

The Holiness of God

Leviticus: The Holiness of God (Week 3/6) Set Apart to be Holy

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *How can you grow in your appreciation of God's holiness and your confidence in approaching God?*

Warm-Up

1. How do you define "holiness"?
2. On a scale of 1 (evil) to 100 (the Lord's holiness) - where would you place yourself?

Read Leviticus 11:1-47

3. Which animals are unclean? Is there anything *specifically about them* that makes them unclean?
4. Read a selection of verses in Leviticus 12:1; 13:1-3, 13:47-51, 15:1-6, 15:19-23. What other things can make someone unclean?
5. Are there any patterns you can identify? How are some laws related to *avoiding* things that relate to, or can lead to death?
6. Which of the laws make sense to you? Which of the laws are perplexing? *Who* makes the laws?
7. What is the purpose of the clean and unclean laws? How do they relate to holiness?
8. Why does only the Lord have the right to determine what is holy and what is unclean?

Read Leviticus 15:31

9. Why is it important to *avoid* being made unclean? What is the consequence? Why was this a relevant issue for Israelites?
10. How common was it to be unclean or defiled? How much care would you need to be clean?
11. Why does being defiled *prevent* us from being in God's presence?

Read Mark 7:14-23

12. What is the *true source* of defilement? How does that relate to us today?
13. Which kinds of evil thoughts have you had before? How do you try to deal with them?
14. Why do we need *the Lord* to make us holy?
15. Read Hebrews 13:12. Who makes us holy? How does he make us holy? How is this permanent?
16. How does Jesus' death give you confidence to approach the Lord?
17. How should your holiness found in Christ change how you live on your frontlines this coming week?
18. What is our responsibility *today* to live as holy people? How can we support others to do that?

Apply *Is there anything in your life that causes you to doubt God's acceptance of you? Bring them before the Lord, and spend time meditating on the good news that Jesus has made us permanently holy, in him.*

Pray *Holy Lord, help us as your people to be holy as you are holy. Thank you that in Christ we have been made holy, and help us walk in step with your Spirit to grow in holiness. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

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Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Frontline this Week

How does the presence of Jesus transform your frontlines this week?

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “Purity: Wholeness Before God” by Pete Wilkinson:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/purity-wholeness-before-god/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Ritual Purity” by Des Smith:
<https://www.trinity.org.au/lockleys/sermons/3-ritual-purity/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Biblical Skin Care” by Paul Blackham:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=49610&show_file=57347
- *Listen (sermon):* “Leviticus 1:1-15:33” by Andrew Sach:
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/52386/>
- *Watch (Video):* “Holiness” by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/videos/holiness/>

Series Resources

- *Read (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 3/6 “Set Apart to be Holy”

by Amy Norman (26/10/2025)

거룩하게 구별됨

Cïi këek wëk bëik Lɔjïik

பரிசுத்தமாயிருக்க பிரித்தெடுக்கபட்டுதல்

Bible Passage: Leviticus 11-15

*Holy Lord, help us as your people
to be holy as you are holy.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

- Leviticus 11-15 is a very bewildering part of the Bible!
It can be really difficult to make sense of all of the restrictions listed, understand exactly why so many things are unclean, and then wade through all the detailed instructions on how to make someone clean.
- And yet we should not just dismiss these chapters, for they are part of God's instructions to his people.
They teach us: part of being God's people is *obedience* to the Lord.
And part of being his people is learning and recognising that *he is holy*, and commands us to be holy.
- In fact right after all the food laws, the reason the Lord gives for paying attention to what he says - is *grounded in his holiness*.
- The Lord says in verse 44: "... be holy, because I am holy."
So it should get our attention *how* these rules about being clean and unclean relate to *the Lord's* holiness and how *we are* to be holy. /
- There have been lots of theories around *the purpose* of the clean and unclean laws.
- Some have suggested that it was God's way of instituting hygiene in an ancient world.
But this doesn't really explain all the restrictions.
- Others have thought the purpose of the laws was only to be radically different from all the other surrounding cultures. But this doesn't explain how some sacrifices *do* look similar to

other cultures, like sacrificing bulls, even if the reasons are very different.

- Some have even suggested that clean animals reflect characteristics *desirable* in humans, like chewing the cud (regurgitating partially digested food) is like meditating on the law. These theories have some helpful observations, but they don't get to the heart of the matter.
- The purpose of the clean and unclean laws is *how to live with the Holy Lord*. The Lord gives his people *the command to be holy*, and the Lord gives instructions on *how to live*.
- The very reason Leviticus is written is because God is coming to dwell with the people he has made a covenant with. Through these laws he is showing them *how to live with him*.
- There are plenty of details in chapters 11-15 that are perplexing, so let's break it down. Let's look at:

What makes something unclean?

Why does it matter?

What should we do?

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WHAT MAKES SOMETHING UNCLEAN? | LEVITICUS 11:41-47

무엇이 부정하게 만드는가? | Yēē ŋö yē Ke dē'cōk Rāāc? | அசுத்தமாக்குவது எது?

First, **what makes something unclean?** Let's look at the summary given in *chapter 11*, from *verse 41* ...

“Every creature that moves along the ground is to be regarded as unclean; it is not to be eaten. You are not to eat any creature that moves along the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is unclean. Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves along the ground. I am the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

Leviticus 11: 41-45

- Here we see that creatures that move along the ground are unclean. There are specific birds that are unclean - like the eagle and vulture. Flying insects (that don't have jointed legs) are unclean. Carcasses of animals, animals without fins and scales, animals that don't chew the cud or have no divided hoof are unclean.
- And later in chapters 12-15, bleeding, skin diseases, spreading mould, and bodily discharge are all considered unclean.
- It can all seem totally confusing! Some things are *unclean* and other things are *clean*. >

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- Sometimes we can see why, and other times it's a mystery to us.
And just to make it more confusing, it doesn't stay the same.
The same thing which is clean, could *become* unclean.
- *For example*, a person can be clean, but if they touch a dead animal - then they are unclean.
But the same person when cleansed,
can also be set apart and made holy for God's purposes.
- Most of these are not exceptional circumstances - many of the things that make people or objects unclean or defiled are normal, everyday parts of life! //
- Maybe some of the circumstances that are listed as unclean are not just confusing to you, but come across as inconsistent, unsettling, and unfair.
I'm not sure the Israelites, having just been slaves in Egypt and likely living very different lives, would have understood them all either.
But they did understand the mighty and holy actions of the Lord who rescued them.
- There are two critical things that God was teaching his people through these laws:
it is *the Lord* who determines what is unclean and unclean;
and that which is unclean *can not be* in his holy presence.
- That's what we saw in the example of the priests last week.
God set apart both people and objects to come into his presence.
- Aaron and his sons didn't get to dictate *how* they would prepare to serve the Lord, >

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but the Lord told them how to prepare.

- They needed to be washed, clothed, and anointed - to be set apart, to be consecrated and made holy - in order to be fit to come close to the holiness of the Lord.
- And when two of Aaron's sons *acted* against the Lord's commands, they died.
- The Lord has the right to determine what is holy, or what is clean and unclean, because it is all in reference *to his holiness*. Only the Lord is holy.
- The position and movement of people and things,
away from the Lord's presence as people and objects are made unclean or defiled,
or towards the Lord's presence as people and objects are cleansed or consecrated,
are all in reference to *the Lord, who is holy*.

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WHY DOES IT MATTER? | LEVITICUS 15:31, MARK 7:1-23

그것이 왜 중요한가? | Ku yëë ŋo tǝ'thiin? | ஏன் இது தேவைப்படுகிறது?

Second, it still leaves us the question: **why does it matter?**

- Based on what we read in chapters 11-15, people and household objects would have *constantly* been moving in and out of being clean and unclean.
- You could be made unclean by what you ate, what you touched, who you touched, and what your body did.
- Some of it you could control, and some of it you couldn't.
- So why did it really *matter* that the Israelites paid attention to these laws? The Lord tells Moses and Aaron the reason why in *Leviticus 15, verse 31* ...

“ ‘You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.’ ” *Leviticus 15:31*

- Uncleanness *is not trivial*, but will be fatal, if someone who is made *unclean* comes into contact with what is holy.
- This is not a hypothetical risk, but as the Lord comes to dwell *in the middle* of his people, this risk is alive and active.
- God takes defilement seriously - for he can't become less holy. His goodness and perfection can't be turned down. >

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And so the people *surrounding* him must take extreme care to be holy.

- The Lord wants his people to live and flourish *in his presence*. And so all these specific rules show *how to do that*. They identify which circumstances will be dangerous for people to approach the Lord, so they are not caught off guard.
- The very presence of these protective laws expose that humans *are not inherently holy*. But we are easily defiled and made unclean. For the Israelites - the constant vigilance of following these laws: where ordinary life would be punctuated inspection, isolation, waiting to be purified, bathing, and counting off days, would have highlighted just how *significant* the problem of defilement is.
- We might look at all these laws with relief, that they don't really apply to us anymore - but the underlying issue *has not changed*. Being unclean is not just a problem for the Israelites, but it is a problem for all humanity.
- Being unclean and being defiled is a problem for us - for we *are all* ultimately unfit to be in the presence of God because of our sin.
- The clean and unclean laws were just a signpost to our true cause of defilement. Jesus moves beyond washing hands and what we eat, and points out that our problem comes from our heart. *Mark chapter 7, verse 14* ...

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Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.”
Mark 7: 14-15

- The Israelites *knew* that being defiled in the presence of God, would lead to death.
 - But Jesus doesn’t want the crowd or us to dismiss what these laws are pointing to, that what comes from *our heart* is what defiles us.
 - *Jesus continues in verse 20:*
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He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” *Mark 7:20-23*

- This list is fairly exposing and incriminating: have you had an *envious* thought? Have you ever *wanted* to deceive someone and get out of a situation? Or have you just *thought* you were better than someone else?
- It is a mistake to think we have *the right* to approach the Lord on our own terms, no matter how good we are at following rules or washing our hands. For Jesus exposes that evil is deeply rooted *within us*.
- And evil cannot come into contact with the perfect goodness of our holy God.

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WHAT SHOULD WE DO? | LEVITICUS 11:43-44 & 1 PETER 1:13-2:3

우린 어떻게 해야 할까? | Yēē ḡō buk Lōi | நாம் செய்யவேண்டியது என்ன?

So finally, **what should we do?**

- Should we just try avoiding shellfish and bacon, and hope she’ll be right?
 - This won’t *ultimately* fix our heart.
But God gives us the solution (which we’ve already seen) in *Leviticus chapter 11, verse 44* ...
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“I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.” *Leviticus 11:44*

- *Being holy* is the pre-condition of being in the presence of God.
- But - if what we eat *can’t* make us holy, and what *we do* can’t make us holy - *then has the Lord just set an impossible standard, where we are doomed to fail?*
- No - for we see that God stipulates *what is required* (our holiness), and how *he will* provide the means for us to be made holy.
- Holiness is *only* for the Lord to grant. Only the Lord is holy.
- For the Israelites, constantly in and out of being considered clean and unclean, it would have been obvious they needed a *permanent* solution to be made holy.
- And so the Lord stepped in to provide a permanent way to make us holy, through the sacrifice of Jesus. >

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As *Hebrews* puts it:

And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. *Hebrews 13:12*

- Blood was a sign of death, defilement, and exclusion. But Jesus' blood *makes us holy*.
- In Jesus we have been made holy,
he took on our defilement,
he took on the Lord's judgement for the evil that comes from within us.
So when we trust in Jesus, we don't receive *death* in God's presence, but we *enjoy life*!
- Jesus' death on the cross makes us holy - *so now* we have complete confidence to enter God's presence.
- Because Jesus has made us holy - God can indwell us by his Holy Spirit,
because Jesus has made us holy - that we await New Creation, with God dwelling with us,
with no fear or rules to separate us.
- When God in his majesty and holiness came to dwell amongst the people of Israel,
in all consuming fire, I suspect they were afraid.
They saw the implications of *presuming* on the Lord's holiness - that it would lead to death.
And the laws enforced keeping a distance from the Lord.
- But because *Jesus makes us holy* - we can have confidence to be in the Lord's presence.

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- Jesus' sacrifice for us will not wear out - our holiness in Jesus is *permanent*.
Jesus' sacrifice for us is not temporary - we don't need to be worried that Jesus will look a bit closer at our hearts and be disgusted.
The wonderful *assurance* of *Hebrews* is that because Jesus makes us holy,
he is not ashamed of us. And he will never be ashamed of us.
- Nothing we can *ever* do will earn our holiness (that is Jesus' job)
but we still have an ongoing responsibility of *being holy* and *reflecting God's holiness*.
- We know that for the same imperative in Leviticus, is repeated in the New Testament (in 1 Peter): "Be holy, because I am holy"
- Just like for the Israelites, being holy is a reflection of who you belong to.
We are God's people, made holy by Jesus,
and so our lives should reflect the Lord's holiness.
- Today we don't reflect holiness through what we eat, but what comes out of our hearts.
As Peter tells us in his letter: we are to *rid ourselves of evil desires*: like sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly,
and *grow* in our sincere love for each other that is truly from our heart.
- As we look to grow in holiness, it might be worth doing a little audit on your heart.
What type of thoughts are coming from it? *and*
This week, how can you grow in *sincere* love for someone else?

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- When we are confronted with the evil thoughts that come from our heart, we can bring them in confession to the Lord.
We don't need to hide them or try to justify them - for the Lord sees them, and Jesus has already died for them. In Jesus we are assured of forgiveness. And we have help by the very Spirit of God to strengthen us and equip us to work towards ridding ourselves of all such evil.
- And this work, of paying attention to what overflows from our heart, and seeking to starve it, will grow our appreciation of just how costly it was for Jesus to make us holy.
- More positively, we can replace evil thoughts and grow in holiness by focusing our attention on *growing in our love for others*.
What would that look like for you tomorrow?
Pick someone on your frontline, someone you will spend time with tomorrow. Intentionally growing in love could mean *doing less of something* to be more present, or it might mean *showing up more* to grow in love for them. //
- Part of holiness is trusting the Lord is good, and obeying the way of life he commands us, as given in his Word.
- Of course, we won't do this perfectly, but we have the help of the Holy Spirit, at work in us, slowly shaping us into the holy people we already are in Jesus. >

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- That gives us confidence to persevere in growing in holiness, not to be self-righteous or think we're better than anyone else, but because of *who* has made us holy.

Gracious Father, thank you for not giving up on us - even in all our defilement and sin.

But thank you for giving us Jesus, and making us holy.

Please by the power of your Spirit be at work in our lives - in our hearts, minds, desires, and actions - shaping us as your holy people for your glory.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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