

Small Group Questions

Small groups and individuals can use these questions to engage the content of Sunday sermons.



October 8-29, 2023

First Fruits

In ancient times, God's people gave the first fruit offering after the annual spring harvest as a gift of gratitude for God's generous provision. The ritual first started after the miraculous escape from Egypt when God demanded that all the Israelites dedicate the first offspring of their flocks and families to God. How can this ancient practice help us reset our priorities, deepen our gratitude, and enlarge our hearts to be generous to the vulnerable?

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops.

– Proverbs 3:9 (NIV)

October 8, 2023

God is the Source

1 Chronicles 29:10-14 (NIV)

Connect:

Who have been formative models of generosity in your life?

Engage:

This psalm was written to commemorate the dedication to the first temple that King David built.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-14 (NIV)

1. What do these passages say about God? Do you believe that God is the source of all the blessings in your life?
2. Our culture promotes the idea that wealth is the product of hard work and that what we have belongs to us. How do you think King David would respond to that idea?
3. What things do you consider yours? For example, how many times do you use the word "my" to describe your possessions? What would you find the most difficult to hand over to God freely?
4. What does David mean by the question posed in verse 14, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you?"
5. What practical ways can you use the resources and gifts that God has given you for God's purposes?
6. What could be some of the results if everyone in our church joyfully and generously gave to God?

Apply

By acknowledging that everything we have comes from God, we remember that tithing is simply giving back what already belongs to the Divine One. David led the way by offering his fortune for the construction of the temple. The people also contributed. They not only had the ability to give, they had the willingness to give.

The first fruits principle recognizes that all good things come from God. Gratitude motivates us to return the first and best portion to God as an act of worship. How can you express your gratitude to God this week?

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.

Small Group Questions

Small groups and individuals can use these questions to engage the content of Sunday sermons.



October 8-29, 2023

First Fruits

In ancient times, God's people gave the first fruit offering after the annual spring harvest as a gift of gratitude for God's generous provision. The ritual first started after the miraculous escape from Egypt when God demanded that all the Israelites dedicate the first offspring of their flocks and families to God. How can this ancient practice help us reset our priorities, deepen our gratitude, and enlarge our hearts to be generous to the vulnerable?

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops.

– Proverbs 3:9 (NIV)

October 15, 2023

The First and the Best

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Connect:

When you got your first paying job, what was the first thing you did after cashing your check?

Engage:

There are many ways to understand the stories and commands in the Bible:

- literal truth – historical
- allegorical truth – symbolic of other principles (story points to Christ)
- moral truth – teach ethical principles

Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11

1. What do you think “first fruits” means? Is it literal, allegorical, moral, or a mix of all three?
2. First fruits offerings come with a recitation of what God has done for God’s people. The celebration of the Exodus is enshrined in the Jewish festival of Passover. What would be the pinnacle of our Christian story? What personal story might you recite that demonstrates God’s faithfulness to you? To our church?
3. Scholars estimate that nearly 98% of the population lived in extreme poverty during these times. Do you think demanding a first fruit offering is asking too much? Why or why not?
4. First fruits require us to give God the first and best of the harvest. How do you relate to this principle when you reflect on your practices of tithing or pledging to God’s ministry? How does this kind of giving impact faith?
5. Share examples of this kind of first fruits giving you have seen.

Apply

The first fruits concept challenges us to give intentionally from our first and best as a gift of gratitude and praise for God's blessings. We don't give God our leftovers. When giving God our best, it means giving our best time, best talents, and best resources.

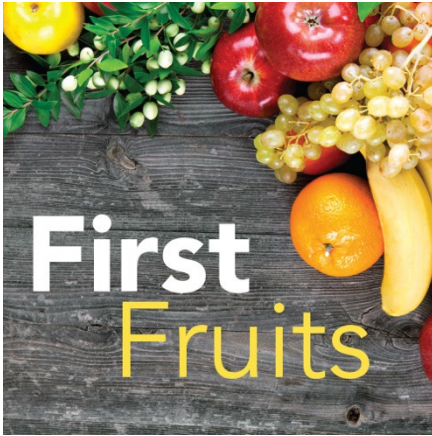
This week, reflect on first fruits giving and consider how to integrate this practice into your charitable giving.

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.

Small Group Questions

Small groups and individuals can use these questions to engage the content of Sunday sermons.



October 8-29, 2023

First Fruits

In ancient times, God's people gave the first fruit offering after the annual spring harvest as a gift of gratitude for God's generous provision. The ritual first started after the miraculous escape from Egypt when God demanded that all the Israelites dedicate the first offspring of their flocks and families to God. How can this ancient practice help us reset our priorities, deepen our gratitude, and enlarge our hearts to be generous to the vulnerable?

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops.

– Proverbs 3:9 (NIV)

October 22, 2023

Giving Cheerfully

2 Corinthians 9:6-12

Connect:

Looking back at your childhood, what were the explicit and implicit lessons you learned about money?

Engage:

Offering gifts and tithes is always tied to gratitude for the blessings we have received from God. When facing challenges, gratefulness is the counterweight to complaining.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-12

1. Paul turns to agricultural metaphors in describing spiritual growth. What do you think he means by sowing and reaping? How do you find the principles of sowing sparingly and bountifully apply to your spiritual, social, and economic life?
2. Contributing monetarily to God's mission should be done in freedom and joy. Why does our motivation for giving matter to God? How would you characterize a poor attitude toward giving and how can that mindset tarnish our spirituality?
3. Verse 8 repeats the word "all" (NIV translation) or "every" (NRSV) several times. What point is he trying to make here?
4. How does God's provision in nature apply to us? How does God's provision translate into service to others? How does our service relate to worship?
5. Give examples of how your generosity has impacted you and those around you.

Apply

We give out of joy and gratitude because God has blessed us. After offering our first fruits to God, God also blesses us so that our needs are met and we have abundance to share "in every good work."

This week, how can you cultivate a heart of generosity? Reflect on what keeps you from being generous and what motivates you. What practical steps can you take to be more openhearted with your resources?

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.

Small Group Questions

Small groups and individuals can use these questions to engage the content of Sunday sermons.



October 8-29, 2023

First Fruits

In ancient times, God's people gave the first fruit offering after the annual spring harvest as a gift of gratitude for God's generous provision. The ritual first started after the miraculous escape from Egypt when God demanded that all the Israelites dedicate the first offspring of their flocks and families to God. How can this ancient practice help us reset our priorities, deepen our gratitude, and enlarge our hearts to be generous to the vulnerable?

*Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops.
– Proverbs 3:9 (NIV)*

October 29, 2023

We are God's First Fruits

James 1:16-18

Connect:

What is your response to "God is good all the time, all the time God is good?"

Engage:

James begins his letter by writing that we have the divine life in us (blessed) when we endure temptation. God is never the source of temptation and evil.

Read James 1:16-18

1. James suggests that when we are generous, we are agents of God's grace. Our kindness to each other is a direct reflection of God's generosity. When you bless others, do you sense that you are doing God's work?
2. The opposite holds true. If we are not gracious and giving, our lack of love causes others to experience temptation and evil. So, if God is not the source of temptation and evil, who is responsible?
3. What is the significance of our identity as "first fruits" among God's creatures? How might your attitudes, words, and actions impact others around you?
4. How can we as a church become a "first fruits" offering to our community? How can we be more generous agents of God's provision and justice?

Apply

In God's economy, as followers of Jesus, our identity is reframed as the first fruits of humanity. We are reminded that we are God's blessing to be shared with a parched and hungry world.

As we commit to pledge financially to MWPC this week, how can you reframe your tithe as a first fruits offering, given for the sake of others?

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.