



## But First, God

*“He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me.” (Deut. 26:9-10)*

### Putting Your Life in Order

From the first page of your Bible, you will begin learning the great truth of the Scriptures: God is before all things and above all things. In sequence and in significance, God is first, and he has no competition. Can you honestly say, then, that God is first in your life? How can you become a “God-first” kind of a person? In Deuteronomy 26, Moses offers instructions that will help you pause and prioritize your life around God and not yourself.

### First Things First (Deut. 26:1-19)

**26:2. Firstfruits.** This offering occurred once and is not to be confused with the annual firstfruits offering from Deut. 18:4. According to this command, the long-awaited first harvest was not to be eaten immediately. Rather, Moses uses this moment to teach Israel to prioritize God’s \_\_\_\_\_ over personal \_\_\_\_\_.

**26:3-10. Declare.** The firstfruits offering is a celebration of God’s faithfulness. As is the case with all covenant celebrations, this ceremony includes the declaration of the truth – God kept his \_\_\_\_\_.

**26:5. Aramean.** A reference to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, who wandered to Haran in Aram (Gen. 28:5) and later to Egypt (Gen. 46:3-7). **Few people.** Jacob settled in Egypt with 70 people in all (Gen. 46:27). God multiplied Jacob’s descendants until they became a threat to Egypt (Ex. 1:8-10).

**26:12. Year of the tithe.** In years three and six of the Shemitah- cycle (Israel’s seven-year economic cycle) the Israelites set aside a tithe to be given to the poor. This is in addition to the Levitical, or sacred tithe (Num. 18:21-24) and the temple, or festival tithe (Deut. 14:22-27).

**26:13-15. Then say to the LORD.** Israel is to stand honest before the LORD concerning their use of the third-year tithe. The tithe is not to be used for personal enjoyment or gain, but for the purpose of blessing the needy in the land.

**26:16. Heart and soul.** Moses commands Israel not to allow the offerings and tithes to become a rote religious practice. Jesus later rebukes the Pharisees for failing to heed this command (see Lk. 11:42).

**26:17-19. You have declared. He has declared.** This reads like a renewing of covenantal vows. Israel pledges obedience to God as God vows to provide for Israel, even going so far as to set her in praise, fame, and honor. By seeking God first, Israel was securing provision for herself. Jesus says the same concerning those who seek God’s kingdom first today (see. Mt. 6:33).



*In an attempt to shake the paradigm of a “me first” culture, the non-profit “I Am Second” launched in Dallas in 2008. iamsecond.com*

## I Am Second

God demands to be first because you were designed to be second. You can only truly flourish under His rule, for when you willingly become second God promises to supply all your needs (Phil. 4:19).

“When first things are put first, \_\_\_\_\_ things are not suppressed but \_\_\_\_\_.” (C.S Lewis)

## But First, God

1. Tell the truth about your time. Give God the \_\_\_\_\_.

*“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” (Mark 1:35)*

*“On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.” (Acts 20:7)*

- **The first 15 minutes of your day.** Make the commitment now to wake up for the Lord.
- **The first day of your week.** Gathering weekly with the church requires commitment. You have a busy week ahead. But first, God.
- **The first day of the month.** Did you know North Boulevard has a team of 70 people who fast and pray on the first day of the month? Join in by writing “fast first” on your Connection Card, or by emailing rsacles@nblvd.org.

2. Don’t just dig in, again. Consecrate before you \_\_\_\_\_.

*“...and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, Lord, have given me.” Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him. (Deut. 26:10)*

*Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he [Jesus] gave thanks and broke the loaves. (Mt. 14:19b)*

- **Pray before you eat.** Training a child to pray before eating is a worthwhile endeavor, but it is not a practice for children alone. Praying before a meal is biblical, practical, and helpful for developing a God-first mentality.
- **Sing before you swim.** Christians do not vacation to simply enjoy the ocean, but to enjoy the God of the ocean. You might be eager to swim. But first, God.

3. Put your money where your faith is. Invest in the \_\_\_\_\_.

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:19-21)*

- **Fund the teaching of the gospel.** (1 Cor. 9:9-11)
- **Offer aide to Christians in need.** (Acts 4:32-37)
- **Extend compassion to a hurting world.** (James 1:27)

**Answers:** glorification; gratification; word; second; increased; first appointment; consume; best