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*The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.*  
Exodus 23:19

When I was a young Christian I gave off the bottom of my income to the Lord. In other words, I gave Him my leftovers, and often there was not much left over for Him.

Fortunately, however, things began to change in 1986 when our church was planning a major capital campaign to build a new parish hall. Like good Episcopalians, we hired a Baptist consultant to teach us about stewardship. One of his lessons was the Biblical principle of "first fruits" or giving off the top of our income. Because we no longer live in an agrarian society this concept has lost some of its original meaning. To fully understand, we need to picture a farmer offering the first part of his harvest to God in thanksgiving for God's goodness to him. By doing so the farmer was demonstrating his total trust in God to provide sufficient food for him and his family from the remainder of the harvest along with adequate seed for next year's crop.

Since then I have changed my way of giving. The first check that I write each month is to the church in payment of my pledge. In this way I am giving God the first fruits from my harvest and, like the farmer, reflecting my complete and absolute dependence on God's provision for me and my family. Sometimes it can be a little scary, but the amazing thing is that there always seems to be enough money available to meet our needs and even some left over for future planting.