
Ignite

“ Dear Lord, teach us to give our whole heart to You. Help us to be sacrificial givers. As we give, let Your Holy Spirit speak to us and align us to Your purpose. May we focus on Your Words today and offer our hearts to worship and praise You. Amen.”



SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: *The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.*

Leviticus 1: Pursuing Holiness - Offerings & Sacrifices

Senior Pastor Chris Kam

Leviticus 1:1-9 The Burnt Offering

The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. He said, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When anyone among you brings an offering to the Lord, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock. “If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the Lord. You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you. You are to slaughter the young bull before the Lord, and then Aaron’s sons the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting. You are to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. Then Aaron’s sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

Introduction 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Deuteronomy 6:6-9, 1 John 4:12, Hebrews 12:14, 1 John 1:8-9, Hebrews 9:22

The overall message of Leviticus is about justification and sanctification. We learn that the way to God is through sacrifices and the shedding of blood for the atonement of our sins. This way, we are justified, and we can have access to God. This book communicates that receiving God’s forgiveness and acceptance should be followed by holy living and spiritual growth. This is a lifetime sanctification process

that transforms us into a new life of holy living, as we adopt a new holy lifestyle in God, to be set apart and be different from the rest of the world as God's people. In Leviticus, we learn that God loves to be approached, but we must do so on His terms, not ours. Through the sermon series on the book of Leviticus, may we learn to reaffirm our faith and realign ourselves to be more Christ-like.

Leviticus is like a gift store with a very dull front. It talks about offerings, sacrifices, clean and unclean food, diseases and social behaviour. If the Bible is the whole counsel of God, we cannot pick and choose what we like and ignore the rest. It is possible to miss out on a vital piece of information of God and His work if we only do selective reading.

Leviticus is the third of five books in the Hebrew Scriptures called the Pentateuch (which simply means "five books"), also known as the "Torah" by the Jews. It consists of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Genesis covers hundreds of years of history, Exodus covers about 350 years, Leviticus covers only about one month, Numbers covers 40 years, and Deuteronomy is the launch to the future history of Israel, starting from the Promised Land. Leviticus is in the middle of God's dealing with men. They were encamped in the wilderness in front of Mt Sinai, and the book starts and ends at the same geographical point. In that one month, they were going to school as God has instructed them. God was laying out His prophetic plan and promise for salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, Who will be the sacrificial lamb for the world, although they did not know it yet.

The ancient Jews in the Old Testament times began training children in the study of the Torah when they were about five or six years old, starting with the book of Leviticus. The child then progresses on to the study of the other four books. By the time the boy reaches 13 years old, he would need to perform the Bar Mitzvah, a Jewish adulthood ritual, for the boy's transition into adulthood. By this time, he would have known all five books of the Torah by heart. The law of God envelops the entire Jewish child. The meaning of the term 'Bar Mitzvah' is broken down to as follows: 'bar' means 'son', 'mitzvah' means 'commandment', and hence 'Bar Mitzvah' means 'son of the commandment'.

The Jewish Rabbi Assi (Midrash) once said: *"Why do young children begin the study of Torah with the Book of Leviticus, and not with the Book of Genesis? Surely it is because young children are pure, and the sacrifices are pure; so, let the pure come and engage in the study of the pure."*

What is pure? The sacrifices. They are often without blemish and defects. If the book of Leviticus can be taught to a 6-year old boy, there is no reason why we cannot understand it.

There are 613 commandments found in the Old Testament. 247 of them, nearly half of the total, are found here in Leviticus. It is the heart of the community and the spiritual life. This book is referred to about 40 times in the New Testament; indicating that it has a great significance to every Christian.

The book of Hebrews will be preached later this year. You cannot understand the book of Hebrews unless you have a working knowledge of the book of Leviticus.

The book of Leviticus can be divided into two sections:

- Section 1 - Chapters 1-16: The way to God through sacrifice - justification (an access to God)
- Section 2 - Chapters 17-27: A walk with God through sanctification (a lifestyle in God)

There are two key words that sum up the book of Leviticus: sacrifice, and sanctification. Sacrifice is an event, while sanctification is a process over a period of a lifetime. Leviticus describes your Christian journey and testimony. It is about how you are saved and thereafter, how you stay close to God.

Animals were killed to get into the presence of God. A high priest representing the people and the nation, will make these sacrifices on behalf of the people and the nation. He does it very carefully with a standard of holiness, so that he himself will not be killed when he enters the presence of God.

God sent the Holy Spirit to live in us, that is how we have the presence of God with us. We cannot see him face-to-face yet, but one day we will. Leviticus talks about holiness more than any other books in the Bible.

The words 'holy', 'blood', 'priest' and 'sacrifice' are repeated many times in Leviticus, more than any other books in the entire Bible. The word 'blood' alone is mentioned 79 times in Leviticus (compared to 316 in the Old Testament) – that means 25% of it is found in Leviticus. It is meant to teach that sin is awful and destructive. The wages of sin is death. Sin makes a bloody mess of things. We see that an innocent victim, in this case, an animal, must die and shed blood to atone, or to pay, the penalty of the people's sins. We cannot come close to God because of sin. We have a sin problem. Not only did we inherit this sin problem from Adam, but we also continue to disobey

God because our hearts are sinful. We have to admit and confess it. The word 'confess' means we agree with God, about what He says about us and our sins.

We often like to soft pedal things and make Christianity 'friendly' to people. For instance, the word 'sin' is not often used; instead, alternatives like 'indiscretion', 'moral misjudgements', 'weakness', 'mistakes' are used. We need to be offended by the word 'sin', and hate it like how God hates sin. We want to forsake sin, like how God wants us to forsake sin. The book of Leviticus is trying to tell us that sin is horrible, and it separates us from God. Calling sin by any other name will not benefit anyone. Relabelling sin is dangerous because we do not take it seriously.

The first seven chapters are about fixing sin so that we can get close to God. The way to God is by sacrifices. The tabernacle is like a slaughterhouse; with an enormous amount of blood. 'Blood' is mentioned 409 times in the Bible.

Chapters 1 to 5 talks about how you can get into the presence of God with the five offerings. Chapters 6 to 7 deals with specific instructions for the priests about how to correctly handle these different sacrifices.

What do all these mean?

a. The sacrifices in the Old Testament *Leviticus 6:12-13*

What did it mean to the Jews?

The word 'offering' (or 'offer') appears 346 times, and 'sacrifice' appears 33 times in Leviticus.

Note the phrase 'kept burning'. There is a constant need for the atonement for sins. It is an indication of the total dependence on God and following His laws.

The burnt, grain and peace offerings are voluntary offerings; it is for the Jewish people to express their gratitude to God.

- The burnt offering is an expression of thanksgiving to God, that He has given a provision for our sins to be atoned, to be compensated for, so that we can get close to Him. We show our worship of God through a willing and complete life of surrender, devotion and commitment to God.

- The grain offering is a picture of the table of fellowship and communion we can now enjoy with God.
- The peace offering is an expression of thanks for that gift of peace with Him.

The other two sacrifices, sin and guilt offerings, are mandatory for confession and to receive forgiveness.

- The sin offering covers the daily unintentional sin as we walk with God.
- The guilt offering deals with unintentional sin against the holy things involved in worship or against somebody; note the phrase 'unintentional sin' - you didn't mean it, but it happened. These are not for deliberate intentional sins.

When we read about the first three offerings, we will notice this phrase: 'an aroma pleasing to the Lord'.

God loves the idea that we are offering such sacrifices to worship Him. The point is, the fire of offering kept burning, and it is the role of the priest to ensure that this happens. It is a commitment on the part of the Jewish people to show their complete dependence on God through these sacrifices.

b. The sacrifices in the New Testament

What does it mean to us today?

We need to look at these sacrifices with the lens of the New Testament.

The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, while the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

In the Old Testament, these were prophetic words of what is to come in the New Testament. Conversely, in the New Testament, we find the revelation of what the Old Testament meant.

- 1. These sacrifices point us to what Jesus offered *Ephesians 5:1-2, John 1:29***

For the ancient Jews, these were done to fix the problem of their sins. But they did not know that these also speak of better things to come. The book of Hebrews talks about a better sacrifice, a better high priest and a better altar. In other words, they are all fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses, the author of Leviticus, was actually writing about Jesus. The pleasing aroma of the ancient sacrifices is fulfilled through Christ. The death of Jesus is the completion of all the sacrifices prescribed in the Old Testament in getting right with God. We are justified by faith in Christ Jesus by what He had done on the Cross for us. The Holy Communion reminds us to be thankful and stand in awe of Jesus Who gave His life for us.

Jesus who is not only the high priest, but also the sacrifice.

2. These sacrifices point us to what we offer to God *1 Peter 2:4-5, Hebrews 13:15, Psalms 51:16-17, Romans 12:1*

The sacrifices in Leviticus were meant to express the full dependence on God. We are all 24/7 Christians. The ultimate high priest, Jesus Christ, Who offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice, now ordains us to be priests who offer spiritual sacrifices.

What are these sacrifices?

Sacrifices need not only be rituals of atonement, but also expressions of worship. What we say and what we sing are important in how we live our lives. Each person should come with a right posture, humble and repentant before God. We should not be pretending, we should not be hypocritical. We must be sincere. It is no longer the parts of an animal that are important; but rather we ourselves now are a sacrifice to God. We come with complete humility before God to acknowledge that we and everything we own belong to God

3. These sacrifices point us to what we offer to others (an aroma pleasing to the Lord) *Mark 12:30-31, Mark 12:33, Hebrews 13:15-16, Philippians 4:18*

A sacrificial heart towards God and others are foundational to true worship. Do good as it is a fragrant worship. Both the sacrifices of Jesus and our sacrifices for Jesus can be described as a fragrant offering, a pleasing aroma.

Conclusion

There have been many fragrant offerings in DUMC in the last few months. For example, we served the people in the community through the ImpactNow initiatives and we gave or pledged to give towards our anniversary gift weekend (AGW). The AGW target stands at RM 5.5 million. Thankfully, within the first three weeks of the year, 58% of the target has already been met.

The overall message of Leviticus is about justification and sanctification; that is, God coming into our lives and transforming it from the inside out. Receiving God's forgiveness and acceptance should be followed by holy living and spiritual growth. God loves to be approached, but we must do so on His terms, not our terms.

How are you doing in terms of your walk with Christ? We need to examine our own hearts. Will we repent and not wallow in our sins before God? If we have done wrong, we must come honestly, before God and say '*Lord, I am sorry and I repent God*'. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. There is a call now to walk in holiness. Let us pursue holiness.



SERMON REFLECTION

1 Samuel 15:22 '*...to obey is better than sacrifice...*'

Sometimes, I do think obedience is sacrifice, in and of itself.

I have been prompted to give during the MCO last year, but I have always put it off. I thought it was the Holy Spirit prompting me; however, when I look at the circumstances then – I was not working then and the economy was adversely affected by the pandemic – I was not sure if parting with my savings was a wise thing to do. By nature, I found comfort knowing that I have money sitting in my bank account. Listening to my flesh to not give may sound reasonable, yet, it can be dead wrong. However, if I put off everything until I was completely sure of it, then not only will I not get anything done, I would have also disregarded the prompting of the Holy Spirit (which consequence I dare not imagine). And so, I finally gave an offering to church. Immediately after that, I felt joyful and liberated, as if some dark clouds have been lifted off me.

A few days later, my husband was prompted to do a cursory check for me, and it was found that I have some money under the Unclaimed Moneys Act which I needed to claim. I was not aware of this at all, and the amount that I needed to claim back was seven times the amount I put in as offering a few days before that! God is a Restorer!

Later that very same day, I attended a teaching on biblical stewardship. God really confirms His Word with signs and wonders following! During this teaching, the speaker expounded biblical principles on giving. It was not my first time hearing such a message, but God opened up the eyes of my heart and revealed to me that He is trustworthy and He is good all the time. I was truly convicted. I was really touched by the Holy Spirit and cried throughout the lesson. We give because He first gave us. We give out of a heart of abundance, because God is a loving and generous God.

With hindsight, my hesitation in giving was due to too much focus on self-preoccupation. Worldly wisdom would concern itself with personal lack with no thought on how the less fortunate may be coping. Worrying about meeting our own needs, while understandable, is actually a sin because it shows that we do not trust God. Of course, we exercise godly wisdom in planning, but worrying is somewhat unnecessary if we know Who our Good Shepherd is. The money I gave as offering could have been used to satisfy my own selfish desires. However, God is holy and His ways do not conform to the ways of the world. If God had sacrificed His Son out of His love for me, why can I not 'sacrifice' my desires out of obedience to Him?

Looking back, I know I needed to repent of the times that I did not heed God's prodding, and not heeding it with a good attitude. I do not wish to slide into sin out of my refusal to obey God.

In 2 Samuel 24:24, King David said he would not give God something that cost him nothing. I believe genuine giving occurs when I give something that I would like to keep. However, we cannot fool God by our outward action of sacrifices, when we know He primarily looks at our heart, and would like sacrifices and offerings from our heart, even when we do not understand. Now, I know that I know that I know, that giving offerings is an act of worship to God. You would really want to give once you have such personal revelation. Knowing that your offering impacts lives and goes to a worthy cause that is bigger than your desires is a humbling motivation to continue to give. Aside from this, I do get a 'kick' out of tithing and giving offering now!

In all of these, I pray that our sacrifices are like an aroma pleasing to God.

Contributed by May Ng



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Questions

(You may choose to have CG members type in their answers in the Zoom chatbox)



Photo by Kari Shea on Unsplash

- What is the most precious gift that you have ever received? Or, conversely, what is the most precious gift that you have ever given out?
- Pr Chris talked about missing out on vital information due to selective reading being akin to using 5% of a powerful software because you did not read the manual. Are you fully harnessing your software/applications/gadgets? Did you buy any of these things recently, and if yes, what is it? Are you using all the functions that are available?

Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- What new things did you learn about the Old Testament offerings and sacrifices you never knew before?
- What does the word 'sacrifice' mean to you?

Suggested Questions linked to:

a. 'The sacrifices in the Old Testament - What did it mean to the Jews'

- Sin separates us from God. In your opinion, why do you think there is a need for such offerings in the Old Testament? What do you think is the 'correct' or 'permanent' way to deal with sin? If there are no such offerings then, what do you think could be the consequences?
- What do you think the fire on the altar that must be kept burning represents? Why should we keep the fire for God burning? How can we see that the fire does not go out?

b. 'The sacrifices in the New Testament - What does it mean to us today?'

1. 'These sacrifices point us to what Jesus offered'

- What did these sacrifices do for the one who offered the sacrifices? How does it apply today through Christ? Share your own testimony on how you came to realise that your sins are forgiven.

2. 'These sacrifices point us to what we offer to God'

- What are humans trying to fix or correct when we offer sacrifices? Why did they think that blood could solve the problem of sin? How then does the blood of Jesus solve the problem of sin?

3. 'These sacrifices point us to what we offer to others'

- What do these words "aroma pleasing to the Lord" mean to you? You can answer this according to what we offer to Him, and what we offer to others around us? Share some practical examples. (You may refer to the scriptures that were shared.)
- One fragrant offering to the Lord from many of us is through the AGW . Share with your group the blessing from gifting in the AGW each year.

Question Bank *(Extra questions you can use to bring discussion further as you see fit):*

1. What has been your perception of the book of Leviticus?
2. What would you consider as a sacrifice that you have made for Jesus?
3. Parents may say this to their kids “Don’t you know how much I have sacrificed for you. If only you knew you would not be...” Do you think God would make such a statement to us? Why or why not?
4. Share a time when you made a conscious decision to turn away from something you knew was wrong, and you chose a different way instead. How was your action similar/different from that of the world’s? How does this set you on the path of holiness?
5. Do you think sin is just about breaking rules? Do you think sin breaks relationships too? In what way? How would you ‘mend’ a broken relationship caused by sin?
6. On the topic of sacrifices, how is God any different from other gods/religions that require sacrifices?
7. Repentance goes beyond just getting our act together. Is there something in your life that God is calling you to confess and seek forgiveness for? If it’s not too personal, do share with the group.



PRAYER



Photo by Timothy Eberly on Unsplash

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Heavenly Father, thank You that I am not bound by the Mosaic Law.

Thank You that I do not have to offer sacrifices from the herd or shed blood from the flock to honour Your name.

Thank You that I do not have to offer an animal, to be returned into fellowship when I sin and fail You. May my sacrifice of a broken, contrite heart, and a consecrated life, honour Your name and be acceptable in Your sight.

Thank You that through the shed blood of Christ, I am forgiven of my sin and have access into the throne-room of Your presence, every moment of the day and night.

Thank You that in Him I have mercy to find help in time of need. Help me to obey Your Word and adhere to the principles and practices laid out in Scripture for Christians, and learn lessons from those given to Israel.

This I ask in Jesus' name, Amen

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Leviticus>



OTHER RESOURCES

Below are some links to resources for you. Do **CLICK** on the images below!

FEATURED

In view of our current changing landscape that affects us individually and corporately, here are some featured resources for you this month!



The impossible task for a single grain of salt

saltandlight.sg

One grain of salt can hardly make a difference in the stew...

Lee Soo Tian

Society Work Vocation

Article



Life before the Pandemic

christianitytoday.com

Let's not return to our old way of life

Kelly Edmiston

Suffering Society Christian Living

Article



Why is Prayer So Hard?

christianitytoday.com

Amy Julia Becker

Prayer & Spirituality

Article



Practicing the Presence of God

39 pages

ccel.org

Lawrence is known for his devotion and ability to bring G...

Brother Lawrence

Prayer & Spirituality

E-Book (Free)

OTHER RESOURCES

Discover a host of other resources curated for you here!



DUMC STORIES

Be blessed by a compilation of inspiring DUMC Stories that you can share with others!

