



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“The Blessed Life: The Principle of First”

Ps. James Lowe – 1/24/2016

*“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; **it is Mine**... That you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males **shall be the Lord’s**’. “But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem”*
Exodus 13:1, 12-13

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- What did you do when you got your first check?
- What makes “First things” so memorable: First day of school, first job, first kiss?
- What do you think is the greatest barrier that keeps people from being generous?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

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If we want to understand giving God’s way, we need to understand the principle of first. The principle of first is about making sure God is first in our lives. Throughout Scripture, the firstborn, the first-fruits, and the first tenth always belonged to the Lord. Our obedience to this **Principle of First** reveals the condition and priorities of our hearts.

1. The firstborn Must Be Sacrificed or Redeemed

In Exodus, the firstborn among clean beasts had to be sacrificed, while the firstborn of the unclean had to be redeemed. These two classifications are examples of what was to come. God’s firstborn Son, Jesus, was clean and had to be sacrificed. We are unclean, and therefore Jesus was sacrificed for our redemption. God gave Jesus first, in faith, even when we were sinners. Jesus is God’s tithe. When you give the first to God the rest is redeemed.

2. The First-fruits Must Be Offered

Exodus 23:19 says, “The first of the first-fruits of your land you shall **bring** into the house of the Lord your God.” God says to **bring** the first-fruits (and the tithe in Malachi) into the house of the Lord. The reason God uses the word *bring* instead of the word *give* when He talks about tithing is because you can’t give what doesn’t belong to you. According to the Scripture, you have two choices when it comes to the tithe. You can bring it, or you can steal it. There is no other choice.

When God said, “bring all the silver and gold from Jericho,” Achan kept some. And of course then, with the next city, they lost the battle until they brought it to the house of God. In Joshua 6, God calls the tithe consecrated or set apart—the same thing He called the first-born. But, in Joshua 7, once Achan took it, He said, “Israel has stolen from me and they’re cursed.”

God wouldn't receive Cain's offering because he didn't bring the first offering. God's preeminence reminds us He can't and He won't be second.

It's consecrated when you bring it to the house of God. It's cursed if you leave it in your bank account. It takes faith to give the first. It takes faith to believe that 90 percent redeemed and blessed will go farther than 100 percent cursed.

3. The Tithe Must Be First.

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord" (Leviticus 27:30)

All of the tithe is the Lord's. It belongs to God. He set it apart for Himself. That's why it's stealing to keep it, because He set it apart to Himself. That's why it has to be first — because God is first and He owns it. In other words, if we're going to return it, we have to return it *first*.

There are many blessings that go along with tithing, but it is the principle of faith and putting God first that initiates these blessings. The first portion, the tithe, is the portion that redeems the rest. God does not desire a legalistic begrudging response; He desires our hearts to be submitted to Him in joy and faith that His principles are true.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- The principle of first is giving to God before we see if we're going to have enough. What are some financial things in your life that are most likely to conflict with the principle of first?
- How has your giving affected the growth of your faith?
- Are you bringing to God the whole tithe, which belongs to Him?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Pray that you will put God first in everything you do and everything you have.
- Pray that God will bless **all** of your finances as you put him first in your giving.
- Thank God for redeeming your life, for giving his Son to rescue you from bondage.