

L E V I T I C U S

# CALLED

*Walking with a Holy God*

*LifeGroup Studies*

*Leaders' Notes*

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# CALLED

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## Hi LifeGroup Leaders!

The Hebrew title to the book of Leviticus is *vayiqra* 'And he called...'. This comes from the first word of the book 'The LORD called to Moses...' Through Moses, the Lord calls his people to costly worship (Ch 1), Holiness (Ch 10), to be Atoned (Ch 16), to Love of Neighbour (Ch 19), and to All of Life Worship (Ch 23). The reason for this is that he wants to walk among them and be their God, and for them to be his people (Lev 26:12)

In the same way, The LORD calls to us at Figtree, who have been atoned by the blood of Jesus, to walk with him. Leviticus provides an immense resource of wisdom about what this could look like in the Christian life today. My prayer is that it will deepen our understanding of worship, holiness, the atonement, love of neighbour, and rest.

Thanks for taking on the challenge of leading your group through these studies. The studies will go over the passage from the sermon to help provide opportunity for clarification and go deeper. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

## Here's some tips for studying Leviticus with your group:

- **Remember:** God is calling his people to an 'all of life' worship of him. Jesus simplifies this to Love of God, and Love of Neighbour. If you're ever stuck as a group wondering 'what on earth is being talked about?' consider whether it is meant to be an act of love of God, love of neighbour, or a symbolic reminder that every part of a person's life is in some way meant to be given over to God.
- **Flick through the studies and get a gist of what each will cover.** This might save you from having conversations that will be dealt with in more detail later on. For example, we'll look at Sabbath in detail in the final study even though it pops up all over the place in Leviticus.
- **Don't be afraid to look for the principles and push into application questions.** A big fear of doing this series is that we just learn lots of 'knowledge' about Levitical practices, but don't consider what *significant* principles underpin them. I hope the questions lead this well, but it will take time understanding the passage to see God's heart behind these practices which are culturally foreign to us.

Any questions at all just ask :)

**Pete Lenehan**

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## SERIES OVERVIEW

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DATE	THEMATIC	EXEGETICAL
5 May	Misconceptions, Overview Why are we doing this? Sacrifices/Offerings	Called to Costly Worship  Leviticus 1
12 May	Clean/Unclean	Called to Holiness  Leviticus 10
19 May	Atonement/Nature of Sin	Called to be Atoned  Leviticus 16
26 May	Are We Consistent?  Two Types of Cloth	Called to Love of Neighbour  Leviticus 19
2 June	All of Life Worship	Called to Rest  Leviticus 23

# STUDY 1 | COSTLY WORSHIP

## LEVITICUS 1 & ROMANS 12:1-2

### Engaging the Study:

- When people think of Leviticus, what comes to mind?
- What questions do you have (if any) about this book that you would like us to look at over the coming weeks?
- When you think of 'worship', what comes to mind?
- When you think of 'sacrifices/offerings', what comes to mind?

**Optional:** Watch [Bible Project Leviticus Summary](#) (approx. 8 minutes)

[bibleproject.com/explore/video/leviticus](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/leviticus)

**Pray:** Lord, there are some difficult things to understand in your word! We pray for insight and understanding and that you would help us consider what sacrificial worship looks like. Challenge us in our own lives as we reflect on what you called your people to do long ago. Help us to live lives of sacrificial worship today for our Lord Jesus. Amen.

### Read: Leviticus 1 & Romans 12:1-2

**Context:** It may be helpful for you to clarify with your group the following points

- God's people are still at Mt Sinai
- **Chapters 1-7** look at offerings and sacrifices to God. There are 5 offerings: 1) Burnt, 2) Grain, 3) Fellowship, 4) Sin, 5) Guilt. Burnt and Grain offering were usually provided together. Sin and Guilt were often done together. After these, a Fellowship offering may also be done as it was symbolic of fellowship restored with their creator God; enjoying a meal with him!
- These offerings are different to the Day of Atonement offering (Leviticus 16). We'll look in more detail at the Day of Atonement in Study 3.

### Questions for discussion:

#### 1. What are some of the details you noticed or were confused by?

If the group's really stuck you might like to point out some observations:

- Worship was costly! (Bull, Goat, Bird; these would have been valuable)
- Worship involved the "Best" given to God (e.g. animal without defect)
- The worshipper "identified" with the animal (hand on head)
- The worshipper was involved (cleaning the animal)
- The worshipper didn't offer "poo" to God
- Worship was for ALL "when anyone among you brings..." v.2)
- It brought about 'atonement' v.4 - we'll look at atonement in more detail Study 3.

#### 2. God makes provision for various 'degrees' of sacrifice (e.g. Bull, Goat, Bird). What does this tell you about our God?

God wants everyone to be able to come and worship him!

#### 3. The people are to 'lay their hand' on the head of the animal, what do you think was the purpose of this?

It may have been to identify with the animal (particularly during sin/guilt offering) i.e. this animal should be me! We see in 1:4 that by doing so 'it will be accepted on your behalf'. It may have been simply a strong and visceral reminder of the costliness of worship. Worship is depicted as a deeply involved act. You couldn't worship as a by-stander.

# STUDY 1 | COSTLY WORSHIP

## LEVITICUS 1 & ROMANS 12:1-2

### 4. What do you think is the purpose of these sacrifices?

While we are very comfortable with the idea that sacrifice is due to sin. The Burnt offering and Grain offering aren't explicitly dealing with sin, they are also about giving things that are valuable in your life to God as worship of him.

### 5. The sacrifices are highly involved, with the worshipper responsible for cleaning the animal to be sacrificed. Do you think we are 'involved' enough in worship today? What should 'involved' worship look like?

### 6. How do we feel about having an innocent animal sacrificed? How does this shape how we feel about the sacrificial death of Jesus?

If we are shocked by this act, then how much more should we be shocked by the cross and the innocence of Jesus himself? Sacrifice costs. For our vegan/vegetarian friends, it is important to note that animals were not sacrificed because they were worthless, but because they were viewed as extremely valuable and innocent.

### 7. How does this offering/sacrifice shape your understanding of what God's people were called to?

God's people were called to sacrifice to him for unintentional sins (see Lev 4:1), yet the burnt offering seems to be an act of free worship, simply surrendering a whole, valuable, animal or a grain meal to him!

### 8. There are five offerings described in Leviticus 1-7. What do you think this teaches us about worship of God?

There are two sacrifices specifically related to dealing with Sin (The Sin and Guilt Offering), yet God wants more than that from his people. He doesn't just want to forgive and forget, he wants them to engage in 'fellowship' with him (fellowship offering - like having a meal with God!), he wants them to offer from every part of their life, whether that's the grains (grain offering), or the meat (burnt offering)!

### 9. There is both continuity, and discontinuity, between the Old and New Covenants. What do you think is 'continuous' for us today? What do you think is 'discontinuous'? Why?

It's fairly obvious we don't need to sacrifice animals anymore (see Hebrews), we know Jesus is our perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12), yet the principles seem extremely relevant for us today. When we approach worship of God today, do we think of this as an involved, costly, exercise? Even as we try to reclaim these notions of involved and costly, how do we do this whilst making sure worship of the one true God is something everyone can engage with regardless of their means? In what ways does 'consumer-culture' affect the way we think of worship? What would 'costly worship' look like for us on a Sunday? Or during the week? How does this shape your understanding of how we are called to worship today?

*Study continues on the next page...*

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# STUDY 1 | COSTLY WORSHIP

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## LEVITICUS 1 & ROMANS 12:1-2

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10. Worship involved giving the 'best' to God. Do you think we give our best to God as we worship him? What stops us?
11. We can see God's people were called to a costly worship of their Lord by whole offerings to him. What kind of sacrifices do you think God might be calling us to make?
12. How are we to offer ourselves as 'living sacrifices' today? How does Leviticus deepen our understanding of what God calls us to in Romans 12:1-2?

# STUDY 2 | HOLINESS OF GOD

## LEVITICUS 10

### Engaging the Study:

- When you hear the word 'holy' what comes to mind?
- What ideas do you think our world/society has about 'holiness'?
- "Death is too extreme a punishment for sin". Discuss.

**Optional:** Watch Bible Project [What the Idea of "Holiness" Means in the Bible](#)

[youtu.be/l9vn5UvsHvM](https://youtu.be/l9vn5UvsHvM)

**Pray:** Lord, as we learn about your holiness, we pray that we would be moved and challenged by this. Lord, these are some confronting words in your scripture. We pray that you would have us learn what you want about your character, holiness, justice, and goodness. Amen.

### Read: Leviticus 10

**Optional Reads:** Acts 5:1-11; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Hebrews 4:14-16.

**Context:** God has given very specific instructions for how the priests are to approach him in Chapters 8-9. The priests themselves need to be atoned by the blood of a sacrifice from 'top to toe' (8:23). They have a significant responsibility in being mediators of the people God with God himself. It's in this context that Nadab and Abihu directly defy God in Chapter 10 and want to approach him on their own terms.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. **When we talk about 'holiness' what do you think this means?**
  - a. Optional. Ask members to read and share their reflections on the following verses: Gen 2:3; Ex 19:23; Lev 20:7; Num 3:13; Deut 15:19

- b. The word in these verses is *qadosh*, the basic meaning is "to set apart". God is the ultimate 'set apart' one. The one who is distinct, and different, to all else.

2. **We read fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord' (Lev 10:2). Why do you think this occurred?**

3. **Read V.16-18 - We read that Moses is angry with Eleazar. Why?**

Moses is angry at him for not following the Lord's instructions verbatim.

4. **Read Aaron's reply in v.19. Moses is 'satisfied' with this. Why do you think Eleazar was able to 'disobey' yet Nadab and Abihu were killed for their disobedience?**

5. **What do you think this teaches us about the reason for Nadab and Abihu's death?**

My interpretation is that this passage is not about 'legalism' i.e. Nadab and Abihu were not killed for violating a law, they were killed because their hearts were in rebellion against God. In this sense, the story is about Nadab and Abihu experiencing the consequences of sin when it enters into the presence of a Holy, perfect, God. Eleazar 'breaks' the law yet does so for honourable reasons (the grief of his father, i.e. love of neighbour). God is more concerned with people's hearts, and reasons for their actions, than he is with the actions themselves.

*Study continues on the next page...*

## STUDY 2 | HOLINESS OF GOD

### LEVITICUS 10

6. **God says "'Among those who approach me, I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honoured.'" Lev 10:3. How do think this works out in today's world?**

7. **Big Picture Question: There are several of these kinds of events throughout scripture (e.g. Ananias and Sapphira, Sodom and Gomorrah, Sin of Achan). Why do you think these occur? Do you think these people's 'sin' was worse than anyone else in the bible? What do you think is the point of their deaths being recorded in scripture?**

Read 1 Corinthians 10:8-11. I think these passages of scripture are tangible warnings, for all time, that God is real. God is not to be trifled with. One day he will be 'proved holy in the sight of all people'. These moments in scripture are graces to us today to warn us. God is patient and gracious with us.

8. **When you read about the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, what reaction do you have? When you read about the death of Jesus the Son of God, what reaction do you have?**

Explore with the group - have we been desensitised to the death of Jesus? If we have a sense of injustice, or outrage, or concern, at what has occurred for Nadab and Abihu, how do we feel about the cross? How does this story of the deaths of Nadab and Abihu shape our understanding, and our heart response, to the cross?

9. **Overall, this encounter emphasizes the dangerousness of God's holiness. What comfort is there for Christians in this passage? How is God's dangerous holiness a good thing?**

10. **Read Hebrews 4:14-16. How does knowing the story of Nadab and Abihu deepen your understanding of what it means to approach God with confidence?**

**Pray** Father, thank you for your incredible grace towards us. We pray that as we continue to reflect on this part of your word, that you would help us to grasp something of what it means that you are a holy God. Amen.

# STUDY 3 | DAY OF ATONEMENT

## LEVITICUS 16

### Engaging the Study:

- How do you think wrongs should be righted in our world?
- 'Rehabilitation should be the only response to wrong'. Discuss.
- 'Punishment should be the only response to wrong'. Discuss.
- What does the group know about the atonement in the bible?

**Optional:** Watch Bible Project [How God Deals with Evil Without Destroying Humanity](#)

[youtu.be/G\\_OIRWGLdnw](https://youtu.be/G_OIRWGLdnw)

**Pray:** Lord, as we explore this deep truth that you have solved the problem of our sin, we pray that we would never take this for granted, but would be amazed at your justice, love, and compassion for us.

### Read: Leviticus 16

### Optional Reads: Hebrews 10:1-10

**Context:** We are at the heart of the book. Previously, God has explained how he can deal with 'unintentional' sins (see Sin offering 4:1, and Guilt Offering 5:14), yet the question remains: is there any grace for repentant people who have sinned intentionally? What about the sins they haven't even realised? God has spent the first few chapters calling and preparing Israel to live lives of holiness. He now makes clear what is required for the community to live in his presence and how he will deal with 'all' their sins. We will explore how atonement requires both being 'washed' and the consequences dealt with.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. **'The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron' v.1** Why do you think this opens the chapter?
2. **What do you think the word 'atonement' means?**

The word is *kipper* and has at least two primary meanings. 1) 'wash/cover' (expiation) e.g. Noah 'kippered' the Ark with tar (Gen 6:14) and 2) 'deal with anger' (propitiation) e.g. Jacob 'kippered' Esau with a gift (Gen 32:20). Some bibles translate the word as 'expiation' and ignore the dealing with wrath side, others translate it as 'propitiation' and ignore the cleansing side. NIV has gone with 'atonement' to recognise the broad meaning it conveys.

3. **'I will appear in a cloud over the atonement cover' v.2 - what do you think this might symbolise? What is the significance of this?**

This is a symbolic re-enactment of Mt Sinai! See Ex 19:9 it emphasises the closeness of God's presence.

4. **The High Priest and his household needs to be atoned for (v.11). Why do you think this is significant?**
5. **We read that 'things' and 'places' are 'atoned' for in v.20. Where does this fit in our understanding of atonement?**

It teaches that our world, and everything in it, has in some way been stained by the effects of sin. It needs to be atoned for in the sense of being washed clean, made holy (you may like to consider this in light of Rom 8:22).

# STUDY 3 | DAY OF ATONEMENT

## LEVITICUS 16

**6. The vast majority of what is happening is not seen by the people, it is inside the tent. What is the significance of describing this for the people? Why do you think God wants his people to know this?**

Just like us today, God wants his people to know the lengths and extent of his love. Rather than this just being a private, special moment for the High Priest, God clearly reveals to his people what is required to be living life in his presence. Even as he establishes a priesthood, he radically levels the playing field between the priests and the people. There is no 'secret' knowledge.

**7. There are two goats for the sins of the people of Israel. The 'sin offering' (v.15) and the 'scapegoat'/'live goat' (v.21). The passage says that on the scapegoat, 'all their sins' are confessed, and sent away. What do you think this might teach us about the sins of the people?**

- a. This is a symbolic reminder that this ritual doesn't ultimately deal with their sin. There is still an unfinished problem to it. They just have to hope it doesn't come back!
- b. Jesus is never called the scapegoat, why do you think this is the case?
- c. You might like to reflect on Rom 3:25 here.

**8. How does the description of this ritual shape your understanding of Jesus' atonement?**

**9. We've seen that atonement is huge. It is both washing clean, and dealing with righteous anger. When you think about Jesus' atoning work on the cross, what is the main category you think about?**

This passage beautifully brings together the double requirements for wrongs to be righted. First, the consequences of that wrong must be dealt with (sacrifice). Second, the person must be rehabilitated, or made new. In biblical/Levitical language 'cleansed' or 'washed'.

**10. In response to the day of atonement, God's people are called to 'deny themselves' (v.29). Where else have we heard this call? (Hint: Matt 16:24)**

**11. What do you think it looks like for us to 'deny ourselves' today? What is the motivation for this?**

# STUDY 4 | CALLED TO LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR

## LEVITICUS 19

### Engaging the Study:

- “Christians ‘pick and choose’ what to obey from the Old Testament”. Discuss.
- What do people think about these quotes?
  - “Moses is dead. His rule ended when Christ came. He is of no further service,” - Martin Luther
  - “The Law points us to Christ for our Justification, Christ points us back to the law for our Sanctification” - John Stott
  - “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.” - Jesus, Mt 5:17–20.
  - “By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.” Heb 8:13.

**Optional:** Watch Bible Project [The Purpose of the Old Testament Law of Moses in the Bible](#)

[youtu.be/3BGO9Mmd\\_cU](https://youtu.be/3BGO9Mmd_cU)

**Pray:** Lord, as we explore this call to love our neighbour as ourselves, help us to avoid the two pitfalls of ignoring this high call you have for us, but also not settling into a life of guilt and legalism. We pray this in your son’s name. Amen.

**Read: Leviticus 19**

**Optional Reads: Luke 10:25-37**

**Context:** God’s people have been atoned, and he calls them to a holy life. Leviticus 19 is bracketed by some of the most controversial passages in the book about sexual ethics (Leviticus 18 & 20). By placing this chapter in between these two, we see that the heart of God’s commands is love of our neighbour.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. **Why does God want his people to be holy? (v.2)**
2. **There’s a LOT of seemingly random ‘laws’ here, what stands out to you? Do you notice any particular emphases or patterns?**
  - a. The motive for holiness v.2
  - b. Respect for parents and Respect for God by Sabbath & Sacrifice v.3-8
  - c. Love of neighbour v.9-18
  - d. All of Life worship through:
    - i. Symbolic order (representative of the garden) v.19
    - ii. Grace and atonement for Sexual sin v.20-22
    - iii. Symbolic fulfilment of the Edenic Command v.23-25
    - iv. Abstaining from particular practices v.26-29
    - v. Upholding of justice v.33-36
3. **As we read through these commands to God’s people, what stood out to you? What was challenging?**
4. **V.9 - God’s people were commanded to leave ‘gleanings’ for the poor and foreigner. How do you think this principle should play out today in our lives?**
5. **V.14 God wants his people to have a particular care for those with disabilities. In what way do you think this should be reflected in our lives and church today?**

# STUDY 4 | CALLED TO LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR

## LEVITICUS 19

6. **V.15 warns us against partiality to either the poor or the rich. In what ways do you think we might be tempted to show partiality to these groups? What about the 'middle'?**
7. **V.17a 'do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart' is contrasted with 'rebuke your neighbour frankly'. How might these two commands be related?**

I wonder if this is teaching us that part of the solution to holding bitterness in our hearts towards others is by having frank conversations with them?

8. **V.17b 'rebuke your neighbour frankly so you will not share in their guilt' what do you think this looks like for us today? This is smack-bang next to v.18. How does it shape our understanding of love of neighbour?**
9. **V. 18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord." The Lord contrasts a 'grudge' with 'love our neighbour'? How does this enhance our understanding of what it means to love others?**

This verse contrasts holding a grudge with love of neighbour.

### 10. V.19 What's up with these commands?

Lots of debate from commentators on these. The view I find most helpful is that God just wants every aspect of his people's lives, whether that's their clothes, their fields, their animals, to be reflective of order and purpose, reflecting that their God is a God of order and purpose. Nothing particularly wrong with planting to crops next to each other :)

### 11. V.20 - We can often think of the Old Testament law as quite unforgiving. How has reading these detailed commands enhanced your understanding of what it might look like for us to love our neighbour today?

How do we pursue this without falling into legalism?

# STUDY 5 | CALLED TO ALL OF LIFE WORSHIP

## LEVITICUS 23

### Engaging the Study:

- Have you ever been on a weekend away, Christian camp, or some other intentional retreat? In what way did that affect your faith?
- How do people plan out their years, and future?

**Pray:** Lord, as we explore these festivals, and this call to rest, you gave to your people, challenge us we pray and the call you make on our lives regarding how we think about our time and how we rest in you. Amen.

### Read: Leviticus 23

### Optional Read: Leviticus 25; Mark 2:23-28

**Context:** God has given his people commands for how to live individually, yet he also gives them commands for how to live as a community and how they are to corporately worship him. Chapter 23 looks at the 'year', Chapter 25 helps God's people think about a 'lifetime' of worship and intentionally stopping to give thanks and praise to God.

"Israel's appointed feasts and festivals were unique times they would meet with God. All of the festivals combine to form an ongoing disruption to the people's lives, designed to form the way they saw and participated in the world." (Bible Project)

### Questions for Discussion:

**1. All of the festivals seem to have a common element of 'rest' as the primary means of worship. Because of this, we'll focus on exploring the Sabbath today:**

- a. What do you think is the role of the Sabbath in the Christian life?

- b. God's call to Obey the Sabbath was his fourth commandment. How do you think this shapes its importance if at all?
- c. Jesus said to not be legalistic about work on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28), how should this shape how we think about it?
- d. God calls us into his 'rest' (Heb 4:10), in what ways do you think our lives should be a demonstration of this 'rest'?
- e. How do you think we 'rest' whilst also being people who 'strenuously contend' for gospel ministry? (Col 1:29)
- f. The assumption in the Old Testament seems to be that God's people would work 6days/week. Do you think we "rest" too much or not enough in our modern world?
- g. Broader society now ignores any idea of a day being set aside for Christian worship e.g. footy games, kids' sport, shopping, friends birthday parties, social events; all often scheduled on Sundays during our regular service. How do you think we should respond as Christians? How do you navigate this as a Christian personally?
- h. Some Christians might argue we need to set aside a literal Sabbath to devote to God and rest. Others argue 'sabbath rest' should be part and parcel of how we go about our daily lives. They argue setting aside a particular day is not practical in our modern world. What do you think are the pros/cons of each position?

*Study continues on the next page...*

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# STUDY 5 | CALLED TO ALL OF LIFE WORSHIP

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## LEVITICUS 23

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2. Lev 23:9 - God wanted his people to dedicate the 'firstfruits' of their labour to him. To what extent do you think this principle should still be present in our lives today? What do you think this could look like in our lives?
3. Day of Atonement  
While we've already looked at the day of atonement in detail, we now read that 'Those who do not deny themselves on that day must be cut off from their people.' Lev 23:29. How do we respond to this? Why is this so serious?
4. Quote from The Bible Project: "These festivals combine to form an ongoing disruption to the people's lives, designed to form the way they saw and participated in the world." In what ways could we intentionally allow our lives to be 'disrupted' and remind us of worship of God?
5. How does this part of scripture enhance your understanding of the importance of regular services such as Easter, and Christmas, and even just regularly gathering together? What about Christian retreats?
6. How do we apply some of the principles we've learnt today without falling into the trap of having the 'people for the Sabbath' rather than the 'Sabbath for the people'?



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