

Leviticus: Growing Closer to God



- Do you often feel distant from God & wish you had a closer relationship with Him?
- Do you often find your heart cold & apathetic about spiritual things?

The book of Leviticus teaches us that God invites us into a deep intimate relationship with Himself. God has provided an open door to Himself. He has promised that if we move closer to Him, He enthusiastically welcomes us & will move closer to us (James 4:8; 2 Chronicles 15:2). Leviticus begins where the book of Exodus ends—at the bottom of Mount Sinai. The Tabernacle was just completed (Ex. 35-40), and God is ready to teach the people. Leviticus shows us how to *grow close* to God.

Central Lesson: Growing closer to God is possible when we make Him **FIRST** in our lives.

Title: The name Leviticus means “*pertaining to the Levites*.” The book was a manual or guidebook for the Levite priests to help lead Israel in approaching, worshipping & living for God in intimate fellowship.

Author: Moses. Fifty-six times in the 27 chapters of Leviticus it is stated that God gave these laws to Moses (Example: 1:1; 4:1; 6:1, 28; 8:1).

Date: 1450-1410 B.C.

Key Phrase: “**Be HOLY, for I am HOLY**” Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7-8, 26. The word “holy” is used 152 times in Leviticus, more than in any other book of the Bible. The word “**holy**” means: to “**separate**” and “**be devoted**” to God. God had removed Israel from Egypt, and now Egypt had to be removed from Israel. The book of Leviticus taught Israel how to exchange Egyptian ways of living and thinking for God’s ways. In the same way, at salvation, God removes us from this sinful world, places us in His eternal family (Col. 1:13), and makes us positionally holy before Him (1 Peter 2:5, 9-11). At salvation, God removes us from the world; through sanctification (the development of holiness), God removes the world from us. Therefore, every area of our lives must be devoted to God (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Key Verses: Leviticus 20:26; 19:2 **Key Chapters:** Leviticus 18-20

Theme: The key theme of Leviticus is “**CONTINUED fellowship with God through holiness.**”

Leviticus begins with God being near and calling to Moses (and Israel) “... **from the Tent of Meeting**” (Lev. 1:1), whereas, in Exodus, God is distant and speaks from the mountain that burned with fire (Ex. 19:16-19). Leviticus views Israel as **already in fellowship with God** because of their obedience & faith in the shed blood of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:12-14, 23-27).

Leviticus is *not* about how Israel can come into a saving relationship with God. Salvation has already occurred by faith in the Passover lamb. Instead, Leviticus is about how Israel can **maintain a close intimate relationship with**

God through various sacrifices, separation from sin, obedience to God’s laws, and through celebration & worship of God. Leviticus is *not* focused on Israel’s (salvation) *position* in God’s family but on (sanctification) *fellowship—the closeness of their relationship* with God. Leviticus parallels the Apostle John’s emphasis on the Christian’s fellowship with God in 1 John (cf. 1 John 1:3-10).

God is Holy, and His people must seek to live holy lives (Lev. 19:2; 20:7, 26; 1 Peter 1:13-16). God’s people are to be *distinct, different, and separated* from this sinful world (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). God’s people are not to conform to the sinful practices & lifestyles of modern society (Romans 12:2). In this day of moral relativism and promiscuity, the book of Leviticus contains a message that is vital for our world.

Outline:

- I. The **WAY to Holiness:** Sacrificial Offerings (1-10)
 - A. The Sacrificial Offerings (1-7)
 - B. The Priests (8-10)
- II. The **WALK of Holiness:** Scriptural Obedience (11-27)
Laws governing Israel’s conduct & community life

Major Events in Leviticus & Pictures of Christ:

1. **Sacrifices**—Instructions for the **five offerings** (Chapters 1-7). The sacrifices: (1) Taught reverence for the holiness of God by requiring a perfect animal to be sacrificed and a holy priesthood to officiate the sacrifices. (2) It taught submission & obedience to God and His laws. (3) It showed the high cost of sin through the substitutionary death of an animal of great value—sin was not minimized or rationalized away as it is often done today. (4) Most importantly, it illustrated the redemptive sacrifice of the coming Messiah, The Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (John 1:29), who did not destroy the law & ceremonies, but literally fulfilled them (Matthew 5:17).
2. **Priesthood**—the consecration and ministry of the Levite priests are explained and established (Chapters 8-9).
3. **Judgment upon sacrilege**—Two priests, Aaron’s sons Nadab (na-dab) and Abihu (a-bi-hu), disregarded God’s instructions for offering the sacrifices, and fire came from God and consumed them (Chapter 10 esp. v.2). Possibly they were drunk when they offered the sacrifices (cf. 10:9).
4. **Laws**—God gave Israel laws governing various areas of life: food, health, sex, relationships & civil matters, etc. (Chapters 11-27). God was protecting Israel from disease and crime. These laws made Israel *distinct* from the surrounding nations’ idolatrous, unhealthy, and unruly lifestyles.
5. **Worship & Holy Days**—God established seven feasts as religious and national holidays for Israel (Chapter 23). These feasts established an orderly, regular schedule for fellowshiping with God & were often celebrated together as a family. In addition to seven feasts, there was the Sabbath year (one year out of seven) when the fields were allowed to rest (25:1-7) and the Year of Jubilee to be celebrated every 50 years when all debts were to be canceled, slaves freed, and property returned to the original owner (25:8-55). There is no indication in the Bible that the Year of Jubilee was ever carried out.

Central Lesson: Growing closer to God is possible when we make Him **first** in our lives.

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday’s study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week ► Pray for friends that need Jesus..