

First Fruits

The Bible has quite a bit to say about the topic of first

In fact, some Bible teachers say there is a principal of “firsts”

Putting God first in everything in our lives whether our time, talents or possessions is very important

Starting with our money and giving what we do with the “first fruits” affects every aspect of our lives

If you want to have a *God Blessed Life* you must put *God First*

Consider this:

- There are more than 500 verses in the Bible concerning prayer
- Nearly 500 concerning faith
- More than 2000 concerning money and possessions

Jesus talked about money in 16 of His 38 parables

- Why would money and how to handle it be talked about so much?
- Money is a test from God
- How you handle money reveals volumes about your priorities, loyalties and affections

In fact, money dictates many of the blessings you will or will not experience in life

Far too many Christians are confused about tithing and the principle of first fruits

Exodus 13:2 (NKJV)

² “Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine.”

- The “*firstborn*” belongs to God – it is Mine
- 16 times in scripture God declares it’s His

Exodus 13:12–13 (NKJV)

¹² that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males *shall be* the LORD’s. ¹³ But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem *it*, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

- According to Old Testament law the firstborn was to be sacrificed or redeemed
- There was no third option
- The clean firstborn had to be sacrificed to redeem the unclean firstborn
- First most this is a picture of Jesus

John 1:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

- John perfectly defined Jesus’ role
- Jesus was God’s firstborn
- He was clean, perfect and unblemished
- We were all born unclean and needed to be redeemed
- I have been crucified with Christ!
- I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb!
- Jesus was God’s first fruits offering
- He is God’s tithe

God gave Him before we believed

Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- God gave it (Him) in faith that He might become the first born of many brethren – **Romans 8:29**
- We give our first fruits or tithes in much the same way
- Before we see the blessing of God we give it by faith

God had a legal right to claim the first born in Egypt because the first born belongs to Him

Yet the first born of Israel didn't die that night

Exodus 12:7 (NKJV)

⁷ And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.

- Imagine dipping a hyssop branch in lamb's blood and making a cross as the blood drips down
- This is precisely how we're saved

The principal of first fruits is powerful

Someone once said,

“any first thing given is never lost, and any first thing not given is always lost”

Matthew 16:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

- The first belongs to God
- We can give God the first of our time
- We can give God the first of our finances
- We are saying, *“God I'm going to give to you first and trust you to redeem the rest”*

It always requires faith to give first

- God didn't say wait let your ewe produce nine lambs and then give me the next one
- He says give me the *first* one

This is why tithing is so important it's the primary way we acknowledge that God is first

- When the first portion is given to God the rest is redeemed

We can do the same thing by coming to church on Sunday we are giving God the first day of the week or the first of our time

- Some people view Monday as the first day of the week
- A day to work hard and direct the rest of the week and make as much money as we can
 - They give the first part of their week to money
- Other people think the week starts on Friday
- They party and have a good time
 - They give their first fruits of their time to recreation

The reason the early church met on Sunday was because they were celebrating the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ

- They gave the first of their time to God in worship

Exodus 23:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.

- The first of your first fruits
- Not the last
- It's not the tenth portion
- It's the first tenth portion
- Bring it to the House of the Lord
- Not missions
- Not television or radio ministry
- Those are worthy of support
- It doesn't say to give your first fruits wherever you want
- The tithe comes to the house of the Lord
- The place where a community of believer's worship together

Proverbs 3:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.

- Here it is clear we are to honor the Lord with the first fruits of all our increase
- “Then”, He will fill our barns and vats
- We give the tithe which redeems the rest

When the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land, He asked for Jericho as a tithe

- He told them not to take any of the spoils for themselves
- The Lord declared it belonged to Him

Joshua 6:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.”

- God didn’t say conquer ten cities and give me the spoils from the tenth one
- He said give me the first city and you can have the rest
- In fact, God said to set it apart or consecrate it
- If you didn’t it would bring a curse or “accursed”
– Joshua 6:18
- And it did – Achan, kept some for himself – Joshua 7
- He brought destruction of the People of God
- Consecrated or cursed?
- If we keep the tithe, we are robbing God

Malachi 3:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, *even* this whole nation.

It's amazing how many people try to overlook this scripture or explain it away

- Well that's Old Testament

Malachi 3:6 (NKJV)

⁶ “For I *am* the LORD, I do not change;

We have seen the first born belongs to God – Exodus 13:2

The first fruits are His – Exodus 23:19

Now we see the tithe belongs to Him – Malachi 3:8-9

- I ask you, when did God change?

Some say – “Well, tithing is under the law, so I don't have to do it. We're under grace now”

There are many things under the law that continue to be principles with God

- Is it now OK to commit adultery?
- Is it now OK to murder?
- Is it now OK to steal?

There are eternal principles with God tithing is one of them

I hear from tithers again and again, “God has blessed me, I can’t afford not to tithe”

I hear non-tithers say, “I can’t afford to tithe”

It’s about giving the first by faith!

Genesis 4:3–5 (NKJV)

³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

- Why did God respect Abel’s offering but reject Cain’s?
- Abel’s was the first born of the flock
- Cain brought an offering “in the process of time”
- NLT – *Some* of his crops
- Cain brought his offering when he got around to it
- God is looking at our hearts when we give
- When we give the first fruits God respects that offering
- The tithe is your first fruit
- The tithe must be first!

Leviticus 27:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the LORD’s. It *is* holy to the LORD.

If you have ten one dollar bills, which one is the first?

Let's say you get paid Thursday

- You immediately pay your bills and buy groceries
- You then go online and give your tithe
- Have you tithed the first of your increase?
- No!
- Your first fruits is the first dollar spent
- This is not legalism, its faith
- It is an act of faith to tithe before your bills are paid

What does it say about priorities when we pay everybody else and then see if there's enough to give God His portion?

The first portion has the power to redeem the rest

Romans 11:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches.

- The first portion carries the blessing
- That's why you don't want to give it to the mortgage company
- Many Christians fear the IRS and the mortgage company more than God
- Give to God first and watch Him bless the whole lump!
- If God is first in your life everything will come into order
- If God is not first, nothing will come into order
- Your marriage, health, family, finances, your job and career

Would you rather go through life with 100% of your income under a curse or 90% of your income blessed, redeemed and protected by God?

In 1998 the Body of Christ, around the world earned an equivalent of an estimated \$15.2 trillion

Total amount given to all-ministry related causes, including churches, missions, etc., was \$270 billion – 1.8%

In the US, we earned an estimated \$5.2 trillion and gave \$92 billion – 1.7%

We are giving less than the poorest countries around the world

It's not that God needs our money but we need His blessing if we are to reach the world with the Gospel of Christ

We need to give to the Lord first!

1 Corinthians 16:1–2 (NKJV)

16 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ² On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

- NLT – “in relation to what you have earned”
- We should give in direct proportion to the size of our paycheck or increase