

The Holiness of God

Leviticus: The Holiness of God (Week 5/6) A Call to Holy Living

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *How can you live boldly yet reverently before our holy God this week?*

Warm-Up

1. Have you ever made a list of house 'rules'? What were they and how did it go?

Read Leviticus 19:1-10

2. What is the primary command of the LORD to his people? What does it mean to 'be holy'?
3. Why does it matter from whom the command originates? *If he makes the call, who sets the standard?*
4. Do you ever struggle to obey (or want to obey!) what God instructs? Do you think it is always necessary for us to understand *why* God requires us to do (or not do) something?
5. How is taking our cues from God (for life and living) counter-cultural in our day and age? How was it counter-cultural for the Israelites and later for the first converts to Christianity?
6. Who was the master of the Israelites previously? Who are we tempted to make our master? Why is God the only ultimate master worthy of our devotion and obedience?
7. Read Leviticus 20:26. What are the key reasons outlined here for the people of God to be holy?
8. Is our salvation dependent on our efforts in holiness? *How is holiness a reflection of our status in Christ?*
9. *Have you ever considered holiness as part of your purpose? What does that look like on one of your frontlines?*

Read Leviticus 19:11-19

10. How do you first respond when you read or hear this list of instructions? How broad is it?
11. What are all the various dimensions of life covered by the instructions outlined in chapter 19?
12. What areas of our lives are 'off limits' to God's demand for holiness? *Are any particularly challenging?*
13. How do we decide which of these laws apply to us? Can you think of examples in which Jesus affirms or intensifies some of the instructions outlined here? Who can help us to live this way?

Read 1 Peter 1:13-21

14. Do you ever feel like a bit of an 'imposter' as a Christian? Why should we feel secure?
15. Ultimately, how have we been made holy? To whom is our hope anchored to?
16. How does *looking forward to Jesus' return* and *looking back to his sacrifice* embolden you to live in a way even when it feels costly or different to those around you?

Apply *Is there any particular area of your life in which you need to grow in holiness (with God's help)?*

Pray *Lord, please forgive our sins and failures and help us to live holy lives in accordance with you. May we respond wholeheartedly to the Good News that Jesus is Lord—the one who fulfils the Law, sets us apart, and sanctifies us by his Spirit. Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

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Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Frontline this Week

Pick one important relationship to you. How could you improve transparency, time, or trust this week?


For Families

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

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “On Being Holy” by John Woodhouse:
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/3657/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Directions for a distinctive workplace” by Hugh Palmer:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=135647&show_file=146434
- *Listen (sermon):* “Holy Holy Holy” by Pete Wilkinson:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/holy-holy-holy-4/#sermons>

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 5/6 “A Call to Holy Living”
by the Rev’d Adam Lowe (09/11/2025)*

거룩한 삶으로의 부르심 | Cəṭ də cəṇ Ləjīk
呼召过圣洁的生活 | பரிசுத்த வாழ்வுக்கு அழை

Bible Passage: Leviticus 19

*Gracious and loving Lord, thank you that you are perfectly holy,
please help us to know you, trust you, love you, and be like you. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

During one of the many COVID lockdowns, my family and I decided to workshop a list of rules that would help make for a *happy household* living in a *confined space* for an *undetermined amount of time*. We workshopped this as a family, there was a whiteboard involved, and we together we came up with five rules: (1) LOVE God; (2) BE KIND to everyone; (3) COOPERATE with the leader; (4) USE QUIET voices and steps; and (5) PLAY NICELY having fun. It was probably more aspirational than reality, but I think almost everyone would agree that this is a good list of rules! *They all kind of make sense.*

But as we come to this point in Leviticus, a section that is not just limited to chapter 19, but encompasses *18 through 20*, many of the rules that we read can not only seem a bit *pernickety* or *particular*, but they can also seem *peculiar*. *They don’t all make immediate sense.*

- Or at least not to us. / On how to shave your beard.
Or harvest your fields.
Or what fabrics you should or shouldn’t wear.
- That can leave us with a boat load of questions.
Like, what was God thinking? / Do these rules still apply to us?
Is all of God’s Word TRULY good and useful for the instruction of our lives? //
- Time-and-time again, whenever there might be a Christian taking a particular position on something publicly, that rubs up against the cultural tide of the moment, it’s often verses from these very chapters of Leviticus, that are used as fodder to try and make a Christian view of the Bible look like nonsense.
- You may have heard of someone saying something *sarcastically like...*

Leviticus 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight.

I wear reading glasses, does that mean I'm out.

Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples. Even though that's expressly forbidden in Leviticus 19:27; does that mean all boy bands need to be stoned.

My uncle has a farm, he violates Leviticus 19:19 by planting two crops in the same field.

Some of my friends wear garments made of two different materials, they're toast aren't they? / *And so it goes on.*

The intent is not **just** to ridicule or undermine the Bible, but to imply *that it's ridiculous for Christians to assert the Bible has any authority for our lives and our world*, as Christians seemingly pick-and-choose the rules and prohibitions that suit their agenda.

- **Is that what we do?! / How are we to approach a list of instructions like this in Leviticus? //**
- Well first, it's important that we recognise that these laws are for the Israelites, not us.
It is the witness of the New Testament that we are no longer under the Law.
That doesn't make it arbitrary — *because it is from God and foreshadows what is to come.*
And it also doesn't mean that all of these instructions are irrelevant:
for God's demand for holiness still bears true on our lives. /
- But as we come to these instructions, *with the NT as our guide*,
we not only see what is *affirmed*, but also that which is *intensified*. //
- So as we consider this call for holy living, there are three key aspects:
- **A call and cause for holiness, the scope of holy living, and holiness for followers of Jesus.**

A CALL & CAUSE FOR HOLINESS | VERSES 1-10

거룩함의 부르심과 이유 | Cöt ku Yë njo yë wäk Lajik | 呼召与追求圣洁的理由 | பரிசுத்தத்தின் அழைப்பும், காரணமும்

First, we see a call and cause for holiness. Leviticus 19, verse 1...

The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. “Each of you must respect your mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God. “Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the LORD your God.

The phrase, *I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD*, or the shorter version, simply, *I AM THE LORD*, appears at least 26 times in chapters 18 to 20. *It's like a drum beat on repeat over-and-over again.*

- You might feel a bit bamboozled by the long list of instructions,
but don't miss the refrain about God that punctuates it all!
- If there is one thing that the Lord longs for his people to know,
it is that HE IS THE LORD AND THAT HE IS THEIR GOD. /
- That means, at the very elementary level,
that the primary reason why God's people should be obey his commands — seek to be holy,
is not because they agree with his instructions,
not because they're better than what they would come up with,
not even because they completely or even partially understand the reason for them all,
but because they recognise the one WHO CALLS THEM TO IT. It's the Lord. Their God.

- At the very simplest level, the answer to the question of why we should be holy, is because God has told us to be. // Holiness is not about obeying rules, but obeying God.
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On the odd occasion in our household when one of the kids queries or protests about why they should do something, I often want to respond, Why do you need to do it? Because I am your parent! We sometimes get the cheeky response, but you're not the boss, God is the boss! To which I'm quick to respond, TRUE, but I've also been given some delegated authority!

- As the Israelites have come out of Egypt and freed from slavery to Pharaoh, they have not become a people without a master, to freelance as they please, but they're freed to live faithfully in response to their ultimate master.
- That instead of doing what makes them *feel best*, or even what they determine as best, (*the kind of principle by which we're encouraged to shape our lives*), that they would live in humble response to what God has decreed as best. Because having the Lord as your God makes a difference. *It makes a difference to: your attitudes, your priorities, your behaviours, of what you do and do not do.*

Yet, the cause for our holiness is not simply because God tells us to be (*even though that would be perfectly sufficient cause!*), *but because of who he is and who we are in relation to him.*

- Chapter 19, verse 1... *be holy because - I, the Lord your God, am holy...* but it reaches a climax later in chapter 20, verse 26 with...

You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, *and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.*

- As people made in God's image; As people who belong to a Holy God; Part of our very purpose is to reflect his holiness, his character, and *accordingly* be distinct in this world. [*He doesn't call us to be almighty, or all-powerful, but HOLY—reflecting his character, his goodness.*]
- To be clear: *the people of God, be it the Israelites or us as Christians*, are not connected to God by the sum of our efforts.
- But we are to grow in our resemblance of God, as a result of his gracious efforts that have caused us to be his people. /
- For Israel, holiness was not just related to how their worship was ordered; or how sacrifices were made to account for this sin; or the setting apart of people, places, and objects for special purposes; but how every dimension of their lives conformed to God.
- For Christians, that means, the before we even get to lists, rules, or instructions, on what holy living looks like for us in practice, it begins with a recognition of who God is, and a longing to line up every aspect of our lives with what God desires.
- Not to earn our salvation, but in response to the one who has saved us, and set us apart for his purposes.

THE SCOPE OF HOLY LIVING | VERSES 11-19

거룩한 삶의 범위 | Cök dë Läjik | 圣洁生活的范畴 | பரிசுத்தவாழ்க்கையின் நோக்கம்

Second, we see **the scope for holy living**. Verse 11...

“Do not steal. ‘Do not lie. ‘Do not deceive one another. ‘Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. **I am the LORD.** ‘Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. ‘Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. ‘Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. **I am the LORD.** ‘Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. ‘Do not go about spreading slander among your people. ‘Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the LORD. ‘Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. **I am the LORD.** ‘Keep my decrees.

The list doesn’t begin or end there! Sometimes people draw a parallel with the ten commandments, yet despite some similarities, there are clearly some big differences.

Chapters 18 and 20 emphasise sexual ethics and warnings against idolatry.

In the chapters which follow later, the Lord lays out the consequences for falling short.

- And as we come to this list, *as the types and categories of things traversed are broad and wide*, it can not only seem a little overwhelming, but even a bit strange or random!
- It describes *what holiness looks like at home, in the vineyard, towards God, & also towards others. Of how holiness is to take a grip on our inner and invisible life, but also our outer visible behaviour.*

- You might be wondering, how can we possibly interpret this from a Christian perspective? The short answer is carefully! But even so, we shouldn’t let the breadth of these instructions be lost on us as God demands holiness here, there, and everywhere! That’s kind of the point.
- That before we get to any of the nitty gritty details, of what the Lord is commanding, we’re meant to appreciate the sheer scope of what is being required. As we seek to imitate God, be like God, *there is no divide between so-called sacred and secular.*
- When it comes to holiness, there is nothing off limits. It’s utterly comprehensive and involves every dimension of life.
- It intrudes into the religious, personal, relational, ethical, agricultural, and social. *It doesn’t matter if we’re at home, church, work, school, shops, or driving in your car.*
- Being a person of God just can’t be tacked-on, like you might style your house, but God resets the foundation and comes in and rearranges everything. //

I was always taught, that goals should be *realistic* — *but this seems unrealistic.*

As Christians, it’s easy at one level as we approach this chapter, to think, *phew,*

I’m so glad that this does not apply to me! It not only seems pretty onerous, but impossible!

- And to some extent, that’s true. As Christians, we come to the Law differently. We uphold loving neighbour, Jesus said that, but you don’t need to go home to sift through your wardrobe for clothes made of different types of materials. //

- We don't have time to go through each of these instructions one-by-one, but it's fascinating that so many of these instructions have important contexts.
- For example, it's interesting that the prohibition about clothes of two types of material, is not a prohibition against *making them* but *only wearing them*.
In fact, the priestly garments were made of blended fabrics, and it seems this DO NOT was aimed at preventing other Israelites acting like priests, which incidentally was an issue.
- We don't see the prohibition of tattoos or piercings carried through in the New Testament, likely because the issue in view here was a practice by pagans associated with death.
- But just because not all of the laws carry through to the New Testament, that doesn't mean that it is all abandoned. We use the New Testament as our guide.
- In fact time-and-time again, Jesus takes some of these Laws, like loving neighbour, and he doesn't just affirm it but he intensifies it. *That loving neighbour doesn't just mean loving the poor, the foreigner, the disabled, the needy, associates, without distinction, as laid out in Leviticus, but also extends to loving our enemies, and praying for those who persecute you.*
- And just when you thought that was enough, Jesus doesn't stop there.
- *Being careful about the fabrics that you wear all of a sudden sounds much more straight forward.*
- *Because, often, Jesus doesn't just intensify or extend the command to what we do or do not do, but he also applies the standard to the very desires of our hearts.*
- The demand to be a holy people is unchanging and all encompassing.

HOLINESS FOR FOLLOWERS OF JESUS | 1 PETER 1

예수님의 제자들의 거룩함 | Lōjiin dē Kōk juāny Yēcu cōk | 耶穌追隨者的聖潔之路 | இயேசுவைப் பின்பற்றுகிறவர்களுக்கு பரிசுத்தம்

Why? Because he is God and that is who he has called us to be.

As J C Ryle put it...“Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment—hating what He hates—loving what He loves—and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word.”

Holiness is also for followers of Jesus. *First Peter chapter 1, verse 13...*

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

These verses are from the opening chapter of a letter that Peter wrote not to one particular Christian community, but to a collection of Christian communities scattered across various Roman provinces.

- They were predominantly Gentile believers who had turned away from paganism, sought to follow Jesus, but now are facing pressure to conform to the world around them.
- That's why Peter describes them as exiles!
They are God's chosen people, yet they feel like they're now living in a foreign land.

- That's how it can feel for us, too!
- Yet what's amazing, *is that as Peter writes to encourage and exhort them to keep following Jesus, to keep being faithful even as the cultural pressures and trials press in, the place where he goes, the verse that he quotes is from Leviticus 19.*
- Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, FOR IT IS WRITTEN, *Leviticus 19:2, Be holy, because I am holy.* // Hear what is happening here.
- That even though they were Gentiles, not Jews, the call and cause for them to be holy remains the same.
- It is because the LORD GOD, their God, is holy that *they are to be holy.*
- Not just on a Sunday. Not just in one particular place. BUT:
That as followers of Jesus that we would strive for a holiness that matches his.
That as followers of Jesus we would seek to be holy wherever and whenever we are.
- Afterall, he is with us. We're temples of the Holy Spirit. //
- Peter says do not conform to the evil desires that you had — past tense, *things that may even be encouraged, supported, even celebrated in our world,* but instead be conformed to the very likeness of the one whom we follow.

Ryle continues "Do nothing that you would not like God to see. Say nothing you would not like God to hear. Write nothing you would not like God to read. Go no place where you would not like God to find you. Read no book of which you would not like God to say, 'Show it to Me.'"

When Peter says, *with minds that are alert and fully sober,*
he's not saying they tended to be sleepy or drunk.
He's saying, this is what I want you to grasp with absolute clarity. **Be holy.**

When I was right at the end of studying Psychology, after all the exams had been completed, all of the supervision hours were logged, every clinical practice requirements had been met, and every subject had been passed, I sat down at a meeting with all of my colleagues at university. We should have all been relieved, even excited as we awaited a letter of registration, but instead we all felt like frauds. One by one, each of us shared that we felt like imposters and were just waiting to be found out! We weren't perfect. We didn't have it altogether. And we certainly didn't feel ready.

- Maybe that's how you feel sometimes as a follower of Jesus.
- Maybe, in the thick of challenge, aware of the ways that you fall short, that you can just feel like there is no point, that it is hopeless.
- That you're an imposter.
If only people knew what you thought or what you had done.
- Perhaps sometimes, you catch yourself thinking, that it might be easier, or more lucrative, or *just more fun if you just did some of those things, that the Lord tells us not to do. / Or not to go so far in loving neighbour as he commands. /*
- It seems the people that Peter wrote to were feeling hopeless, too.
Maybe even like that may as well give in to things not of God.

- And so Peter says to them, remember WHO your hope is anchored to:
*the one who will return, bringing his work — including in you to completion;
the same one who has set you apart and made you holy by his own blood.*
- Remember all of the sacrificial systems in which blood was spilt,
in order for something which was broken to be made holy. That's us!
- We can have security to live radically holy lives with confidence,
not because we're always going to get it right,
but because Jesus has already made us right.
- The more we know him, the more we'll know how he wants us to live.
- We can run to him and seek his mercy and forgiveness when we get it wrong.
We can depend on him, in the very power of his Spirit, to live his way.
- We're not adding to the holiness that Christ has achieved,
We're living into the holiness which Christ has won for us. //
- Be holy, because I the LORD your God am holy.