

### Taking it Home:

- If God is the owner of everything in the universe, including absolutely everything you have, why wouldn't you want to give back to God with a generous heart? Two things in life are definite: (1) Everything you own (possess) will leave you (decay, be stolen, worn out, given away); (2) or you'll leave everything you own or possess (death); thus people really own **nothing** because ownership is permanent; only God owns everything; He is the owner of the company and He has made men stewards or managers! What is holding you back from generously giving back to God your best, the finest of your "first Fruits?" (Cf. Matthew 6:19-21, 24; Col. 3:1-2).
- Do you understand your standing before God because of your trust in Jesus Christ as Savior? This is a classic rags-to-riches story! Do you realize that God has not only given you everything materially but IF you trust Jesus Christ as Savior He has given you sonship, adoption into His royal family, and every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus? If God has given you everything, materially, and spiritual life, eternal life, etc., why would you have a reluctance to trust God when He asks you to give back your "first fruits" of your time, talents and treasures to Him?

Living Above and Beyond  
Living Above and Beyond the Mess  
Deuteronomy 26:5-10

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Bethel Church  
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## Living Above and Beyond the Mess

Notes:

For a restatement of Pastor Matthew's sermon points, visit [pastormatthew.net](http://pastormatthew.net) and click on the "Write This Down" tab.

For more information about Growth Groups, Growth Group homework, and a podcast of sermons with homework, visit [www.bethelfc.com](http://www.bethelfc.com).

# Growth Group Homework

For the week of January 8, 2012

Deuteronomy 26: 5-10

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**Quick Review:** The offering of the first fruits was to be accompanied by an elaborate confession of the Lord's faithfulness. The whole idea of "first fruits" was for the people of Israel to worship God, rejoice for His provision and His goodness, for everything is from Him; thus Israel was being instructed to give back to God their best, their very finest. It was a time of gratefully praising and rejoicing because of God's faithful and dependable goodness and mercy.

The clear bias of the scriptures is that everything we have materially is owned by the Lord who grants us stewardship privileges and responsibility. With this comes the obligation to recognize His ownership and honor Him with the "first of the fruit," our very best!

## My Story:

- Recount a time during your life's experiences when you graciously assisted someone or helped someone significantly but the only thing you received back was ungratefulness from the person you assisted. How did that make you feel?
- Define what it means to "give your very best, your finest?" How do you feel when someone says they're giving their very best when you know they are not? Have you ever stated to someone that you'd given them your very best, your finest when you knew you hadn't? How did that make you feel? Were you convicted knowing you'd not given your best? Discuss.

## Growing Deeper:

- READ Deut. 26:5-10, what's the historical situation Moses is sharing about **why** the people of Israel should give their "first fruits" to God? What had God done for the Israelites? (Cf. Vv. 5-9).
- Pastor Matthew stated that the response of giving your "first fruits" to God reflects an attitude of the heart about God and spiritual things. Pastor Matthew also stated that the giving of "first fruits" is an act of worship and trust. What did Pastor Matthew mean by that statement?
- In Deut. 26:5-10, Moses describes the wandering, lost leader of Israel, Jacob who led them to Egypt. The Egyptians enslaved the Israelites for over 400 years until God heard their cries for mercy and help. God raises up Moses to free His people from bondage and slavery and He gave them all their provisions of life during their 40 years of wandering and a new land filled with milk and honey. **READ Deut. 26:9-11. READ Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 1:3-7** and interpret. According to these Scriptures, what has God done for those who trust Him as Savior? Do you see any comparisons between the Deuteronomy passages and the NT passages above? Discuss.
- **READ Deut. 26:16-19.** What are the clear declarations from God for the Israelites to obey Him and keep His commands, statutes and ordinances, including the giving of their "First Fruits." Does this apply to believers today?
- What did Pastor Matthew say "first fruits" means? Is the giving of your "first fruits" just about giving the first of your income to God, or does it mean giving God the "first fruits" or best of everything He's given to you; time, talents, treasures? Discuss.
- What was the Best and Finest God offered to mankind? (READ John 10:14-16; 11:25-26; Rev. 5:12-14) Why would God expect back the best and finest from man? (Cf. Romans 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; 9:8-13; 1 John 2:2).