

PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.

Questions

The Book of Leviticus – Have you ever tried to read *Leviticus*? If you have ever attempted to read through the Bible in a year, *Leviticus* is usually where you get bogged down! To the modern reader, much of this book seems outdated and downright strange with its description of various **sacrifices** and strict **dietary, purity, ritual, civil and religious** laws. Yet, behind all the seemingly peculiar details in this book, is an underlying theme that is very relevant and important to us today – the *holiness of God*.

Holiness is mentioned more times (152) in *Leviticus* than in any other book of the Bible and *Leviticus* is a guidebook for *holy living* in the presence of a *holy God*. After Israel's dramatic exit from Egypt, the nation was camped at the foot of Mount Sinai for two years in order to listen to God (**Exodus 19** to **Numbers 10**). During this time, God gave his people detailed instructions on how to live every part of their lives – religious and secular. This special instruction was needed because the nation of Israel was to be different and set apart from every other nation on the face of the earth. They also had to keep themselves holy in order to come into the presence of a holy God. In *Leviticus*, God declares his own *holiness*, as he calls his people to live *holy lives* – *set apart to him and set apart from* the civilizations around them. Today, we still need to see the importance of holiness and how to live our lives in the presence of a holy God.

YAHWEH IS HOLY

1. Read **Leviticus 19:1-2, 20:7-8, and 26**. If this was the **only information** you had about the term *holy*, what conclusions would you come to about the concept of *holiness* and *holy living*?

Answers will vary.

God is holy and God's holiness requires a holy response from us which seems to revolve around keeping and obeying God's laws about how to live life. We may act holy, but it is God who makes us holy because we belong to him. Holiness includes being set apart from others who do not acknowledge God.

- ♥ What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word *holy*? Does *holy* have a positive or negative connotation for you? Why?
- ♥ How do you picture God's holiness? What does God's holiness have to do with your holiness?
- ♥ What do you think it means to "*be holy*?" Does that sound inviting to you? Why or why not? Do you know of anyone whom you would describe as *holy*? What makes them holy?

2. *Holy* means to be *set apart; separate*. According to the Scripture listed below, what sets God apart, making him "wholly separate?"

Exodus 15:11 – There is no one or no other god like God. No one or nothing shares God's majestic holiness, awesome glory or wondrous works. God is in a class by himself.

1 Samuel 2:2 – There is no one like God and no one holy like God. There is no one as stable and faithful as God.

Isaiah 40:13-14, 25-26, 28 – No one and nothing holds a candle to God's knowledge and power. No one tells God anything and knows all that he knows. Nothing and no one can even be compared to God. He, alone, created all that exists. He knows everything, inside and out. He never runs out of power or knowledge.

Isaiah 44:6 – God himself says that he is the only God; there is no other. Nothing was before God and nothing will outlast him.

- ♥ Why is God called a Rock (**1 Samuel 2:2**)? How many ways can you think of that he is like a rock? If someone asked, what **wonders** would you say that God has done in your life (**Exodus 15:11**)?

- ♥ Some would say that it is intolerant, dogmatic and narrow-minded to insist that there is no other God than *Yahweh*. Is there proof for this statement? "Proof" for God always rests in the observing the visible creation (Romans 1:20) and in our experience of God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. There is no other god that has done, can do or will do what God has done, is doing and will do. How would you reason with a person who might think there are other religions and other gods?

It is usually pointless to argue with someone over the existence of God or that other religions are false. However, we can learn to defend our faith by reasoning with someone and asking questions and pointing out how God is different from any other god and how Christianity is different from any other religion.

3. **Holiness** also means *purity*. How do the following verses confirm God's complete purity?

Deuteronomy 32:4 – This is a wonderful description of God and a good verse to "meditate" on, turning it over and over in your mind for a time as you glean it's truth. God is like a Rock, stable, steadfast, unmovable. Everything he does is perfect, just and fair. He is faithful (loyal, constant, true, devoted, dedicated, committed, trustworthy, dependable, reliable) and he NEVER does anything wrong, bad or sinful. Along with being fair, he is upright (honest, honorable, upstanding, respectable, high-minded, moral, righteous, conscientious, good, noble). What else could we ask for in a God?

Psalms 18:30 – God is perfect and everything he does is perfect; he is not flawed in any way. God's word (written and spoken) is perfect and without flaw which means all his promises to us are absolutely true and trustworthy. We can count on God's promises and Word.

Jeremiah 9:24 – Everything that God does shows his kindness (loving-kindness) justice and righteousness. He not only does these things, but takes great delight in doing them. These acts are his "trademarks."

1 John 1:5 – God is pure light without a trace of darkness or evil. He is pure goodness.

- ♥ What would it be like if our all-powerful God *wasn't* perfect, upright and just – and *was* able to do wrong? If God was all-powerful but not all good, he would be a very frightening character. He could not be trusted and we would never know if he was for us or against us, working for our good or working for our demise. Specifically, how would this change your relationship with God? Intimacy and trust would not be possible. We would always be questioning his motives. It would be a relationship of fear, domination and appeasement.
- ♥ What evidence do you see of God exercising *kindness, justice* and *righteousness* on earth (**Jeremiah 9:24**)? What are some things that *delight* you? What does it mean to you that God also *delights*?
- ♥ *Light* and *fire* are often used as symbols of God's holiness. Why are these good metaphors? *Light drives out darkness and fire burns away impurities*. What do you find comforting about the statement that *God is light and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5)*? *We never have to question God's motives because there is no evil or deception in him.*

In his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer writes: *Holy is the way God is. To be holy, He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because He is holy, His attributes are holy; that is, whatever we think of belonging to God must be thought of as holy.*

Optional: Isaiah 6:1-8, Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 15:2-4 are three Scriptures that give us glimpses into the throne room of heaven. What are some specific responses that result when any living creature, human or heavenly, comes close to God's holiness? *Creatures that come close to God's holiness cannot help but continually declare his absolute purity. Sinful humans are acutely aware of their own un-holiness. God's holiness elicits constant worship, and honor and praise from those who come close to it. God's worth is continually declared and praised; nothing and no one stands before God. Rather, creatures fall down and worship him for all he has done and all he has made.*

What is your response to God's holiness?

THAT WHICH BELONGS TO YAHWEH IS HOLY

In the Old Testament, anything **associated with God** becomes holy (set apart and pure) because he is holy. Although *associated holiness* is different from God's *essential holiness*, it does *make pure* and *sets apart* the holy from the unholy. That which God set apart as holy was to be treated with special respect and serve God's people as a reminder of their unique relationship with God. The priests were told, "You are to distinguish between what is holy and what is ordinary, what is ceremonially unclean and what is clean. And you must teach the Israelites all the laws that the LORD has given . . ." (**Leviticus 10:10-11**). In the Old Testament, the holy must never be used in a common or profane way. That which was consecrated to God must be for his use – forever.

4. God *set apart* **objects, persons, places** and **times** to be holy and consecrated to himself, to be used for his purposes. According to the verses listed below, *what* did God make holy and *why*?

Scripture	What was made holy?	Why?
Exodus 30:25-29	(Objects) The Tabernacle (Ten of Meeting) Ark of the Covenant, <u>all articles used in worship</u> – table, lampstand, etc.	These articles were holy because they were used to worship God who is holy. They were holy because they were in God's presence.
Exodus 19:10-11, 16-22	(persons and a place) people, Moses, and priests; Mount Sinai	because they came into the presence of God who is holy and pure; because God came down on the mountain
Deuteronomy 7:6-8	(people) the Israelites	Because they were chosen by God from all the people on the earth; his treasured possession. They were holy because they belonged to God.
Exodus 20:8-11	(Time) The 7 th day of the week; Sabbath	Because God rested from his work of creation on the Sabbath, blessing it and making it holy

♥ What does your church do to help distinguish between the sacred and the secular? Compare your lists. In your opinion, what is "sacrilegious"? What are some examples of your definition? Can you think of any ways in your own life that you separate the sacred from the secular?

♥ As followers of Christ, do you think we still need to practice a Sabbath rest? Why or why not? The **Sabbath** (one day – 24 hours - of rest and celebration in every seven) is one of the 10 Commandments. Jesus did not repeal, cancel or annul the idea of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delight and renewal. It is a day when we remember the leisure of Eden and anticipate our play and rest in the new heavens and earth. It is not possible to go into depth here about how to celebrate Sabbath rest, but there are many good books on the subject if you are interested. Sabbath rest is not an option; it is a commandment and it is one of God's best gifts to us! It is also a very needed practice in our busy, crammed-to-the-full lives. The benefits of practicing Sabbath rest are numerous and it is good for our bodies, hearts, souls and minds. It is meant to be a day of delight and it should not be ruined with legislation and legalism – but it IS different from all the other days of the week. It is holy and **set apart** to God.

♥ Do you prepare yourself in some way to come into the presence of God in worship? What are some things you could do to prepare your heart, body and mind to meet God? There are many things we can do to prepare ourselves to come into God's presence. Some examples: we make time for God by not being hurried or rushed and if we are meeting with others, we are on time. We can confess our sins and receive God's forgiveness and cleansing. We can prepare our hearts with prayer and meditation on God's Word. We can quiet ourselves. We can make sure we are not holding on to unforgiveness and make things right with others before worshipping God. How might this be beneficial? If our hearts and minds are not ready to meet with God we will probably miss the experience of his Presence.

5. According to **1 Peter 2:5, 9-10**, *who* has been made holy and *why*?

Those who have been redeemed and belong to God are made holy. We are made holy because we have received God's mercy and we are made holy so that we can praise and worship God who has called us out of darkness into his wonderful light. We are being built together into a spiritual house in which God lives by his Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22).

- ♥ What were some of the functions of a priest in Old Testament worship? The priests came into God's holy presence for the people; they offered sacrifices to God for the people; they worshipped God in the tabernacle or temple. How do you feel about being part of a holy priesthood? Because a holy God now lives in us by his Holy Spirit, we are holy priests, worshipping and making the sacrifice of praise to God. How do you offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God?
- ♥ Share with your small group your experience of being called out of darkness into God's wonderful light. How do you declare God's praises or show his goodness to others (2:9)?
- ♥ What makes you a "living stone" and with whom are you being built into a spiritual house or temple? We are "living" stones because the Holy Spirit lives in us, making us the Body of Christ. How do the words *chosen*, *royal*, *holy* and *belonging* make you feel (2:9 NIV)? What is your response?

YAHWEH CALLS THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIM TO BE HOLY

In the Old Testament, holiness was expressed in strict separation. The holy was not permitted to come in contact with the ordinary, or the clean with the unclean and interaction between Israel, God's holy people, and surrounding civilizations was discouraged. In the New Testament, the emphasis on holiness is *moral purity* – the concern over right and wrong and the quality of a person's character. God's people are to separate themselves from evil while living among people who do not live according to God's holy standards. Believers are *set apart* to God, but not set apart from involvement with unbelievers.

The Apostle Peter wrote, "Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be his children – is holy. For he himself has said, "You must be holy because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16). God is holy; therefore, all who are associated with him must be holy and reflect him in their *character* and *actions*. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life (1 Thessalonians 4:7). The holiness of God requires that we who are associated with him live good and self-giving daily lives in this present world.

6. Read **Colossians 3:5-10** in both the NIV and NLT. What, specifically, are the behaviors we are to put to death that belong to the old life we had before we became new persons in Christ?

sexual sin, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy; bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk.

- ♥ One way to put something to death is to *stop feeding it*. Can you think of any activities or practices you need to give up or stop doing so that your are not feeding the desires of the old nature?
- ♥ How important is holiness in your life? How is your life different from those who do not follow Christ? What do you think would help in your desire to be holy – set apart for God?

7. Read **Colossians 3:10-12** in both the NIV and NLT. What, specifically, are the behaviors we are to *put on* as God's holy, chosen, and dearly loved people?

Tenderhearted mercy, kindness, patience, humility, gentleness, forgiveness, making allowances for each other, and most of all love for each other.

- ♥ What is the difference between "holy" and "holier-than-thou"? How can you avoid this tag and still be the holy person God wants you to be? Do you know a "holy" person? How would you describe them?
- ♥ Which aspect of your old nature feels like a comfortable old T-shirt to you now? Why it is difficult to shed or remove? With what piece of Christ's wardrobe would you like to replace it?

BELOW IS THE SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURE FOR THIS LESSON THAT CAN BE PRINTED OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME

Exodus 15:11 “Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you— majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?”

1Samuel 2:2 “There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

Isaiah 40:13-14, 25-26, 28

Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor? **14** Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

25 “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One. **26** Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

Isaiah 44:6 “This is what the LORD says— Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.

Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

Psalms 18:30 As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

Jeremiah 9:24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.

1John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

Exodus 30:25-29 Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil. **26** Then use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony, **27** the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, **28** the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. **29** You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy.

Exodus 19:10-11, 16-22 And the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes **11** and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

16 On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. **17** Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. **18** Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, **19** and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

20 The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up **21** and the LORD said to him, “Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. **22** Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them.”

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

7 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

8 But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Exodus 20:8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. **9** Six days you shall labor and do all your work, **10** but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. **11** For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

1Peter 2:5, 9-10 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

NLT

Exodus 15:11 “Who else among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is glorious in holiness like you—so awesome in splendor, performing such wonders?”

1Samuel 2:2 No one is holy like the LORD! There is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

Isaiah 40:13-14, 25-26, 28 Who is able to advise the Spirit of the LORD? Who knows enough to be his teacher or counselor? **14** Has the LORD ever needed anyone’s advice? Does he need instruction about what is good or what is best?

25 “To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?” asks the Holy One.

26 Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out one after another, calling each by its name. And he counts them to see that none are lost or have strayed away.

28 Have you never heard or understood? Don’t you know that the LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.

Isaiah 44:6 “This is what the LORD, Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty, says: I am the First and the Last; there is no other God.

Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock; his work is perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!

Psalms 18:30 As for God, his way is perfect. All the LORD’s promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection.

Jeremiah 9:24 Let them boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the LORD who is just and righteous, whose love is unfailing, and that I delight in these things. I, the LORD, have spoken!

1John 1:5 This is the message he has given us to announce to you: God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.

Exodus 30:25-29 Blend these ingredients into a holy anointing oil. **26** Use this scented oil to anoint the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, **27** the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and all its accessories, the incense altar, **28** the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the large washbasin with its pedestal. **29** Sanctify them to make them entirely holy. After this, whatever touches them will become holy.

Exodus 19:10-11, 16-22 Then the LORD told Moses, “Go down and prepare the people for my visit. Purify them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their clothing. **11** Be sure they are ready on the third day, for I will come down upon Mount Sinai as all the people watch.

16 On the morning of the third day, there was a powerful thunder and lightning storm, and a dense

cloud came down upon the mountain. There was a long, loud blast from a ram’s horn, and all the people trembled. **17** Moses led them out from the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. **18** All Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the LORD had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain shook with a violent earthquake. **19** As the horn blast grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God thundered his reply for all to hear. **20** The LORD came down on the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses climbed the mountain.

21 Then the LORD told Moses, “Go back down and warn the people not to cross the boundaries. They must not come up here to see the LORD, for those who do will die. **22** Even the priests who regularly come near to the LORD must purify themselves, or I will destroy them.”

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 For you are a holy people, who belong to the LORD your God. Of all the people on earth, the LORD your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure.

7 “The LORD did not choose you and lavish his love on you because you were larger or greater than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! **8** It was simply because the LORD loves you, and because he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors. That is why the LORD rescued you with such amazing power from your slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt.

Exodus 20:8-11 “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. **9** Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, **10** but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. **11** For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

1Peter 2:5, 9-10 And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are God’s holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ. **9** But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God’s holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

10 “Once you were not a people; now you are the people of God. Once you received none of God’s mercy; now you have received his mercy.”

OPTIONAL SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 6:1-8 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. **3** And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” **4** At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. **7** With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Revelation 4:1-11 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” **2** At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. **3** And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. **4** Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. **5** From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. **6** Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. **7** The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. **8** Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and

night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.” **9** Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, **10** the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: **11** “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

Revelation 15:2-4 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God **3** and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. **4** Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”