

LEVITICUS DEVOTIONAL

By Pastor Phil Emerson

NAME: _____

OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

Lifegroup 12s

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

Lifegroup 3s

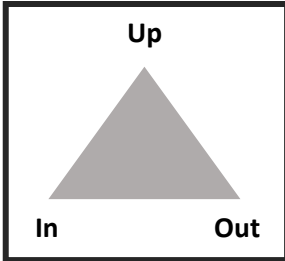
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.

INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS

I know you were wondering when I'd venture into Leviticus. Come on now, stay with me! Let's explore this amazing book that just maybe you've never endured right through before. I used to struggle with this book full of religious offerings and ceremonial cleansings. I remember as a young believer saying to an old Brethren preacher that I was struggling with it and he gave me this life-changing advice: "Oh, son," he said, "it is a most wonderful and beautiful book. You just have to treat it like the rest of God's Word – look for Jesus on every page." And that's exactly what I've done for over half a century now, looked for Jesus on every page. The Bible is a Hymn (HIM) book, it's all about Him, our glorious risen Saviour. Come with me as we look for Jesus on every page.

Get your Bible, journal, pen, and oh yes... you may need to make your tea or coffee a little stronger!

Love and prayers,
Phil

Live

We begin this amazing book of detail, intrigue and mystery with 7 chapters of offerings. The Burnt Offering, along with the others described in Leviticus 1-7, was offered on the bronze altar of Burnt Offering, the plans for which God gave Moses in the book of Exodus. This altar was made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze. It measured nearly 8 feet square and was about 4½ feet high. It was a very large altar indeed because it had to take anything up to a bull, but certainly not too big considering the number of sacrifices it was required to facilitate. If you entered the courtyard of the tabernacle through the gate, the altar of Burnt Offering would be the first of the tabernacle furnishings you would see as you approached the tabernacle. To the left of the altar was the ash heap where the ashes from the altar were placed.

The Burnt Offering spoken of in this chapter was primarily a personal offering, done voluntarily by the individual Israelite. We can pick this up from verse 4 where the person would lay their hands on the head of the animal, symbolically transferring their sin, shame, and guilt unto the innocent animal who would then die in their stead. Already in this first chapter we see the type and shadow of Christ dying for our sin. So, let's go on the journey I mentioned in the introduction and look for Jesus in every chapter.

I love how God wants us to be more preoccupied with the treasure within than with the pressures without. God's all-surpassing power will be shown most dramatically through our weaknesses. If His incomparable beauty will be most clearly revealed through our hardships, then let's stop complaining. If His redeeming purposes will be most fully realised through our brokenness, then let's humble ourselves and surrender. Though there are seasons when throwing in the towel, finding another story, or running away are incredibly attractive, where else would we go but to our Abba, the Lord of all things?

Pray

Father, You alone give the words of life, sufficient grace, and the hope of glory. May Your voice be ten times louder than any other voice clamouring for my attention. In the coming hours, days, and weeks, demonstrate the wonders of Your love and the sovereignty of Your rule. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The purpose of the Grain Offering is not atonement (for no blood is shed), but rather worship. It is the acknowledgment of God's divine provision for the Israelites for life itself. The Grain Offering praised God for His abundant supply of the Israelites' daily bread. Remember how Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *"Give us this day our daily bread"*? It is important to note that while people do not contribute to their redemption, they do participate in the growing of the crops by which God sustains their life. The human element is present in the Grain Offering in a way that it is not in the Burnt Offering.

I believe we see a beautiful pattern emerge with the Burnt and the Grain Offerings. Follow me on this, what we see here is that we can add nothing to our redemption for our atonement (a person could not add to the Burnt Offering), but the Grain Offering followed the Burnt Offering, showing that man's contribution is acceptable to God based on the atonement of the Burnt Offering. (You may need to read over that a few times to take it in!) This is a total picture of our redemption in Christ; it is not based on what we can do but on what Christ has done. When we step into this reality then we begin to worship Him for who He truly is, and God accepts our worship.

How sad it is when people violate the principle of this sequence and try to offer things to God before they receive His salvation in Christ. How sad it is when people try to clean up their lives in order to be acceptable to God. Once His sacrifice has been accepted, once we have trusted in Christ's work on our behalf, THEN our offerings and sacrifices are pleasing in His sight (so long as they conform to the requirements He has given us). My prayer is that you have received the atonement Christ has made by the shedding of His blood on the cross of Calvary, and that having done so, you will now offer to God the other sacrifices which will be absolutely pleasing in His sight.

Pray

Father, today my prayer is short and thankful. I only love and serve You because You first loved me and gave Jesus for me. How can I not give You myself totally? I love You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Leviticus 3

Live

A Peace Offering could be offered as an act of thanksgiving or to fulfil a special vow or as a freewill offering. These were optional offerings which an Israelite could offer at any time, except during the Feast of Pentecost when the offering was mandatory. Imagine for a moment that you are an Israelite in the days of Moses and you are about to make a Peace Offering. You begin by selecting an animal without defect, either male or female, from the herd. You then bring this animal to the doorway of the tent of meeting where you lay your hands upon its head. By this act you are identifying your sin with this animal, and yourself with its death. When you have slain the animal, the priest collects the blood which is shed and sprinkles it around the altar. Remember, without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin. Sound familiar?

The Peace Offering was symbolic of the peace that already existed between the worshipper and Yahweh because the sin was already atoned for. It was never offered to *obtain* peace, but as a *celebration* of the peace that already existed. It is a picture of the fellowship between God and the believer based on the blood sacrifices. Now, in looking for Jesus on every page, it's not hard to find Him today! Christ is our peace. Ephesians 2:13 *"Now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall."* Sin had separated us from God, and only the sacrifice of Christ on the cross could reconcile us back to Him. It took the shed blood of Jesus to remove the barrier and bring us near. The word for 'peace' that Paul uses is 'eiro' and means 'to join together'. This peace is dependent upon Christ alone. Beautiful stuff!

Pray

Father, forgive me for putting anyone or anything before You. Lord Jesus, for Your glory, fire up my love for You. Take my affections to new places of liberating and transforming wonder. I don't want to love You with a 'status quo' love. I want to love You with consuming abandon for You alone are worthy of everything I have and am. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

In verse 1, we have the unintentional sin. This is the sin of omission, something you should have done and didn't (as opposed to the sin of commission, something you committed). In verse 3, we have the priest sinning and what he should do; verse 13, the whole congregation; verse 22, the leader. What a wide spectrum of people. The Sin Offering (*chatta'ah*) was a compulsory offering for the covering of sin. It could be an ox, ram, kid, doves, pigeon or even fine flour depending on the nature of the case. This offering covered sins committed unintentionally out of weakness. It did not cover sins of presumption in defiance of God or open sins of rebellion. It did not deal with general sins, but particular sins.

Do you see the value which God has assigned to the blood of an innocent victim shed in place of the sinner? It begs the huge question today, have we come to personally accept the shed blood of Christ as God's provision for our sins? The terms 'salvation' and 'born again' are all too frequently misunderstood because we use unbiblical terminology to define what they mean. We talk, for example, about 'asking Jesus into your heart' which isn't a biblical phrase. I can understand why this phrase is used but I think it sells redemption short. Many people in our modern society who are lost in their sins want to retain certain things about Jesus, but reject the most important part of His person and work. They want to honour Him as a humanitarian, healer, teacher and philosopher, a great example, but they do not want anything to do with His sacrificial death, His shed blood. The essence of Christ's work for sinful man is the shedding of His blood. You will remember that in Exodus on the night of the Passover the blood of the lamb only became effective when it was applied to the doorposts and the lintel. If it had been left in the bowl it would have remained completely ineffective. The same applies to the blood of Jesus; it must be applied to our lives daily.

Pray

Father, You've made me Your own at the price of Jesus' blood. I've been redeemed from sin and death and placed into Your righteousness and embrace. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Leviticus 5

Live

The last chapter dealt with the Sin Offerings to be presented for various groups: the high priest, the spiritual head of the people; the whole congregation; a ruler of the people; individual members of the congregation. Now specific instances of sins are identified. They are a type of less magnitude than those mentioned in chapter 4. All the same, in the committing of these sins, there must be an offering for atonement.

From chapter 4 to 7 we have presented to us the Sin and Guilt Offerings; the two themes intermingle throughout this entire section. So, we can conclude that the Bible, contrary to our modern culture, closely ties sin and guilt together. Look at how both relate to each other in the following texts.

Verses 5 and 6, *“When anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, they must confess in what way they have sinned. As a penalty for the sin they have committed, they must bring to the LORD a female lamb or goat from the flock as a Sin Offering; and the priest shall make atonement for them for their sin.”*

Verse 15, *“When anyone is unfaithful to the LORD by sinning unintentionally in regard to any of the LORD’s holy things, they are to bring to the LORD as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a Guilt Offering.”*

Notice this: if a person is *guilty*, he needs to bring a *Sin Offering*. On the other hand, if a person *sins*, he needs to bring a *Guilt Offering*. The two concepts are seemingly inseparable. For us, we realise that Jesus Christ, our Sin Offering, is the eternal solution to our guilt. He offered Himself for our guilt, but we must acknowledge our guilt and accept this offering He made for us. Then we can rejoice in the knowledge that we will be made holy.

Pray

Father, thank You that through Jesus and His once and for all sacrifice for sin, You have released us from the power and guilt of sin; they no longer have any claim nor hold over us. Thank You that who the Son sets free is free indeed. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Leviticus 6

Live

Today we have what has become known as the Trespass Offerings. As you read these today notice the job of the priests. While the people brought the offering, the priests had to work hard to keep all the regulations required for the sacrifices. These Trespass Offerings were presented for special sins by which a person had contracted guilt, and are therefore not included in the general sacrifices already mentioned. Three kinds of offences are mentioned as requiring trespass offerings.

I love verse 13, *“The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.”* This is a symbol of the never-ceasing worship which Yahweh required of His people. It was essentially connected with their acts of sacrifice. We must always keep worshipping. Finding Jesus in pages like this is relatively easy. He is worthy of all our worship. The fire that never goes out is like the Holy Spirit given to us at conversion. God lights up our spirits with His Holy Spirit, living in us and through us, giving us the joy of the Lord. May our cry today be that of the psalmist in Psalm 85:6-7, *“Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us Your salvation.”*

Let’s rejoice this day with thankfulness for the claims of God’s Word, for when He diagnoses a problem, He always resources His children with more grace. I’m not sure where our hearts leak joy, but I don’t want any of us to get used to this condition. Since His joy is our strength, may He cause our heart muscle to beat afresh with the joy that fills the courts of heaven. Since joy is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, may He fill our lives to capacity. May He weed, prune, and fertilise our hearts for a bumper crop. After all, Jesus is praying for the fullness of the Father’s joy to be in us (John 17:13).

Pray

Father, I will live with anticipation and hope, for Your prayers never fail. Though I’ve never seen You, I do love You. And I love You because You first loved me and gave Yourself for me on the cross. Fill me afresh with the inexpressible and glorious joy that comes from living in union and communion with You. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The focus in this chapter is on exactly what portions from the offerings the priests were allowed. The Peace Offering was the only sacrifice in which the worshipper himself was privileged to eat the meat offered and share it with others. God's provision for those who serve Him is very evident here. There are many lessons of a personal and practical nature that appear in these instructions. Honesty, integrity, fair-dealing, self-denial, humility, hospitality, and many other virtues are woven into the structure of the sacred sacrifices.

Unfortunately, by the time of Jesus, the leaders of Israel had added many of their own rules to God's rules. Instead of following the spirit and intent of the law, there was a great burden laid upon people if they wanted to be considered righteous in the eyes of the leaders. At least the law, itself impossible to fully obey, offered grace and mercy. And yet, even with these allowances, the law could never perfect anyone. We have seen this time and again in the various offerings detailed for us in these chapters.

But then along came Jesus who didn't need to be perfected by the law because He was already perfect. These types and shadows were meant to lead the people to Him. In Him they were fulfilled. Now, through Him, something so much better is available to us. We read in Hebrews 8:8, *"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises."* The mediator's duties have been carefully laid out and explained. We've already seen some of the things that were given to them for the conduct of their duties. The Lord granted the priests particular parts of the offerings. They had no inheritance of their own; the Lord was their inheritance, and so they shared in the Lord's portion.

Pray

Father, just as David danced with shameless freedom before the Ark of the Covenant, I long to be free because of the riches of Your grace. I have no trouble singing to You or lifting my hands in the assembly of Your people, but I want Your immeasurable love to spill over into all of my life. Help me to worship You with awe and wonder. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Every believer in Christ, even today, can discover in this eighth chapter truth that is vital to them, not only for the present, but forever. The public nature of the impressive ceremonies points first of all to the glaring light of publicity that attended the coming of Christ as the High Priest of all believers.

Christians today are in every way just like the ancient Jewish priesthood, "*a royal priesthood*", as witnessed by the Apostle Peter. I love that there are enough details added in this chapter to remind us that everything about this ordination process is, in type and picture, looking forward to Jesus. The details are logical and orderly, and the dignity of how everything is accomplished is pretty impressive. The Lord had called, and now the calling was being acted upon.

Over and over in this chapter, the words "*as the Lord commanded*" are stated. There is a set procedure which He laid out, and that set procedure must be followed carefully. This is important because of what it foreshadows – a more perfect Holy One who would come to redeem the world and fulfil the law! As we look back on these things, we can clearly see Christ revealed, and we are given the surety that our hopes are placed in the right basket. The word we have been given is sure. The hope we possess is well-grounded, and therefore the things promised to us, yet future, are certain to come to pass.

The above is only a partial list, but these are sufficient to show how thoroughly the New Institution was set forth under the forms and shadows of the Law of Moses. I'm sure you, like me, treasure the promise of being kept by God. We have no bootstraps to pull up, no magic happy pill to take, or any 'fix-it' button to push, but a Father who will never forget or abandon His children. What a God He truly is, so compassionate and generous. There is no one like our God, no, not one.

Pray

Father, how great are Your mercies, how profound Your kindnesses, how more-than-sufficient Your grace. May Your peace rule as an umpire in my heart today. May I see Jesus – the Prince of Peace, more clearly than the waves of any storm. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Before I start today let me refer back to a little thought from chapter 8 about the priests. In verse 24 we were told that Aaron's sons were brought forth after the ram had been slaughtered and Moses took some of the blood and placed it on their right ear, the thumb of their right hand, and the big toe of their right foot. This image won't leave me. Could it be signifying that as we follow God, we *listen*, we *do*, and we *walk* it out? Just a thought!

Moses was the only medium to communicate the divine will to the newly made priests. The first of their official acts was the sacrifice of another Sin Offering to atone for the defects of the inauguration services. Then followed a Burnt Offering, expressive of their voluntary and entire self-devotion to the divine service. In corrupt forms of religion, the leaders and priests set themselves above the people, almost as though they were sinless, but in the true religion of the Hebrews, the priests were required to offer for their own sins as well. This is unlike our great High Priest, Jesus, who knew no sin, did no sin, and in Him was no sin at all.

If you were in Israel and saw the parts of an animal laid on an altar, you might question where the beauty was in that – a once living animal going up in smoke. But if you considered what that sacrifice meant instead of thinking about the brutality of animal offerings, you would see the mercy of God bestowed upon undeserving people. That leads us to the cross of Christ. What is the most horrifying thing that could ever have happened is also the most beautiful thing. He went to the cross. He weighed out the cost, set the plan in motion, and carried through the execution of it. What beautiful imagery and powerful significance there is in looking for Jesus on every page!

Pray

Father, there's brokenness all around me and in me. I praise You for already forgiving all of my sins – past, present, and future; every sin of word, thought, and deed. Lord Jesus, I praise You for not merely waving off my sins but wading into the mess and paying the supreme price of Your life and death. In Your strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

What is meant by offering *“strange fire”* before the Lord? It means anything which reckons upon our own self-righteousness and forgets that life is given to us as a gift. Perhaps the most basic form of sin is ingratitude, this seizing of life as though we have a profound right to it, instead of receiving it as a gift from the Father's hand, and, with that realisation, giving thanks for it.

We are reminded today that sin always has consequences, especially when we treat lightly the divine things of heaven. Like, it's not that these boys hadn't been instructed. This chapter gives a graphic picture of what it means to offer *“strange fire”* before the Lord. Another example in the New Testament is found in Luke 18:9-14 – the prayer of the proud Pharisee. Remember how he stood and prayed, *“Lord, I thank You that I'm not like other people, like all these unwashed publicans. I tithe every day, and I fast twice a week...”*. His prayer is a recital of all that he has done for God and suggests how lucky God ought to feel to have him on His side.

Let's offer God a sacrifice of praise today; after all, there are so many reasons to love Him, so many reasons to risk being completely honest and vulnerable with Him. I love how He doesn't despise our brokenness and weakness. There is no safer haven than His love and there is no greater, richer, more certain acceptance than what we have in Him. If God's kindness leads us to repentance, then surely His compassion leads us to the freedom of vulnerability. So maybe a good thing to say to God today is, *“Here I am. I wish I could speed up my sanctification. I wish I was already over certain things. I wish old wounds still didn't carry present power. I wish I wasn't triggered to anger, insecurity and fear by certain people. But I'm Yours – this day and every day until You return or take me home.”*

Pray

Father, I wish I were freer to be in the moment, without concerns for the next thing and the next. I wish I were more spontaneous, relaxed, and welcoming of You in my life. This isn't a 'wish list' as much as it's the cry of my heart for the gospel to do its work in my life. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Come on now, stay with me! I know Leviticus is a tough book of religious rituals, ceremonial laws and stuff, but let's keep looking for Jesus in it! You are doing good!

Few things today are as clear and simple as this chapter detailing clean and unclean. Don't you wish that in every choice and decision you had to make you could say with certainty, "This is clean and that is unclean"? Good and evil. Yes and no. I wish life were that simple, but most often it isn't. There is, however, one issue where it *is* that simple – our relationship with God. When it comes to the issue of where we will spend eternity, it is clearly defined. All those who are *in Christ* are saved and their sins are forgiven. All those who are trusting in anything else, including their good works, are not in Christ. In that sense, our salvation is a clear-cut, yes-or-no, in-or-out matter. All those who trust the shed blood of Jesus Christ are in. All those who trust in anything else are out. A clearly defined issue! We are either in Christ, or we are not.

These food laws were to protect the people from disease, visibly distinguish them from other nations, and help them avoid things which represented sin, like a serpent. Scanning through this book, I notice how many verses are about staying teachable, receiving correction, and loving discipline. It's a good exercise to underline them. I sometimes wish the sheer number of highlighted and underlined verses in my Bible indicated how humble and non-defensive a person I am. But that's simply not the case. I'm sure you will agree, we can all still shift blame and make excuses with the best of them. We need the power of the Word to grant us greater and quicker freedom to let the Bible read us, not just us read it. It exposes our sin and brokenness and reveals more of the riches of the gospel.

Pray

Father, it's because Jesus made Himself of no reputation becoming sin for me on the cross that I don't have to live for my own reputation. Because I'm no longer guilty or condemned for my sin, I can live in the freedom of that finished work. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

When God created Adam and Eve, He also gave the wonderful command to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Children are a gift of God and are deemed to be a blessing, according to Psalm 127. What a thrill to see a married couple become new parents. When a woman becomes a mother, not only is there great joy, there is also a great sense of responsibility. The law in this chapter gives some insight into this matter. There is nothing wrong or immoral about giving birth; the problem here is that the woman's discharge of blood makes her unclean. All bodily discharges were defiling and disqualified the woman from approaching the tabernacle. There is no mention of the baby being unclean; it is the discharge that follows childbirth that makes the woman unclean. Childbirth is connected to the fall of man. Just ask any woman who has been in labour ... it is painful and dangerous. But this is not how it was meant to be. The pain and sorrow in childbearing came because sin entered the world, according to Genesis 3:16.

The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day did not have a grasp of what constituted uncleanness. They saw it merely as a matter of external things. Thus, they were greatly offended at Jesus' actions, and considered Him to be unclean and a lawbreaker. They could not understand why He spent His time with the unclean, harlots, sick, even lepers. Their error was to fail to see Him as the One who had come to do what the law was unable to do – make people clean. In His ministry, Jesus avoided the self-righteous who thought themselves clean, and sought out those who were regarded as unclean. The cleansing which the law could not perform, only pronounce, was done once and for all by the atoning death of Jesus. I love this!

Pray

Father, as surely as You called out to a dead Lazarus and he walked out of his tomb fully alive, so when You called out to me, I too was raised from the dead, made fully alive in You. By Your grace, I've already passed from death to life, and from being condemned to being declared righteous. For the sovereign grace and resurrection power of the gospel, I praise You today. Indeed, salvation is of the Lord! In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

God wanted to set aside these people as His own and wanted to teach the Israelites about sin. Disease, of course, is not sin in and of itself even though it did come about through the fall of mankind. Most people who suffered these diseases were not ill because of any particular sin, but the nature of these types of disease teaches lessons about the nature of sin.

In Israel, the priest was also the dermatologist and it was his task to evaluate what made a person clean and what made them unclean. He was to examine the skin and also the hair. If the sore had gone below the skin, it had obviously gotten into the flesh. Here is an Old Testament lesson concerning a New Testament truth: the sins of the flesh, those things which go deeper than our outer covering, are what cause us to be unclean. We cannot know a person's true character by merely looking at them because sin enters right into a person, beyond their body into their spirit.

Another lesson is that just as serious diseases spread, in the same manner sin takes control of a person. It's effects always grow worse until it has ruined that person's life. Also, it was necessary to separate a person from other people while they had the disease. In the same manner, sin separates us from both God and a right relationship with other people.

These two chapters, 13 and 14, go into great detail concerning the issue of the dreaded disease of leprosy. It is argued that the Hebrew word signifies various diseases or conditions which are all lumped under the one word, "leprosy". For this reason, the NIV uses the translation "defiling skin disease".

Pray

Father, there are many areas of my life in which I long for greater freedom. I want greater freedom from being impacted by people's opinions of me. I want to respond to trying situations and difficult people with grace and wisdom, rather than reacting with complaining and irritation. I want to be quicker to pray and slower to fret. So, help me to look deeper than the skin and reveal my soul to You today. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This chapter tells a person who has been ill what to do when they have recovered. This person had one of the skin diseases noted in chapter 13. The priest had declared them unclean, so they left to live outside the camp. But now they are well again; the disease has gone. This chapter describes what they must do next. This is how he (or she) can start to live normally again!

Look for these three things: the ear means what you hear from God, the thumb means what you do for God, the toe means where you go for God. Despite Aaron being the high priest and having been addressed along with Moses at the beginning of chapter 13, the Lord now speaks only to Moses. Unlike the last section which dealt with identifying leprous outbreaks, this section deals with purification rituals. They are words of *law*, and so Moses, the lawgiver, receives them.

A couple things need to be noticed here. Firstly, this is referring to a person who is unclean because of leprosy, a picture of defilement from sin. This person was unclean and was separated from the Lord's people. Secondly, from the outset, the priest had nothing to do with the cleansing of the leper. He was unclean with leprosy, and now his condition has apparently changed. He was outside of fellowship, and now he is to be accepted back into it. He had a plague which pictured sin and separation, and now he is healed. Having an affliction in the skin was an outward sign of uncleanness. As we have already noted, it pictures sin in mankind, a plague of death. Interesting that the word "skin" is never mentioned in chapter 14. There is life and health, leading to spiritual restoration.

Pray

Father, Your Word is a balm for the broken and bread for the hungry. This isn't only theory or good theology; it's experientially true. You've promised to 'show up' and be enough, and You are. In the storms of life, You are nearer than the storms themselves. You've created me and You've redeemed me. You summoned me by name and called me Your own. No more condemnation; no more orphan-like spirituality; no more making a name for myself. I am Yours and Your banner over me is love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Old Testament law stated that the unclean could never come into the presence of the Holy God, and yet the Holy One Jesus Christ took upon Himself human flesh and dwelt in the midst of men. We are reminded in John 1:11,12 *“He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”* In His ministry, Jesus avoided the self-righteous who thought themselves clean, and sought out those who were regarded unclean. The barrier that the Old Testament law and its sacrificial system could not break down, the New Covenant in the person of Jesus Christ did. The cleansing which the law could not perform, only pronounce, was done by the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Repeatedly, New Testament writers speak of the cleansing which the Christian has received.

May our hearts be filled with gratitude today for God’s kindness and might, His grace and persistence. He completely saves all who come to Him by faith, and the very faith we need for coming to Him He freely gives. He has rescued us from darkness, a kingdom in which we were both willing citizens and desperate slaves. Only the gospel is powerful enough to set us free.

What must be observed in this chapter is that something that is quite natural, and in many ways proper, is also seen to be broken. We know that sexuality is a gift from God, but because of sin, this wonderful gift is frequently abused and often perverted. This law was therefore given by God to help His people appreciate the gift by putting some boundaries around it. This law teaches us about God’s boundaries around sex while at the same time instructing us about the sanctity of life. Where God is placed in the proper place, life is valued and sex is protected, enriching marriage.

Pray

Father, thank You for triumphing over me and in me. I am becoming more aware that the best way to live is for You to spread the fragrance of knowing You in my life. If it’s through my brokenness that the perfume of Your presence is best released, then I’ll boast in my weaknesses all the more. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Looking for Jesus in every page has been so beautiful in this study. This chapter contains one of, if not the most, powerful images and shadows of the New Covenant. It's stunning to study. The first fifteen chapters of Leviticus all have something to do with how individuals become 'right' with God through sacrifice or how they become ceremonially 'clean' before Him by obedience to His laws. Chapter 15 was a load of instructions about how human functions relate to being clean or unclean under the Law of Moses.

It is important to remember that according to Hebrews 9:22, *"the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."* We must realise that there is no forgiveness of sins without sincere repentance and the atonement of Christ. Today's chapter describes a sacred ceremony the Israelites were commanded to perform once a year, one that symbolised how Jesus Christ would atone for the sins of all people. While the rites described in chapters 1-15 were individual in application, the Day of Atonement symbolised atonement for the sins of the whole Israelite nation. They would bring a goat before the high priest, who would then lay his hands on the head of the goat confessing all the sins of the nation. This was symbolic of transferring all the sins unto the goat. Then a fitful young man would lead the goat deep into the wilderness knowing that this goat would never return but would die or most likely be savaged in the wilderness. "Scapegoat" was the name given to the goat that 'escaped' into the wilderness, never to return, with the sins of the people on him. The scapegoat symbolised that, through the atonement, all of Israel's sins could be forgiven, never to return. When we come to Hebrews 10:12 we are reminded about Jesus in this way, *"But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God."* What beautiful images of Christ we see in this chapter!

Pray

Father, it's amazing how reading the Old Covenant makes me so, so thankful for the New Covenant. It also makes me so, so glad I got to be born under the New Covenant. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

How we traffic through a passage like today's is by understanding the times. Eating meat was a luxury in those days, something reserved for special occasions. Cooking up a steak or eating lamb chops was not a regular thing. If you wanted to kill a sheep for a meal, you would need to bring it to the Tent of Meeting and offer it as a Peace Offering to God. Remember, with the Peace Offering, the worshipper was able to eat most of the meat, after the priest took his portion. This was only practically possible while Israel was living and travelling together through the wilderness. Once they were settled in the land, a new provision was given. Deuteronomy 12:20 describes the new rule: *"When the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as He has promised you, and you say, 'I will eat meat,' because you crave meat, you may eat meat whenever you desire. If the place that the LORD your God will choose to put His name there is too far from you, then you may kill any of your herd or your flock, which the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your towns whenever you desire."*

Two passages spring to mind in this very bloody chapter. Revelation 1:5, *"Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood."* And Revelation 5:9, *"And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain, and with Your blood You purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.'" A matter as important as the atoning work of Christ was so vital, so precious that long beforehand God began to prepare men for its coming to pass. We find the preciousness of blood and the principle of atonement revealed very early in Scripture, and then clarified throughout.*

Pray

Father, thank You for how these passages keep pushing us into the New Covenant where the precious blood of Your Son Jesus would be shed once and for all for sins past, present, and future. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

At first read it is easy to see that this chapter is aimed exclusively at men. The passage addresses men of Hebrew households who held the power and who had access to weaker, vulnerable members of the household who could not refuse or resist them. This list is given for a reason, and the reason is given. Israel is to be different from Egypt, the land she left, and different from the behaviours and morals they have taken with them. They should be different from the land they are going into with its current population which will influence them moving forward.

When I started my study of this chapter, I read it not as an ancient Israelite, but as a man whose sight is distorted by the sexual revolution. There are many cultural voices telling us that sex is a drive similar to hunger and that it is almost impossible to control. This cultural message penetrates our lives in subtle ways and affects our view of life and the Scriptures. Sex has become all about 'my' desires rather than placing your spouse's needs before your own.

This chapter teaches personal holiness and is a commentary on the seventh commandment, do not commit adultery. God takes an entire chapter to teach how to apply that commandment. In the next chapter, God teaches how to apply the other nine commandments. My ability to love others as illustrated in Leviticus 19 is conditional on my ability to develop personal holiness as set out in Leviticus 18. This is the reason why sexual sin is a sin against the body, as the Apostle Paul says. Paul says that when you commit sexual sin, you commit it against yourself. If married, sexual sin doesn't just prevent you from loving your spouse. Whether married or single, sexual sin actually prevents you from loving others properly and prevents you from loving your neighbour, from sharing Jesus with others who need Him.

Pray

Father, what a great perspective-giving Scripture. Forgive me when I love inconsistently, when I think that I deserve to have my needs met. In all these things, I want Your hand and heart to be at work in me. I want to be a person of faith in the daily messiness and disappointments of life. By Your grace, take my sexuality, my all. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This chapter provides us with a study on the practice of holiness by taking us through nine of the commandments. Interestingly, it is not until after the exodus that God calls His people to live holy lives. The Mosaic Covenant was established so that Israel would be a holy nation, according to Exodus 19:6. While there are hints at how holiness is to be practiced earlier in the Moses writings, it is in this great chapter that holiness is defined in great detail. This chapter is a crucial one for every believer because there are many misconceptions in Christian circles today as to what holiness really is; it is a term which is used more than it is understood. This is an incredible study that would be of huge benefit to any who would embark upon it.

Contrary to much popular theology, holiness is *definable*, *practical*, and even *measurable*. But further, when it comes to holiness, those who have been redeemed by the grace of God ought to be *responsible*. We are to pursue the practice of holiness in our lives and because of God's saving grace, we have the power to do so. Remember, please, God is different from His creation, transcendentally so, and this is what the believer is called to imitate. When God called His people to holiness, He was calling them to a lifestyle and an existence that was different from those around them. Believers are similar to unbelievers in many ways – we have the same physical, psychological, and relational needs as those who reject Christ; we love our children as atheists love their children; we enjoy the same hobbies and sports and other forms of recreation. Rarely can you look at people and tell simply from their externals that they are Christian. The differences that exist between Christians and non-Christians relate to desires, beliefs, values, and aspirations. And because of these differences, there will most definitely be a difference in behaviour.

Pray

Father, on any given day a number of voices contend for my attention. There are the voices from the past – sometimes shouting, sometimes whispering, always seeking to disrupt my peace and rob my joy. But then there's the voice of the Holy Spirit. How I praise You for that one voice that transcends and trumps every other. I desperately long to be holy. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Chapter 20 falls into the broader context of chapters 18-20 which stress the practical outworking of holiness in the everyday life of the Israelite. Chapter 18 focused primarily on the family, chapter 19 approached holiness from the standpoint of one's neighbour, and in this chapter, God requires that His holiness be reflected by His people loving their neighbour. Chapter 20 follows up the teaching of the previous two chapters by prescribing the punishment for the capital crimes outlined. The serious nature of the punishment serves to strongly underscore the importance of obeying the commands found in these chapters. The Bible tells us in Genesis 18:25 that God is *"the judge of all the earth"*. This God, our God, is a holy God; surely His judgments are just, yes? Surely the sentence He hands down is fair, equitable, right.

Remember that two chapters ago we heard a similar but shorter warning, *"You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD"* (18:21). That isn't the only command repeated in this chapter. In fact, every command in this chapter has already been given in either chapter 18 or 19. Why the repetition? Verses 1-5 reveal the pattern we find throughout this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is not to restate the command, but to reveal the consequence for the one who violates the command.

I'm so thankful I was born in these times under a New and better Covenant where Christ Jesus came to fulfil the law and redeem me to live under new management. Thank You, Jesus! What a joy to address God as the architect and builder of His own house, including the household of faith. What a privilege for our children and children's children to have a place in God's family and story. As I look back over the years, I'm saddened at the times I failed Him but I am also gladdened, for He has always been faithful to His covenant love, even when I was overbearing and under-believing.

Pray

Father, only You can give anyone a new heart. Give me quick repentances and observable kindnesses. Convict me quickly and deeply when my life contradicts the ways set out in Your Scriptures. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

We will not understand the thinking and actions of the New Testament scribes and Pharisees apart from understanding their background. Much of this background is found in chapters 21 and 22. I have to admit I have never had much empathy for the legalistic scribes and Pharisees, until now. I believe that their error originates in our very text today. Let's be careful of legalism. We need heavenly wisdom, especially around relationships.

In essence, the purpose of this law was to highlight the hope of the covenant. Death was not to dominate the priesthood; the hope of life was. It should be remembered that to the Israelites, death was related to the curse (according to Genesis 3:19) and so touching the dead symbolically brought defilement. The word "defile" means "to make unclean"; here, it has reference to the fact that a priest was not allowed to touch the dead body of anyone except his closest relatives. One may ask, why? Verse 4 informs us that it is because he was "*a chief man among his people*" and therefore he must not profane himself. Priests were always on duty and so must remain clean.

We learn from this that those who served in the sanctuary were held to a higher standard than the rest of the faith community. The priests could not even grieve like the rest. There were certainly priestly privileges, but there were also priestly sacrifices. Those called to oversee the sacrifices sometimes needed to make sacrifices themselves in order to fulfil their duty. Those called by God to the special responsibility for the spiritual welfare of His people are called to a lifestyle that is a bit abnormal. They are called to a lifestyle in which they do not have the luxury of some relationships that those whom they lead often enjoy. They are called to absorb some heartache. They are called to prioritise the sanctuary in a way that others, who benefit from the sanctuary, are not. It must never become a job, rather a calling.

Pray

Father, I realise more than ever how easy it is to fall into legalism and hypocrisy. Indeed, all of us are legalistic and hypocritical about something. Forgive me for allowing such things to reside in me; cleanse me from it all. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

There are several sub-divisions in this chapter. The first section is directed to the responsibilities of the priests. Then comes a short section on the rights of the priesthood and those who may, to some extent, join in those rights. After that is a section on suitable offerings and those which are to be rejected. Finally, there is a short section which further defines sacrificial parameters.

God had a higher standard for His priests because they had a sacred task, making offerings for the people. Because they had a higher privilege, there came a higher responsibility. For those who have been “made holy” by a personal experience of salvation, let me remind you of some important truths from our text. Firstly, just as both the priests and the sacrifices were required to be perfect, so our Lord Jesus Christ was both the perfect high priest and the perfect sacrifice. His priestly offering of Himself has, once for all, made holy all those who trust in His work on their behalf. The Book of Hebrews strongly emphasises this truth. Oh, I love this! Secondly, behind these ceremonial requirements for cleanness is ultimately a moral requirement for cleanness. The ceremonial requirements for perfection entering into the presence of the Lord are designed to illustrate that holiness communes with holiness. If we wish to fellowship with the living God, it requires that we be made right with Him and that we be like Him.

If we are honest, most of us have thought of the law as rules by which we could earn more of God’s favour, or at least micromanage our life for greater success. We need to understand that one of the main purposes of the law was to drive us to the Lord Jesus. It was never given as a basis of our acceptance with God. He has fulfilled the law for us by Jesus’ perfect obedience, and He has exhausted its judgment by His death on the cross. I wish I’d understood this earlier in my walk with Him. Simple and beautiful!

Pray

Father, continue to open my mind to understand how the entire Bible is a revelation of the gospel – the story of Your commitment to redeem and restore Your beloved and broken world. Show me more of You and my place in this magnificent story. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

How do you learn best? Do you prefer to hear a preach or read a book? Watch a documentary or study the printed page? Can you learn about something abstractly or do you need hands-on experience? The Lord has given each of us different learning styles. Therefore, it should not surprise us that the Lord communicates His truth in diverse ways. This is the core of what this chapter and other scriptures have to tell us. We not only have His written Word, but we have commemorative holy days to transmit truth to the young and the old, the literate and the illiterate alike.

The holy days tell and show the great truths of God's salvation, His love, and His plans. They contain things to hear, see, taste, build, and do, and they appeal to everybody. They are "holy days" but that really means that they are holidays. God set aside several religious holidays. Note some important points about the annual feasts or festivals. These holidays focused upon the salvation and redemption of man and the worship of God. The holidays painted the prophetic picture of salvation, the salvation that God was to bring to man through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God used the annual festivals to show a believer how he was to walk day by day throughout life.

There were three Spring Feasts: Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, and Feast of Firstfruits. These three were closely connected, taking place during an eight-day holiday period. The Passover took place on the first day (the fourteenth day of the first month). On the very next day the Festival of Unleavened Bread began and lasted for seven days. The Feast of Firstfruits was celebrated on the third day after Passover, the day after the Sabbath. Christ rose from the dead as the first fruits of the resurrection on the third day from His death. Simple and beautiful!

Pray

Father, nothing compares with being certain of Your love for me. The peace I have knowing I no longer have to perform or pretend with You is priceless, incomparable, and needful. Today, in particular, I'm thankful for the freedom to pour out my heart to You. You are my rock, my salvation, my fortress, my honour, my refuge, and much more. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

In the previous chapter we were reminded of holy time, time set apart to rest, reflect and remember all that God has done, time to celebrate and look forward in anticipation to all that God has promised. Our ultimate longing is to one day be in the presence of God, to no longer see through a glass dimly but face to face, according to 1 Corinthians 13:12. Today's chapter reminds us that the priests were to enter daily into God's presence. Worship is not reserved only for special occasions but God is to be enjoyed day in, day out, all day every day.

The lamp and the bread deal with matters pertaining to the tabernacle and priestly ministry. The lampstand and the table were made of gold and placed in the holy place inside the tabernacle. Both required regular maintenance; one daily (the lamp), the other weekly (the loaves). In both cases, the entire congregation were involved. The people had to provide oil for the lamp and flour for the loaves. The importance of maintaining the light in the lamp and the loaves on the table underscores a very important principle, one which is found in both Old and New Testaments – spiritual ministry requires all hands on deck! The lights must be kept burning with the priest trimming the lights regularly before the Lord. Oil was to be continually supplied to the lamps to keep them burning. The light of the lamps was positioned in the holy place to illuminate the table for bread. Bread was to be piled up before the Lord each week. Twelve loaves, representing the twelve tribes, bread in abundance. Looking at the ingredients, it is evident that these were huge loaves of bread piled up on the small gold table before the Lord. Pure frankincense was to be put with each pile of bread. This was likely burned as a memorial before the Lord. Beautiful!

Pray

Father, what imagery today of the eternal light of Your presence burning forever in glory. What a prospect that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for me in that very presence. May I serve You with all my heart and passion. That's what I want today, Father, to free my heart to serve You not out of shame but because I love You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

In this chapter, God commands a Sabbatical year, a year of Jubilee. Instead of working, the people were to spend the year praising God and reflecting on God's Kingdom rule over their lives. The land was also to have a Sabbatical and there was to be no sowing or pruning, no reaping or harvesting. In the year of Jubilee, the land would grow food from seeds of grain that had fallen the year before; vineyards would still produce grapes; olive trees would still produce olives; fig trees would still produce figs. The people were free to take what they needed for food. They could not, however, take any extra and sell it at a profit. Jubilee, then, was a year of worship, a year in which people and land rested from day-to-day tasks. Instead of working and producing crops, people and land were to worship God. Imagine that, the Jubilee was one whole year of Sabbath rest, a whole year of nothing but Sundays.

A great deal of faith was required of the Israelites to follow these commandments pertaining to the Sabbath year. After all, letting the fields lie fallow for a whole year seemed like a waste and it put the Israelite in the position of having to trust God for his daily bread. In verses 18-22, God assumed that some would have their doubts about the Sabbath year observance, and so He assured the Israelites of His provision. Keep in mind that in Exodus 16 God instituted Sabbath day observance with regard to the gathering of manna. For some time, then, the people had been experiencing God's faithfulness in this matter. God gave the people a small test of faith before He gave a larger one. How faithful are we in the little things?

Imagine having to rely totally on God for a whole year without intervening, without thinking if we just prayed enough, believed enough, or were filled with the Spirit enough. Imagine simply worshipping and depending on Him for your full and bountiful supply as well as your every need. Let's worship Jesus today, fully and with our all.

Pray

Father, thank You for comforting me when I'm downcast. You are *"the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort"*. You are the lover of my soul and not my performance. You're an amazing Father. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This chapter promises blessing for keeping God's Law and cursing for disobedience. The underlying principle is that our actions have consequences. Our obedience to God's commands brings blessing, and our disobedience brings discipline. Paul spoke of this as "sowing and reaping". He stressed that sowing evil results in discipline, while sowing righteousness brings blessing. Our actions are either the sowing of evil or the sowing of righteousness, and they will produce either blessing or cursing.

It would be one thing if temptation came like junk mail, easy to recognise, ignore, and discard. But temptation comes with such alluring and promissory power that resisting doesn't seem possible, or even desirable. It could bring us to despair if we didn't have the assurance that temptation itself is not sin. Hebrews 4:15, *"we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet He did not sin."* Incredible that Jesus was tempted in all things just like us but without sinning. What a stunning example He is.

A little side note of personal thought ... some argue that the emphasis of the Sabbath is on physical rest and the responsibility to reflect upon God and His work. Undoubtedly, rest and reflection are a large emphasis in the sabbatical laws. However, there is another element I think gets missed. In the days of the tabernacle, the temple, and then the synagogue, those who honoured the Lord by observing His Sabbath law did so in public and corporate acts of worship. In our terminology, they 'went to church'. There, I've said it! At the risk of sounding religious, the fourth commandment was given by God to make us pause to consider creation and redemption. And since God is still the Creator and the Redeemer, we also stand in need of the same weekly pause, and, if possible, like the children of Israel we need to worship corporately.

Pray

Father, the very fact that You also suffered the full fury of temptation gives me hope and keeps me sane. Jesus, I ask for myself and for a host of friends, bring the hope and resources of Your Word to bear at the very places we feel the seducing power of temptation the most. In Your strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Well done, you did it! You made it through Leviticus! I'm proud of you.

Even when men are carrying out their highest calling, the worship of God, their sin hindered and contaminated their deeds. I fear that there are many Christians who suppose that when someone is involved in what may be viewed as “spiritual ministry”, they are somehow exempt from temptation and sin. This final chapter should teach us otherwise. This is not merely an Old Testament phenomenon because in the New Testament, in Acts 5, we find Ananias and Sapphira trying to reduce their gift while representing their offering as the total sum of the proceeds of the sale of their property. In 1 Corinthians 11, we see that the saints were drunk and disorderly during the celebration of the Lord’s Table. In Philippians 1, we are told of those who were preaching the gospel out of impure motives.

In the New Testament and the Old, man’s sin is ever present. No activity is free from the corrupting influence of sin. Let us constantly be on guard when we worship God (and all other times), being realistic about our fallenness and proneness to wander. There’s the ever-present element of spiritual warfare swirling about us; the thief is constantly looking to rob and destroy, seduce and condemn in any way possible. Maybe we are struggling because we are trying to do life with too little sleep. Maybe it’s just our brokenness and flesh. Then again, possibly it’s the groaning of birth pangs in our heart, so wanting to be much more like Jesus than we already are. Probably it’s all of the above.

The sanctity of keeping vows is found in the books of wisdom: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. These are not merely a part of the Old Covenant; they speak of what is fundamentally right on a basic human level. Let us be wise and careful both in making oaths and vows, and in performing them. Let’s be people who keep our word and live by God’s Word!

Pray

Father, forgive me when I get it all wrong. In any case, and every case, I look to You, my Abba Father, to meet my needs. I cast my cares on You because I know that You care for me. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

