



Why We Need Leviticus

The Story of Scripture – Part 9

I've heard it said many times, "Leviticus is where Bible reading plans go to die." It's funny every time I hear it. Some of you are going, "Yep. Mmm-hmm. I'm behind on the Bible Reading Plan." But I think Leviticus is one of the most important and relevant books in the Bible for our culture today, and I hope you will be able to see why.

Leviticus picks up where Exodus leaves off. The people of Israel are camped out at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Their leader, Moses, has gone up to the top of the mountain and has received instructions from God. That kind of bookends the book of Leviticus. Look at Leviticus 1:1: *"The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying..."* Then look at the very end of the book, Leviticus 27:34: *"These are the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses for the people of Israel on Mt. Sinai."*

So this book was written to instruct the Israelites on living together as God's distinct holy people in the midst of a pagan culture. One of the questions people struggle with in reading Leviticus is, "Why do Christians pick and choose which laws to apply?" You may have had people say that to you, or you've thought it before. When it comes to adultery or homosexuality, we enforce those laws. But we'll eat shellfish in a minute; no problems, no questions asked. We'll wear mixed fabrics, even though that was prohibited in Leviticus. So why do we pick and choose?

I want to answer that quickly before we even dive in, because I think it will help you as we walk through the book of Leviticus. The short answer is that we keep all the laws in Leviticus that are consistent with Jesus' purpose. Here's what I mean by that. There are three different types of laws in Leviticus. Scholars categorize them this way.

There are civil laws, which are laws that governed the nation of Israel at that point. It governed their behavior, including punishments for different crimes. But when Jesus came, He didn't establish one country or nation. He established the church—the body of Christ—which is made up of people from all nations, tribes and languages. So today, as the church in the new covenant, we are no longer under those civil regulations that governed Israel as a nation state.

There were ceremonial laws. These are the regulations given about ritual purity, including the sacrificial system. But when Jesus came those laws were designed to illustrate God's holiness, our

unholiness, and the solution God would provide. The book of Hebrews, which we'll look at, says all of those ritual laws were designed to point to Jesus as the One Who makes us pure before God. So we have Jesus and we don't need those rituals, ceremonies and regulations.

Then there are the moral laws in Leviticus, laws that declare what God sees as immoral or command what God sees as moral. Jesus affirmed these, obeyed them perfectly and enables us as Christians to obey them by the power of His Holy Spirit.

So yes, we set aside some of the laws in Leviticus because they are no longer consistent with the purpose of Jesus, then we obey, apply and enforce other laws of Leviticus because they are designed to guide us on how we are to live and reflect God's holiness.

As we talk about the book of Leviticus, and as you read Leviticus, I want to remind you that all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful (2 Timothy 3:16). God says through the prophet Isaiah that God's Word never returns to Him empty, but it always accomplishes what He desires it to accomplish (Isaiah 55:10-11).

So the way I want to organize this summary of the book of Leviticus is by asking what is Leviticus designed to accomplish in us? What effect should studying the book of Leviticus have on us? I see five things.

1. The book of Leviticus should cause us to approach God more reverently.

The holiness of God is one of the clearest and most prominent themes in this book. You see it over and over again as you read it. Look at Leviticus 11:44-45. God gives them these commands, but then He says, *"For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy... For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God."* He says, *"You shall therefore be holy,"* Why? *"For I am holy."*

Throughout the book God repeatedly says to them, "I am the Lord. I am the Lord." God is holy. First of all, that means He is in a class all by Himself. We've seen this in our Bible Reading Plan so far. One of the main points of the book of Genesis is the fact that Yahweh, the God Who revealed Himself to Abraham, is not merely one among many gods. He's not merely a regional deity, like the ancient pagans believed. He's not a mid-level manager of a particular function of nature. He's not the god of fertility. He's not the sun god or the rain god or the moon god. No, God is the Lord over all of creation.

So if Genesis shows us that God is not merely a regional deity, then Exodus shows us that God is not merely a rival deity. He is not sparring with or straining against the gods of Egypt. God declares and then demonstrates in the book of Exodus that He has all power. He is the Lord of lords and He is the King of kings. He is holy, meaning He is in a class by Himself. But also, it means that He is completely pure and does not tolerate sin.

This concept of God's holiness shapes everything we read in Leviticus. God wants to teach His people that there is a distinction between Him and everything else. This is why God establishes certain boundaries and distinctions in the Israelite community. The clearest summary of this is in Leviticus 10:10, where God tells Aaron the priest, *"You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean."*

As you read through Leviticus, over and over again you see those categories. A diagram would be helpful, but I don't have one. So just picture in your mind that there are two major categories: holy on one side and common on the other. Underneath common there are two more categories: clean and unclean. You could think of this like a spectrum. You have unclean, clean and holy. Clean is the normal state of things—the natural state of things. Unclean doesn't necessarily mean sinful, although sin is always unclean. Uncleanness is broader than that. Which is why we have all these seemingly random laws.

Unclean means something is not in a condition suitable for God's presence. Something that is unclean can be made clean through a process of purification. But listen to this: the unclean and the holy are never allowed to come into contact with each other. I heard one preacher say it's like never allowing the cables to touch when you're jump-starting the battery in your car. If you allow those cables to touch, bad things happen. Well, the same thing is true in the book of Leviticus. When His people allow what is unclean to interact with what is holy, bad things happen.

The word "holy" means reserved for a special purpose. There were people, places, things and times of the year that God commanded to be made holy. In other words, they had to go through a special process so they could be reserved for God's special purposes. Anything that was said to be holy had to be treated differently from the common things of life—even days, like the Sabbath.

Now, what is the point of all of this? The details are important and there are a lot of details in the book of Leviticus. That's why some of you gave up around about chapter seven. The details are important, but don't lose the bigger picture. The point of this is very clear. We have to approach God on His terms, not on our own terms. You and I cannot approach God however we want or however it makes sense to us. We can only approach God on His terms.

Over and over again, when the people brought offerings and the priests made sacrifices, we see it described with this key phrase: "And they did just as the Lord commanded." What if they didn't? What if they decided to approach God on their terms instead of His? What if they decided to come to God based on what made the most sense to them, rather than based on His Word?

Look at Leviticus 10:1-2, one of the most sobering stories in the Leviticus: *"Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron,"* so they are priests, *"each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them."* You might say,

“Well, they’re going a good thing. They’re sincere. All they want is to connect with God in the way they feel is best.” Verse two: *“And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.”* Then their family members had to come and drag their bodies, not just out of the tabernacle, but outside the whole camp.

This is a picture that shows us we should approach God reverently and with humility. We have to approach Him on His terms, not our own. We have to recognize the infinite difference and distance between us and Almighty God. He is Creator; we are His creation. This should impact everything. It should impact how we worship on Sundays. For one thing, when we gather, we should make sure we are prioritizing the things God commands for New Testament worship—things like prayer, singing, teaching and the ordinances. If we’re not careful, we can prioritize all these optional things that make worship more appealing and more comfortable for us, so this becomes entertainment and not worship. Lights and LED walls and graphics are great. We use all of them. But we have to be careful not to focus on what is optional to the point that we begin to neglect the more essential aspects of worship that God commands.

This doesn’t just affect various aspects of our worship; it should affect our attitudes when we gather for worship in the presence of a holy God. So what is our attitude toward God? Do we actually recognize Who is watching us? Do we actually recognize Who we talk to when we pray and when we choose to obey or disobey? Do we recognize when we come through these doors to worship that this is God Who deserves all of our worship and all of our reverence? Listen, we should approach God with more reverence.

2. The book of Leviticus should cause us to take sin more seriously.

What makes sin, sin? What makes something sinful? The Bible is clear that essentially sin is when we fail or refuse to obey God’s commands. Sin is always primarily an offense against God, rebellion against His leadership and rejection of His love. In a very real sense, sin is a middle finger to God. Even hearing a preacher say that from the pulpit feels offensive. Exactly. Every single time we sin, it is an absolute offense to a holy God, and all of us are guilty of sin. That’s the whole point. That’s the net effect of the sacrificial system in the book of Leviticus. It was a constant reminder that my sin deserves extreme punishment. It’s not really extreme punishment; it’s the punishment we actually deserve. God takes sin seriously. We saw how God executed His judgment against Nadab and Abihu, but it wasn’t just priests. In Leviticus 20, God commands the death penalty over and over again. “Shall be put to death... Shall be put to death... Shall be put to death...” It’s almost like the chorus of Leviticus 20.

Can I be honest? There are some passages in Leviticus that are not just difficult, but they disturb me. They’re hard to read. Like when God commands His people to burn a woman to death. Or when God commands His people to stone a young man to death. How do we understand those passages? Why

would we want to worship a God like that? Have you had those questions before? Have you had people in your life ask you those questions before? These questions honestly deserve more time than I have to give them, but I don't want to just ignore them.

These are the verses our children don't read until somebody points them out to them in college, then they feel misled and scandalized. They have a difficult time trying to reconcile what they're now reading in Scripture with what they've known all along about the nature and character of God. We don't shy away from these difficult parts of Scripture when we really understand them.

So read Leviticus 21:8 and 9 sometime. Read Leviticus 24:10-14 sometime. If those passages bother you too, and you need help processing them, email me. I promise you; this sermon could be 90 minutes. I don't have time to cover everything. I'm not just trying to cop out. Literally, email me: mike.kelsey@mcleanbible.org. Email me and I'll help you process how to understand these passages of Scripture.

Here's what should be abundantly clear: God takes sin more seriously than we can possibly imagine. It's why Romans 6:23 says, "*The wages of sin is death.*" It's consistent. It's what He said to Adam in the Garden, "If you eat from this forbidden tree, you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:15-17).

If you lease an apartment or rent a house, what happens if you default on your responsibilities? You get evicted. Contrary to what you may think, you are not autonomous nor self-existent. You don't own your own life or anything in it. You don't have exclusive proprietary rights over your body or your breath. God does not owe you life. Life is a lease and when you rebel against the Source of life, you get evicted—spiritually, then one day physically and permanently separated from God.

We should take our own sin seriously and we should take each other's sin seriously. I'm not talking about us running out into culture, judging, condemning and blasting everybody else. No. Paul was very clear about that. But we are called to judge and hold accountable those within our local church family who call themselves Christians. The New Testament teaches us to lovingly but directly confront each other when we see a pattern of sin.

If necessary, we're even to deal with that sin—but not by death. We're not under a theocratic government like the Israelites were. The church is not a civil government. So we deal with sin in the church today, not by death, but by church discipline. Not by execution, but when necessary by exclusion from church membership. That's why we say one of the 12 traits of a Biblical church is biblical accountability and discipline. In certain countries we see things like bribery at the highest levels of government, as well as female mutilation. In some of those cultures, they don't even see those things as sinful. Is it possible that we don't fully comprehend how evil our sin is? Is it possible that some of what feels normal or natural to us is actually detestable to God? Consider these situations:

- When we tear down someone's reputation through gossip.

- When we wound the hearts of our children or our spouse or our coworkers with our harsh or insensitive words.
- When those of us who are husbands neglect or ignore the wife God commanded us to cherish, dragging our feet in making changes.
- When we disobey or dishonor our parents and cause them deep pain.
- When we refuse to tell people they can have eternal life through Jesus, simply because it might be awkward.
- When we intentionally discard clear commands in Scripture and decide that our 21st century American culture has a more reliable moral compass than God.
- When we defile our bodies by using them in ways that violate God's design.

Each of us is guilty before God and the problem is you cannot remove your own guilt. I don't care how religious you are, how good of a person you think you might be—you cannot remove your guilt before God and neither can I. This is the difference between Christianity and every other religious system. Isaiah 64:6 says, *"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."* God takes our sin serious, so we should take our sin seriously.

Now, there are various personalities in every circle of friends. You've got the one friend who's super-fun and the life of the party. Their IG is lit. If you don't know what that means, look it up. Go talk to your kids. You've got that friend who is super-compassionate and considerate. It's the friend who kind of keeps everybody connected to each other and who checks in on everybody. Then you have that friend who's a little weird. You know what I'm saying? They're serious all the time. They don't really have much of a sense of humor. You love them and they're still invited to the cookout, but if you're honest, they're just a little bit of a downer.

Leviticus is that book of the Bible. The one you kind of want to avoid, because it can be a little bit of a downer. Yes, Leviticus can be a downer, but it doesn't leave us there. It doesn't leave us under the weight of the reality of God's holiness and our unholiness, because the whole purpose of Leviticus is to point us forward toward the grace that can only be found in Jesus. So the central question Leviticus answers is how? How can a holy God dwell among unholy people? How can a perfectly holy God execute His justice against sin and accept sinners at the same time?

3. The book of Leviticus should cause us to love Jesus more passionately.

Look at Leviticus 16. How can a holy God dwell among unholy people? Before getting into the details, here is a very simple but astonishing principle you should take from everything you're about to see in Leviticus 16. It is this simple principle: God wants to dwell with His people. It should be

astonishing to you that God wants to dwell with you, that God wants to have a relationship with you, that He wants to dwell among us as a church family.

God wants a relationship with His people, so He provided a way. In order for the Israelites to be forgiven of their sin and be acceptable to God, they needed two things. They needed a priest and they needed a sacrifice. In other words, they needed someone to represent them before God and they needed a substitute to take God's punishment in their place. So there were all different kinds of sacrifices offered at different times in the Israelite community. But the climax of all of them was the Day of Atonement, which we read about in Leviticus 16. It's called Yom Kippur, which literally means in Hebrews, "The Day of Covering." Eric Saunders, our Arlington campus pastor, has an incredible sermon on line focusing just on this chapter which I'm about to summarize in half a minute: Atonement simply means "at-one-ment." It means to be made right and whole again.

I was so tempted to read all of Leviticus 16 to you, but I won't. Thankfully, I found this helpful summary of what would happen from the Old Testament scholar Ray Dillard. The week before the Day of Atonement, the high priest was put into seclusion, taken away from his home to a place where he was completely alone. Why? So he wouldn't accidentally touch or eat anything unclean. Clean food was brought to him and he washed his body and prepared his heart. The night before the Day of Atonement he stayed up all night, praying and reading God's Word to purify his soul. Then on Yom Kippur, he bathed from head to toe and dressed in pure, unstained white linen. He then went into the Holy of Holies—the inner room of the tabernacle. No one but the high priest could go in there and then only once a year. So he went in there, offered an animal sacrifice to God to atone or pay the penalty for his own sin. After that he came out, bathed completely again and new white linen garments were put on him. He went in again, this time sacrificing for the sins of the priests. But that's not all.

He would come out and bathed a third time from head to toe. They dressed him in brand new pure linen, then again he went into the Holy of Holies and atoned for the sins of all the people. This was all done in public. The tabernacle was crowded and attendants watched closely. They had a thin screen to shelter him when he was bathing, but still people were watching the whole ordeal. Part of this process involved two goats—one was killed and burned on the altar as a sacrifice. Then listen to what happened to the other goat according to Leviticus 16:20-22:

And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

This was something they did every year, once a year because “*on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord from all your sins*” (verse 30). Do you get the picture of what’s happening here? Let me make this abundantly clear. Hebrews 9 and 10 are basically an explanation of the book of Leviticus. It looks at Leviticus through the lens of the gospel.

Look at Hebrews 9:11-12:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 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.

He accomplished for us an eternal redemption. Praise God! In Leviticus, an imperfect priest represented the people before God, but still needed atonement for himself. But in the gospel, Jesus is the great High Priest. He is without sin. He went to the cross, not wearing perfect linen, but clothed in perfect righteousness. In Leviticus they had to sacrifice bulls and goats as a substitute. They were looking at that bull, goat or lamb experiencing the punishment they deserved. But in the gospel, Jesus presents Himself as our Sacrifice on the cross.

In Leviticus the blood of animals only provided temporary cleansing and atonement only lasted for one year. But on the cross, Jesus said three words: “It is finished.” His blood never loses its power. It reaches to the highest mountains and flows to the lowest valleys. We sing, “The blood that gives me strength from day to day, it will never, ever lose its cleansing power.” Through Jesus, we are able to move from being unclean—not suitable for God’s presence—to being made holy (Ephesians 1), reserved for God’s special purposes, blameless in His sight.

If you haven’t put your trust in Jesus, you need to be cleansed of your sin. All you have to do is turn from your sin to Jesus Christ. You need to abandon any and every remedy for salvation or for enlightenment or for whatever it is you think you need. Abandon every other remedy and turn to, embrace and put your trust in Jesus and His finished sacrificial, substitutionary work for you on the cross.

That same Jesus didn’t stay in the grave. He rose from the dead to prove that His sacrificial offering was accepted by God the Father and paid the penalty for all of your sin. The check cleared the bank and all of His righteousness now flows into your account. Turn from your sin. Put your trust in Jesus today. Don’t fall for the lie that just because you’re sincere you’ll be saved. God only accepts that which He ultimately provides and there’s only one way. It is through the blood of Jesus Christ shed on your behalf.

If you have put your trust in Jesus, if you have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, how then should you respond to all that Jesus has done for you? Two more points.

4. The book of Leviticus should cause us to spread the gospel more courageously.

All of this should cause us not only to love Jesus more passionately, but if we do, then we should spread the gospel more courageously. I won't spend much time on this point, but I want to show this to you quickly. Notice the repetition, even in our reading so far, of "outside the camp." The dead bodies of Nadab and Abihu had to be taken outside the camp. Anything that was unclean had to be taken outside the camp. Who was outside the camp? Everyone and everything that was unclean. Everything that was not suitable to be in God's presence had to be taken outside the camp. Why? Because the tabernacle was in the center of the camp so unclean things had to be taken completely away from God's presence.

Look at Hebrews 13:12-14: *"So Jesus also suffered outside the gate." Why? "In order to sanctify the people through his own blood."* Just like certain sacrifices were taken outside and slaughtered there and the blood brought back in, He sanctified the people through His blood. So then, how should that affect how we live? *"Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."*

Jesus was willing to leave the Holy of Holies, heaven, come into this unclean place we call earth, take on human flesh and die like a criminal on the cross, like one who was unclean. He was separated, treated as if He was not suitable to be in God's presence. He was willing to do that in order to purchase our salvation and make us clean by His blood.

The Bible says if Jesus was willing to do that, then we should be willing to join Him on His mission, to go to those unclean people and places. They're not unclean because of where they live or what they wear, but just like you and me before we knew Jesus, they are still in their sin. They have not been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. We should be willing to have some conversations that might be awkward or even difficult. Some of us may even be called to go to other parts of the world where we might be persecuted which would be worth it because through us the Lord Jesus might take people out of the kingdom of uncleanness and bring them into the Kingdom of light, the Kingdom of that which is clean, but also because we're not living for this life anyway.

If we truly believe that God's judgment is coming, if we truly believe that God's mercy is available, if we truly believe that Jesus is Savior and Lord, worthy of praise from every person and people group, then we have to be willing to take risks for the sake of the gospel. Out of love for the Lord Jesus and love for people who are going to face God's judgment unless they hear this good news and respond to Jesus in faith, we should be willing to take risks for the sake of the gospel.

5. The book of Leviticus should cause us to pursue holiness more comprehensively.

However, God doesn't just want us to tell people about Him; He also wants us to show them what God is like. If we're in a relationship with God, we should pursue holiness more comprehensively—a total commitment to Jesus.

One of my favorite writers and scholars is Dr. Carl Ellis. When I was a college student, I remember being at an Impact Movement conference and attended a breakout session where he drew something he called the “Window of Righteousness.” It was a four-paned window that described the different dimensions of righteousness or holiness.

Across the top is “Personal” and “Social.” On the bottom you see “Piety” (morality) and “Justice.” When you put those together, you get Personal Piety, Social Piety, Personal Justice and Social Justice. Now, if you want to avoid controversy, then you don't have to use the phrase Social Justice. You can substitute Justice—don't read your politics into this; he's just talking about what the Bible talks about: concern and compassion for people in intentional and public ways.

You might think of Piety as loving God. Thus Personal Piety would be my own personal relationship with God, and Social Piety would be our relationship with God together as a community of faith. Then you might think of Justice as “Love your neighbor as yourself” and how we do that personally in our own personal sphere, but also how we work to love our neighbor as ourselves through the public sphere. We do that in our country in lots of different ways, like through how we vote and how we advocate in all sorts of ways.

This chart is worth reflecting on in and of itself, but the reason I'm mentioning it is it helps us to get our arms around how comprehensive God's idea of holiness is in the book of Leviticus. If you're new to the Bible, you've heard this phrase before: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus emphasized that in His teaching. Do you know where He got it from? He's quoting Leviticus 19:18.

God is concerned about our personal piety, but He's also concerned about our holiness together as a church family. He's also concerned about that justice layer, about what it looks like for us to treat people around us fairly. When you get a chance, read Leviticus 19, but let me give you a few quick examples, and let's see if you can hear where they might fit. We'll start with Leviticus 19:9-10:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard.

If you were an Israelite, you might be tempted to say, “God, that doesn't make sense. I'm a farmer. Why would I not gather all of my harvest? Why would I not gather all the grapes from the

vineyard in order to be able to turn them into wine?” Here’s why. He says, “*You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner.*” Why? “*I am the Lord your God.*” Look at Leviticus 19:14: “*You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.*” He’s saying, “You should demonstrate a concern for those with special needs.”

Leviticus 19:15: “*You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.*” In other words, not just in the personal sphere, but even in the systems and institutions of society, God says, “I want you to do everything you can to make sure people are treated fairly and equitably with justice and with righteousness.”

In your experience in the American church, which quadrant, would you say we have focused on? If you’re like me and like my sister up here on the front row, you will probably say Personal Piety, like my own personal private relationship with God and how I personally obey Him. That’s not bad; God clearly cares about our own individual holiness. If we had time, we would see that throughout the whole Bible, God is not just concerned about the individual. He’s also concerned about the piety of the Israelite community. He expects them to be concerned about that as well. Why? Because God’s people should have a godly reputation.

He’s also not just concerned about our relationship with Him and our piety individually or together as His covenant people, but He’s also concerned about how that motivates us to move out into the world and demonstrate love personally, in systemic, social and societal ways. God says, “I’m calling you to be holy and pursue holiness in every aspect and dimension of your life.” It’s a holistic holiness. It is not compartmentalized. It’s not just, “God, I will obey You in this area, but then I’ll neglect what You say in that area.” It’s not, “God, I will allow the Bible to govern me in this particular area of my life, but I will allow entertainment or politics to govern me in this other area of my life.” No. God says, “I am the Lord over everything and if you are in Christ, if you are a part of My people, I’m calling you to pursue holiness in every aspect and dimension of your life.”

Why are we to pursue holiness? There are so many reasons, but the reason emphasized most throughout the book of Leviticus is what we’ve already read. He says, “Because I am the Lord your God, and I am holy.” He says, “You be holy, because I’m holy.”

My kids are getting to that age when they’re playing with other kids in the neighborhood. One day one of our kids came and started asking if they could do something that one of the other kids was doing. When we said no, they said, “But their parents let them do it.” You already know what I said. I said the same thing my parents said to me when I was their age. I said the same thing I have been waiting my entire life to say: “I’m not their parent; I’m your parent. You are my child.” In other words, remember who you are.

Of all the different reasons and motivations for us to pursue holiness, high on the list is our response to God's grace shown to us in Jesus, but that's not the only reason. The most prominent reason in the book of Leviticus is because God says, "You are My son, you are My daughter, and you should bear a family resemblance. I am your God, your Lord, your King, your Father, and part of My purpose for calling you is so I can use you to demonstrate and display My holy character to the world around you."

We get the joy, the great honor and privilege to display to people what God is like. As they look at us individually and together, they should see some evidence of the goodness of God, the joy of the Lord, plus the faithfulness and reliability of our word and God's Word. We should reflect His holiness, His separation from sin and His abundant sacrificial generosity. People should be able to look at the quality of our lives which should say something to them about the nature and the worthiness of our God.

You are not just a Christian. You are a display. You are an object lesson. You are a commercial for Almighty God, to show people around you, "My love is real, My generosity is real, My faithfulness is real. It's not just theoretical; it's concrete. You are experiencing it through My people."

Have you ever thought about how amazing the sun is? NASA says, "Nothing is more important to us on earth than the sun. Without the sun's heat and light, the earth would be a lifeless ball of ice-coated rock. The sun warms our seas, stirs our atmosphere, generates our weather patterns and gives energy to the growing green plants that provide the food and oxygen for life on earth." Now, the sun isn't amazing just because of its benefits, it's amazing because of its beauty. We love sunsets and I've heard that sunrises can even be beautiful as well.

Ironically, something so beneficial and so beautiful can also be extremely dangerous if we don't take it seriously. Did you know that even though the earth is 93 million miles away from the sun, we still have to wear sun screen? Did you know that the sun's surface temperature is about 10,340 degrees Fahrenheit? Do you know how much heat a NASA space suit can handle? 250 degrees. And no NASA space ship has ever dared to get within four million miles of the sun, which didn't happen until this past August with a mission that is still occurring right now. The sun is so beneficial and so beautiful, yet with our human limitations we can't come anywhere near it.

That is the same thing we learn in the book of Leviticus. Although He is a God of blessing and is ultimately beneficial to every one of us as the source and sustenance of our very lives, God is not to be trifled with. In our human limitations and human sinfulness, we cannot even come close to the presence of God. Yet, because of His mercy and grace, He has made a way for us to draw near to Him. We don't just come into His presence, we live in His presence, now and for all eternity. But there's more. He calls us to shine with a derivative light. He calls us to shine like the sun in the darkness of the world, so that the world will see our good works and glorify our Father Who is in heaven.

Let me pray that God would help us as we follow Him.

Father, as I've been studying Leviticus, I have just been overwhelmed. You are so holy beyond what we can perceive and what we can imagine, yet more gracious than we can perceive or imagine—certainly more than what we deserve. So, God, as we think about what You revealed through the book of Leviticus, help us to reverence You and rejoice in the gospel. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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