

# First Fruits

by Michael Koulianos

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*Michael Koulianos emphasizes the significance of first fruits in our spiritual lives, encouraging simplicity, devotion, and community support as we enter a new year.*

**Duration:** 34:15

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 30:6, Psalm 51:11, Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 6:33, Romans 11:16, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Galatians 5:22-23, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 1:5, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "Christian Life", "First Fruits", "Spiritual Foundations"

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## Description

Michael Koulianos emphasizes the significance of 'first fruits' in our spiritual lives, drawing from Romans 11:16 to illustrate that the beginnings of our actions and commitments to God are crucial. He encourages the congregation to return to the basics of faith, such as prayer, scripture reading, and generosity, especially as they enter a new year filled with opportunities for growth and building a new church structure. Koulianos highlights the importance of maintaining purity in our spiritual roots and being intentional about the battles we choose to engage in, urging believers to focus on what truly matters in their walk with God. He calls for a season of simplicity and devotion, inviting everyone to participate in a Daniel fast as a way to dedicate the first part of the year to God. Ultimately, he reminds the church that their foundation is built on Jesus, and they must remain focused on His presence and guidance.

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## Transcript

Can you hear me okay? My voice is... Oh, it's so funny. Yeah? You're an easy crowd. Hey, Eloise.

Welcome home. Well, my voice is getting stronger every day, so that's good. You guys are stuck with me for a little while.

And then I got sick like four days ago, so... Oh well. But I'm here, I do have a word for you. If we stay connected, that'll be miraculous.

I have my kids here, chewing up the Wi-Fi. And two of their friends, Bill's... Two of his grandsons are staying with us for a few days. And they chew up Wi-Fi very well as well.

And everything else in the house. So I told them to get off their little devices and pray in tongues for one hour. That was a joke, I didn't freeze.

All right. You guys are too serious when I'm not there. Okay, it's good to be back, sort of.

Let's pray. Lord, we love you today. And we give you all the glory.

And we thank you for your presence. With your people. And with every family represented.

With everybody watching online. Your presence is everything. So we turn all of our affection Let's go, Joel, you on strike? Help me.

There you go, okay. I'm just joking. We love you so much, Jesus.

Amen. All right, I just have a little quick word. Take your Bibles to Romans 11.

Man, the worship was awesome today. Okay, go to verse 16. And I'm gonna read this to you.

For if the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. The context here is the nation of Israel and God's ultimate plan for them.

Paul was addressing those who thought that God had rejected his plans for Israel. So Paul's dealing with that. And I'm a huge believer in reading the word in its proper context.

So I don't want to throw that out. But at the same time we see certain principles that are preeminent throughout the entire Bible. And they almost hold like a river from beginning to end.

You know, there's an old saying, never build a theology on one verse. It's so true. So in saying that, we see as we look at the Scripture that when God does something first, it actually means something.

So firsts are powerful. There's power in what God does first. He's actually saying something, not in merely doing something, but in the order in which he does it.

Does that make sense to you? And I've shared this with you all and with our students, that it does matter to the Lord when we do something. It actually declares something to the Lord. And even relationally with us, with each other, it matters when we do what we do.

So if a husband and a wife, for instance, greet each other at 2 p.m. and walk past each other all morning, that says something. But it also says something if they greet each other immediately in the morning. And so what Paul is getting to here, can you hear me okay? Okay.

Okay. What Paul is getting to here, yes, he is talking about Israel and God's plan. But he's also showing us something about the ways of God.

And what he's saying here is that if the first, if the beginnings of something are holy, then the whole lump is holy. And if the root just imagine a plant, if the root is pure, then the branches are pure. Now that's not to say that the Lord doesn't need to prune the branches to keep them pure.

It is to say that if the sap flowing through the root is pure and of one substance, that sap will eventually make its way to the branches, into the entire life of the plant, into the fruit growing on the branches, so that purity flows throughout. So even in the tabernacle for instance, the priest had to trim the wicks of the lampstand candles every day. So, again, it's not to say that the Lord doesn't continue his work in us daily to maintain that purity.

But what I do want to get at today is the power of these beginnings. The power of firsts. So, we've entered a new year.

Before I go any further, I just want to say how much I do miss you guys and miss teaching. To be honest with you, I kind of look back at my preaching schedule over the last almost four years now, and it was just a little much. And I've had to go to the Lord and say, did I just assume to go and preach in each and every one of these moments, or did you speak to me? And you know, sometimes you so badly want to serve the Lord and his people well, and I want all of you to feel, to feel the love that we do have for you.

But our friend Ben Fitz gave me a word like three weeks ago, and the word was, the word was, Michael, you need to know that everything you've done and are doing is enough to the Lord, and that the people do feel the love of God, and that you're a limited person, and in the end, you're going to have to trust the Lord to let the people feel the love that he has for them, and the love that you ultimately have for them. And that's probably been a weakness, certainly living with Jess over there, who is the, who is like mother, school mother, and loves you guys so much. But I would have to say I've definitely gone beyond probably for some time now what my body was just telling me probably for about a year.

So, the good news is, is that the church isn't built on its pastor. I'm not going anywhere, and that's why I am taking a break. But, I do, I just want you guys to know, I can't wait to be back there and preaching the gospel and doing what I love to do.

I've learned how sacred and what a treasure a voice actually is. I mean, man, I took my voice for granted. Just the ability to talk is a beautiful thing.

And the ability to teach God's word is such a high honor. And I told the Lord I'll never complain again about preaching. At the same time, I'm going to listen to to the Lord and, you know, how old am I, babe? 44? Yeah, 44, right? Am I 45 or 44? I don't remember.

Yeah, 40, 44, yeah. So, you start losing track after a while. But, all that to say, I can't wait to be back.

And, the church is built on Jesus. This has been a great season to see new worship teams emerge. It's been awesome.

There are more coming. That House of Bethany has become like a little Jedi combine. A little Jedi farm of worshipers.

More voices and instrumentalists are coming. And to see our students, as well as our team, step up and teach the word. Ryan filled in on a couple of weddings.

So, it's just been great to see you guys do what you do. And, I think the Lord's at work in the midst of all that as well. So, let's quickly just talk about these firsts.

So, this is the beginning of a year. And, for me, when the Lord invites me into a newness, into a first fruits type season, which is what I believe we're in right now, I never try to complicate it. Or, go for something huge.

It's just never been how the Lord has dealt with me. What He's always done is just reminded me of the firsts. Of the basics.

Of what keeps the root pure. And so, that's what I want to talk to you guys about right now is what are the firsts for Jesus image? What are the firsts for a believer? And, I want us to carry this into this new year because this is a massive year for what God wants to do here. We'll be breaking ground on the building.

You know, by the end of this year, you're going to see the building being built. I mean, way before that, but by 2023, I mean, there's going to be a massive structure on that land. There's a lot happening.

You know, we're most likely going to hit the road in multiple cities to take the Jesus Knights on the road. The nations will continue to flood our Sunday services. So, there's a lot going on.

But, what I like to do is when there's so much going on, I like to tuck my heart like David did when he lost everything at Ziklack. In a way, that was a new beginning. He lost everything he had because he made he made his enemies fight his own fight.

Or, he entered a battle that wasn't his. This is in 1 Samuel. And, that is a wonderful lesson for us to learn.

In that, I would venture to say there's like 5 to 10 battles that come my way. I'm sure they come yours as well. Daily.

That offer me the opportunity to pick up a battle if I want it. Even if it's not mine. Does that make sense to you? Like, if you want an issue every day, you can have one.

Wave to me if you're hearing me. Alright, that's all of us. To fulfill God's destiny in your life, you have to choose not to pick those up.

It's a choice. And, you have to determine which battles have something to do with those firsts and which do not. Now, if you try hard enough, you can connect every battle to you.

But, I'll never forget the Holy Spirit. I really believe He spoke this to me. Whispering to my heart, if you want to slay dragons, you can't swat flies.

So, David decides to fight with the Philistines against Israel. He goes out to battle with them. They reject him.

They don't want him. He comes back to Zig Lag, only to lose everything. And that's what happens when you pick up a war that's not yours.

The devil will come in from behind and take what the Lord has given you. So, that's number one. Number two is David has this new beginning.

And the first thing he does is he wraps himself, clothes himself in the ephod, and he, he, he, in a sense, strengthens himself in the Lord by doing what he'd always done, going to the Lord. So, in this new beginning, this new season that we're in, I really feel it prophetically. I want us to go back to the basics.

Back to the basics. One is, like right now, I'm on a Daniel fast, and I'm so glad I'm not a vegan. It just reminds me every time I do this that I wasn't called to be a vegan.

And, as I said a few weeks back, if you're a vegan, your Daniel fast doesn't count. You gotta find something else. So, I'm starting off with a Daniel fast, and then I'll probably do a 19-day liquid fast after.

I'm not telling you to do that. I just want to be really clear. But, I do want to invite you to start this first season with simplicity.

And, when you do these things, it's almost like a beacon of light that begins to flash before heaven, and the light says, land here. You know, like when military helicopters need to land in a storm, they put a

beacon of light out, the team on the ground, so that the chopper can land in a storm. When you do things like this, when you return to the simple things, that beacon of light just begins to shine, and it tells heaven, this is a great place to land.

Okay. Number two, I want us to really devour the scriptures this year. Devour the scriptures.

Something that the Lord has been, you know, what we might be able to do, babe, is maybe get the reading plan that we use for the students, that takes them through the Bible in a year. Is that right, Jenna? Yeah. We can get that plan to the entire church.

when, now, I just want to say this correctly, there's a way to do this without being led of the Lord, and it can become a bondage, to be honest with you. But when it's led of the Holy Spirit, like, for instance, fasting or whatever these firsts are that I'm going to get to, they all need to be wrapped in a lifestyle of worship and intimacy with God. But, back to what I was saying, I want us to get back into the scriptures.

One thing I'm going to begin doing now is serving pastors and help pastors plant and serve in sustainable church families that are presence-driven. I really feel like that's part of my calling is to help pastors see and believe that you can lose so much of the garbage that American church has been built on. Not just American church, but Western church all over the world.

I've been all over and it's like this, so I shouldn't say that, but I want pastors to see they can build in the presence of the Spirit with the right priorities and serve them well. One of the things I'm going to be addressing with these pastors is the necessity to hand the faith down to their children. Now, this probably sounds so meat and potatoes.

You know, you're like, wait, where's the QR code for the next initiative or you know, cool, whatever we're going to do, next small group we're going to start, whatever. But, I'm talking about a way of life that opens your eyes to the reality that we are mandated to hand the faith down to our children. And that we need to do it so faithfully that our children are burning when the Lord takes us home.

And then we need to press this into our children so much so that they'll do it for theirs. Pastors lose their kids in many cases, I believe, because pastors spend more time discipling a room than they do their own children. And this doesn't mean your kids are going to you know, float on clouds, bring you food and rub your feet every day and pray in tongues while they're doing it.

It just means, my children are, they're a trip. I love them, they're a trip though. But Christ, Jesus himself has been implanted into them daily.

Daily. So, when it comes to reading the scriptures, I am talking about devouring them yourself. But also creating a lifestyle in the home that exposes your children to the scriptures.

You see the kingdom, the word of God, the kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the spirit. Jesus likened the kingdom to yeast. And yeast, he said, before you know it, travels through the whole lump.

When you intentionally share the scriptures with your children, it gets into them whether they know it or not. And the Bible says, if you train a child in the way they should go when they grow old, they will not depart. It doesn't mean that they won't go in a way that is grieving or painful.

But we can take rest knowing that the word that's been planted, that it will bear fruit. So, I want to encourage you guys to do that. Number three, I want us all in this season, how do I say this, to allow us to be disrupted.

Not, I don't want you to lose your rest, your joy and your peace. Of course. But there's this divine troubling.

It's a divine stirring that I'm talking about. It's a, it's giving God permission to interrupt your white picket fence. I've had this thing in me lately where I've wanted to do more from a generosity perspective.

I don't know why. I probably, I don't think I've ever felt this, but I looked in my closet the other day and I thought, man, that's a lot of clothes. I need to give them away.

Or whose pain, we know a family who recently lost a loved one. And I thought to myself, how can we serve their pain? How can we help bring hope? I asked the Lord to trouble me and he started doing it. Do you know what I mean by that troubling? Not, not a lack of peace, not a lack of stability, but also not this comfort where you just kind of glide and it sees in a favor.

I guess another way of saying is putting your heart on the altar and dying another death. So there's that. And to be honest, and this would go for our online family too.

It's going to take radical generosity to build the building. I mean, I'm blown away by the response already, but it's going to take miracle after miracle. And that's, that's our God.

And as the local church family, we have to make sure that we're not depending on the nations to build the house that our kids will grow up in. So we're in this season now of sacrifice. This season that's bigger than us.

This season of realizing I'm building for the generations and it will be worth it. I've known for a while and I'll close. I've known for a while that, well, I've known for, since I was a kid that anointings that I had been exposed to growing up or just the incredible favor the Lord's given me to know and be around people.

I knew that wasn't by accident. I knew that that if I honored these people, God would, would bless me. And I don't mean money.

I mean, in the spirit, but I also knew when the revelation of Jesus came so strongly in 2006, that God would tell Jesse and I to honor all we've received, but to build according to the vision the Lord gave us. And I've known that the vision the Lord gave us, if we would build an obedience that the Lord's design would make the ministry transferable. And so we intentionally built away from us.

And all the branding at our events, I, I knew if I could build away from me that when I'm gone, it wouldn't collapse. And so to build, not just to see it, but to build it, you have to be people of peace. Remember the Lord told David he could not build the temple because he was a man of bloodshed.

People who are wired for war, people who are wired for drama, people who take offense. Remember, you have to pick a fence up. The Greek word for offense is trap.

Scandal and scandal. Trap and scandal are two in the same in that, in that word. Like a trap in the woods while you're walking down a trail, you reach your hand in that trap and it locks on you.

That's what a scandal is. It's what Psalm chapter one warns against. Don't hang out with the mockers and the scoffers.

What I've known for a while that if I could maintain my peace, God wouldn't trust me to build. And I don't mean build a building. That's part of it.

It's needed. But something that would outlive us all, everybody in the room, this counts for, something that would outlive us so that our hands, rather than be covered in blood from battles, our hands can be put to living stones and build something that glorifies the Lord. So that's my next point is run from drama.

Run from it. Be quick to forgive. Be slow to be offended.

Be quick to confront. If it's needed, and then once the person asks forgiveness, let it go. And rather than look for war, look for the Lord's peace.

And then lastly, you know, it's always going to come down to loving on the Lord and opening the scriptures and adoring him every day. So to review, let's enter this season now with our eyes wide open, with our hearts wide open. I want to invite as many of you as possible into this, this Daniel Fast, if you're not already on it.

If you have a health issue and you can't do it, it's fine, I understand. But if you're able to do it and give the Lord this first part of the year and give him the first part of your day, and then that'll turn into giving the first part of the hour and the first part of the minute. And before you know it, 24-7, you're looking at Jesus.

Amen? All right, I'm going to pray, baby, and then you take it, okay? Father, we love you. I thank you so much for this precious group, this precious family in your presence. Lord Jesus, just let us all return to those first works and let our land never go out.

Keep the oil flowing in our lamps and let the lamp never go out. Trim the wicks, trim the vine. Do what you need to do, only never let the lamp go out.

Take not your Holy Spirit from me. It's what David said, never let your glory lift. Now let the people go forth and bathe in your presence, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Love you.

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