

Small Group Guide NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY

The Church at Brook Hills

David Platt

April 13, 2014

Leviticus 16

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Before Small Group

Readings for April 14-20

Leviticus 18-24 and Psalm 22-31

Where We Are In The Story (Old Testament)

Background of Leviticus: Everything in Leviticus points to the holiness of God. His perfection and man's sinfulness stands as the reason for all of the sacrifices, laws, and regulations included in this book, for Leviticus explains how a covenant between a righteous God and a sinful people practically plays out in everyday life in the era before Christ's resurrection. Written by Moses as Israel wandered in the wilderness, it contains divine speeches that Moses delivered to the people of Israel about how to worship God and how they should live. Modern readers of Leviticus may tire of reading the many laws and regulations, but for Israelites in the Old Testament era, Leviticus provided relevant information for how they were to go about their day-to-day lives.

Structure of Leviticus:

- Leviticus 1-7 explains the rituals of the different sacrifices.
- Leviticus 8-10 gives instructions for the priests of Israel.
- Leviticus 11-15 instructs the people on cleansing and purification.
- Leviticus 16 details the sacrifice and instructions for the Day of Atonement.
- Leviticus 17-27 provides directions regarding the festivals, the holy days, and how the people should live.

This Week in Leviticus: Leviticus 18-20 contains instructions regarding ethics in everyday life. In these three chapters, God emphasizes the expectation that those who follow Him will be holy as He is holy (Lev. 19:2; 20:26), which is the central theme of Leviticus, and these three chapters give specifics regarding what a holy lifestyle looks like, particularly with regard to sex, idolatry, and our treatment of others. He instructs the people to live a life different than the Egyptians and the Canaanites (Lev. 18:3), and this principle of holiness applies to believers today (1 Pet. 1:16). Throughout these three chapters, God reiterates the reason for the commands – "I am the LORD your God." This statement points to their covenant with God, how they owe their creation as a nation to Him, and His own moral character and standards. Our obedience should stem from a reverence for who God is and from gratitude and love for Him.

Leviticus 21-22 instructs the priests how to live and how to serve as servant leaders for the Lord, and Leviticus 23 describes the festivals and holy days that God prescribes the people to celebrate. These holy days include: the Sabbath, the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths. These feasts and holy days taught the people that all that they have belongs to God, and they provided opportunities

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opportunities to remember and to praise God for what He has done. These national festivals and holy days also maintained the nation as a *community* of believers,

- From sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, the Jews were to keep **Sabbath**. This was the sign of their covenant with God (Ex. 31:13). For the Israelites, the Sabbath served as a commemoration of God's work in creation as well as His work of redemption in delivering them from bondage in Egypt (Dt. 5:12-15). While it was a day of rest, its purpose was for worship and spiritual service, not personal pleasure.
- Exodus 12-13 contains instructions for celebrating the **Passover** and the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**. The Passover celebrated God's redemption of His people from slavery in Egypt, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread reminded the people that God expects the redeemed to pursue purity and to purge the sin from their lives, to live in light of their redemption. The Feast of Unleavened Bread also fell at the first harvest of the year in the spring.
- With the **Feast of Firstfruits**, the people gave thanks to God and offered their first and best to Him. This offering also represented faith that God would continue to provide for His people, and it points to Jesus' resurrection since He was the firstfruits of the dead (see 1 Cor. 15:20).
- The New Testament refers to the **Feast of Weeks** as **Pentecost**, and it occurred fifty days after Passover when the wheat crop ripened. The people would each bring two loaves of bread baked with leaven and give thanks for the Lord's provision in the harvest. As an expression of their gratitude, the people were to leave part of their harvest for the poor to glean and to eat.
- The **Feast of Trumpets** took place in the fall and marked the end of the harvest season. Trumpet blasts announced the beginning of this memorial, and the people were to present a food offering to God and to rest from work. The people would celebrate the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths in succession since the month of Tishri included all three of these occasions. This feast called the people to rest from their labors and to worship the Lord.
- Leviticus 16 describes the **Day of Atonement**, and on this day, sacrifices were made in order to wipe the slate clean with regard to the people's sin. This day illustrated that fellowship with God cannot take place unless sin is removed, and sin cannot be removed without the shedding of blood from God's appointed sacrifice.
- The **Feast of Booths** (a.k.a. Feast of Tabernacles) commemorated how God provided for His people in the wilderness wanderings, so during this feast, the people lived in temporary dwellings or shelters. Afterwards, they rejoiced at not having to live that way before since God had given them the Promised Land. This feast also served as a time of thanksgiving to God for the provision of crops that year, specifically in the fall harvest, and a time to pray for God's continued provision by sending rain in the winter.

Background & Structure of Psalms: God used many different writers to write Psalms: David, Moses, the sons of Korah, Asaph, etc. The book is arranged in five parts, and this arrangement occurred after the people of Israel returned to the land after the Babylonian exile. A doxology concludes each book or arrangement of psalms (Psalm 41:13 for Book 1, Psalm 72:18-19 for Book 2, Psalm 89:52 for Book 3, Psalm 106:48 for Book 4, and Psalm 150:6 for Book 5), and the entire book of Psalms climactically ends with a grand doxology of several psalms (Ps. 146-150).

- Book 1: Psalms 1-41
- Book 2: Psalms 42-72
- Book 3: Psalms 73-89
- Book 4: Psalms 90-106
- Book 5: Psalms 107-150

This Week in Psalms: This week's readings contain two well-known and beloved psalms, Psalm 22 and Psalm 23. **Psalm 22** depicts the King David's dilemma in reconciling the nature of God with His actions and what He permits to happen, even to His own people. King David's response to his unanswered prayers provides instruction for God's people as they attempt to navigate through times when they *feel* unheard or forsaken by God. Despite how he felt in his situation, the psalmist persevered in prayer (v. 1), remembered

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God's character (v. 3), recounted God's faithfulness to His people in the past (vv. 4-5), reflected on God's faithfulness in his own life (vv. 9-10), praised God for His response to the psalmist's prayers (vv. 25-30), and exhorted others to glorify God (v. 23).

This psalm also contains **typology**, which is an indirect prophecy. This means that the Holy Spirit led King David to write in such a way about his own circumstances that they would also become true in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. The psalm foreshadows what would happen with Christ, but when King David penned Psalm 22, his words had more significance than *he* intended. For example, David would not have known to write about the Messiah being pierced in His hands and feet (v. 16) because crucifixion was a Roman form of execution, and the Roman Empire did not even exist during the reign of King David. Psalm 22 also contains typological references to the Roman soldiers casting lots for Jesus' clothes (Ps. 22:18; Jn. 19:14), the mocking of Jesus (Ps. 22:7; Mt. 27:39), and Jesus' thirst on the cross (Ps. 22:15; Jn. 19:28). Hebrews 2:12 also quotes Psalm 22:22 when it places the now exalted Jesus as the one offering praises before the congregation of believers.

On Good Friday, Christ quoted the first line of this psalm on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" However, Jesus was not asking God to explain the reason for His abandonment, for Christ knew why He was on the cross. In stating the first line of Psalm 22, Christ was appropriating the *entire* psalm and relating it to His experience – the confidence in the Lord, the petitions for deliverance, the deliverance from the suffering, and the glory given to God. Jesus prayed for deliverance in the Garden of Gethsemane, yet He died. He who is righteous prayed a prayer that went unanswered, yet Hebrews 5:7 explains, "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, **and he was heard** because of his reverence." The Father heard the cries of the Son. God heard His prayers, but He chose to answer Him at a different time and in a better way. God had delivered David from dying, but he chose to deliver Christ through death. Furthermore, through the cross and the resurrection Christ became the source of eternal salvation for all who repent and believe in him as Lord (Heb. 5:9). We can be saved from the punishment we deserve for our sin! Jesus' death is substitutionary. He was abandoned for us, so we will never be abandoned. He will never leave us or forsake us because He has already been forsaken.

Psalm 23 exudes confidence in the Lord, and it includes three scenes: a pasture with a shepherd and his sheep (vv. 1-4), a lavish banquet (v. 5), and the sanctuary of the Lord (v. 6). By comparing the Lord to a shepherd, the psalmist emphasizes the Lord's role in caring for His people. This does not mean that God's people get everything they want or even everything they physically need, for God does permit people – including His followers – to suffer. The provision mentioned by the psalmist is likely spiritual nourishment and spiritual growth, which aligns with Jesus' instructions to Peter in John 21 to "feed my sheep" (Jn. 21:16). There is no lack in the Lord's care (v. 1), and He also provides restoration and refreshment for His people (vv. 2-3), leads them in the way of righteousness (v. 3), and protects them (v. 4). Therefore, God's people need not fear any evil or calamity because they have the promise of God's presence (v. 4). With the banquet scene, the psalmist addresses God directly (v. 4), expresses trust in the Lord and in His protection despite the presence of his enemies (v. 4), and acknowledges God's gracious hospitality and care (v. 5). The psalm concludes with the psalmist's explicit desire to commune with God (v. 6), for his reflection on God's character increased his affections for the Lord and stirred his desire to return to the sanctuary, where God made His presence known in that era of history.

During Small Group

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with

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others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives: Praise God for His law, which reveals our sinfulness and points us to its fulfillment in Christ. Pray we will take seriously God's commands and live in humble submission to His will. Ask the Spirit to empower us all to help one another in our battle against sin. Thank God for the perfect sacrifice found in Christ. Pray for God to unite us all together as His redeemed people. Pray for God to help us all understand the unique role we have to play in fulfilling His mission together with one another.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week, we are praying for the different ministries that are part of Local Disciple-Making at Brook Hills. This includes Preschool Ministry, Children's Ministry, Student Ministry, College Ministry, Young Singles, and Adults. For more information about each of these ministry areas, visit brookhills.org/local. We are also praying for Household of Faith Church, East Lake, and Larry Cockrell, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Mid-Termers David and Laura D. serving in East Asia. David and Laura, along with their children, arrived 4 weeks ago in East Asia and are getting settled in. There they will be taking language classes and looking for long-term opportunities to work. Join us this week as we pray for David, Laura, and their family. We are also praying for our short-term team serving in North Africa, in addition to the Koreans of North Korea. For more information and ways to pray, visit brookhills.org/weeklyresources.*

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

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- Two truths to consider...
 - These Old Testament laws represent God's covenant relationship with His people.
 - These Old Testament laws are not our testament laws.
 - Unless an Old Testament law is somehow restated or reinforced in the New Testament, it is no longer directly binding on God's people.
 - These Old Testament laws are the Word of God for us even though they are not the commands of God to us.
- Three pieces of counsel...
 - Read these Old Testament laws carefully within their context.
 - Observe what these Old Testament laws reveal about the gospel of God.
 - Imagine the effects of these Old Testament laws collectively within a community.

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- Four implications for the church...
 - We stand in awe together before the God who reigns over us.
 - We cannot be a casual community before God.
 - We must be a contrite community before God.
 - We fight in battle together against the sin that remains within us.
 - Our propensity to sin is strong.
 - We need help from one another.
 - The punishment for sin is severe.
 - We want help from one another.
 - We unite together around the cross of Christ.
 - God's provision in the Old Testament: An annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement.
 - God saw the sins of Israel.
 - God was satisfied by the sacrifice of a substitute.
 - God's provision in the New Testament: An abiding sacrifice in the death of Christ.
 - God sees the sins in our lives.
 - God is satisfied by the sacrifice of His Son.
 - Our guilt is gone.
 - Our conscience is clear.
 - We work together in the mission of God.
 - We want to show God's law through the way we share our lives.
 - We want to spread God's gospel for the sake of God's glory.

Message Summary

God gave His Law to His people so that they could have a relationship with Him. The laws that are not restated or reinforced in the New Testament are not binding on God's people today. However, all of Scripture is God's Word to us. When read within their context, these Old Testament laws reveal aspects of the gospel that are applicable to every human being. The laws reveal the mighty nature of God and His sovereign rule. Therefore, we should approach Him with a humble heart, a contrite spirit, and a serious attitude of worship. Because we are sinners with a deep propensity to sin, we need community to help us walk in a manner worthy of being called His child. In addition, we walk together in life, unified by the cross, and work to spread the gospel for God's glory among all peoples.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

As the leader, there are at least three directions the small group can take in light of the current Bible reading plan. Knowing the people in the group, prayerfully consider what would be the best route to help those in your group grow. The group's meetings could also vary with each week, so if one week's sermon prompts a lot of thought and discussion, option one could be what the group does that week while the next week could be different. As the leader, feel the freedom to take all or just some of the content in this guide and do what is best for your group.

- *Using the discussion questions below, the small group time can focus on discussing the sermon and how to apply it.*
- *The group can discuss the Bible readings from the past week. If choosing this route, ensure that the group does not simply discuss information but also focuses on how to apply what they have learned from the Bible readings. The information in the "Where We Are in the Story" section can assist the leader in knowing the background and context for the readings.*
- *Using the REAP (read, examine, apply, pray) outline for studying Scripture, the group can take one or*

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both passages from that day's readings and discuss them. So if the group meets on Monday, then you could pick one or both of the passages for Monday. This also helps those who are new to studying the Bible or who struggle with reading it learn how to do so. To assist the group with REAP questions, download the Guide to Personal Worship from brookhills.org.

Reading Leviticus can conjure up images of legalistic priests who shun Jesus in the New Testament. All of the minute rules and regulations can leave a bitter taste in our mouths for the character of a God who would place such a burden on His people. However, lead your group to understand that the law was a gift of grace from God to His people. He gave it to them so that they could know how to please God and follow Him in a relationship. Think about the gods that other nations worshiped. How is God's way different from the trial and error and guessing that other nations did (and do) to try to appease their gods? Point out that although the Israelites were unable to obey all of God's laws, He acknowledged their inability with a way to receive forgiveness through sacrifice. Not only was the Law a gift of grace, but the sacrificial system was a gift of mercy. The Law showed the people how to be in relationship with God, and the sacrificial system provided a way of forgiveness when the people failed to maintain the Law. How should that change our perspective on Leviticus and all of the laws in the Old Testament?

Admittedly, there is much of God that is still a mystery. But what we need to know is fully revealed to us in His Word, including how to have a relationship with Him. He even tells us, very clearly, what is expected of His people in the old covenant as well as the new covenant. We often complain that we do not know what God wants us to do. However, God has given us the commands and the appropriate principles to be able to make wise decisions. Moreover, He has given His people His Spirit to speak into our lives. When we are in a right relationship with God, His Word and His Spirit work together to guide us clearly. How does it change our relationship with God when we know that He isn't trying to hide His will from us? Help your group to understand that, although there are times when we have to spend time truly seeking God's hand, He wants us to know His will for our lives. Also, invite the group to describe how God already told us His will in His Word. For example, when searching for a spouse, we know that he/she should be a close and growing follower of God who displays the fruits of a relationship with God. When know that, as a student, we should give our best effort to our studies and to do our work wholeheartedly because we are actually a display of God's character and are working for Him and not man. What are some issues in our lives in which we need God's guidance? How has He already spoken to them in His Word?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- How does our view of Scripture affect the way that we read and value it?
- What are the dangers of viewing Scripture as less than God's Word and revelation to His people?
- Why can we have a high view of Scripture as sufficient and authoritative for our lives? How does this belief impact our walk with Christ, our acknowledgement of sin, and the way we pursue holiness?
- The new covenant through Jesus Christ made some of the laws under the old covenant no longer applicable. However, the spirit of those laws, in their context, is a word from God for us. What kind of attitude is appropriate for all of Scripture, including non-binding laws as found in some places like Leviticus, if we rightly view it as God's Word?
- How do we determine what Old Testament laws we are to keep and what of the Old Testament does not apply to believers on this side of the cross?
- Looking at the context of Scripture is imperative to right understanding. How can reading a passage in its historical and literary context help us to gain insight into its application to our lives, even if the

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explicit law does not apply to us? How is this approach also helpful in not misapplying passages like Jeremiah 29:11 and Philippians 4:13 to our lives?

- How do we find the historical, cultural, and literary context of whatever passage we are studying in Scripture? What tools can we use? How do we identify tools that teach truth and not error? How do we use resources in such a way where our dependence is on God's Word and not on the resource itself?
- Looking at Leviticus 16, we know that this passage is no longer binding in its explicit instructions to us. However, what does it reveal to us about God, sin, and humankind? How does it help us to better understand Christ's sacrifice, as it is further explained in Hebrews 9 and 10?
- Those who had visions of God in the Old and New Testaments were immediately stricken with intense humility before a glorious God. How do we often find ourselves too comfortable before a holy and magnificent God? How do our actions and attitude often reflect a flippant attitude toward worship—personally and corporately?
- How can we worship God with awe and humility while also calling Him "Daddy" and "Friend"?
- How does our surrounding culture minimize sin? What impact does this have on us and on our children? How do we demonstrate the seriousness of sin through actions such as repentance, asking forgiveness, and not entertaining the appearance of evil?
- How do we gain a righteous understanding of sin as abhorrent to God? How does accountability with other growing believers not only help us avoid sin but also remind us of its severity?
- The laws God gave to His people were given to the Israelites as a community, not as individuals. What does this indicate about the responsibility of God's people as a whole to obey Him, help one another obey Him, and to display God's glory as a nation to the world?
- How can our group become a safe yet appropriately bold place to maintain accountability?
- Why is the cross of Christ the unifying factor in the lives of believers? In what ways does it unify us?
- Are there any issues in which we need to address in our families, friends, or small group that hinders unity?
- Scripture is clear that even the gifts of the Spirit are different and that God has given each person different skills to fulfill different tasks of His mission. Obviously small groups will be composed of persons who have different personalities and skills. How can we use these differences to minister to others? What special tasks or areas are we especially adept at for God's glory?
- How can we personally engage brothers and sisters in Christ (in our small groups and around the world) in a way that glorifies God and points the world to Him?