

# THE MEANS OF WORSHIP

**+** **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

The Old Testament sacrifices showed God, and others, His people's commitment, gratitude, and confession of sin.

**+** **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Leviticus 1–7

**+** **SETTING:**

When the Israelites left Egypt, God spoke to Moses and gave him instructions for His people. God set up the tabernacle so He could dwell with His people as He reminded them of His holiness, forgiveness, and presence. He also gave them specific instructions for the sacrificial system with its various offerings so they could worship Him, remaining close with Him in their covenantal relationship. Through the sacrificial system laid out in the law, God's people showed Him their commitment, gratitude, and confession of sin through worship.

# DAY 1

## READ:

**Leviticus 1:1-17; 6:8-13**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Leviticus 6:12-13**

## NOTES



## ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #90: WORSHIP

While many reduce worship to an event or the singing of worship songs, worship is first and foremost something of the heart and extends to all areas of life. The aim and focus of worship is God, giving Him the exact due of praise and adoration that He deserves. Worship should be carried out not only at a personal level within a Christian's life but also in joining with other Christians in the corporate act of worship and stewarding our gifts for the glory of God. Corporate worship serves to edify and strengthen other Christians, but it also serves as a witness to non-believers of the greatness of God.

Have you ever tried to keep a fire burning? It's not as easy as it seems. If you've been camping or have had a fire pit in your backyard or enjoy grilling, you know you need to tend to the fire. Add more kindling. Add more wood. Make sure it doesn't get too big or too small. So imagine tending to a fire all day and night!

In Leviticus, God showed the people of Israel how they were to worship Him through the sacrificial system. He told in exact detail how the sacrificial rituals were to be enacted so the Israelites could make atonement for their sins and remain in relationship with God. God Himself laid down the rules for His people and the priests, those set aside to do God's work.

The instructions for the priests involved dedication and commitment. Concerning the burnt offering, the priests were to make sure the fire never went out. God repeated this instruction three times to emphasize the importance of this enduring fire as a symbol of God's people's enduring faithfulness and constancy (vv. 9,12,13).

Today, sometimes we come to worship with a nonchalant and carefree attitude, whether it's in corporate worship or in the way we worship through our daily lives. Perhaps we don't pursue worship with the idea that it's hard work or takes discipline or involves a holy God. Leviticus reveals to us, however, that this shouldn't be the case. We need diligence and reverence in our worship. Of course, our worship can't be legalistic—it doesn't earn us anything. But when we are faced with a holy God, our worship should adjust itself to honor the magnitude of that holiness. Easy worship that doesn't cost us anything isn't worth much to God either.

**How do you think you can worship God with more reverence and diligence?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-23

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Leviticus 6:15

## NOTES

Our sense of smell, though not essential to life, brings joy to it. The smell of flowers, the ocean, new babies, and new cars all bring a pleasing aroma to our souls.

Throughout Leviticus, when God gave instructions for His people for the sacrificial rituals, He mentioned that the burning at the altar was “a pleasing aroma to the LORD” (v. 15). Of course, the smell itself was not all that was pleasing. Primarily, God was pleased with the symbolism of what the burning meant. A blood offering was usually for the purpose of atoning for sin. It repaired the relationship the Israelites had with God when sin entered their lives, and that atonement was pleasing to the Lord. A grain offering was different in that it would work more as an offering of thanksgiving, reminding the Israelites of God’s provision, faithfulness, holiness, and care for His people.

Today, because of Christ, we no longer need to burn sacrifices. But corporately, we can sing songs of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. More importantly, when we live our lives as a “living sacrifice,” striving to be holy and pleasing to God, Paul says that this is true worship (Rom. 12:1). This worship involves being thankful, although this characteristic is sometimes underplayed in our lives. Yet thanksgiving anchors us to Christlike characteristics such as humility, patience, mercy, and love.

As the people of Israel burned their grain offerings and thought of how God had always been faithful in providing for His people, they had no other response than humility and joy and love. Through thanksgiving, we respond in awe of God and with a desire to be faithful to Him as He is faithful to us, and this is a pleasing aroma to the Lord.

**Write down in a journal or recall all the things you are thankful to God for in this past week.**

# DAY 3

## READ:

Hebrews 7:23-28

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Hebrews 7:27

## NOTES

Reading about the sacrificial laws may not be that exciting to you. They may seem irrelevant for our times. “That’s the Old Testament,” some might say; “It’s the New Testament that’s important.”

But we cannot truly understand the New Testament without understanding the Old. We cannot fully appreciate what Christ offered for us unless we understand the magnitude of what He fulfilled for us.

Every other high priest was a man who sinned and needed to offer sacrifices for himself. Jesus, however, did not sin, and thus, His sacrifice was purely for us, a completely selfless act (v. 27). Not only was it selfless, it was sufficient. His “once for all” act of laying His life down on the cross for our sin made the sacrificial law unnecessary for us. Without this act, we would still be burning animals for the forgiveness of our sins to restore our relationship with God, and that only in an incomplete way.

Imagine what our spiritual lives would be like if Jesus didn’t offer His life for our sins. If we cared enough and had access to Scripture, we perhaps would be trying to fulfill the law on our own without being able to do so. We would constantly be doubting whether God truly loved us and if we’d ever be worthy enough. We would struggle with the idea that God is holy and we are sinful and that chasm between the two would be too wide to cross.

In imagining this scenario, we’re able to see how much the gospel story reveals the glory of God and the magnitude of His love! How much it shows God’s pursuit of us, even in our sin! How much God’s mercy and faithfulness endures for the love of His created beings!

**What do you think your spiritual life would be like today without Christ’s sacrifice?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

Leviticus 4:1–5:13; 6:24-30

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Leviticus 6:25

## NOTES

Part of a diamond's price is dependent on its clarity, its lack of inclusions and blemishes. On a diamond clarity scale, "flawless" is the best with no inclusions and no blemishes visible under 10x magnification. Even still, no diamond is made perfect.

Like diamonds, though some may seem like it on the outside, none of us are perfect on the inside. If we think we are flawless, we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8). Perhaps some of us live more uprightly than others or have had less struggles, but still, we are never perfect. God sees beyond the 10x magnification and sees the selfishness in our thoughts or the love of the world that exists in our hearts. And if we proclaim otherwise, then we are calling God a liar—which He isn't—and showing that we are far from Him (1 John 1:10).

The Israelites understood this and came to God with their worship and sacrifices, which included confession of sin. The sin offering was God's prescribed way for His people to restore their relationship with Him because He is holy and cannot abide sin.

Worship, then, corporately or individually, should involve confession of sin. We cannot worship well until we confess the specific sins we are dealing with and acknowledge how we fall short. We know God forgives us, but in worship, we show our sorrow for sin and acknowledge Christ's sacrifice in removing sin's stain from us. When we lay our sins at Christ's feet, we also acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit to guide us toward Christ-likeness, not depending on our own power but His alone.

We worship God when we confess our sins because we recognize the holiness of God and how reconciliation would be impossible without Christ.

**What have you learned about worship and confession that you didn't realize before?**

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"For nothing good have I  
Whereby Thy grace to claim;  
I'll wash my garments white In  
the blood of Calv'ry's Lamb.  
Jesus paid it all, All to Him  
I owe; Sin had left a crimson  
stain, He washed it white  
as snow."<sup>1</sup>

—Elvina M. Hall (c. 1818-1889)

# DAY 5

## READ:

**Romans 8:1-11**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Romans 8:3**

## NOTES

Sisyphus, the king from Corinth in Greek mythology, was so full of trickery that Zeus punished him in Hades by forever having him roll a big boulder up a hill just to have it fall down again and need to be rolled up again endlessly. Like Sisyphus, humankind without Christ would continually be trying our best to fulfill the laws of God without ever succeeding because of our sinful nature and how we are bound by our fleshly desires.

Yet Paul tells us that no condemnation exists for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). Because of Christ, we are set free. Jesus accomplished this for us through His sacrifice on the cross as a sin offering (8:3). In the Greek myth, Zeus sent Sisyphus to an eternal punishment. Similarly, and not a myth, God punishes sinners for eternity in hell. But in contrast, God has provided a way for us to escape from eternal punishment, to free us from bondage and condemnation. And beyond that, He has provided a way for us to be a part of His family and His kingdom.

The ritual laws of old could not fully satisfy the requirement of God's condemnation of sin. But since God sent His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh," as a human being, He was the perfect sin offering, fully sufficient and powerful enough to fulfill the law and restore human beings to God. We no longer are bound by the forever drudgery of trying to do and be better, hoping to make it to the top of whatever hill we think will give us meaning and purpose. We no longer are hypnotized by that life. Instead, God has given us freedom to walk with Him, with purpose and grace and with kingdom mission in mind.

**What has Christ set you free from in your own life?**

# GROUP

NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"God does not only 'demand' praise as the supremely beautiful and all-satisfying Object. He does apparently command it as lawgiver. The Jews were told to sacrifice. We are under an obligation to go to church. But this was a difficulty [for me] only because ... I did not see that it is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men."<sup>2</sup>

-C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

## INTRODUCTION

### ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #90: WORSHIP

While many reduce worship to an event or the singing of worship songs, worship is first and foremost something of the \_\_\_\_\_ and extends to all areas of \_\_\_\_\_. The aim and focus of worship is \_\_\_\_\_, giving Him the exact due of praise and adoration that He deserves. Worship should be carried out not only at a personal level within a Christian's life but also in joining with other Christians in the corporate act of worship and stewarding our gifts for the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. Corporate worship serves to edify and strengthen other Christians, but it also serves as a witness to non-believers of the greatness of God.

### POINT 1: The sacrifices showed dedication to God (Lev. 6:8-13).

God's instructions for the burnt offering reminded the Israelites that worship involves \_\_\_\_\_ for and \_\_\_\_\_ to God.



**Why would God require an unblemished animal sacrifice to atone for sin?**

The specificity of God's instructions for the priests emphasized God's expectation of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as part of people's worship.

### POINT 2: The sacrifices showed thankfulness to God (Lev. 6:14-23).

The grain offering had a focus on \_\_\_\_\_ God and expressing \_\_\_\_\_ to Him.



**What are some ways to remember God’s provision in our lives so we can be thankful?**

Our greatest reason for thankfulness to God is an \_\_\_\_\_ to regular sacrifices because \_\_\_\_\_ laid His life down for us.

NOTES

**POINT 3: The sacrifices showed confession to God** (Lev. 6:24-30).

The sin offering required \_\_\_\_\_ along with a sacrifice to make atonement. In the New Testament, we learn that Jesus came as the sin offering for our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ from condemnation. We receive this relationship from God when we repent and believe.



**Why should confession be a part of our worship of God?**

**MY RESPONSE**

Because we have been forgiven of all of our sins through Christ’s sacrifice, we seek to be living sacrifices, serving Jesus and making Him known among the nations.

- **HEAD:** What are some ways God has prescribed for His people to worship Him now that Jesus has come?
- **HEART:** Do you regularly confess your sins as part of your worship? Why or why not?
- **HANDS:** How will you be a “living sacrifice” this week because of Jesus, who became a sin offering for your salvation?

**VOICES from THE CHURCH**

“Are we trying to atone for our sins? We can’t. Only Jesus can, and He already did. Don’t try to repeat the atonement—just accept it! Embrace God’s forgiveness. Relax. Rejoice.”<sup>3</sup>

–Randy Alcorn