

He carefully observed each person who filed into the treasury. Some walked slowly, their heads held high, hoping everyone noticed the large bag of coins they deposited. Others walked quickly, their heads hung in shame, hoping no one noticed their tiny bag of coins. Some shuffled in grumpily, like kids dragged into the doctor's office. Others walked purposefully, sporting a joyful smile. He observed each one that brought their offering. But he looked deeper than how much noise each offering made as it clanged into the trumpet-shaped receptacles in the Temple Treasury. He looked at their hearts; their motivation for giving to his Father. He saw what was invisible to everyone else.

2,000 years later, people are still bringing their offerings into God's house. Not dropping shekels into trumpet-shaped receptacles, but commitment envelopes into a wooden box marked, *Forward in Faith*. If Jesus was sitting in one of those Narthex chairs today, watching us offer our commitments, what would he see below the surface? Arrogant hearts that shout, "Look how much I'm giving!" Ashamed hearts, thinking, "I gave so little. I'm worthless." Apathetic hearts, begrudgingly dropping in a forced commitment, or blowing past the box thinking, "I'm not wasting my money on THAT."

Nearly 35 centuries ago, God also asked his people to bring commitments. Not to expand a school building, but to build the Tabernacle, the tent-like structure where God would dwell among his people after he freed them from slavery in Egypt. From the Israelites' response, we can apply some principles for ourselves-- **4 Keys to Our Commitments** as we make our commitments for *Forward in Faith* today: 1.) Our Purpose, 2.) Our People, 3.) Our Gifts, 4.) Our Motivation.

About 3 months after God split the Red Sea and rescued the Israelites from Egypt, God gave Moses, the leader of Israel, instructions for the people. Along with the Ten Commandments, and other rules to govern Israel's daily life, God also commanded Moses, ***"Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering...Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them."***

In order to build this sanctuary called the Tabernacle, God commanded that the Israelites offer the needed building materials: things like gold, silver, and bronze; yarn and fine linen; wood and animal skins; oils, spices, and precious stones. Skilled people were needed to build, weave, and spin, so that God's work could be carried out through the Tabernacle.

That's the first key to our commitments: what was the Israelites' purpose in bringing these gifts? Moses tells us they, ***"brought to the LORD freewill offerings for all the work the LORD through Moses had commanded them to do."*** The Israelites brought their commitments, so that God's work could be done! At the Tabernacle, the mobile precursor of Jerusalem's Temple, the Israelites would worship God. Priests would offer sacrifices and intercede for the Israelites' sins. There, the all-powerful, infinite God of the universe would dwell above the Ark of the Covenant, housed in the 15 square-foot Most Holy Place. They brought their offerings for the purpose of honoring God and carrying out his worship and work.

And isn't that our purpose too? By expanding our school ministry, we're doing the work of Jesus, who tells us to "Let the little children come to me." By expanding and beautifying our building, we'll draw more people to our school and church to teach them about their Savior. And God is glorified through that! We bring our commitments for the purpose of glorifying God, and doing his work!

Notice, I said "we" bring our commitments. Another key for our commitments is Our People. As you scan Exodus 35, notice who participated in the offering. ***"Everyone who was willing... men and women alike...everyone...everyone...every skilled woman...all the women who were willing...the leaders...all the***

**Israelite men and women.**” Men and women; leaders and followers; wealthy, middle class, and poor. The whole nation worked together to respond to God and supply the materials necessary to do God’s work!

And when everyone responds and plays a part, the sinful, arrogant heart that cries “Look how great I am for giving so much!” is silenced. Because the purpose is carried out by a family of believers working together to glorify God, not individuals! Notice that Moses doesn’t record, “Good thing Jacob gave so much! He carried the project!” God doesn’t record individuals’ names. He remembers the people that did this amazing work together as a group!

This isn’t like when a wealthy athlete donates millions to his alma mater, and they put his name on the library. Our commitments aren’t about us. We don’t want to put our name on the building. We want Jesus’ name to be proclaimed through it! And we do that work together, as a Family Growing in Christ!

But our sinful nature still wants to focus on the size of the individual gift. Aren’t we more wowed by the person who commits \$250,000 than the person who commits \$250? Don’t we naturally pay more attention to the Israelites bringing gold and silver than the Israelites bringing wood and goat hair?

God doesn’t. He never indicates that some gifts were more important. Every gift the Israelites offered to God were necessary and valuable! It’s important for us to think the same way about Our Gifts as a key to our commitments.

Without the goat hair, the skilled women couldn’t have woven cloth for the Tabernacle’s tents. Without the wood, the craftsmen couldn’t have constructed the Ark of the Covenant. Every gift was valuable and necessary to do God’s work. That means the shame-filled hearts lamenting “I couldn’t give very much” can release their guilt, because every gift given for God’s work is valuable and necessary, whether a quarter or a quarter-million.

Maybe you aren’t in the financial position to commit money towards Forward in Faith. That’s OK! There are so many ways to support God’s work besides with your money. Notice how God acknowledges the skilled women who spun the yarn and goat hair into fabric. The only two people named in this account, Bezalel and Oholiab, aren’t mentioned for giving vast offerings, but for using their God-given gifts as craftsmen; to design, build, and teach others to do the same.

Valuable and necessary commitments aren’t just the ones followed by lots of zeros. Whether your commitment to *Forward in Faith* is the value of your stocks, or helping with in-house construction work, or sweeping the gym floor, any offering or service given to glorify God is an invaluable gift in God’s eyes! When Jesus watched the people giving offerings in the temple, he taught his disciples that lesson. The old widow who dropped in a few miniscule coins gave more than all the wealthy who poured in thousands. **“I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.”** Obviously fractions of a penny aren’t as much as thousands of dollars! Why would Jesus say this?

That’s where the fourth, but most important key to our commitments comes in. What is Our Motivation for giving our commitments? It’s a matter of the heart. Jesus said that the widow gave more than anyone else, because she was motivated to give by a thankful heart that trusted God!

As Moses records, **“Everyone who was willing, and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD.”** Everyone whose heart moved them. Isn’t that what this is all about? Our motivation isn’t to have more storage, or to have a gym that impresses opponents, or because life will be easier when you can bring your kid to all-day preschool. We consider those things, but in the end, we make our commitments to carry out God’s work because our hearts have been moved by the Gospel to thank and love our Savior!

Our hearts are moved as we remember God's grace in sending Jesus to be the fulfillment of the Tabernacle-- not a place where God would dwell among his people, but God himself, becoming one of his people, and dwelling among them in this sinful world. As we remember how God faithfully provides for all our needs. As we take to heart how vital it is for us to share Jesus with a dying world.

The Israelites' hearts were moved to action by God's grace also. Just a few months earlier, the Israelites had quickly broken God's commandments they'd committed to following by worshiping the Golden Calf. God could have destroyed his rebellious people immediately. But after Moses' pleading, God didn't destroy them. Instead, he showed them mercy. Not abandoning them, but instructing these rebellious sinners to construct a Tabernacle where the Holy God Would dwell among them. And we see the gospel-motivated results!

In Exodus 36, we're told that ***"the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning" and that eventually "people were restrained from bringing more, because there was already more than enough to do all the work."*** Can you imagine sitting here on Celebration Sunday in 2 weeks and hearing, "Stop bringing commitments. We've already got more than enough!" May God so move our hearts with the gospel to do just that! That doesn't mean that if we don't go over and above \$6.8 million that our hearts weren't thankful. Not at all. What matters more than the final commitment number is the hearts from which those commitments come—gospel-driven hearts that love Jesus and trust God to continue providing for our needs as we move Forward in Faith.

And that's why arrogance, shame, or apathy don't fit. Because those attitudes are self-focused. As Christians with moved hearts, our giving will be gospel-focused, not self-focused. On this Commitment Sunday, we consider the Four Keys to Our Commitments: Our Purpose—to glorify God and do his work. Our People—all of us working together as a family to carry out that purpose. Our gifts—all valuable and important in God's eyes, regardless of size. Our Motivation—hearts moved by the Gospel to give back to God who gave everything for us. Hearts moved because Jesus, the one who sat in the Temple and watched people bring their offerings—that same Jesus went to the cross—fully committed to die to remove every sin, including our self-focused, arrogant, ashamed, or apathetic giving.

That means that as Jesus watches you make your commitments this weekend or next, he sees a gospel-driven heart. A heart cleansed by his righteousness. A heart of faith. And he says, "She gave... He gave... more than anyone else." Brothers and sisters, on this Commitment Sunday, everyone who is willing, whose heart moves them--come and bring your offering, for all the work of the Lord we've been commanded to do." May God fill us with his gospel to do just that.