

Learning to love Leviticus

Abby Van Solkema

Did you inwardly groan when you read the title of this month's devotional? Leviticus? Really? If you did, you are not alone. Leviticus is one of the least read books of the Bible, and therefore one of the least understood books as well. What do animal sacrifices, ritual purity, and priestly practices have to do with us as believers today? I must admit that I was also filled with a certain amount of reluctance when contemplating the book of Leviticus for this month. I have never personally studied Leviticus before because it seemed too intimidating. But once I started digging into it, I was pleasantly surprised at what I found. Second Timothy 3:16 reminds us that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and Leviticus is no exception.

When we finished up our study of Exodus in March, we saw that God had set apart Israel at Sinai to be his special, chosen people. He had given them the ten commandments and other laws to show them how to live differently from the other nations. Moses had directed them to construct the tabernacle according

to the instructions he received from God, and the Lord came to dwell in the tabernacle with all his glory. But at the very end of Exodus a problem is presented. "And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (40:35). If even Moses couldn't enter the tabernacle because God dwelled there, how could anyone else? The solution to this problem comes in the book of Leviticus. It contains God's direct revelation to Moses about what is necessary for the people to dwell with God.

Our heavenly Father is holy, meaning that he is entirely pure and good, completely free of any moral imperfection. God's holiness is the attribute that is mentioned most often in Scripture. It is essential to his character. Yet his people are completely sinful, unable to obey his laws and therefore not able to have fellowship with One who is so powerfully perfect. So how can a holy God dwell with his unholy people? This is a problem that God's people have faced ever since Adam and Eve sinned and were cast out of the garden of Eden, no

longer able to dwell with him as friend-servants. It is a problem that we are unable to solve ourselves. Yet our merciful Father has graciously provided a way for this fellowship to be restored.

Immediately following the fall, we read that God killed an animal to make coats of skins to cover the shame of Adam and Eve. From the very beginning, it was clear that blood must be shed in order to atone for the sin of man. Sacrifice is necessary for salvation. This theme of atonement shines through especially in the first half of Leviticus, where God gives detailed instructions for how the priests are to intercede for the people and carry out all the different sacrifices to take away the guilt of the people's sin. The second half of Leviticus emphasizes the theme of holiness, which is closely connected to atonement. Not only must the guilt of the people's sin be taken away so that they could have fellowship with God, but they also had to follow his rules for godly living. Leviticus expands on the laws of Exodus by going into more detail about how the people were to live and worship and establishing punishments for not following these laws.

All the rules, laws, and rituals in Leviticus were instructional for the daily life of Old Testament believers. But as believers in the New Testament, we have the freedom to see these things in a different

light—as signs that point ahead to Christ. We are able to experience what the Israelites could only anticipate. Hebrews 10 reminds us that repeated animal sacrifices are no longer necessary because Christ came to be the ultimate sacrifice, atoning for our sins once and for all. The priesthood is no longer necessary because Christ came to be the perfect high priest, who continually intercedes for his people in heaven. We also have the Spirit of Christ in us, who cleanses us from all sin and works sanctification in us so that we can more and more live a holy life that is pleasing to God. What a blessing it is that we are no longer prevented from entering into fellowship with our heavenly Father, "having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest [place] by the blood of Jesus" (v. 19).

Although Leviticus does paint a beautiful picture of the work of Christ on our behalf, it can still be somewhat challenging to read. Many of the daily passages that you will read from Leviticus are quite long and filled with obscure details about Old Testament rules. For our purposes in reading through the entire book devotionally in one month, I would encourage you to use a study Bible to help you grasp the main idea of what each section of verses is describing and not get too bogged down in trying to understand every single aspect of the rituals and regulations. It also

may be helpful to split some of the longer readings into two parts and read half in the morning and half in the evening. Leviticus may not be the easiest book of the Bible to read, but with some persistence you

will uncover many amazing truths about who God is and how he graciously provides a way for us to live as his people. And maybe you will even learn to love Leviticus along the way!

Date	Read	Study	Psalter
May 8	Lev. 1:1-17	What does it mean that the burnt offering was "of a sweet savour unto the LORD" (v. 9)? How can Christians today offer this same "sweetsmelling savour" (see Eph. 5:1-2)?	258
May 9	Lev. 2:1-16	What is the significance of the fact that the grain offering was always offered in tandem with one of the other bloody sacrifices?	109
May 10	Lev. 3:1-17	The peace offering was the only one of these five sacrifices that the worshiper could eat. What does this teach us about the benefits of our relationship with God (see Rom. 5:1-2)?	137
May 11	Lev. 4:1-5:13	How does sin (whether intentionally or ignorantly committed) make us unfit for fellowship with the Lord? What is the only way for us to be cleansed from our sin?	41
May 12	Lev. 5:14-6:7	How does sin put us in debt to God? What is the only way for satisfaction to be made for this debt?	362
May 13	Lev. 6:8-7:10	What can we learn from the fact that the priests were able to partake of some of the food from certain offerings?	363
May 14	Lev. 7:11-38	How did the sacrificial system of the Old Testament maintain fellowship between the people and the Lord? How does Christ do this in an even better way in the New Testament?	8
May 15	Lev. 8:1-36	Why was the office of priest necessary? How does Christ fulfill this office by serving as the perfect priest? (See Heb. 7:20ff.)	302
May 16	Lev. 9:1-24	The Israelites witnessed the presence of God through fire (v. 24). How do believers experience the presence of God in our worship today?	4

May 17	Lev. 10:1-20	What was the essential sin of Nadab and Abihu? How can you guard your heart against committing this same sin?	51
May 18	Lev. 11:1-47	The Israelites had to be discerning about which animals they came into contact with. How are believers today called to be discerning in order to live a holy life? (See Eph. 5:6-10.)	76
May 19	Lev. 12:1-8	How does this chapter remind us of the effect that Adam's original sin has on all mankind? What characteristic of Christ's birth ensured that he would be able to save us from this original sin?	140
May 20	Lev. 13:1-59	How are leprosy and other skin conditions a picture of sin and the effect that it has on man? What does Jesus' healing of many lepers during his ministry add to this picture?	144
May 21	Lev. 14:1-57	What are the two birds in this chapter symbolic of? (See Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3-4.)	277
May 22	Lev. 15:1-33	How can you see the great burden of following the ceremonial laws in this chapter? How have believers in the New Testament been freed from this burden? (See also Matt. 9:20-22.)	246
May 23	Lev. 16:1-34	How does the scapegoat ritual (vv. 21-22) illustrate the truth of Psalm 103:12? What comfort does this give the believer?	284
May 24	Lev. 17:1-16	What is blood a picture of in the Bible? Why do you think God commanded the Israelites not to eat blood?	217
May 25	Lev. 18:1-30	How does the description of sexual impurity in this chapter differ from how it is portrayed in the media today? How can you guard your heart against callousness to this sin?	233
May 26	Lev. 19:1-37	How does the diversity of the commands in this chapter emphasize the fact that we are called to holiness in every part of our lives? How can you grow in holiness?	369

May 27	Lev. 20:1-27	How do the severe punishments for disobedience in this chapter emphasize the seriousness of sin? What do you deserve as punishment for your sin?	321
May 28	Lev. 21:1-24	Why was it so important for the priests to be pure? Do the same standards apply to church leaders today? (See also 2 Cor. 6:4-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 2:7-8.)	282
May 29	Lev. 22:1-33	Why was it necessary for the sacrificial animals to be without blemish?	72
May 30	Lev. 23:1-22	What were each of the feasts listed in these verses supposed to help Israel remember about the Lord and what he has done for his people?	164
May 31	Lev. 23:23-44	How will Christ fulfill the blowing of trumpets, day of atonement, and feast of tabernacles?	172
June 1	Lev. 24:1-9	What can you learn from the fact that the people of Israel were responsible for supplying the pure oil and holy bread for the tabernacle?	357
June 2	Lev. 24:10-23	What is the seriousness of blasphemy? How can you guard your heart against this sin?	168
June 3	Lev. 25:1-22	What were the sabbatical and jubilee years meant to remind the people about the land that God had promised to give them in Canaan? What can you learn from this?	180
June 4	Lev. 25:23-55	What is the significance of the fact that no Israelite person or part of the land of Canaan could be sold permanently? What is this a picture of?	227
June 5	Lev. 26:1-46	Make a list of all the covenant blessings that God promises in this chapter. How will we experience these blessings even more fully in heaven?	185
June 6	Lev. 26:1-46	As you read through this chapter again, notice all the curses that God promises to the disobedient. How do they remind you of the importance of repentance?	237
June 7	Lev. 27:1-34	What should believers consider before making a vow? (See also Eccl. 5:1-7.)	182