

## Excellence from a Heart Rightly Motivated and Fully Surrendered

“By faith Abel...” – Hebrews 11

“By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.”  
Hebrews 11:4

What is your attitude toward giving?

- I keep nothing for myself or my family.
- I am very generous with the excess that I have.
- I weigh my giving carefully, keeping in mind what is a practical amount to give.
- I have a hard time giving at all.

Often the story of Cain and Abel brings to mind Cain's failures of jealousy and murder, and Abel is only noted for the fact that his life was cut short by his brother's sin. But something was remarkable enough about Abel's life and actions to merit inclusion in the list of saints in Hebrews 11. This fact actually stems from Abel's right attitude when giving an offering to God and his faith that God was deserving of his best.

We are not told much about Cain's offering or what went about before he offered it, but it seems that he had an attitude of “I gave *something*- this should be good enough.”

What attitude do you believe Cain's gift stemmed from?

- Carelessness
- Selfishness
- Jealousy
- Discouragement
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

We are not told much about why God was not pleased with Cain's offering, although we are led to believe that it was because Abel brought the best of what he possessed, the firstlings, while Cain settled for the mediocre. Abel's heart was right- he recognized who God is and responded to his correct perspective of God's awesomeness by giving the best of what he had.

Abel's giving was from a heart that was rightly motivated. He recognized that God deserved nothing less than the very best that he could give, and it is noteworthy to hear that God was, in effect, bragging about his gifts that He had received as an offering, as we read in Hebrews 11 that He was “testifying about His gifts.” God doesn't brag about something unless it's the best. In Hosea we are told that God is pleased by loyalty, or mercy, rather than sacrifice. This loyalty is what Abel offered to God.

Examine your heart for the motivation of what you do. Are you giving out of recognition of God's greatness and worthiness?

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“For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice. And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”  
Hosea 6:6

"He who is **faithful** in a **very little** thing is **faithful** also in **much**; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."  
Luke 16:10

Are you giving your first; are you giving your best?

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Our best doesn't have to be best by the world's standards. God looks deeper than the world looks. We must give the best that we have. Again, it is the heart motivation that God is looking at. He knows whether we have taken stock of what we possess and offered him the best of what we have.

There are so many areas in which we may be tempted to give less than our best. What is an area in which you frequently give less than your best?

- Time
- Love
- Money
- Attitude
- Work
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Abel demonstrated a heart and life fully surrendered. He gave the best of what he had without concern for what that would mean for his own personal success or financial situation. We, as well, are called to surrender all to God. Are you holding something back from Him? If so, what is it?

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There is also an aspect to this story that deals with details. Both brothers offered a sacrifice. And Cain's was actually offered first. But Abel didn't just give whatever was handy. He conscientiously chose the best of what he had. He was not careless or flippant. Details are indeed important to God- look at the detailed instruction He gives for the building of the temple (1 Chronicles 11-19, 2 Chronicles 3-4) or the system of sacrifice, explained in Leviticus.

We face decisions regarding details in every area of our lives. What area do you need to be diligent in the details today?

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What will you do *today* to do this?

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This passage proclaims that Abel's legacy- "still speaks." This legacy stems from the faith that Abel exhibited when offering a sacrifice to God. Even though Abel's life was cut short, he made an impact on many generations to come, even extending to our own generation.

“And 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 seek Him.”  
Hebrews 11:6

What kind of legacy are you leaving?

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Now think about this question. What kind of legacy do you *want* to leave?

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It requires faith in God’s wisdom to obey when we do not understand the whole of the story, to give God the best of what we have, to give God *all*. Be encouraged that your faith in Him brings pleasure to God, and that your rightly motivated obedience will be rewarded by Him.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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