

Firstborns and Flatbreads

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Exodus: Redeemer and Redeemed / Exodus 13:1–16

Discussion Questions

1. In Exodus 13:2, God commands the Israelites to consecrate their firstborns to Him. What does it mean to consecrate your family to God? Remember the definition of consecration: to set something apart for a particular purpose.
2. The sermon highlights the struggle many face in finding and making their own meaning. How does understanding that God has a claim on your life provide freedom from this struggle? Share personal experiences where recognizing God's purpose helped you find direction.
3. The Feast of Unleavened Bread required the Israelites to dedicate specific times for remembrance and celebration. What practices can you implement to ensure that God is a priority in your daily and weekly routines? How can you better allocate your time to reflect on and celebrate God's work in your life?
4. The sermon discusses how consecrating the firstborn animals signifies that all possessions belong to God. In what ways can you demonstrate that your possessions are tools for God's kingdom? What steps can you take to use your resources more generously and purposefully for Godly purposes?
5. At the conclusion of the sermon, there's a call to audit three domains: family, time, and possessions. Reflect on these areas in your life. What commitment can you make this week to begin submit to God's claims over these areas?

Sermon Notes

What does a life look like when it does not realize it was created for a purpose?

Each and everyone of us must settle in our hearts the purpose for which we were created, and we'll find that in

Bridging Sentences

- God gave concrete rituals to the Israelites so that the people remember it was God who redeemed them out of Egypt *because he claimed them—they were His people.*
- **When you and I accept God's claims we are free from the tyranny of trying to find our own purpose and meaning. And we are so easy to forget.**
- And if we don't get this, we'll waste a lot of energy trying to find some direction.
- Have you ever thought of the fact that God claims you? That God has claims on your life?

Exodus 13:1–16 ESV

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine." ³ Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. ⁴ Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. ⁵ And when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month. ⁶ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and

on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. ⁷ Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. ⁸ You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' ⁹ And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. ¹⁰ You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year. ¹¹ "When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, ¹² you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's. ¹³ Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴ And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵ For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' ¹⁶ It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

1. God has a claim on your family.

Right out of the gate, we see a strong and total command. [Exodus 13:2](#) "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."

Consecrate & Firstborn

a. Consecrate

Consecrate is a word we don't use much at all. The idea of consecration has very religious overtones in our ears today because we're so downstream from the Bible. But you consecrate things every single day—

- You set aside one side of the sink for dirty dishes and one side for clean dishes.
- You have the one drawer set aside for collecting all of the junk.
- You all have the one set of plates that *never* gets brought out except for *maybe* Christmas time if you don't mind handwashing them.

The word **consecrate** means to set something aside for a particular purpose. This is the idea behind our word group—dedicate, sanctify, hallow.

We'll talk a whole lot about the so-called Holiness Codes of Exodus in the coming months, but what we're talking about in the Bible whenever we talk about holiness or consecration is this idea.

Now that you have that definition in your mind, listen afresh to the same word in two different contexts, one where you expect it and one where you don't.

Genesis 2:3 ESV

³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

In making the seventh day holy, God set it aside as distinct and for a purpose: rest.

Here's the unexpected occurrence:

Jeremiah 22:7 ESV

⁷ I will prepare destroyers against you, each with his weapons, and they shall cut down your choicest cedars and cast them into the fire.

It's not immediately clear in the English translation because translating it "I will sanctify destroyers against you" would probably confuse casual readers.

But in both verses, the root שָׂדָשׁ (ke'dash) appears. In both verses, God has set something aside for a particular purpose.

b. Firstborn

Our word firstborn here is extremely important as well in the Bible, not least of which because Jesus Christ is called a *firstborn of all creation* ([Col 1:15](#)).

Firstborn is an easy one to figure out. This word means describes the person who watches the rules and consequences evaporate with each subsequent birth of a sibling.

But really, the firstborn male was a figurehead—a representative of the next generation. So, God could talk metaphorically of Israel as a "firstborn." This metaphorical—representation—use is more significant in the Bible. For example, the youngest son of Jesse is called the firstborn of God in [Psalm 89:20, 27](#).

[Psalm 89:20–27](#) (ESV)

²⁰ I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him... ²⁷ And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.

The same principle applied when the Israelites brought their firstfruits to the Feast of Harvest (Exod. 23:16, 19). They offered their first and their best to show that the whole harvest belonged to God. In the same way, the firstborn was the firstfruits of the family. To consecrate him was to consecrate everyone else who came from his mother's womb.¹

Point: God's claim over the firstborn signifies His broader claim over every family.

c. Future Generations

God's instruction to consecrate the firstborns was not just for the people who were leaving the land of Egypt, it was for all of the subsequent generations.

God explains why the firstborn males of both man and beast in Israel are for him: the firstborns in Egypt died so that they would live. But more importantly, God had earmarked this people for a particular purpose. Through Israel's offspring one would come who would bless the nations. Through their line would come a son who would crush the head of the serpent and save the people from the curse.

All of their children belonged to him because God had blessed all of their children with his unique covenant promise.

One way a parent could dedicate a child to the Lord was through priestly service. This is what Hannah was doing when she gave Samuel to the Lord.

It's also why Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple. Do you remember what Luke tells us? [Luke 2:22–23](#)

Luke 2:22–23 ESV

²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")

Our families belong to the Lord—our children belong to the Lord.

¹ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 371.

But here in Exodus 13 God places his people in the same category as donkeys. This showed them that they were sinners in need of salvation. In a word, they needed to be redeemed. Otherwise they would perish, as the donkeys did if they were unredeemed.²

2. God has a claim on your time.

Point: The observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread required Israelites to set aside specific times for remembrance and celebration.

- › Is this literal? No, the point is we forget! What causes us to forget, and God is aware that when the people leave Egypt and finally get to the promise land that they'll be so far removed from their perceived need of God that they slip into idolatry.

Keeping it front of mind is what the Lord meant, which is to say that the Israelites needed to carve out dedicated time to reflect on their personal deliverance—what God did in history to save *me*.

- › Practical atheists? A practical atheist is someone who is an atheist in all practices except maybe profession: you might look at their schedule and think they give no time at all to the Lord.

3. God has a claim on your possessions.

Point: Consecration of the firstborn animals demonstrates that all possessions ultimately belong to God.

Donkeys were unclean animals in Israel, so they could not be eaten or sacrificed, but they fulfilled a critical function in all of human civilization—even in the West until at least the 1940s.

They are incredibly important animals that can carry a tremendous amount of weight, which for a nomadic people are its possessions.

When we link firstborn donkey, we're having the same representative metaphor apply across the nation: everything you own belongs to me.

4. God's redemption satisfies his claims on your life.

Point: The redemption of the firstborn is a metaphor for Christ's ultimate redemption of all believers.

Audit those domains: are you consecrating your family? Are you consecrating your time? Are you consecrating your possessions?

But more importantly, are you trusting Christ when you fall short? Life in Christ is easy, brothers and sisters, we don't have to wonder what he wants from us and even we we don't get it right, he cares for us.

Let's go to him in prayer.

² Ibid, 372.