

TIPS

No. 9

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What are First Fruits Anyway?

The church at large struggles to involve its members in worship and peripheral activities such as stewardship. Many churches lack the necessary volunteers to support their many programs such as missions or outreach. What probably has the most immediate impact on programs is when financial support is weak. However, what hurts the Church at large the most is when its members remain reluctant to even share the good news of the Gospel. If you need convincing, just turn on the television, read your local newspaper or check the Internet. Can we rest on our laurels when the extinction of Christianity is just one generation away? There are many other religions ready to claim their place in the world and step in to fill any void.

One answer lies in the meaning assigned to the term "*First Fruits*." The concept of First Fruits comes from the Old Testament and refers to the tithing of the early harvest and

choicest crops before they were stored or sold. In modern times, however, people typically give out of their surplus and/or abundance, unwilling to share their extra time unless their commitment is small. Many only share their faith when there is no risk.

"He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruit of all he created."

James 1:18

Why is this simple concept of First Fruits so important? James tells us that God has set us apart from all other creation and did so at the very beginning of this world. We are not by-products of evolutionary chance but of a Master's beautiful design, thoughtful purpose and skilled hand. To be a first fruit is to gain the love and grace of our Creator, as an artist loves His masterpiece.

We are not a part of the surplus of a cosmic cloud, the tailings of an unknown sculpture's work. Each of us is the result of an unselfish Creator, who has shared everything with us, even His Son.

To Inspire People Spiritually

Who Owns the World?



Today, our society responds to God's calling by failing to understand the meaning of First Fruits. Nowhere in the Bible will you find meaningful stewardship resulting from returning leftovers to God.

Regardless of one's attitude toward giving, the attitude of a Christian steward should recognize that for their faith to strengthen and to maintain a healthy relationship with God, giving must be first. Giving first is also a recognition of God's sovereignty over us. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1:21, "*For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*" A frightening thought, losing sight of our Creator. Paul clearly shows that if we ever lose sight of God, we will lack the discernment to survive in our world.

If your goal is to reach your full potential in this universe, include a vision of community outreach. Our world must strengthen its children and give them hope. The next generation must survive holding on to Christ. It is a great responsibility, an ardent task, one commanded from above. Will the next generation of believers know the joy of sharing First Fruits? Let us all hope so and work so to that end.

Your tip: Share a first fruits today.

What we do with our resources is important. So are the roots of our generosity. Are you generous with your First Fruits?

Check List✓

Do you participate in the stewardship of God's resources?

What would you consider your First Fruits?

Are you comfortable with the concepts of pledging or tithing?

Do you help teach the responsibilities of stewardship to children?

Will you take a risk to share your faith with someone who is curious?

Do you participate in the stewardship of our earth's resources?

Does your generosity with time, talent, treasure and testimony motivate others to do the same?