



First fruits & A better way to give

First fruits

If you have been in Church long enough, you have heard of first fruit(s). I have heard it in church for a long time where the Man of God gets up and encourages people to give their first fruits. In some cases, with condemnation and scare tactics.

I have also been a part of congregations that believe and teach first fruits. However, what has been taught and what we have believed is not the truth. What many people think or believe about first fruits is not so.

Seek first—Matthew 6:33

Seek first— key point is putting the kingdom of God first by seeking it. What we seek is what is our priority.

In *Matthew 6:33*, the Word tells us to seek first the kingdom of God, not seek it last or second. This passage is speaking of priority being God and His Kingdom.

Main point

- Main point about first fruit is not just giving, but PRIORITY in giving to God first. This is a missing point. Giving is a point, yet not the main point.

Let us define First Fruits?

First fruit is the first of your fruit going or given to God, not ALL your fruit.

Giving to God first portion of our substance, fruit, or increase before we do anything else is our first fruit. It's honors God. We need to set aside what to give to the Lord first before we do anything else. We should be giving God first, not last. First fruit, not leftovers.

I have learned that the most hated and dreaded months especially in Africa are January and February if you are in an environment that doubles down on first fruits. These have turned out to become months of struggling, why? Because many believers give away ALL their salaries and monies away in the name of First fruits.

Under the new covenant the number one guiding principles or scriptures for giving are detailed below:

- a) 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*
- b) 1 Corinthians 13:3 *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."*
- c) 2 Corinthians 8:12 *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

Nothing is wrong with giving

- a) Nothing is wrong with giving. We should be givers, but the way first fruit are taught in the body of Christ is not what the Word teaches. You can't defend that from the word.
 - i) I'm not against giving but am saying the Word of doesn't not teach first fruits as the church has promoted it.

Proverbs 3:9-10 *Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: [10] So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*

a) Giving honors God

- i) One of the ways we can honor the Lord is through our substance—through giving, yet not just giving but giving to Him first, not last.

- ii) First fruits are really about honoring God—first.
- iii) Giving to God first honors Him, but giving to Him God last, dishonors Him. You should not make your hair, nails, buy your toys, and then give to God last or as an afterthought. *“Oops!! I have to give. I almost used it all. I have a little left. I will just give what I have.”*
 - o He comes first in all our affairs. He has the priority in our substance, fruits, and increase.

b) Thy substance

- i) You should not be planning to honor God with other people’s substances. You need to give yours.
- ii) I heard a person say, what if I gave myself to the Lord, would that be a first fruit? Well, it is important that you give yourself to the Lord, but you also have to give to Him first in your substance.

c) God First

- i) Do not first spend and then give God last—this doesn’t honor God! **That is giving your last fruit, not first fruit.** I know some believe that you should take all your salary and give it away to the church.

d) Give ALL? Or FIRST of all

- i) Notice: This **doesn’t say give to God ALL** your substance or ALL your fruit as some have presented this. This is not talking about you giving all your salary or money. Don’t give to God last.

Unlike what we have been taught and told, God is not after our all. God is simply to be given to first in priority. **God want to be given to first, not to be given EVERYTHING and remain with nothing.**

- ii) If that is the case, then you need to apply this principle across the board, not pick and choose.

- o This is not saying give away ALL of the first such as your first salary every year, or when you get a new job, your first born, your wife, House, car and then start over again. If I told you to give away all your first house or car as “first fruits, will you? No, you won’t. You don’t believe that.
 - o Why accept giving away only money as the first fruit and nothing else? Something is wrong. This is not consistent.
- iii) If the Lord tells you to give it **all** away, do it (John 2:5), but this should not contradict other commitments and you have and the rest of the Word of God and the principles therein.
- o If you are doing it to honor God, do it, you should not then turn around and beg and be a pain to everyone else.

I doubt that God would want you to give everything away and live under the bridge. Many have given all and have struggled, lived in a trench, and begging because they misunderstood this passage, or someone manipulated and deceived them.

- i) I doubt our Heavenly Father would take all from us only to have us begging, living in a bridge, eating crackers and water.

e) Price to pay/Consequences

The way we have lived as believers has in many ways been a poor testimony to the world. We don’t keep our words and we cry I gave it as first fruits. This is wrong!

It’s not **appropriate or responsible** to give all your money away and not meet your commitment such as rent, food for family, tuition, etc. You cannot use this and default in other commitments in the name of first fruits.

- i) If you are doing it to honor God, do it, you should not then turn around and beg and be a pain to everyone else.
 - o Lose a job because you are broke to make it.
 - o Family goes hungry

- Borrow—God can't lead you to give it all only to borrow. You only give what you have, not what you do not have.
- Beg
- Live under a bridge
- If your kids and wife go hungry in the name of first fruits, they will have hatred and **resentment** towards the Word, the church, and the Lord when they have nothing to eat claiming you gave all the money away in first fruit.
- Rent—If you have a commitment like rent and feeding your family, you cannot hide behind first fruit and fail to provide and do your basic needs. If it is the Lord, you will not beg.
- You could lose your job because you have no transport.
 - Is it God that led you to give all your money away so that in return you lose your job because you have no transport?

Story about a student

A student was dismissed after giving a commitment to pay her tuition. The reason was the first fruit. She got a new job and she decided to give all her money if I'm not mistaken as first fruit. Then she came and asked for a pardon citing she had given the monies as first fruit. This is wrong. If the Lord led her to school and was providing for her tuition, how then could He be the same one to lead her not to pay knowing she is under dismissal and not provide another way for her to meet her tuition obligation. The truth is that was not God who led her to give it all away and then not make her commitment. It is not God who caused her to break her word. Something is wrong with such a picture of God.

f) Increase

- i) Increase is not referring to what you earn extra or the difference between your old salary and your new salary. It's not saying wait until you get a promotion and then give a first fruit.
 - When you go to work and get paid, whether you get a pay increase in what you make, earn, or your salary give to God first.

- o Increase is referring to what we earn, not just the pay raise, extra, or the first salary of a new job or of the year.
- o You're earning from a job, business and so forth is an increase. It has increased you or added increase to your life.

First salary?

If I got a job and got paid my first month \$30,000; all the \$30,000 is not to be given away as the first fruit as we have been taught. The first fruit would be simply a portion, not all the \$30,000 given to God first before spending and taking care of anything else. In other words, God gets the first of this fruit (\$30,000). God would not want you giving all the 30,000 and living under a bridge.

Promotion?

If I got a promotion, the increase between the old salary and the new salary is **not the first fruit nor do I have to give it all away**. However, I give to God first before anything else. He gets the first of that fruit and every fruit.

If you do not understand this, you will continue to live like you have in the past. **You will dread promotions** because you have to give it all away. You will **dread getting a new and better job** because you will have to give away all your first salary according to many proponents of first fruits.

First fruits = Tithes and Offerings

- a) In practicality, when we give to God first of our tithes and offerings, we have given first fruits—the first of our fruits.
- b) I have been in some churches where they had multiple kinds of envelopes and I'm not against the envelopes, but among those was an **"first fruits" envelopes** which was separate from the tithes and offerings. My first fruits are my tithes and offerings. I do not have to give tithes, offerings, first fruits and so forth.

Two tenth deals (2/10)

Leviticus 23:17 *Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD.*
(KJV)

¹⁷ *You shall bring in from your places two loaves of bread as a wave offering, made from two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven as first fruits to the Lord.*
(AMP)

- a) This is not saying you shall bring all your loaves. These were to be made from only two tenths, not from all your ephah of fine flour to be baked with leaven as first fruit to the Lord. What's the point? Religion has told us that you must take EVERYTHING which is not accurate.
- b) God referred to something that was less than 100%, to be precise (2/10) as first fruits unto the Lord. This was not all their fruit.

A Little Cake First

1 Kings 17:13 *And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.*

- a) Elijah asked for a LITTLE cake FIRST, not ALL the CAKE. Just a little.
 - i) Elijah did not ask for all the cake to a point where nothing was left for the widow and her son. He was considerate. After the widow had given to him, there was some left for to make for her and the son. Today some ministers tell believers to give ALL the cake and they and their children have nothing to eat thereafter. This is purely wrong!
 - ii) Elijah was to be given priority in the same way God is to be given priority. He was to be given a little, not ALL.

- b) This widow gave Elijah first of the fruit of her meat. It was a first fruit. She did not give him, nor did Elijah ask for EVERYTHING.

Husbandman = vinedresser

a) 2 Timothy 2:6 *The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.*

b) John 15:1 *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

- i) God is the husbandman. He should be the one to be the first partaker of the fruits. He should receive the first of our fruits—the first fruits.
- ii) Again, if you want to give first fruits the traditional way, please feel free to do that. One thing you can't do is make your conviction a doctrine for everyone else. That would be wrong. Personal convictions are not to be treated as doctrine.

God is after our heart, not your things or money! When He gets your heart, He gets everything you have.

If we teach people well, they will want to give. I remember I taught this same message, and you would think because of this people would not want to give, but the students asked to give without me asking them to. They were set free from the oppression of the first fruit and their result was giving in return.

A better Way to Give

Rich, are you not concerned that people would stop giving. NO! I'm not. I'm concerned that people have been losing by giving for the wrong reasons. They have been taught wrong and, in many cases, manipulated. People have not cared much. Actually, people are going to give more than they have ever given. When we teach people well, they will give and they will reap as a result.

You can give to God as much as you want whenever you want. However, don't be deceived or manipulated to believe you are giving scripturally when you are not. You are missing out on your harvest.

2 Corinthians 9:6 *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*

a) Sparingly = Sparingly and bountifully equals bountifully.

i) Your reaping is based on your sowing. The more you sow the more you will harvest.

- o If you want a huge harvest, you must plant a lot of seed.
- o You can't pray in a big harvest. You sow it in—BIG.

b) Reap

We need to believe for our reaping just as we do in sowing. Sow in faith, reap in faith. Seed is not sown to die in the ground.

Why give?

1 Corinthians 13:3 *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."*

a) The reason, motivation, attitude, or heart behind our gift is more important than what or how much you give.

b) Being told you can buy God's blessing or the salvation of a loved one or some other positive result with your monetary gift is using the wrong motive to get you to give.

Why then give?

1. It is true that when we give, the Lord will give back to us a hundredfold in this lifetime (Mark 10:30) but giving only to get is the wrong motivation.

2. God prospers us so we can establish His kingdom (Deut. 8:18).
3. Give to those in need (Eph. 4:28).
4. Abound unto every good work (2 Cor. 9:8). We do need to expect to receive when we give, primarily so we will be resupplied and able to give more.

However, the emphasis should be on giving, not receiving. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). We should *live to give* and not *give to live*.

When to give:

There has been a lot of misunderstanding about when we should give. Many Christians only give after all their needs have been met. They give leftovers rather than first fruits, which is giving to God first (Proverbs 3:9); 2 Timothy 2:6 with John 15:1.

There is a wrong and a right time to give.

The first thing we do when we receive money is honor the Lord by giving a portion of it to His work—first. If we do not, we are not honoring the Lord.

Specific command of the Lord.

Also, some of us are taught only to give at a certain command.

- a) God's Word is His instruction, and we shouldn't have to have an **audible voice** to give us further direction.
- b) There are times when the Lord will specifically direct our giving, but it's not all the time. **This is an exception, not the rule.** We can't hesitate to give citing we have not a command from the Lord to give. We have the Word.

Giving as you purpose in your heart is a greater level of giving than a specific command from the Holy Spirit every time. This is a level of maturity where the Lord is not soliciting you to give.

The Scripture says, "As he *purposeth* in his heart, so let him give; not *grudgingly*, or of *necessity*: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

1. Purposed
 - a) to intend or resolve to perform or accomplish
 - b) Decided in advance

2. Not grudgingly
 - a) Giving from sadness or reluctance to give.
 - b) Grievous and Grief
 - c) Sorrow
 - d) Pain—If it pains you to give, it is best to keep your money. You are going to need it.
 - e) Heaviness
 - f) Annoyance—Some people are annoyed when an offering is being received. They are not ready to give. They are not cheerful and should not give.
 - g) Affliction
 - h) Not with regret

You can't be thankful, after all of this.

3. Necessity
 - a) Constraint
 - b) Compulsion

4. God loves a cheerful giver, not a tearful giver.
 - a) Many Christians have been **tearful givers** especially in the area of first fruit and they have never gotten a harvest.
 - b) Who is a cheerful giver? Joyfully, willingly
 - c) It is one who sings and shouts or dances as he takes his offering to the front basket?

"The Greek term underlying "cheerful" reflects the insight that a cheerful or radiant countenance reflects a kind heart, a heart disposed to benevolence and generosity, a spirit opposite to murmuring and complaining."—Ultimate Cross Reference Treasury (UCRT)

The Lord wants us to give as we desire to give, not under pressure. It is the mafia that forces or pressures a person to do stuff. "Tell me you love me, now."

If you are being:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| i) Manipulated | vi) Condemned into giving |
| ii) Coerced | vii) Criticized |
| iii) Arm-twisted | viii) Guilt—made to feel guilty if we don't give |
| iv) Pressured | ix) Reluctant |
| v) Compelled | |

Do not give. Wrong time and place to give. And do not allow condemnation.

Giving under these conditions is not pleasing to God.

- o That's rewarding negative behavior.
- o It's like casting a vote and saying, "I like it. Do it again even more."

Where to give

Where are you fed? Give where you are fed. You don't eat at Sheraton but go over to Serena to pay. You pay where you eat. Likewise, you are to give where you are fed.

- a) 1 Corinthians 9:7-11 *7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which*

wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

- b) Galatians 6:6 *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*
- c) 1 Timothy 5:17-18 *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.*

Example of myself:

- o I give at my local church in Colorado—River Rock Church, I give here in AWM Charis Uganda, I give to my local church here in Uganda.
- o I also split my tithes and give them where I'm fed. Then I give offerings to AWM Colorado, people, and other opportunities I get such as chapel here in Charis Bible College.

Malachi 3:10 reads, *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."*

- a) Tithes primarily belong to your local church that is if your church is truly a storehouse. A storehouse is where you get fed, keep your food, or go to get food. This is not the case for many churches though.
 - i) The local church is the backbone of God's work in the earth. There are ways that a local church can feed you that no other ministry can.
 - ii) Marriage counseling, pre-marital counseling, Baptism, baby dedications, prayer ministry, burial, funerals, counseling, teaching of the Word.
- b) I believe offerings above your tithes go to other ministries and benevolence work.
- c) However, if the local church is not feeding you or is feeding you bad food or poison. You want to pay or give elsewhere. Give where you are fed healthy and good food.

For instance: If you are being fed by Andrew Wommack, give to Andrew. Don't give where you are poisoned or starved, but where you are served.

- d) Giving in a dead church, one which is not preaching the gospel, feeding you, is a vote of confidence in what they are doing. You are subsidizing them.

It's wrong to get fed in one place and give your tithes and offerings to another place. Get out and go find a right place.

- a) If you want to continue giving your first fruit, go ahead, but do not put compulsion on others. Do not struggle, beg, or even borrow. It is not faith to give all away only to borrow, beg, lose your house, job because you have no transport.
- b) If we were to give with the right motives and only where we are fed, most churches would have to either repent or leave the ministry.
 - i) Godly giving (with a right motive, right place, and at a right time) benefits those who are teaching the body and are not using trickery, lies, manipulation and gimmicks to encourage people to give.
- c) Some people have been hurt by these giving gimmicks that some ministers use to the point that they do not care for giving anymore. If God is leading you to give all your salary away, by all means, give it, but I will not preach it as the oracles of God's Word, nor will I get up and say God is saying give all your money away. That would be wrong. Playing a God-card is very manipulative. We need to let people hear God for themselves.

Sacrificial giving

Sacrificial giving the way some ministers have taught about it is simply encouraging folks to give beyond their means. This is not scriptural and contradicts 2 Corinthians 8:12 and Acts 11:29. We are never encouraged to give beyond our means, nor give from deficit.

Some think for their giving to be sacrificial they have to give their last like the widow (Luke 21:1-4) and they think it is more powerful. If you've done some farming, I would argue that the sowing your very last seed does not give you a double harvest. I believe all our giving ought to be sacrificial, but that does not mean we give God our last. I would rather give God my very first than my last (Proverbs 3:9).

- a) Most people cite 2 Corinthians 8:3 *For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;*
- i) This does not say they gave. It says they were **willing** to give beyond. This does not say they gave beyond their power or ability, but rather stating their willingness to do so.
- b) 2 Corinthians 8:12 *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*
- i) The key point was the motive through which one gave. They had to have a willing heart.
 - ii) We are to give according to our ability. We can't give what we do not have. It is nonsensical to do so.
 - iii) Another point is the Lord is not for deficit giving. He only asks us to give what we have, not what we don't have.
 - iv) *"It is not faith to ignore or claim what you see in your bank account is not there. If your bank accounts says zero, do not write out an offering check to a ministry. Faith calls those things to don't exist as they were, not call those things that do exist, as they did not."* Rick McFarland Commentary on 2 Corinthians 8:3
- c) Acts 11:29 *Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:*

Widow with two mites

Mark 12:41-44 *And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. 42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. 43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, *Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: 44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.**

The widows who gave the two mites gave more than the rest not because she gave all she had (100 percent), period. She did, but there was more.

Giving your very last does not make your gift better.

- a) She gave in faith.
- b) She put God first, ahead of herself, and she gave with a right motive, unlike the rest of the givers. Jesus was looking at the hearts, not the size or amount.
- c) This was not an encouragement to give small amounts. If the emphasis is not on the size of the amount, this is true even in cases where the amount is small. Don't wait until your gift is small to appear like this widow.
- d) *"The Lord looks at percentages in our giving. That's why He instituted the tithe, which means one tenth. It's not according to the amount a person gives but the percentage that makes it a big gift. This poor widow gave 100 percent of what she had. That made her the biggest giver of the day."* Andrew Wommack's Living Commentary on Mark 12:43