

MANual Lessons from Leviticus

Our journey to becoming better men continues with lessons from the book of Leviticus. As with the first two posts about Genesis and Exodus, I'm using The **MANual**, a Bible that provides honest and straightforward answers about our role as Christian men. My goal for posts on each book of the Bible is to help more men learn to follow Jesus instead of a culture that acts unholy much of the time.

Typically, many people stop reading the Bible at Leviticus since it begins with detailed instructions about burnt offerings designed to cover the sins of the people against God and their guilt over those sins. Today, burning animals seems very strange to us (at least not in my part of the country!) so why read about them.

Let's learn how a different kind of offering can, in fact, lead to a more holy life.

Leviticus: Practical Holiness

Like Genesis and Exodus, Leviticus is one of the five books of Moses. It consists of 27 chapters written approximately 1445 BC. The setting is the foot of Mount Sinai where the people of Israel settle after wandering in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt.

The blueprint for Leviticus is about how to worship a Holy God and how to live a holy life. God provided the Israelites instructions and the commandment: "I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God, therefore be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:45).

The word "holy" or "holiness" is mentioned more times in this book than in any other part of the Bible. Being holy means to be "set apart" for a life of righteousness and total devotion to God. It's the notion of being set apart for a special

purpose. God wants His people to be morally and spiritually different from other people so we can make a difference during our time here on earth.

How can we as unholy people, sinful by nature, be like our Holy God?

By first dealing with our sin.

Rules, Rules, Rules. Who Needs More Rules!

The first 17 chapters of Leviticus include ground rules for how God wanted the Israelites to live as holy people. These instructions teach about the nature of God and how to develop the right attitudes about the worship of Him.

There are details in Leviticus about animal sacrifices, which were very symbolic gestures at the time. Burnt offerings of bulls, goats, sheep, and offering grains were important to the people for two reasons:

1. to show their praise, thankfulness, and devotion.
2. as an atonement (make amends or reparation) for their sins.

Sacrificial offerings showed that the person was giving up a life to God to remove the guilt of their own sins. Today, God simply wants us to offer ourselves into a more holy life, rather than burning animals or symbolic offerings.



God's Forgiveness

To be completely forgiven means that nothing we do can separate us from God's love. Jesus already paid the price on the cross. We are no longer bound by the power of the sin within us. He did nothing to deserve that horrible fate and we

do not deserve this gift of God's grace.

However, when we begin to live a holy life and repent from our sins, we show God that we love Him as well.

- What guilt do you still carry with you? Pray now for God to release you from the guilt that hinders your spiritual growth.

After defining the instructions for offerings, the book of Leviticus instructs the priests on the orderly worship of God and a regular pattern of fellowship with Him. It defined times of celebration and thanksgiving, as well as times of reverence and rededication, that demonstrated their devotion to God.

Leviticus also describes how the motives and practices of people's lives reflect their devotion.

Just like Cain and Abel in Genesis 4, and Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25, the lives of the sons of Aaron, Moses' brother demonstrate the consequences of sin.

Nadab and Abihu had examples of holiness in action all around them in their father, Aaron, their uncle, Moses, and their aunt, Miriam. But these brothers abused their responsibility as priests and disrespected God's instructions for worship and suffered a fiery death.

MYTHS
BUSTED

Going to Church Once a Week is Enough to Have a Spiritual Life

According to a 2007 Barna Research study, only 56% of those

who attend a Christian church say they are absolutely committed to the Christian faith. Another 33% are moderately committed.

Does this show devotion to God who loves us immeasurably?

Maybe you attend a church because you like contemporary music or the preacher teaches with the Bible in hand. Even if you attend church consistently (or watch it online during this pandemic), are you really devoted to practices for spiritual growth?

At its most basic level, the church is really about people. It's not a building or a series of meetings. It not a type of music or stained glass windows. It is a body of believers under the command of God, who are learning to follow the ways of Jesus.

Let's be realistic. Nobody excels in anything if they only do it for one hour a week. The same holds true for our spiritual lives. Can we know God well if we only think about Him on Sunday?

What's more important is a consistent pattern of worship and engagement with God's people who help your spiritual growth.

- Do you lead your family by wanting to go to church each week?
- Do you read a daily or weekly devotional or participate in a small group Bible study?
- How do you prepare for worship, both inside the church and worship throughout your daily life?

Leviticus continues after the death of Aaron's sons with instructions about clean and unclean food. It explains purification after childbirth and the treatment of skin disease (like Leprosy), contaminated clothing and households,

and bodily discharges. These directives were provided to protect Israel from the communal health problems of those days.

Leviticus also provides instructions for the altar to help the priests “atone” (Hebrew meaning “to cover”) the sins of the people. The Israelites had moved from one idol-infested country (Egypt) to another (Canaan) so God needed to warn them to leave behind the immoral and drunken practices of those pagan cultures. This was especially important for the plethora of forbidden sexual activities defined in chapter 18 (especially detestable ones like sex with your father’s wife - his new wife, not your mother, or sex with your brother’s wife, your aunt, your neighbor, another man, and even animals).

These rules were established to keep the Israelites pure and set apart for God’s purposes.



God is Holy

When the Bible declares God as holy, it means He is absolutely pure and perfect. Because of this holiness, God does not mix what is holy and unholy. He needed rules to separate His people from the others. This hard-to-grasp concept makes it hard for most of us today to accept the charge to become holy.

- What disciplines do you practice that help you become more holy?
- Do you still hold onto some ancient rituals that hold you back from knowing God and accepting His free grace?

Chapters 18-27 of Leviticus then provide God's instructions for a holy life. He desires our absolute obedience in motive and in practice. He also outlined some new practices for the people like observing the Sabbath, celebrating holy events such as The Passover, the Day of Atonement, and enjoying sacred feasts.

Some of the last chapters of Leviticus describe the rewards of obedience (peace in the land, look over them with favor, increase their numbers). They also describe the penalty for disobedience (sudden terror, diseases and fever, punishment for sin seven times over, laying waste of the land).

But the last chapter concludes by explaining the value of our dedication to worship and obedience to God. It's through Christ that we sinners are made holy and acceptable to God. This enables us to live radically different ("holy lives") that show what it means to believe in a holy God.



Reward for Our Obedience

God keeps His promises. He is dependable and reliable. His instructions for a holy life helped set the Israelites apart from others but still apply to us today. The Bible is full of examples of God disciplining the people. It's also full of the rewards of pursuing a more holy life.

- What aspect of obedience is most difficult for you?



God Buddy Focus

No one likes to be told what to do or what to believe these days. It's our human nature. So although the book of Leviticus seems awfully restricting, it also reminds us of the rewards of being a faithful believer.

Once we understand the eternal benefits of our obedience to God, we can then begin living a more holy and fulfilling life.

This week:

1. Identify some new practices that help increase your holiness.
2. Talk those practices over with a God Buddy. Ask him to hold you accountable by reporting on your progress in these new goals.

Remember to comment for each post so we keep the conversation going and help each other become more godly men.