

# The Holiness of God

## The Holiness of God (Week 1/6) Approaching a Holy God

### Small Group Discussion Questions

**Connect** *What is one habit that you can change to be a better steward of all that God has entrusted to you?*

#### Warm-Up

1. What are your impressions of Leviticus? What parts have you found strange or challenging?

#### Read Leviticus 1:1-9

2. Who is giving instructions? Why is God addressing Moses from the tent of meeting?  
(Hint: read Exodus 40:34-38)
3. What is God giving instructions about? What type of detail does he include?
4. How are the sacrifices God instructs *similar* and *different* from other cultures?
5. Why are sacrifices *required* when the Lord comes to dwell with his people? What does the sacrificial system *expose* about the gap between humanity and the Lord?
6. In Leviticus 11:45, the Lord describes himself as holy. How would you define the holiness of God?
7. Why is God's holiness a problem for sinful people?
8. Imagine you were an Israelite, needing to follow all these instructions. What would the continual *practice* of these different offerings and sacrifices teach you about God's holiness?

#### Read Leviticus 5:17-19

9. What does a person need to do if they sin (intentionally or unintentionally)?
10. How does the sacrificial system show sin demands justice? What is the cost for sin?
11. How does the sacrificial system show that sin requires help? Who needs to be involved in sacrifices?
12. How does the sacrificial system show that sin requires grace? What is God's response to sacrifice?
13. Did God need to create the sacrificial system? Why is it actually a gracious provision for the people?

#### Read Hebrews 10:1-10

14. Why wasn't the sacrificial system not enough to *permanently* deal with our sin?
15. In what ways does Jesus' death for us satisfy the demand for justice, help us as the ultimate mediator, and is accepted by God?
16. Have you ever doubted your worthiness before God? What type of things do you worry about?
17. Read Hebrews 10:10. How should Jesus' death for you give you confidence that you are worthy and holy? What type of access - *in Christ and by the power of the Spirit* - do we have with God today?

**Apply** *This week, what would it look like to delight in God's presence with you?*

**Pray** *Holy God, thank you for your commitment to us, that you found a way to permanently deal with our sin. Help us not lose sight of what it cost our Lord that we can draw close to you and dwell with you forever. Amen.*

# GOING DEEPER

## **The Holiness of God (Week 1/6) Approaching a Holy God**

Small Group Discussion Questions

### **On Your Frontline this Week**

*Who can you bring along to the Alpha Course this week?*

### **For Families**

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: [stbartskids.org](http://stbartskids.org)

### **Listen, Watch, and Read**

- *Listen (sermon):* “Leviticus 1:1-15:33” by Andrew Sach:  
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/52386/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “#1 Sacrifices” by Des Smith:  
<https://www.trinity.org.au/lockleys/sermons/1-sacrifices/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Sacrifice: Fellowship with God” by Pete Wilkinson  
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/sacrifice-fellowship-with-god/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Everything’s got to be perfect” by Richard Bewes:  
[https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show\\_media=49608&show\\_file=52914](https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=49608&show_file=52914)

### **Series Resources**

- *RRead (book):* “Leviticus: A 12-Week Study” by Michael LeFebvre.
- *Read (book):* “Rediscovering Holiness” by J I Packer.
- *Read (book):* “Holiness” by J C Ryle. 📖
- *Read (commentary):* “Leviticus” by Katy Davis.
- *Watch (website):* “The Book of Leviticus” by the BibleProject:  
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-leviticus/>

📖 [Available to borrow in the Church library](#)

## LEVITICUS: THE HOLINESS OF GOD

*Week 1/6 “Approaching a Holy God”  
by Amy Norman (12/10/2025)*

거룩하신 하나님께 다가감  
亲近圣洁的上帝  
Ba roṯ Nhialic Loṯiik  
பரிசுத்த தேவனை அணுகுவது

*Bible Passage: Leviticus 1-7*

---

*Holy Lord, please as we come to your Word,  
would your Spirit equip us with insight and understanding.  
In Christ, continue to form us as your holy people.  
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

---

---

One of the most recognisable buildings in the world is the White House. And if you visit, you can see the building through a security fence, but that's probably as close as you'll get. I don't recommend jumping over the fence, just to get a closer photo. Of course, the building is not special because of what it looks like, but because of *who* lives and works there. No one can just walk into the Oval Office and have lunch with the President. Even if you are serving the President in his army, you still can't access him.

---

- In the same way, you can't just walk up to the Lord.  
He is not just the ruler of one country but the entire universe.
- And unlike a President, God is not like us. The Lord is holy.
- Approaching the Holy Lord is *far more problematic* than approaching the White House.  
But the story of the Bible is how God *makes a way* for us to approach him.
- Here in Leviticus, we are in the middle of God's plan to be with his people.  
The Lord has rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt.  
The Lord has led them through the Red Sea to safety.  
The Lord has made a covenant with them at Mt Sinai.  
*And now* he is setting forth his plan to come and dwell with them.
- For a group of grumbling, sinful, and unholy people - that is a problem.  
Just recently *these same people* epically failed to keep God's covenant, even hours after agreeing to it! They have a pretty terrible track record.  
So it begs the question: *How can an unholy people approach and live with a holy God?*

- That is what Leviticus is about. It's about how God is making a way to be with his people. His directions and instructions all throughout Leviticus *reveal God's holiness*. they shapes how the people are to relate to God, they expose the danger of sin being in proximity to him, and show what is required for *us to be holy*.
- So how can an unholy people approach a holy God? Here in Leviticus chapters 1-7 we see **a surprising approach,** **the key ingredients,** and **the ultimate goal.**

3

## A SURPRISING APPROACH | LEVITICUS 1:1-9

놀라운 접근 | 出人意料的接近 | Cöt dë röt Gei | ஒரு ஆச்சரியமான அணுகுமுறை

*First*, it's **a surprising approach** God has in mind. There is so much of this section that we can just find strange and perplexing! So let's have a look. *Chapter 1, verse 1 ...*

---

The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. He said, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When anyone among you brings an offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock.

"If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you. You are to slaughter the young bull before the LORD, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting. You are to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. *Leviticus 1:1-9*

---

- This is all very detailed and very graphic - but it is just a *small* part of all the instructions the Lord gives in chapters 1-7.
- There is just *a lot* of sacrifice. There are burnt offerings, grain offerings, sin offerings, guilt

4

offerings, ordination offerings, and fellowship offerings.

- God gives instructions about the selection of bulls, sheep, goats, doves, pigeons, flour, olive oil, and incense. He tells which organs to cut out, which to wash, and which to burn.
- There is a lot of blood and a lot of dead animals.
- The whole thing is pretty overwhelming and strange.  
It is so *far* removed from our experiences and how we come to worship God.

- In the ancient world, this was much *more* familiar. Surrounding cultures would have expected a detailed list of instructions for offerings and sacrifices.
- But of course that doesn't mean that God's people should automatically do this sort of thing. But note here - these instructions and practices are not mirroring culture. They are from God. They are instructed by God. And they set God's people apart.
- One obvious difference to other cultures is that there are no human sacrifices. But even more surprisingly, the Israelites are given these sacrifices *by the Lord*, not to appease him but in order to relate to him.
- God gives these instructions because he is committed to dwelling with them.
- God makes it clear that sacrifices were *required* to make that possible!  
This surprising approach *is what the people needed* in order for God to dwell with them.
- The sacrifices that God instructed *exposed* that there is a gap between people and God.

5

Sacrifices *exposed* just how serious and costly the gap really is, between our unholiness and God's holiness. /

- As the theologian Millard Erikson explains:

---

"There are two basic aspects to God's holiness. The first is his uniqueness. He is totally separate from all creation. ... The other aspect of God's holiness is his absolute purity and goodness. This means that he is untouched and unstained by the evil in the world. He does not in any sense participate in it."

---

- God's holiness is in some sense, a way of describing the very God-ness of God.  
He is the Creator of all - utterly different to *everything* created in heaven and earth.  
He is perfectly pure and good - he can't compromise or put up with evil.
- His complete *divine otherness* and *moral perfection* is why it is so problematic for people marred by sin and evil to come close.  
God can not tolerate or just turn a blind eye to it.  
And so one of the *implications* of God's holiness is right judgement on *everything* that is evil.
- Sometimes I've fallen into the trap of thinking God's holiness *is only* an attribute that separates (which it does do that). But here in Leviticus, the Holy God is drawing close to his people, and inviting them to *also* be holy.
- Because we are part and contribute to sin in the world,  
we can not stand in the presence of a Holy God alone.//

6

- The important thing about sacrifices and rituals is that they aren't really meant to be understood just by *reading about them*, but the point of these instructions is that you would do them.
- Just like you can understand the vastness of the ocean by reading about it, it is something you need to see to understand.
- And graciously, God made a way for the people to see and understand *his holiness*, and what it cost to approach him.  
They would see and smell the blood spilled. They would see the special care and attention needed by the priests, managing different offerings.  
They would personally experience the cost, as they brought an animal they had reared and cared for as an offering to the Lord.
- The sacrifices and offerings were a constant tangible reminder of the vast chasm between the people and God, and of how God was making a way for his people to approach him, and what God's holiness *really* means.

7

## THE KEY INGREDIENTS | LEVITICUS 5:17-19

핵심 요소 | 关键要素 | Dëët dë yic | முக்கிய மூலப்பொருள்

Second, let's zoom in on the **key ingredients**.

- We don't have time to unpack all the different types of sacrifices listed here. But we should note *that they are different*.
- There was the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the ordination offering, and the fellowship offering.
- Reading through all these, you'll notice they were often used in different combinations.
- The sacrifices that relate to sin *should* stand out to us.  
They are constantly in focus, as sacrifices deal with different types of sins, and progressively they lead up to the *heart* of Leviticus - the Day of Atonement.  
This was a series of sacrifices and offerings once a year, which in a special way made atonement for all the sins for the whole community of Israel.
- We will look at that in detail in the coming weeks, but to help us be ready for that, let's pay attention here to the key ingredients of the offerings related to sin.  
The ingredients God provides: justice, help, and grace.  
*Leviticus 5, verse 17 gives a summary ...*

8

---

“If anyone sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands, even though they do not know it, they are guilty and will be held responsible. 18 They are to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for them for the wrong they have committed unintentionally, and they will be forgiven. 19 It is a guilt offering; they have been guilty of wrongdoing against the LORD.” *Leviticus 5:17-19*

---

- Exactly what you bring when you sin intentionally or unintentionally changes, but throughout the sacrificial system, there is a pattern of justice, help, and grace.
- This is what God instructs and provides *in order* that their sin may be dealt with.
- First, the sacrificial system shows sin demands **justice**.  
There is a consequence for sin - whether it is intentional or unintentional.  
And the consequence is death. None of the sacrifices are half-hearted about this.  
It’s not that just *some* blood is poured out (in a way that you can patch it up to heal), but each time the payment is the death of an animal, on behalf of the person who sinned.
- This embedded justice, where there is penalty and consequences for harming others, is a good thing for the flourishing of the community.
- It reflects the character of God as the perfect judge, who longs for justice.  
It reflects God’s holiness, that he can’t just overlook or minimise *any* hint of sin and evil.  
God’s justice and his judgement works *towards* correcting and upholding the right relationships between God and humanity, and between people,

9

and between us and God’s world.

- The sacrificial system God instituted demands justice for sin, for, as verse 19 states, sin is ultimately against the Lord.  
And therefore a sacrifice is required *to the Lord*, for sin done *against the Lord*.
- Second, the sacrificial system shows us that sin requires **help**.  
It requires an external mediator.
- Notice that *none* of the sacrifices and offerings are DIY projects.  
All sacrifices require the involvement of the Lord, the worshipper, and a mediator.
- The mediator is simply a set apart person, authorised to offer the sacrifices to God.  
In the tabernacle, you *need* a priest to offer your sacrifice.  
In fact, these chapters in Leviticus aren’t written as a handbook for the priests, they are written as instructions *for the people* - so they would know what to bring under what circumstances.
- The need for a mediator shows us that sin is not just a private, personal, and secret issue.
- Finally, the sacrificial system shows us that for sin to be atoned for, there must be **grace**.  
Ultimately, the sacrifice can only be accepted by God.
- Sacrifices are of course offered to God, it is clear that just *perfect* performance of the



offerings is not enough.

- Even though people are doing things, it takes a response.  
And this whole approach is a gracious provision from God.  
He didn't have to do it.  
The people had turned their back on God and broke the covenant *nearly* immediately after they had committed to it.  
But God *persisted* in creating a way to be with his people (beginning here with the tabernacle and sacrifices).
- The sacrificial system was not like a vending machine, add enough bulls and out pops forgiveness.  
*Forgiveness is personal.*  
Sin is against the Lord. Thus it is only God who accepts sacrifices, and offers forgiveness in response.
- The sacrificial system is at its heart relational, as God shows his sinful people how they are to live among him, making the way for justice, providing help, and offering grace.

11

## THE ULTIMATE GOAL | HEBREWS 10:1-10

궁극적인 목표 | 终极目标 | Këe bă Lôi thiék yic | பிரதான இலக்கு

Finally, the sacrificial system had a place, but it was not **the ultimate goal**. It pointed ahead to the ultimate way that God would provide for us to approach him. It pointed ahead to the ultimate once-for-all sacrifice yet to come.

*Hebrews 10, verse 1 ...*

---

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,  
but a body you prepared for me;  
with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.  
Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—  
I have come to do your will, my God.’” *Hebrews 10:1-7*

---

12



The problem with the sacrificial system was that the sacrifices were never enough to *completely* take away sin.

- As Hebrews says, if they *were perfectly effective*, they wouldn't need to keep being repeated.
  - But instead they were repeated. Year after year, month after month, sin after sin. They were a reminder that sin, the gap between God and his people, still remained.
  - In fact, the law, including the sacrificial system, was a *shadow* of the good things to come. As it says, it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away our sin.
  - It is not that God made a mistake in requiring sacrifice,  
And then he later came up with a more modern and more sanitised plan.
  - Rather, the *purpose* was to point ahead to what God would ultimately do,  
how we would perfectly dwell with God forever.
- 
- God was working out a *permanent* way to dwell with his people.  
That is the whole trajectory of the Bible, the whole trajectory of salvation history.  
The finale, the main theme of New Creation, is God dwelling with his people!
  - A Holy God can freely dwell with his people,  
for the Lord, in Christ, would *permanently* deal with our sin and make us holy.
  - All these sacrifices *exposed* our need - our need for our sin to be dealt with,  
our need for someone to step in and help,

13

our need for God's response of forgiveness and grace.

- God provides us *the ultimate* way we can approach him in all his holiness,  
through the sacrifice of his son Jesus. >

14

## CONCLUSION

---

In Alpha, Nicky tells a story of a soldier needing to get help from the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. The soldier's father had died and his family desperately needed his help, but he was an enlisted soldier. Only the President could release him. He travelled to the White House, but of course he wasn't let in. He sat hopeless in the garden, and a young boy approached him wondering why he was so sad. He told his story to the boy, explaining how only the President could help. The boy got up, dragged the soldier towards the White House, and then straight through all the rooms to Abraham Lincoln! No one stopped the soldier, for the boy leading him was Abraham's son.

---

- *Right now*, in Christ, we have access to God because of the Son of God.  
By his Spirit, we can cry out to God and delight in his presence - *wherever we are*.
  - We don't have to seek out a special tent, find a priest and a bull.  
We don't need to wonder if the sacrifice we are bringing is enough for our sin.
  - Through the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf,  
we can enjoy God with us by the power of his Spirit *today* and wherever we are this week.
  - God's presence with you is not dependent on *how you feel* or *what you have done*,  
for the reason we can *now* approach a holy God, is that Jesus has gone ahead of us.
  - As Hebrews says,
- 

... we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. *Hebrews 10:10*

---

15

---

*Gracious Father, thank you that our sin didn't cause you to abandon us -  
but that you persisted in finding a way to permanently deal with our sin.  
Thank you Lord, for giving us your son. We are sorry when we still doubt if we have done enough to draw near to you.  
Please grow our confidence in the forgiveness you have provided, and grow our delight and security in your presence.  
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

---

16