Series Road Map

**Series Overview:** Generosity Initiative: First. What it really is to give your FIRST and BEST to God and how we do that with our Time, Talents, and Treasures.

**Week Overview:** Every one of us has talents. We have gifts and abilities that are unique to us, and we are designed to use them to bring glory to God and his Kingdom.

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Personal Story (Stupid Human Tricks- Penny catching Guinness book of world records)

**Tension (whats the struggle):**

**Text (+ Supporting Text):**

**THP**: **Give your best effort where you are able.**

**Application (call to action)**: Commitment card preview

Key

Scripture - highlighted yellow

Illustration/Video/Object Lesson

Personal Story

Intro: Personal Story (Stupid Human tricks/a unique talent/ability you have)

Penny Catching/Guinness Book of World Records Story… I tried to get into the Guinness book of world records for placing the most pennies on my elbow and catching them in my hand. Record was 41… I practiced to beat it. Called the Guinness Book of World records to try and get in, and it had already been beaten…)

Maybe that’s not your gift… but you have one. Or a few of them…

Every single one of us has been created uniquely. And part of that creation is the giving of things that you are naturally talented at or unique abilities that we possess.

And this is the incredible part about those talents and abilities… Because each of you are created with intentionality, a calling and a purpose, you have gifts or talents or abilities that are unique to you and your calling and your purpose.

In Romans Chapter 12 Paul writes about the way in which we are gifted and what we should do with that… Starting in verse 4 he says, “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others…”

He says that just like you and I have a body, and that body has all different kinds of parts, and all of those parts have different jobs… eyes to see, ears to hear, feet to walk on, hands to touch and feel… We as individuals who have been created uniquely are gifted in ways that complement each other. And that we should use our gifts and talents and abilities to serve each other. To work together. To be in community with each other. To honor and glorify God together.

He continues in verse 6 and says “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

He reinforces our individuality and even lifts up those unique giftings…

He says, WE NEED YOU. WE NEED YOUR GIFTS. And we need you to bring your gifts to the table. He goes on in chapter 12 to teach those same people how to love and care for each other and how to love and care for others, no matter their circumstance.

And the only way that we do this effectively… the only way that we are truly successful. The only way that we can completely share the love of Christ with the people around us is to take up those gifts and talents and abilities that God has so generously given us and use them to the best of our ability. To give the maximum amount of effort to share them with God’s people. To honor God with the gift he has given you.

Colossians 3:17 says, “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

And if we skip down to verse 23 we read, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

Paul is saying that if you want to give God your First and your Best… If you are really going to the First and the Best that God wants. You have to **GIVE YOUR BEST EFFORT WHERE YOU ARE ABLE.**

That is our job… that is what we are supposed to do. To honor God with what he has given us. To make the most of the gifts and talents and abilities. To give God our First and our Best…

We have to take those unique skillsets that we have and give maximum effort to use them to love God and to love people.

Paul instructs you to **Give your best effort where you are able.**

Giving your best effort is hard. It is tiring. It can be absolutely exhausting. But in Colossians 3:24 Paul specifically says that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. And that every time that you serve… every time that you use your God given talents and abilities, you are serving Jesus. You are serving the SAVIOR.

Giving God your First and Best…. Being the First and Best that God wants doesn’t require perfection from you.

It requires your best effort. It requires you to humble yourselves. To know that your abilities do not exist because you willed them to be. They aren’t by accident. It isn’t just happens chance that you are good at what you are good at.

I want you to think about a time in your life when you were given a gift… not just any gift… What was the most meaningful gift that anyone has ever given to you? Who was it that gave it to you??

(Personal story about the most meaningful gift someone has given you:

Story about receiving cards from my Granny on my birthday every year all the way up until she passed away… The amount of effort it took her when she was in the hospital/nursing home just to write the cards.)

And you know what the best part of that gift is… the effort that was put into giving that gift. That person took their time, and they genuinely thought about what would mean the most to me. What would make me feel loved and cared for. They gave up some of their resources in exchange for it. They took the care to wrap it. They made the effort to bring it to me…

If we think back to the story of Cain and Abel that we started this series with, that’s the example that Abel gave us… Think about how much time and care and effort he spent to select his offering, his gift, his tithe to God.

He was a shepherd, so he spent his days and his nights in a field raising his sheep. He knew exactly how many of them he had. He made sure they were moved to new fields with plenty of food each day. He sheared their wool when it was grown out. He went to find them when they wandered off. He stayed in the fields with them on the hottest days and on the coldest nights…

He has already given an incredible effort in raising them, but this is where Abel sets himself apart in the story… He takes the time and effort to select the best. He looks them over, one by one, he chooses the largest, fattest, most valuable sheep that he has. The best of the first born. And he brings them to the altar. And gives them back to God. That is what made his sacrifice so pleasing to God. He gave his absolute best effort. He was thoughtful, we was selective and he gave something genuinely meaningful.

Abel gave his best effort… That is what Cain, and so many of us miss when we think of our tithe or offering.

You have been given a unique gift. A specific talent. An ability that is designed for you to go and serve God and his Kingdom. And it is your responsibility, your job, to go out and use these tools that you’ve been give to share the love of Jesus Christ with the people that you encounter every day.

God wants your best effort wherever it is that you are able.

So where are you able? What abilities do you have that are unique to you? What gift have you been given? Do you have a talent that seems specific to you?

I know that each of you have something that you are good at. God created you as a masterpiece. And God creates with a purpose in mind for each of us. And he equips us to carry out that purpose. It is our job to pick up those tools. To practice. To work hard. To persevere. To spend time with Him understanding what you are supposed to do with those abilities that he has equipped you with. And to go and serve. To go and love his people.

If you are going to be the First and Best that God wants. You have to **Give your best effort where you are able.**

Response: Hand out Commitment Cards

Next week, we get to come together with students from every one of our campuses for a night of worship. And we have the opportunity to give our First and Best…

We are going to wrap up our series, First, with worship and a time that we will take everything we’ve talked about over the last 3 weeks and wrap it up with a commitment that we make to God.

You should be getting a card, and on that card it explains the goals for our First campaign. The idea is that over the next 2 years we will see 100% of the people in our church to participate in helping us raise 77 million dollars to help further God’s Kingdom here on Earth. It also gives you a couple of things to think about, to pray about this week.

We have talked about giving our First and our Best to God… about being generous with everything that God has given us. And if we are honest, one of the hardest things in the world to be generous with is our money… If you look at your card you will see that we have 2 categories listed… One for your money. And one for your stuff.

So we want to give you the week to think and pray about what it is that you want to commit over the next 2 years to give back to God. What is the First and Best that you want to give?

Pray.