

## “First Things First” // Haggai 1:1–11 // *Begin Again* # 3

Summit family, we’re in our final week of this series, *Begin Again*, talking about generosity. I don’t feel like I’m normally a “ra-ra, THIS IS GOING TO BE THE GREATEST WEEKEND EVER” kind of guy. But honestly, I’ve been praying for this particular weekend and this particular message for a while now...because I believe what happens this weekend--what you choose to do with the commitment I’m going to ask you to make--will impact the next ten years of ministry at TSC...

Speaking of money, it seems like whenever I talk about investing money nowadays, the subject of cryptocurrency comes up. “How much crypto do you have? Do you like Bitcoin, Ethereum, Cardano, Salano, or Dogecoin?” And it seems like we’re all hoping we don’t get asked to explain how it works. I’m always like, “Look, I won’t ask you if you won’t ask me. Deal?”

Who would have imagined 10 years ago that we would be talking about an entirely new form of currency that is nothing more than a bit of data buried on a hard drive somewhere? The people who did know that 10 years ago are doing quite well. I bought a little just to mess with it. And by little I mean very little. What’s interesting now is hearing about all the people who had it at the beginning BUT with no idea of its potential value. You’ve probably heard about the guy, Laszlo Hanyecz, who 11 years ago paid for a couple of Papa John Pizzas with 10,000 bitcoins--which means he basically spent about 4 billion in today’s dollars on a fast food dinner.<sup>1</sup>

Or maybe you heard about the guy in the UK who threw out his old hard drive and then a friend reminded him that he had loaded some Bitcoin on it. He checked to see what it was worth, and found the Bitcoin on his harddrive was worth more north of \$6 million. By that time the trash had already been picked up, so he went to the landfill and dug and dug and dug, but never found it. Which made me wonder—how long would l dig in a landfill for a \$6 million object? Show of hands: How many would never even try? How many would stick it out for a whole hour? Two hours? Six hours? A day? A week? How many would say, “As long as it takes?”

**Here’s my question:** What if something which you thought had no value actually turned out to be incredibly valuable, and other things you thought had value actually turned out to have no value at all? **One of the Bible’s most frequent themes is that we often invest in things that don’t matter**, won’t satisfy, and can’t sustain us. Today, in our final message in *Begin Again*, I want to show you how a really obscure OT prophet--one whose book you may never have heard a sermon preached from--makes that point in a powerful way.

**So, Haggai 1, if you have your Bibles.**<sup>2</sup> If you don’t know where Haggai is, relax. It’s after Zephaniah and right before Zechariah... if that’s helpful... BTW, it’s important to me to preach from obscure Bible books like Haggai from time to time because one day you’re going to meet Haggai in heaven and he’s going to say, “*How did you*

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.marketwatch.com/story/bitcoin-pizza-day-laszlo-hanyecz-spent-3-8-billion-on-pizzas-in-the-summer-of-2010-using-the-novel-crypto-11621714395#:~:text=It's%20Bitcoin%20Pizza%20day%20in.pizza%20pies%20using%2010%2C000%20bitcoins>

<sup>2</sup> Works consulted: John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*; John Rinehart, “The Purpose of Wealth,” sermon posted on GospelPatrons.org; Craig Groeschel, “The Hard Right,” sermon preached at Life.Church and posted on November 17, 2015; Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*; Alistair Begg, “1 Timothy 6:17–19,” sermon; Greg Boyd, article on 1 Timothy 6, <http://www.globalrichlist.com/>.

like my book?” and I don’t want you to be embarrassed. Or, even more important, he might say: “You never even heard of my book? Who’s your pastor?” And then I’ll look bad.” He’ll be like, “Oh, you mean that *OBSCURE* pastor from NC?”

Haggai 1, vs 2: “The Lord of Armies says this: These people say: The time has not come for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.”

**The year is 520 B.C.**, about 18 years after Daniel died. God has kept his promise to bring the children of Israel back from exile in Babylon, and he’d even moved on the heart of a pagan King named Cyrus to help fund the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Two Jewish leaders named Nehemiah and Ezra stepped up to lead the charge, who would eventually have books of the Bible named after them, and Israel got off to a great start--they rebuilt the walls of the city and laid the foundations of the Temple. But then production just stopped. For about 16 years.

“**Why**” you ask? Well, they had their excuses: Resources were tight. Plus, this was a strange new land and they had to get their own houses established. Plus, there were still a lot of enemies all around them. **And so, as people often do in times of uncertainty, they pulled inward and focused on building their own little kingdoms.**

**But here was the thing:** These were the people of God; they’d been saved by him--God brought them back from exile all by himself. He was their Provider, their Shield, their Refuge, their Rock. They were called by his name, and the Temple was supposed to be the center of their lives--the place where they could worship God; hear from him; teach their families about him; the place where strangers from other nations could learn about him. The Temple should have been their *first* thought, not an *afterthought*.

And so, 3 The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: 4 “Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?” “Weird,” God says, “you’ve had time to build other things... like nice, paneled homes for yourselves; and yet, my house still sits there in ruins.”

- (*Sidenote, but I can’t help but think this is what God might be saying to some of you about not returning to church in person yet. I realize that there are still some genuinely at risk, and you have to stay separate from people. But there’s a bunch of others of you who seem to feel perfectly safe going to restaurants and grocery stores and Target and sports stadiums, yet, My house is a place you have yet to return to.” But that’s a different sermon for a different day, I guess. But it was on my mind. So, take it for what it’s worth.*)

5 “Think carefully(,then,) about your ways: 6 You have planted much but harvested little.”

*Because you put yourselves first, and me second, God says, two things happened:*

### 1. God frustrated their efforts

When he says, “*You have planted much but harvested little...*” he means, “You put the farming work in, but the harvest is terrible. You’re putting the hours in, but the grades aren’t coming. You’re investing the money, but the returns aren’t there.” I’m frustrating your efforts. He makes it even clearer in vs: 9 “When you brought the harvest to your house, *I ruined it.* (And) **Why?** (you ask): **Because my house still lies in ruins, while each of you is busy with his own house.**”

10 "So on your account, the skies have withheld the dew and the land its crops. 11 I have summoned a drought on the fields and the hills, on the grain, new wine, fresh oil, and whatever the ground yields, on people and animals, and on all that your hands produce."

- I did all this! God calls us to give him our first and best, so when instead we give him our second and the rest, we set God himself against us. This is **one of the most important financial principles in the Bible**, stated most clearly by Jesus in Matthew 6:33: "Seek *first* the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." In context, "all these things" are all the other things we worry about. Provision. Companionship. Marriage. Financial stability. "Seek me first," God says, "and I'll add all these other things to you." And the flip side is also true: Seek first the kingdom of self, and all these things will be taken from you.
- **That's why C.S. Lewis famously said**, in something I quote to you all the time to you-- "When you put 'first' things first, God will throw in 'second' things. But put second things first and you'll lose not only first things, but eventually the second ones also." C.S. Lewis (my paraphrase)
- Now, I want to be careful here, because Scripture also tells us that sometimes we are faithful to God and hard times still come--that's part of living in a fallen world, and it's often how God tests and grows and shapes our faith. So, like I said a couple of weeks ago: this is not some kind of spiritual rebate guarantee where you write God a check and he promises every time to send you back a bigger one. This is not some kind of iron-clad contract.
- **BUT--there are enough passages in Scripture like Matthew 6:33** we should take them seriously. We put God first, and he multiplies us. And if we don't do that, he frustrates our efforts like he did in Haggai's day.
- **The Israelites were like**, "Look--we can't give, because we don't have any excess!" And God responded, "You don't HAVE any excess because you don't give."
- So, here's an honest question for those of you experiencing financial frustration, or life frustration, right now: **What if some of that was God trying to get your attention?** What if right now he is saying to you, "Stop giving me your seconds and thirds; stop squeezing me in at the margins. I don't want to be tipped with your loose change and lunch money. Give me your first and best or nothing at all!" I'm **not saying that's his word for all** of you who are in financial strain, but maybe that's what he's **saying to some** of you.
- **Throughout this series, I've told you a number of stories where God wrote these things into my heart.** They all occurred early in my adult life. **Let me tell you one more:**
  - Years ago--again, shortly after college--I got into a silly little fender bender--one of those reeeaaaally frustrating accidents where you just cut a corner too quickly and do several hundred dollars damage to the side panel on your car. The accident felt so unnecessary and so random. But the moment it happened the Holy Spirit immediately pressed on my heart a decision that I'd made the week before to withhold the tithe from God because of some stuff I had really wanted to buy. And the immediate, clear sense I got was, "Look, I'm going to get this one way or the other. You either have the joy of giving it to me, or I take it out through stupid accidents."
  - Now, like I said, PLEASE be careful with this. The Bible does not teach some kind of Christian Karma system, where each time something bad happens to you, you should look for something bad you did in the past that brought it on. **Far from it; I mean, think about it: Jesus lived perfectly and was betrayed by his friends, falsely accused and then crucified on a cross.**
  - **What I'm talking about are moments when God sends something into your life to wake you up and you know it.** By the way, in my experience, if that's what is happening, the Holy Spirit will make it known immediately; with a clear, obvious action step. God's not an unclear communicator; if he wants to tell you something, he'll make it known. If he doesn't make anything clear, you can assume that what you are going through is just part of the suffering he's appointed his people to. **But you should at least ask the question.**

So, that's #1. Because they put themselves first, God frustrated their efforts. Second,

## 2. They were unable to find contentment

Look again at vs. 6: *You eat but never have enough to be satisfied. You drink but never have enough to (get buzzed, I mean...) be happy. You put on clothes but never have enough to get warm. The wage earner puts his wages into a bag with a hole in it...* I went skiing last year with one of our pastors, Daniel Simmons, who decided to try snowboarding for the first time, which meant he fell--a lot. And all he had on was jeans, so the first night was MISERABLE for him. So, we got up early the next day and went out to buy him some ski pants. He found this marked down pair at a ski shop there--a great deal. So he buys them, puts them on, and we go out there. But then, later that morning, he discovered that his wallet was missing, which led him to discover a humongous hole in the pocket where he put his wallet. I told him, "Well, now we know why they were marked down!" We spent several hours retracing his steps and his ski paths but found nothing. Later that afternoon, however, as he was taking the ski pants off, he discovered his wallet at the bottom of one of the legs of his pants; the hole opened up to the inside lining and that's where his wallet had fallen to.

There's nothing more frustrating than having a hole in your pocket--any money you saved on ski pants gets lost through that hole; any enjoyment you thought you'd get through the pants is ruined by concern over the loss of your wallet.

I'm not saying God was trying to teach Daniel that--he and Wendy are two of the most generous people I know--but to Israel God was saying: *"Look--you keep spending money to buy stuff, but there's like this gigantic hole in your heart, so that no matter WHAT you put in, you aren't finding that happiness, and security, and contentment, that you seek!"*

**I think this has to be one of the worst states to be in.** You obtain what you always wanted to obtain but still don't feel like you always wanted to feel.

- You get married, but you still feel alone.
- You buy the vacation home, but you still don't feel connected to your family.
- You get to the top of the corporate ladder, but still don't feel significant and fulfilled. You're like the guy I've told you about, the CEO of the Fortune 500...
- or that great philosopher **Jim Carrey**, who said, *"I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer."*

I've heard it said, *"Money will buy a bed, but not rest; education, but not wisdom; companions, but not friends; a house, but not a home; amusements, but not happiness; religion, but not salvation."*

Friend: What good is all the money and all the success if it doesn't produce the joy and security and satisfaction in your heart that you crave? God says, *"THAT you will never find, no matter how much you have, if I am not first."* **Life does not consist of the amount of possessions.**

**Contentment, happiness--there is a different way there.** Those who idolize money always find that it **disappoints**. Another of the prophets, Jeremiah, said it this way: *"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."* (Jer 2:13)

I love that imagery... **Idols work like that.** They disappoint. You fill them up and come back the next and find them empty. And when that happens, Tim Keller says, you'll make one of 4 choices:

- **Option 1: Blame the idol itself (and choose another)**--Oh, the happiness I'm searching for wasn't really in being the most popular, it's sex and romance; it's in money; oh, it's not in sex and romance, it's in money; oh, it's not in money, it's in family; it's not in family, it's in knowing you're a good person (or whatever other idol you come up with).
- **Option 2: Blame yourself (and live with shame)**--"There's something wrong with me, I'm not good enough."
- **Option 3: Blame the world itself (and become a cynic)**--You conclude, "There is no happiness in the world! You can't depend on anybody or trust anybody. Everybody and everything will let you down" and then you become a cynical old person.
- **Option 4: Realize that you were made for another world.** As C.S. Lewis said, "*If I find in myself a yearning which nothing on earth can satisfy, it must be that I was made for another world!*"

Two things happen when you put God second: (a) he frustrates your efforts and (b) you are unable to find satisfaction. **This is where Israel was.**

**So what does God tell them to do?** 7 The Lord of Armies says this: "Think carefully about your ways. 8 Go up into the hills, bring down lumber, and build the house; and I will be pleased with it and be glorified," says the Lord.

- *Here's what I love about that verse: It's not that hard.* There's no complex code to break. Just start putting God first. *Get your rear end up to the hills, bring down lumber, and build the house.*
- *"But what about all the enemies who want to kill us? And what about setting up our children well for the future? And what about getting this nation established?"* Can't you hear all their objections? **God responds with Matthew 6:33:** You seek *first* the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, "*and all these things will be added unto you.*"

**The question for Israel, and the question for us, is, "Do you trust God enough to put him first?"** I mentioned this last week, but the greatest obstacle to generosity in the life of the average Christian is not stinginess, it's faith. This is always the obstacle to commitment: (*Do you trust Jesus enough to go all the way with him, to fully release yourself to him?*) If we put God first, will he take care of us?

**What we do with our money is the single-greatest indicator of the quality of our faith.** Talk is cheap--anybody can say they trust God; but what you do with your money determines whether or not you actually do. Don't tell me what your mouth says about God; show me what your pocketbook says about him. That's the more reliable indicator.

**This is why, I believe, Jesus talked about money so much. It's not because he needed money**--again, he could take 5 loaves and 2 fish and feed a nation. He talked about it a lot because he knew that what we did with our money demonstrated whether or not we *actually* believed.

**You see, money always competes with God for first place in our hearts.** It's God's # 1 competitor, so to speak. I was listening to a Christian leader named Andy Crouch--I mentioned him last week. He pointed out how Jesus said in Matthew 6, "**You cannot serve both God and money.**" (Matt 6:24)

- **And he said, "Isn't it interesting that this is the ONE thing Jesus said we cannot serve alongside God?"** You cannot serve God *and* money. He didn't say that about sexual desire. He didn't say that about Caesar. I

mean, think about it: **Caesar was a BAD DUDE**. Evil; anti-God. But Jesus never said, “You can’t serve God and Caesar.” In fact, he says, “Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and unto God what is God’s,” which means, serve Caesar *appropriately*--don’t treat him like a god, but there’s a way you can and should serve both him and God.” So why doesn’t he say that about money, too?<sup>3</sup>

- Andy Crouch said that’s because money offers us a power that not even Caesar has. Money is **unique among other kinds of power, in at least 3 ways, Crouch says**:
  - **First, he said, it’s Funqible** (there’s your SAT word for the week; that word just means that you can trade money for an infinite number of other things. You can use it to buy comfort; to guarantee security; you can use it to control outcomes so that they are favorable for you; money gives you the ability to get done what you want done in the world, even without other people even wanting those things to get done. That’s power.
  - Second, money is **countable**--at any point, you can know how much of it you have. That’s not true for other kinds of power. How much power exactly does the CEO of a company actually have? Well, certainly some, but if you’ve ever been in that role you know it’s hard to know exactly how much power you have. There’s no way to count it. But you can measure money--it is right there on a balance sheet.
  - Finally, Crouch said, it’s **storable**--You can save it for later. That’s not true of most kinds of power. Most power has to be exercised now. With money, though, you can store it up, hold onto it, and use it whenever you want.

**Those 3 things give money a kind of possessive, enslaving power in your heart that not even Caesar has.**

Which is why God tells us that we can’t serve God and money; both call out to us to depend on them, to lean on them, to hope in them, for the future. You’ll love the one and hate the other, he said.

But it’s even worse. (Matt 6:24) Our modern Bibles translate that word as “money,” but in older translations, like the KJV, they use the word “Mammon.” “You cannot serve God and Mammon.” Why did they do that? Follow this: Jesus spoke in Aramaic, and “Mammon” is the Aramaic word for money. The NT is written in Greek, so, when the Gospel writers wrote down Jesus’ words, they translated him from Aramaic to Greek. But for this one word, Mammon, they left it in Aramaic. **Why?**

**Well, when you are translating something, what kind of words do you not translate? Names.** You don’t translate names, you transliterate them. The early church said the disciples wrote down this as a proper name because they understood that Jesus was not just talking about a *THING* here; he was talking about Personal power. A demonic power. Something that comes into your heart with a will.

Satan has a unique power over it. It’s part of his domain. It’s not that you can’t have any of it--no, the world works on it and it has great power for good--it’s just you should realize that it will always be fighting to have you, to possess your heart. God and money will ALWAYS be pulling you in opposite directions. You will love the one and hate the other; or hate the one and love the other. With demonic energy it beckons you, Christian, to transfer your trust from God to it. You may never verbalize it, but in your heart you’ll think: “I don’t need to trust God for the future; I have Mammon.” And, btw, if right now you don’t like all this talk about stewardship and generosity and giving, I’d argue that might just be Mammon whispering in your heart--“Oh, we hate it when he talks about this. Why doesn’t he just mind his own business and move on, and get back to how Jesus makes our lives complete...”

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<sup>3</sup> Andy Crouch, “God and Mammon,” Faith Driven Entrepreneurship

\*\*One of the things JMC explained a few weeks ago was that the devil's primary strategy in our lives was to get us to believe lies--he described a demonic temptation as "an idea with a will behind it." A thought that forces its way into your mind and tries to take over. Then he challenged us to identify the specific lies Satan whispers to us and to counteract them with Scripture.

- Well, I took his advice and began to do that. (My Evernote on my phone). One of mine is with money. I'd say that's true for probably all of us. Here's the version of the lie I believe: ***An abundance of money is the good life. And so, if you're going to give, don't give in a way that threatens your material comforts. Give to look good; give to fulfill whatever obligations you think you have; but never give in a way that threatens your present comfort or future security.***
- The truth that I'm using to counteract that lie is what Jesus says next in Matthew 6: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust does corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up treasures in heaven..." **"The good life is not to be found through laying up treasures here, but laying up treasures there."** I'm faced with a simple call to believe. Do I actually believe that the good life is not a lot of money down here but laying up treasures up there?\*

**What about you? Do you trust God enough to give him your first and best and then, to use whatever excess you have to lay up treasures in heaven, not here?**

Around here, we use a phrase: **Live sufficiently, give extravagantly.** Most of us reverse that. We give sufficiently, and live extravagantly. We try to give sufficiently so we don't feel guilty about our extravagant living. I'm calling you to reverse that. **Listen, there's nothing wrong with nice things--God created all things for us to enjoy.** The problem is when you prioritize that above the Kingdom of God. God was not upset that Israel had paneled houses; he was upset that they had prioritized paneled houses over his Kingdom. If you've got the money to be extravagant somewhere, be extravagant first with the Kingdom of God.

**That's why Veronica and I have always maintained that for us our biggest yearly expense--our biggest budget item--will be the Kingdom of God.** We're determined to put more into God's kingdom than we spend on our mortgage; more than we put into our savings. The Kingdom of God will always come first.

What about you? **Specifically this December,** I want to call all of us to respond in bold ways..

So, I'm asking you, in the month of December to consider what you might do that shows that the KoG truly does have your first and best in giving. Just like last year, we're calling December our "December Declaration." What can you give that will clearly declare Jesus is first? **Maybe there's a gift from stored resources** that you need to transfer into Jesus' kingdom? (5 most valuable things). In fact, maybe as an application of today's message, you were thinking, "Why am I holding on to this for me--when God gave it to me to see the gospel get to others?"

(Conclusion)

Haggai 1:2 These people say: “The time has not come for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.” Oh, but it was time. It should come first. Where do we say this today? We say,

- “The time has not come for the Triangle to be reached with the gospel.” Yes, we give, but not in a radical way, that affects our lifestyle, like the hour is urgent.
- “The time has not come to end the foster care crisis in Durham. The time has not come for us to make a real difference in the prison system. The time has not come for Afghan refugees to receive the hope of Christ. The time has not come to get the Bible to be translated into languages that have no access to the gospel. The time has not come to reach these college campuses. Hopefully that will all happen one day, but right now is the time to build my own house; or to build that second home; or to live that lifestyle I’ve always dreamed of. That’s what time it is.”

But God says, 'No, the time HAS come to build this Temple. Summit, think carefully about your ways. And the solution is simple. Put God first. *Go up to the hills, bring down lumber, and build the house.* I'll take care of you if you do.

**And if you need any additional motivation, realize that this whole Temple thing that they were building was just a temporary stand-in for Jesus. Jesus would be the real Temple, and he was “built” so to speak entirely by God. Jesus didn’t save us through some paneling and wainscoting, Jesus reconciled us to God through the torn flesh of his own body. The real Temple--the place where man and God would reconnect--was established because God gave HIS first and best, Jesus, to us. In light of that, shouldn’t we joyfully give back our first and best to him?**

**Listen:** Throughout the 20-year history of the TSC, this church has stepped forward many times with its first and best, and what God has done through this has been amazing. And it excites me for the future. **Check this out:**

[\[VIDEO: Begin Again, History of Giving\]](#)

Commitment:

A single video could never contain what God has done through your generosity over the years at TSC, but I think it gives us a small taste of what God wants to do *again*. It’s time for us to Begin Again.

Here’s what is ahead for us this year: We’re going to finish building the North Durham Campus (**pic**)

- We’re going to start building a new Alamance County Campus on the land we were already able to purchase because of your past generosity.
- We are asking in faith that in this next season the Lord would allow us to open up another campus. I’ve told you we had over 100 people at two recent interest meetings for a new campus in West Cary and another in Fuquay-Varina and we’ve had over 1200 in person FTG’s here since August 1. The Lord is on the move.

And that's amazing, but let's stop for a moment and dream together.

- What if the Lord wants to expand the prison ministry, or our ministry to refugees? The Lord is literally bringing the nations to the Triangle, how might he equip us to reach them?
- What if God opens a door for us to reach Garner and allow us to purchase land for a permanent campus?
- What if we could expand our ability to reach teenagers through some facilities for them? What if we could expand our ability to train and send out missionaries and church planters and raise up future Christian leaders in both the church world and business world?

So, I want to call you to action. I'm going to ask every single person to pull out their phone and we're going to think through this together. Go ahead and grab it now...

### **You can do 1 of 3 things:**

- 1.) The BEST: Go to our [Summit Church App](#), and the home page has a link to the commitment form.
- 2.) [Text commit to 33933 and a prompt will take you directly to the form.](#)
- 3.) or, [go to summitchurch.com](#) and it's right at the top of the screen.

This commitment is going to be from Dec. 1, 2021 through Dec. 1, 2022. One full year, and I'm asking you, if you are a fully committed disciple of Jesus and consider yourself a part of this church, to prayerfully consider what number represents the first and best? What feels like an appropriate declaration of worship, that declares your thankfulness and gratefulness to God for the goodness he's put in your life? That number should represent a total surrender of all things in your life to God. Don't think about what anyone else is doing, or even what I've told you. This is between you and God.

We've developed an [Online Calculator](#) to give you an easy way to work through your begin again commitment. Let me walk through this tool:

#### First slot: Regular Giving + Special Offering

- How much you typically give in a year, or plan to give. BTW, for some of you, this is the first time you'll ever be committing to give to the Summit Church. Maybe it's the first time you are committing to tithe. Or at least take the first steps that direction. And I am so happy for you, and you are taking steps of faith in honoring God with this area of your life.
- (Others of you are like, "I gave last year, but I'm not sure how much it was. Well, if you're signed in, the Online Calculator will auto populate your last 12-months giving!)

Then you add in Expanded Annual Giving: Beyond what you gave last year, what kind of increase would represent your first and best? Or what is the appropriate amount now that declares your thankfulness for the grace God has shown to you?

Finally: + Gifts from Stored Resources: For some of you, giving your first and best means doing something far beyond the tithe. Maybe something I've said over the last few weeks really resonated with you. Shooting for a double-tithe. Giving 10% of your entire estate. Making the Kingdom of God your largest monthly or yearly

“expense.” Identifying the 5 most materially valuable things in your life and transferring one of those into his Kingdom. For some, this might mean a 6 or 7 figure commitment, and I want to encourage you to do that in faith.

= Total Begin Again Commitment. Those three categories represent your total commitment these next 12 months to begin again.

**Fill that out, but don't hit the word “COMMIT.” We're going to do that all together.**

**Now, if you're a guest, please let me make clear:** I'm not talking to you. I'm talking to those who think of this church as home; who consider themselves a part of this movement. If you're a guest, we don't want you to feel like we are asking this of you, but I do hope through this you can see what we are all about, and my hope is that one day you might feel compelled to join up with us here.

**Maybe some of you hung up on the word “commitment?”** You're like, “Well, I have variable income...” Or, “I might move this year, or I might change jobs. Or I might lose my job.” This is not a contract. It is your FAITH commitment about what you are going to shoot for as God enables you, and that you are going to make a priority for as long as you are able.

**But I want to challenge you: you commit to other things.** When you order ahead at Starbucks, you commit yourself to go by there. Something might derail you, but you are not afraid to commit there. You should commit yourself to this. This is our Exodus 35 moment, where we bring our first and best; where we declare “God, you are priority, and I'm going to trust you to enable me to fulfill this!”

**Our goal here, you know, is not a financial one.** Our goal is that every person who calls TSC their home church will give God their first and best in obedience to Jesus as his disciple, and that every one of us who call this church home will be obedient to the promptings of the Spirit in your heart. Veronica and I are doing it; our staff and elders and SGL's have led the way in doing this. Some of our kids and teens are doing it. This is for all of us.

## Reflection Moment

- We're going to give you a few moments to think, pray, and commit.
- If you are married and here with your spouse, feel free to talk it over with them...
- In a minute, I'll come back up and give you more instructions, but take this time to pray and ask what it would look like for you over the next 12 months to give God your first and your best. How is God calling you to begin again...

**Again, think about it, pray about it, use the calculator, but DON'T hit the word commit.** We'll do that all together in a minute.

[Prayer time for 3 minutes]

Here's what we're going to do now, I told you about the Heave offering and how the people of God came together in Exodus 35 and.... We are all going to do that right now. Again, take out your phone and open the app right now or if you are watching online go to [summitchurch.com](http://summitchurch.com) and let's make our commitment together. 3 ways: 1.) [Summit Church App](#); 2.) Text commit to 33933 and a prompt will take you directly to the form. 3.) or, [go to summitchurch.com](http://go.summitchurch.com) and it's right at the top of the screen.

Hold them in front of you--THIS IS EXACTLY HOW THE ISRAELITES DID IT--now, when i count backwards from 3, hit the word COMMIT!

If you don't have your phone right now--you're like "I don't bring that nasty thing to worship"--well first, good for you. You can still participate with us, of course: as soon as you get home, grab your phone and do it, or sometime in the next week. Or, for those who just hate technology, you could go to Next Steps at any of our campuses when we dismiss.

The point is for all of us, if you call this church home, we want you to commit with us to begin again.

Pray + Transition to Worship