

God has been doing incredible things for CT! In the next two years, over \$4.3 million has been committed to building our dream. Even with limited attendance because of school testing, our youth pledged over \$22,000 in a Wednesday night youth service! My heart rejoices for the generosity of God's people who are excited about building a house to bring Him honor and glory!
Love and blessings always!

Pastor Heard

Let's Build the Dream!

Keys That Guarantee the Success of Your Future

Text:

Exodus 13:11-16 (NKJV) - "And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, [12] 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. [13] 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. [14] So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. [15] And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' [16] It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt."

A. God never asks us to do something without having a reason; nor does He receive benefit from what He asks us to do.

1. He has no proprietary interest in our obedience, since there is nothing in it for Him.
2. For God to experience personal benefit would mean that He was missing something that should be added, which would signify incompleteness.
3. He is Jehovah, the self-existent, eternal One. From eternity past (before time began) until eternity to come (after time ends—which scripture refers to as “ages to come and world without end”), God has always been and will ever be complete within Himself.
4. If we follow His instructions, **we** are the ones who benefit.
5. **Joke:** “Any Birdseed?”

A woman went to a pet store and purchased a parrot to keep her company. After taking the new pet home, she returned the next day to complain, "That parrot hasn't said a word yet."

The storekeeper asked, "Does it have a mirror? Parrots like to look at their reflection in a mirror. Maybe that will inspire him to talk."

So, she bought a mirror and placed it in the cage. But the next day she came to announce that the bird still wasn't speaking. The storekeeper said, "Well, what about a ladder? Parrots enjoy walking up and down a ladder."

So, she bought the ladder and returned home. Sure enough, the next day her story was the same—still no talking. "Does the parrot have a swing? Birds do enjoy relaxing on a swing, so that might encourage him to talk." So, she purchased a swing. But the next day she came to announce that the bird had died. The storekeeper said, "I'm terribly sorry to hear that. Did the bird say anything at all before it died?"

The lady replied, "Yes, it said, 'Don't they sell any BIRD FOOD in that store?'"

B. Everyone should have a workable strategy for their life. Thankfully, God **does** have a plan that works!

1. Tithing has not been correctly taught by the church. When done properly, it affords a huge blessing. Israel gave their tithe and the first-fruits of their harvest unto the Lord.
2. A huge transfer of wealth is presently occurring, from the bottom and the middle to the top. The gap between the wealthy and the poor is steadily increasing, which is opposite of what God said would happen: "The wealth of the wicked is being laid up for the righteous."
3. In one night, God elevated the Hebrews in Egypt by giving them their back wages for the past 400 years—plus interest!

C. Karl Marx, a well-known, brilliant economist, had a solution for the problems of the world.

1. While his observations of economic injustices were off base, his thinking about those problems was very insightful.
2. Marx viewed all people in two different groups or classes—the proletariat, or working class, and the bourgeois, or those who exploited the working class.
3. He believed that the owners of production, or the raw materials, factories, land, resources, etc., were the ones who should build the superstructure.
4. The superstructure was composed of the government, the educational system, law enforcement, hospitals, etc. So, the superstructure favors the bourgeois and ensures that they always remain on top.
5. The 'proletariat' goes to school to learn how to fit into the superstructure created by the bourgeois. Then they are hired by the bourgeois to make the bourgeois wealthy—never to become wealthy themselves.
6. Personally, I absolutely agree that his concept has been enforced. Those at the top have set things up in a way that benefits them.

- a. Example: the stock market is manipulated by those at the top. As soon as they purchase certain stocks and the price soars, we jump in and purchase those stocks, only to have them sell out, and the stock plummets in value. So, they end up with our money.
 - b. Example: George Soros and currency trading. Soros is notorious for doing the same with currency.
7. By setting up the superstructure, they are never held accountable. Yet if some poor kid is found with a rock of crack cocaine, you know what will happen!
- a. It's true the kid shouldn't be using drugs, but neither should these guys get by with what they're doing!
 - b. The reason no one deals with them is because the legal system has been set up to favor them.
8. In his assessment of the problem, Marx was correct. But as time has proven, his solutions were wrong.

D. God's Word provides keys that, if believed and practiced, will guarantee a blessed future.

1. The first key is that we must be stretched to increase our capacity to receive.
 - a. Israel had to "come out" of Egypt before they could travel through the wilderness.
 - b. To inherit the Promised Land required warfare. The Canaanites did not merely give their land away. If Israel would fight for it, God said He would give it to them.
 - c. What are we doing to fight for our Promised Land, or move to the next level? To receive more, our capacity must be increased.
2. Second, we must take advantage of the supernatural component.
 - a. First-fruits produce the supernatural element of blessing that will guarantee success.

- b. Because Pharaoh would not give God the first-fruits that belonged to Him, he suffered loss. He had been told that Israel was God's 'first-born', but Pharaoh refused to give God what was first.
- 3. So why would God ask Israel to give Him the first of everything? That seems illogical.
 - a. By giving God the first, the problem could arise of not accumulating any more.
 - b. For instance, if your first tomato was given to God, how could you be sure that nine more would grow?
 - c. This is why God warned us to be prepared for such questions. Your children are sure to ask why you're giving the first-fruits. Even though it may seem illogical, God's wisdom is not according to man's wisdom.
 - d. The reason for giving Him our first-fruits is to ensure a fruitful harvest.
- 4. What was the problem with Cain's offering? Some suggest that God preferred the blood of animals rather than vegetables.
 - a. That was not true. It had nothing to do with what was being offered.
 - b. The problem was that Cain's offering was not his first-fruits, while Abel brought the firstborn of his flock.
 - c. **Genesis 4:2-5 (NKJV)** - "Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. [3] And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. [4] Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, [5] but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell."
- 5. This was also the reason God asked for Jericho.

- a. Jericho was the first city Israel would conquer after entering Canaan, or the first-fruits of their Promised Land.
- b. God didn't instruct the leaders to conquer the whole land of Canaan and then give Him a few cities. Instead, He wanted the first one. This would ensure that the other cities, in turn, would be conquered.
- c. By failing to give Jericho to God, Achan had to die. It was the only way to wipe the slate clean and allow Israel to inherit the remainder of their promise.

E. By giving God the first-fruits, you have just ensured the remainder of your harvest.

1. **Romans 11:16 (NKJV)** - "For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches."
2. Once the first-fruits have been given, all that follows will be sanctified as well.
3. This same principle is true concerning the resurrection. How can we know God's people will be resurrected? Because **Christ** is the first-fruits of the resurrection. His resurrection ensures the same for us.
 - a. **I Corinthians 15:20 (NKJV)** - "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."
 - b. **1 Corinthians 15:23 (NKJV)** - "But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."
4. Recently I referred to my friend's brother who has become very wealthy by starting and then selling businesses. Of course, he has always been a strong believer in tithing. On one occasion, his wife told him they couldn't afford to tithe that month because the bills were too high, so he wrote a check for twice the normal tithe. In effect, he was giving the first-fruits of

the next month's income. Without realizing it, he had stumbled upon the first-fruits principle. Since that time, he has been blessed beyond measure!

5. Sometimes we look at the ungodly and wonder why they are being blessed. The Kardashian family is a good example. The first thing they do every week is give God their tithe and first-fruits. Sad to say, by failing to give their first-fruits, many of the righteous are not financially blessed.
6. Some of the world's most famous celebrities are faithful tithers, such as: Chris Tucker, Denzel Washington, LL Cool J, Warren Buffet and Bill Gates. They all tithe, but Warren Buffet and Bill Gates give far more than just a tithe.
7. By so doing, they have tapped into a principle that God wants His people to experience. If we do the same, we can expect to be blessed.