

PHYLICIA MASONHEIMER

THE LAW OF GRACE



*Exploring the Grace of Christ
in the book of Leviticus*

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The Goal of This Study

Welcome, friend! I am thrilled to invite you to the book of Leviticus. This is the book we often get bogged down in, isn't it? In our reading plans we seem to cruise through Genesis and Exodus, only to be blindsided by this book!

My goal in writing this study is to change your perspective of Leviticus. The book we deem dry, boring, and overwhelming actually holds a richness just waiting to be explored. I would be so happy if you came away from your study of Leviticus with a newfound joy in and appreciation for the text!

When Christians read Leviticus they frequently assume the Law is bad. An unhelpful—and unbiblical—teaching has crept into our view of this book. This teaching says God sent Jesus to rescue us from the Law: that the Law is a burden, a prison, or something to escape. But that is not how the Law is presented! The Law of God is good, holy, and righteous in all it teaches. The Law was the center of the Temple worship. The commandments physically rested in the Ark of the Covenant in the holiest place. God did not send Jesus to get rid of His Law; He sent Jesus so that He could enable us to obey it.

The giving of the Law in Leviticus was a gracious act of God. The Law was the means by which Israel had a relationship

with Him. It was not a burden or curse; it was a freedom and a blessing. The Law of Israel is now, through Christ, written on our hearts (Rom. 2:12–16). We no longer observe rituals of Temple worship because we are all temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) and because Christ fulfilled the sacrificial system. In other words, the Law is not opposed to grace; the Law is God's grace. The Law was an invitation for Israel to experience the love of God and relationship with Him, all while looking forward to its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

This study has been written in a very simple format. Rather than tell you what to think, I invite you to answer questions about the text and to think critically on your own. I add historical context and commentary on the more difficult passages, but the rest is up to you! Read the verses. Follow the cross references. Take time to pray. If you are used to studies telling you what to think, this might be new for you. Consider this your introduction to inductive study of the Bible! You will leave this book (I hope!) with greater confidence in your study skills.

A second distinctive of this study is that there is no timeframe. We considered framing this as a 10-week, 12-week, or 20-week study, but our team determined that a study timeframe can actually inhibit the freedom to stop and start as your life allows. It can also put unnecessary pressure on the student to finish quickly, which takes away from the learning process. Instead, this study breaks Leviticus down by chapter. You can take as much time as you need to complete each one.

My best tip as you begin is to not attempt to read Leviticus only for quick application. Leviticus is a mixture of law and historical narrative. It will not feel readily applicable because it is not! Focus instead on what you learn about God's character. The question prompts will be focused in this direction. Come to the text prayerfully, ask for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes,

and look for the clear principle about God in the passage for that day. Consider how this principle applied to the original audience before applying it to your modern-day context.

I hope this study is challenging, fulfilling, and interesting—just like Leviticus itself! I am so excited for you as you begin this journey into *The Law of Grace: Exploring the Grace of Christ in the book of Leviticus*.

-P/M



Leviticus 1

THE BURNT OFFERING

Do you desire to be holy? Do you long to live in a community characterized by kindness, selflessness, and respect? Leviticus is the perfect book of the Bible for you!

Leviticus begins while the nation of Israel is at the foot of Mount Sinai. They had been freed from slavery and invited into the family of God. But before Israel could walk into God's promised land, God had some parameters for them. Because He is holy, He commanded that Israel had to be holy too. They could not steward the land well without boundaries. And as we saw in the book of Exodus—all the complaining, whining, and worshiping golden calves—Israel had a hard time being holy!

So in His grace, God gave Israel the Law. This Law was not arbitrary; it was intentional. It was designed to lead Israel into a right relationship with God and a right relationship with other people. As you read these lists of offerings, keep God's kindness in mind. His desire for Israel's holiness is housed in His affection and in His desire for them to be His people and for Him to be their God.

READ LEVITICUS 1

1. Briefly summarize what you read in your own words.

The burnt offering described in Leviticus 1 is referred to in Hebrew as an *ola*. The *ola* was a whole burnt offering that was consumed on the altar—the entire animal, except the skin, was offered up to God. In Israel’s day the offering of an entire ox was a significant financial sacrifice. Not only were these animals large and expensive, but sacrificing them also meant that the person offering the sacrifice did not get to use the ox to work their field or as meat for their family. The entire animal was offered to God and went up in smoke to His presence.

Before the animal was sacrificed, the person who brought it would lay a hand on its head. One commentator points out that the “laying of hands” differs in some sacrifices, such as on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. On that Day, two hands were laid, but here in Leviticus 1 we see only one hand laid on the animal. Commentators debate the difference, but here are some options:

- Laying one hand could indicate participation and representation.
- Laying two hands typically indicated transference; when two hands were laid on an animal or person, something was transferred to them. In the case of a sacrifice, it was

a transfer of sin. Person to person, it may demonstrate a transfer of power (like in the case of Moses to Joshua).

- The most interesting suggestion is that the act here in Leviticus 1 was intended to depict a blend of both. Rather than the animal taking on the person's sin, the individual was actually taking on the animal's purification.

Let's take this to the New Testament.

2. What does Philippians 3:9 say about our righteousness?
3. What does 2 Corinthians 5:21 say about it?

Just as the person offering a sacrifice had atonement applied to him (taking it on as his own), the sacrifice of Jesus has been applied to believers in Christ. His willing sacrifice as a representative for the human race grants us a beautiful relationship with God. Right here in Leviticus 1, we get a hint of Messianic promise!

4. Read Leviticus 1:1–9. What kind of animal could be used for the burnt (whole) offering? (v. 3)

5. In verses 4–9, the priest and the person offering the animal worked together to sacrifice it. List out the responsibilities of the individual, then list out the responsibilities of the priests (e.g., offerer: lay hands on the bull).
6. Why do you think the person offering the sacrifice had to participate in the process?
7. The book of Hebrews was written to teach Jewish believers how the Old Testament points to Christ. Read Hebrews 13:15–16. What kind of sacrifices can Christians offer today?

In Leviticus 1:10–13 the same ritual is described, but a different kind of animal is sacrificed: a sheep or lamb. In both this sacrifice and the previous one, the Israelites are commanded to offer a “male without defect.” This is not the first time a sacrifice had to be specifically male.

8. Read Genesis 22:2–3. What was Abraham asked to do?

9. Skip ahead to Genesis 22:9–13. What did God provide?

In this account, a ram—an adult, male sheep—replaced the human male Isaac (who was likely in his later teens or early twenties and willingly cooperated with his father). Furthermore, the mountain where Abraham took Isaac was the same mountain on which Solomon built the Temple (2 Chron. 3:1). It is also the place that would later in the New Testament be known as Golgotha: the Place of the Skull.

10. Look up Matthew 27:31–37. What happened at Golgotha?

11. What do you notice about the similarities between the account in Genesis and the account in Matthew?

Long after Abraham sacrificed Isaac and long before the Temple was built, Israel was sacrificing male lambs without defect as whole offerings to God. The author of Hebrews saw the sacrificial system as a foreshadowing of Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Hebrews 9:12 says, "*He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption,*" (ESV).

12. How does this impact your view of Leviticus 1?

13. Leviticus 1:13 says the person offering the sacrifice should cleanse the internal organs and the legs. Why do you think this is?

If you struggle to answer, I'll help you out. The organs and legs were more likely to be covered in dirt and defecation. For these to be a pure and holy sacrifice to God, they could not be contaminated. This is why they were washed before burning. This theme of absolute purity will continue to show up throughout Leviticus.

READ LEVITICUS 1:14-17

14. This section repeated a similar procedure to the first two sacrifice options, but in this instance a different animal was sacrificed. What was it?

In this sacrifice the priest once again was responsible for the blood, while the individual was responsible to remove the parts of the bird associated with excrement: the crop (some commentators believe this refers to the lower intestines) and the tail feathers.

15. Why do you think God granted Israel the choice of a bull, lamb, or bird for offering?
16. What does this say about God's compassion and inclusion?

17. What do you find most exciting about your study today?

UNCOVER THE HIDDEN RICHNESS OF THIS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD BOOK AND SEE IT IN A NEW, JOYOUS LIGHT

The goal of this study is to challenge common misconceptions and to reveal the profound grace and blessing that Leviticus holds. Contrary to the belief that God's Law is a burden to escape from, this book explores the beautiful truth that the Law is actually good, holy, and righteous. It is not opposed to grace but rather an embodiment of God's grace. The Law was not a curse; it was a freedom, a gracious act of God, and the very cornerstone of Israel's relationship with Him. And now, through Christ, it is written on our hearts.

This study does not confine you to a specific timeframe, nor does it dictate your interpretations. Instead, it opens the door to inductive Bible study, prompting you to answer questions about the text and think critically on your own. It is designed to let you explore at your own pace, in your own way, providing guidance and historical context when needed.

By the end, you will not only have greater confidence in your study skills but also a renewed understanding and appreciation for Leviticus. Embark on this journey and discover the true grace of Christ within the pages of Leviticus.

Phylicia Masonheimer is a bestselling author, Bible teacher, and host of *Verity Podcast*. She is the founder of Every Woman a Theologian, whose mission is to equip Christians to know what they believe and live it out with boldness. Phyllicia lives in Northern Michigan on a small farm with her husband and their children.



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