

We are remarkably transactional... Aren't we?

We've been in this series for the past month, talking about money and generosity, and one of the biggest things that has jumped out to me (socially, at least) is how transactional we are.

- We give \$20 to the gas station worker and they put \$20 of gas in our car.
- We put a few quarters in a parking meter and we're "promised" that for that period of time, we won't get a parking ticket.
- Or we put our debit card information into our Amazon Prime account and spend hundreds of dollars on things we don't need, and we're promised that those things we don't need will show up in 2 days or less, FREE SHIPPING!

We are remarkably transactional. There are transactions everywhere we turn.

Even in relationships. We subconsciously communicate with our friends, *"If you're a good friend, I'll be a good friend!"* It's rare that we'll stick around if that loving friendship isn't reciprocated, right?

And even for our spouses or boyfriends/girlfriends, we subconsciously say *"If you're faithful, I'll be faithful."* or *"If you love me, I'll love you."* I think it's almost human nature to be transactional.

You give me this; I give you this. For whatever reason, that's how we've been conditioned to think.

But God's not like that. God is not transactional... Which is why He's so hard to understand sometimes.

God is not transactional, like we are. He is... **trans-rational**.

### **transrational**

*adjective trans-rational \(')tran(t)s, -raan-, -nz+\*

*"...going beyond or surpassing human reason."* or what we'd consider "rational."

It is outside of our ability to understand it. It doesn't make sense, logically.

How is God's love available to all? No matter the circumstance? Doesn't make sense. It's trans-rational.

ISAIAH 55:8-9 NLT

*8 "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord.*

*"And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine."*

*9 For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so my ways are higher than your ways  
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.*

MATTHEW 5:45b NLT

*For He gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good, and  
He sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.*

God shines sunlight on Mother Teresa as well as Mass Murderers... He sends healing rain to pour over Saints and Sinners alike. He does not discriminate. You could say that His provision is indiscriminate.

This is one of the big disconnects we have when we talk about money in Church... We're bringing a transactional attitude to something that God never intended to be transactional.

Imagine if a young groom stood before his bride, and he said, "*I promise to love you forever... as long as you stay in great shape.*" Everyone listening would be like, "HELLO!!! That's not love!"

When we approach our faith with a transactional, consumeristic spirit, we will ALWAYS be disappointed.

If we're giving to God, expecting to get something back, we will always be disappointed. Giving money to support the Kingdom of God doesn't make sense. It's not an  $A + B = C$  (plus compounding interest) kind of transaction.

God isn't  $A + B = C$ , God is more like  $A + B = \text{Platypus}$ . God doesn't always make sense.

If you give to God, that money is gone. If you give to support a church or non-profit, we can't expect to see the money in our bank accounts multiply... They'll decrease. Because you're giving your money away.

I say all that because I believe intelligent, generous people are sick of being manipulated. We're educated, we're compassionate, we WANT to give to things that MATTER... We just don't want to be persuaded. We don't want to be sold anything. No one ever willingly puts themselves in a position to be sold something... Like, "*Hey honey, we're in debt. Let's go to Jordan's Furniture and try to get sold a leather couch we can't afford!*" No one does that! When you have a salesman in your face it feels dirty. You feel forced. It's uncomfortable for everyone involved.

But... When you're given a specific opportunity, and it resonates with you at a soul-level... It changes everything. It doesn't feel like manipulation, because it's not! It doesn't even feel like sacrifice. It feels like you're doing what you're meant to do with your life. It feels like

dancing. It feels like, "*Why would we NOT give to this thing? It seems like the only rational thing to do!*"

And you recognize, yes, you're giving your money away, but that money is now turning into breakfast for a hungry kid; or a bicycle for a coffee farmer in Rwanda; or loving outcasts and homeless and refugees... These are Kingdom investments. They pay ZERO earthly return, but we're sowing seeds in the eternal.

And that's why we're talking about this today. Not to manipulate you out of \$100 a month. But to free us from ourselves... And to hopefully cast vision for what it looks like to be a community committed to GIVING FREELY; to support the causes of Christ. Things that matter. Things that fundamentally change people's lives. Entire families. Entire neighborhoods. Entire cities.

That's why we're talking about money. And today is the last week of this series...

To tie a bow on this conversation about money, I want to talk about HIDING vs. ABIDING. I want to talk about Adam & Eve with makeshift underwear, I want to talk about Abraham and Isaac, then I want to wrap up with a bit of challenge for all of us... Sound good?

All right... HIDING vs. ABIDING.

Most all of us know what HIDING looks like... We've played "hide-and-seek" as kids; we've maybe played it as adults with little kids... Much less fun, because we're bigger and less likely to squeeze into good hiding spots. So "hiding" isn't hard for us to visualize.

But ABIDING is a bit different. "Abiding" feels a bit "Christianese" to us.

One of the popular passages that the word "Abiding" comes from is John 15. This is Jesus speaking...

JOHN 15:4-5 ESV

*4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

Other translations use the word "Remain" in place of "Abide." That word means "*to be held, or kept, continually... to remain as one.*"

You can begin to see the difference between HIDING and ABIDING. One is distant and defined by fear, the other is near and defined by trust.

So where do we see this in Scripture? Let's look at a Biblical couple famous for HIDING...

In Genesis 3, Adam & Eve make their first big blunder, just a few chapters into the story... They listened to an influence other than God, this sneaky serpent, and they make a big mistake... They eat the forbidden fruit. And immediately... What do they do?

They hide, and why do they hide? This is important: They hide because of fear. They hide because they have a “transactional” view of God... They did something wrong, so they think they need to hide. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve already have a distorted, Karmic view of God. They think because they did something bad, something bad was going to happen to them.

Genesis 3:7 NLT

*At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness.*

That word “nakedness” in Hebrew is עֶרְוָה (pronounced ā·rōm')... Meaning being *undressed, exposed, laid bare*... So yes, certainly means physical nakedness, but it also means “utterly helpless”... Adam and Eve were immediately made aware of their helplessness—and they’re terrified of this “All Powerful Creator God” that they had previously been in close relationship with. So what do they do?

*So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.*

They sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. Have you ever felt a fig leaf? They look soft, they look like a good choice for some “makeshift underwear”... But they’re not! They’re covered in these tiny barbs that make the surface of them almost feel like sandpaper or Velcro. NOT a great choice for underwear.

But don’t we do this too? I do this all the time! I’m given a gift from God... Something to be cherished and respected, and it typically has a few parameters that come with it. Like, “*John, here’s a beautiful woman to be your wife. She’s a gift to you. The only rule is that this is the only woman you’re allowed to be with.*” Great! Good deal. A gift, followed by a rule, of course placed there FOR OUR GOOD.

Or “*John, here are your children. They’re a gift to you. The only rule is you have to pay attention to them.*” Ok... FINE! I’ll try to do that. Most of the time.

Then we inevitably screw up. At some point, to some degree... We mess up. Could be a huge mistake; could be a tiny misstep. And our immediate reaction is to run and hide, and cover ourselves with fig leaves—We cover ourselves with thorny, bristly things that do nothing but harm us. We try to fix it on our own, but we only make things worse. Ever been there?

That’s Adam & Eve right now... Hiding from God; trying to cover themselves but only making things worse.

So that's where HIDING gets us... Still laid bare before God, but trying with all of our might to hide. Trying to relate to God in a transactional way...

How many of you feel as though you're "hiding" something today?

At the end of the day, we don't want to be known as people defined by HIDING and FEAR, do we?

So let's look at the opposite of HIDING: ...ABIDING.

And who better to illustrate this than Abraham? If we fast forward 19 chapters in the book of Genesis, we see one of the most amazing, impossible, gut-wrenching tests ever placed before a man.

In GENESIS 22:7-14 NLT, Abraham and his son, his only son, are going on a little hike... For some quality "father/son time." Because God had placed this seemingly IMPOSSIBLE task before Abraham... To sacrifice his only son, whom he loved very dearly. This was the test of all tests. Can you imagine anything more gut-wrenching for a mother or father to consider?

But, because Abraham is faithful to what God asks of him... ABIDING... They're going for a little hike. And eventually Isaac picks up on the fact that something's a bit "off."

*7 Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"*

*"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.*

*"We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"*

*8 "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.*

*9 When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice.*

So let's stop right here... How did we get here, Abraham?! What is going on with you? Why are you about to murder your son?

What we see in Abraham that is so different than Adam is that Adam was viewing God in a transactional, fearful way... He was afraid. But Abraham somehow knew and trusted God's trans-rational ways. Abraham was near to God, and he trusted Him. Adam was trying to understand everything, and Abraham was willing to trust in the unknown.

Abraham had no idea why God was asking this of him, but He trusted God... In verse 8: *"God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.*

Abraham was ABIDING; he was tapped into the Vine; he was receiving instruction from God and he was trusting that He would provide, even when he didn't understand where or how or why.

So here we have two pictures of very different ways of interacting with God. We have Adam & Eve hiding in the Garden, covering themselves with Fig leaves, and we have Abraham with his arm raised with a sharpened knife in his hand...

What happens next? What we learn from both of these examples is this:

Whether we HIDE or ABIDE, God always PROVIDES.

We see God's consistent provision to these very different circumstances...

Let's start with Adam & Eve:

Immediately following Adam & Eve's greatest failure... They disobey, they're filled with regret, and they cover themselves with fig leaves... IMMEDIATELY after:

One of the most beautiful pictures of God in scripture:

Genesis 3:21 NLT

*And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.*

He clothes them. And this SHATTERS their transactional view... God doesn't strike them dead; He provides what they couldn't provide for themselves. He covers them. This beautiful picture of forgiveness and grace. Who gives someone a gift after they've been sinned against? God does. His ways are not like our ways... God is trans-rational.

He provides for them what they couldn't provide for themselves.

AND! Where did the animal skins come from? God made clothes for them, but how? Most Bible scholars agree that this is the first glimpse of Jesus we see in the Bible... Just 3 chapters in. Adam and Eve disobey God, and in their shame, they try to fix it themselves: They cover themselves with fig leaves. But God knows better. And He does what is necessary, even though it's not what He would want to do: He makes a sacrifice to create a covering for their nakedness.

Unfortunately, to cover Adam & Eve's shame, something had to die (This was before the days of garment factories.) And even though it wasn't what God wanted, He did it anyways. He provided for them.

God saw them, and He provided for them.

Remember MATTHEW 5:45b?

*For He gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.*

By God's standards, Adam & Eve could very easily fall into the "Evil" and/or "Unjust" categories... Yet He gives sunlight to them. He showers them with blessing. A truly amazing response.

Now, it's important to note that there was CONSEQUENCE for Adam and Eve's actions. We're trying to explain the concept of "consequences" to our 4 year old right now... It's not outright angry punishment. It's not fueled by ego or oppressive power. It's consequence.

"Trans-rational" doesn't mean free of truth or consequence. Good parents give their children consequences. If God had allowed this first sin go completely unaddressed, we might be in an even WORSE place than we are today.

Yet, even in light of that consequence, God provides for them; for their journey ahead, by clothing them and preparing them for the real world.

All right, so what about Abraham? And what about poor Isaac? He's tied up, his dad has this crazy look in his eye, ready to plunge a knife into him...

GENESIS 22:11 NLT

*11 At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"*

*"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"*

*12 "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."*

*13 Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son.*

*14 Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh / Jehovah Jireh (which means "the Lord will provide")...*

Jehovah Jireh: Abraham names this mountain "Jehovah Jireh" to commemorate the amazing provision he experienced there. He was prepared to do something crazy... A seemingly impossible task... And God stopped him in his tracks, and provided for him.

If you've heard that name of God before, "Jehovah Jireh," you might assume that Jehovah means "God" and Jireh means "provides." That's what I always thought. But Mike Lynch,

our resident Bible Yoda, told me last week that it actually means "God sees." That word "Jireh" means "to see, or perceive, or behold..."

God saw Abraham and Isaac, and He saw that Abraham was about to follow through with this insane test of faith... And He stopped him in his tracks and then provided for him. God saw him, and He provided for him.

AND! It was in a trans-rational way. In verse 8, Abraham has the faith to say to Isaac, "*God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering.*" But God didn't provide a sheep for the offering... He provided a ram, caught by its' horns in a thorn patch. Yet another beautiful foreshadowing of Jesus, thousands of years before His birth... An unexpected provision; someone to stand in our place; someone to be sacrificed instead of us.

Whether we HIDE or ABIDE, God always PROVIDES.

What we see in these two stories, one of HIDING and one of ABIDING, is that God provides to both in equally loving, surprising ways. In both situations, God SEES them and provides for them.

So whether you feel as far from God as humanly possible... Or if you feel like you're woven together with Him... He will provide for you.

MATTHEW 5:45b

*For He gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.*

So now for some honesty...

How many of us are hiding from God right now, out of fear, out of shame... Trying to fix it ourselves; trying to cover ourselves with fig leaves? Trying to pretend everything is good? Or living in fear of God, *if He's real*, being terrified of Him, because we'll never measure up, or we've already screwed up too much to be loved.

And all the while, He's waiting patiently for us with soft, comfortable clothing to cover our nakedness; our utter helplessness... No harsh judgment. Just a loving father running down the road to greet His prodigal children with open arms.

God asked Adam & Eve to do something very SIMPLE: Don't eat from this tree. They disobeyed.

God asked Abraham to do an OUTRAGEOUS thing, furthest thing from simple: Sacrifice your only son. He obeyed.

And yet both, the HIDERS and the ABIDERS received blessing.

- Maybe you have an enormous need in your life that you can't even imagine being met.
- Maybe there's this insurmountable problem that you've been facing...
- Maybe you've even been praying about it! Maybe you've been bringing it to the Lord in prayer...
- Maybe you've been looking for that need to be met in a very specific, logical, rational way...

But maybe God is planning on providing in a trans-rational way.

- Maybe you're looking for a Sheep and God is going to provide a Ram.
- Maybe you're expecting God to provide financially but instead He's going to bring you a spirit of peace beyond all understanding.
- Maybe you're expecting God to bring you a husband; the man of your dreams; and instead He's going to bring a calling to your life that blesses thousands of people you've yet to meet.
- Maybe you're expecting God to allow you to conceive to start your family, but He's actually calling you to adopt.
- Maybe you've been praying that God increase your income; but paradoxically He's calling you to begin giving away some of your income.

God provides in trans-rational ways... Ways beyond our understanding. But may we keep our eyes open to Him and how He's working.

ISAIAH 55:9 NLT

*9 For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so my ways are higher than your ways  
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.*

Our job is to ABIDE and to keep our eyes open for how He's providing.

How many of our "unanswered prayers" HAVE been answered, just not in the way we expected or hoped?

Here's our final challenge today, and you know where you're at:

If you feel like you've been HIDING... What was the last thing God asked you to do that you disobeyed? Maybe God asked you to do something and you pulled an 'Adam & Eve' and directly disobeyed... You ran the OTHER direction... What was it? What was that thing?

Did it have to do with money?

- Maybe over the past month, God has prompted you to begin giving and you've ignored it.
- Maybe God has laid someone on your heart to bless with a gift and you forgot about it.
- Maybe God brought an opportunity to you to meet a financial need and you flat-out rejected it.

And God is still waiting there, holding that thing, waiting for you to take it and do it.

If you're feeling like the faucet has turned off and you're not surrounded by fresh, living water... It might be because you have a step to take that you've been trying to avoid.

Whatever it is; take that step. Chances are, it'll create a bit of breakthrough in your life.

It's time for you to hand your fig leaves over, and receive something far greater.

And if we've been in good relationship with God, we need to continue ABIDING. Stay grafted into the Vine, this is an active thing, taking your direction from the Him; getting your nutrients and living water from the Source.

What does it look like to trust God as the Great Provider in our lives?

It looks like ABIDING; and living with open hands... Not clutching onto our things, our time, our money... But holding them loosely, ready to give when God calls us to, and ready to receive when He gives to us...

Clenched fists can't give; but they also can't receive.

What would it look like for us to loosen our grip?

What would it look like for us to abandon the transactional and begin to trust in the trans-rational?

To wrap this series, I want to review what we've learned together over the last 4 weeks.

1. God is the ultimate OWNER and the ultimate GIVER.
2. We can believe that we have enough and be content.
3. What percentage of my income is generous to give back to God?
4. Whether we HIDE or ABIDE, God always PROVIDES.

Let's go to Him in prayer and ask that He continue to work in us and through us...

PRAY.