

1 BACK AT GIVING SERIES JOHN 3:16



Giving Series

Introduction

As we enter into a new month where we are thinking hard about Christmas, it's been on my heart to begin a series on Giving. Our culture has become so obsessed with receiving and consumerism, and consumption that we've forgotten how to love through giving. I felt it would be prudent to really learn about giving from our Heavenly Father's example. The message of Christmas and Christ's birth is culminated in verses that reference His death also.

John 3:16-17 (NKJV)

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Everything about God tells us that He is:

- relational
- purposeful
- full of wisdom
- intentional
- thoughtful
- loving
- Holy

He is not:

- wasteful
- forgetful
- hateful
- selfish
- unavailable
- accidental

So when it comes to Giving, we see that God gives:

- relationally
- purposefully
- with wisdom
- provisionally
- intentionally
- thoughtfully
- lovingly
- And each way He does it is Holy and is to be reverenced

Inspired by our sermon title today, I'd like us to reflect on one of the first scenarios where we first learn how to give and receive in a significant way. And that is giving and receiving in love. And today I'd like us to explore the way God gave relationally and provisionally. And to see that we need to go back to the beginning. We need to be Back at 1.

God Creates Relationally

For all the brothers in the room, there is an amazing love song performed by Brian McKnight called "Back at 1." And many of us had it on our wedding playlist. And the reason we had it on our playlist is because it communicated the foundations of why we said the words "I love you." And as I was prepping for today and thinking of how God loves us even in the Book of Genesis, this song just flew into my head. It wasn't a distraction but rather an insight into God's relational Mind. Brian's chorus lyrics say this:

*(One) you're like a dream come true
(Two) just wanna be with you
(Three) girl, it's plain to see that you're the only one for me, and
(Four) repeat steps one through three
(Five) make you fall in love with me
If ever I believe my work is done
Then I'll start back at one*

One - you're like a dream come true

Genesis 1 show us:

- How God literally pulls creation out of His Mind and begins to form and unpack it
 - like His dream come true
- It must be asked, "why are we here?"
 - why would an all sufficient God imagine a universe and a planet filled with living beings? For what purpose?
- When a Creator dreams or envisions, He creates what He imagined.

Ephesians 1:4-5 (NKJV) 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Two - Just wanna be with you

- God creates out of the desire of fellowship

- Even a God that can do it all, knows it all, has it all, "is all", even He desires fellowship
 - and this desire is not a need, a weakness, a failure or insufficiency, but rather a fulfillment of a "want."
- He creates angelic beings but He doesn't stop there, He creates Mankind - male and female in His likeness and in His image. Both of them reflect who He is.

Three- *Girl, it's plain to see that you're the only one for me*

- When Adam wakes up, the first person He is introduced to is God.

Four - *repeat steps 1 through 3*

- God looks at Adam and sees that there's no suitable being for him and says "it's not good."
- He puts Adam to sleep and God pulls from His own Mind who Adam needs out of Adam's side using one of Adam's ribs.
- When Eve wakes up, the first person she comes to know is God and the second is her husband—the one she was taken from and the one she was prepared for.

Five - *Make you fall in love with me*

- God introduces Eve to Adam and Adam immediately says "WooooMan" she is "flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone" and he names her "woman" because she was taken out of the womb of man.
- Adam was immediately in love with God's provision for him.

For many people, when they think about Creation, they focus in on "order" or the wisdom of God. For me, and many of you, the main question is "why" and I believe the answer is Love.

1 John 4:8 (NKJV)

8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Fellas, God has been teaching us how to love from the very beginning.

God Gives Provisionally

Before ever knew what we would have needed, and before we ever asked for any of it, God had already provided it:

- **Light** so man can see (Gen 1:3)
 - **Firmament/sky** for breathable atmosphere (Gen 1:6–8)
 - **Dry ground + vegetation** for food and agriculture (Gen 1:9–13)
 - **Lights in the heavens** for seasons, time, direction (Gen 1:14–18)
 - **Animals** for companionship, stewardship, and sustenance (Gen 1:20–25)
 - Life Partners in His image (**male & female uniquely created for each other** (Gen 1:26–27)
 - **Blessing and dominion** (Gen 1:28)
 - **Food and sustenance** (Gen 1:29)
- **Rest/Sabbath** (Gen 2:2–3)

God gives provisionally by putting us in an environment where our needs are anticipated and taken care of.

God's Gives Sacrificially

Even when mankind fell through sin and brought death and sin into the world, God still provided a way to redeem mankind.

- animal skin to cover their nakedness
- the prophetic promise that the "seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent"
 - speaking of Christ as the 2nd Adam (formed once again in living dust or womb of Mary), bringing victory over satan by His own death on the cross. In Adam all mankind died but in Christ (the 2nd Adam) all may

live.

God wants us to understand how to love in a way that is always relational and provisional and sacrificial.

- we can be grand gesture givers who do this really big thing but there's no lasting interest there?
 - Just a big splash but no follow up or follow through or fellowship to allow for continued connection.
- we can be skeptical givers where we only give we think our criteria have been met
 - we become conditional givers
 - we become limited givers
 - we become sometimes givers
 - we become critical givers

God Gives Intentionally

For the last example, I'll reference something that is closely tied to this season of giving and the Christmas story that we are so familiar with.

Genesis 1:14-18 (NKJV)

14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; **and let them be for signs and seasons**, and for days and years; 15 and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. 16 Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. **He made the stars also.** 17 God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

The startling thing that jumped out of me in the way that God gives is that, when He created the stars, He knew that when the fullness of time had come, He would use one of those stars to initiate the gathering of the wisemen and the shepherds for what would be the entrance of Christ into the world.

That level of intentionality and predestination reveals the core motive of Love in the story. God created with intention, and fulfilled His love for us and planned for us. Even if it took time, He was patient enough to see it through. If we can learn how to give God's way, those we give to can feel that they were intentionally loved and anticipated and seen even before they have to ask. May God show us how to love by taking us "Back to 1."