lord in something.** Several weeks ago God told me he wants us, next year, to invest 100K into his kingdom. (They’d both had increases in their jobs—but certainly not 10x their income) but **I haven’t told you about it** because I was scared of what you’d say. But, he said, “the other morning I woke up and the passage 1 Kings 17 was clearly in my heart... I didn’t know the passage—I couldn’t think of what it was about—but when I got my Bible it was the story of how God provided for Elijah through the widow whose flour miraculously never ran out, and used him to defeat the prophets of Baal with no resources whatsoever by sending power down from heaven. **God said to me**, ‘Just like I didn’t need the widow’s flour to feed him or the prophet’s strength to defeat the false prophets, I don’t need your money. This gift is for your benefit—I want to teach you to trust me and to give you a new kind of joy.’ So, I feel like God has told us to give 100K and I’ve been **scared to tell you.**”
- She said, **“Funny you mention that.** *God told me the exact same number and I was scared to talk to you about it.*”
- They did it, and that has led to journey of generosity that has lasted now for several years..... as God has increased them year by year they have listened to God and increased their commitment to give.
- They say they are looking forward now to the day they can write a **1 million check** into the Kingdom of God.²
- They **talk about these as milestone moments** in their lives.
- It **all started with just listening** to God.

Veronica and I have done that... He has called us to give 6 months of our take-home salary to **FIRST** over the next 2 years: scary but **can’t wait to see** how God moves and blesses!

² See Cortines and Baumer, *God and Money*, 176–179

Now, **my standard** is not yours. **This couple's** is not yours. **Nobody else's** is yours, but this is what I want you to do: I want you to ask God, "What do you want me to do with what you have given to me?" And I want you to make a gift that represents **your first and best**. That represents **1st generation faith**.

Listen, you've heard some great stories over this series. The **Allison's going to Malawi**. A couple investing \$100K to his kingdom. You may not do either of those things. You **may**.

But that's **not for me to say**. That's **for the Spirit** to say. All I'm asking is, *Are you putting yourself in a position to hear from him?"*

This is not about funding a vision—this is about Jesus being in the right place in our lives. At the end of the day, **generosity is not something God wants from us but for us!**

*I want you to **listen to a story** of someone at our church—one of our pastors, as they learn to process this...*

Lenker Video

What I don't want you to do is find a good enough, respectable amount. That is a Saul strategy. It didn't work out well for Saul. I **want you to say**, "EVERYTHING belongs to you."

- You see, with God, "**how much you give**" is not the only question. He owns everything. So just as important as, "What am I giving?" is "What am I not giving and why?" Sure, God will direct to keep some of it, use it on my needs, bless my family with it, and save some of it. But the point is *all of it, every penny, belongs to him*, and I am responsible to do with every penny what I think he wants with it because it all belongs to him. So, the question is not just, "**How much am I giving, but what am I not giving and why? Is this how much God wants me to keep?**"

- I've **heard stories of some of you** in this who are changing spending habits—going to Starbucks less often, canceling your cable... even some downsizing your house, waiting on buying a car, etc.), and those great, but this *so much bigger* than just making an adjustment. This is a **complete paradigm shift**. Either Jesus owns everything of yours or he doesn't.

This is the message of Colossians. Jesus doesn't just want the first place in religion; he wants the first place in *everything*, which includes all the resources he has given you.

So, here's how you use this card...just a tool

- First: 0, it's ok! Awesome.
- Second blank:
 - Ask: **How much do you want, God?**
 - And, Does this **represent him getting our first and best?** / What makes a statement that says that he is my primary satisfaction and security?
 - Does this number **represent a commitment that will change everything** in my life? Does this commitment say that **God is important** to me—like Saul—or that **everything** I have is actually God's?
 - **Stored resources:** 5 things: monetary not spiritual. 5 things: some of you will go get in one.
 - Have I laid all 5 of the most valuable things in my life at his feet? Have I asked him, "*Is there one of these you want me to transfer into your kingdom?*"

Our goal is 100% of you!

- Note (a lot of our volunteer leaders and 100% of our pastoral/staff team—1000 people, committed 13.5 million!)

Call for offering...

DON'T TURN IN THE CARD THIS WEEK, THAT'S NEXT WEEK. TAKE IT HOME.

As our teams come to take up the offering: not for guests. But let me tell you...

- Blair: this was where rubber met the road... pocketbook conversion

Missional Blessing

