

Why Leviticus Feels Like Another Planet

Leviticus 16

Leader Setup

This guide is designed to help students read a strange part of the Bible without immediately checking out. Leviticus can feel confusing because it talks about things most students do not think about often: sacrifices, priests, blood, clean and unclean, holy places, and atonement.

The goal is not for students to understand every detail of Leviticus. The goal is to help them practice this week's Bible-reading question:

Where have I seen this before?

Leviticus gives us patterns and images that show up later in Scripture and help us understand Jesus more clearly.

Helpful follow-up prompts:

- "Where do you see that in the passage?"
- "What does this remind you of?"
- "Where else have we seen something like this in the Bible?"
- "How does this help us understand Jesus?"
- "What is this showing us about God, sin, or access to God?"

Part 1: Getting Honest About Leviticus

1. When you hear "Leviticus," what comes to mind?
2. Why do you think Leviticus can feel hard, boring, or confusing to read?
3. What are some Bible passages or books that feel strange to you?
4. This week's question is: **Where have I seen this before?** How could that question help when reading a confusing passage?
5. What are some repeated Bible images you already know? Examples: lambs, blood, water, wilderness, gardens, temples, priests, light, darkness, exile, return.

Part 2: What Is Happening in Leviticus 16?

Read Leviticus 16:1-10

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6. What event does Leviticus 16:1 remind us of?
7. What warning does God give Aaron about entering the Holy Place?
8. What does this tell us about God's presence?
9. What kinds of things does Aaron need before coming near? Look for sacrifices, clothing, washing, goats, or other details.
10. Why do you think access to God's presence is treated so seriously?
11. What does this passage show us about God's holiness?
12. What does it show us about mercy?

Leader Note:

Help students see the basic idea: God is holy, sin is serious, and access to God is mercy. The details may feel strange, but the main point is not impossible to understand.

Part 3: Where Have We Seen Holy Space Before?

13. Think about Genesis 2–3. Where do we see people living in God's presence?
14. What happens after sin enters the story?
15. How is access to God's presence blocked after Adam and Eve sin?
16. In Exodus, God comes to dwell with Israel in the tabernacle. Why is that good news?
17. Why does that create a problem if the people are sinful?
18. How does Leviticus 16 help answer the question: **How can sinful people live near a holy God?**

Leader Note:

Keep this simple. Eden, tabernacle, and Leviticus are all connected by the theme of God's presence and the problem of sinful people needing a way to come near.

Part 4: Sin Must Be Dealt With

Read Leviticus 16:11-22

19. What does Aaron do with the blood of the sacrifice?
20. What happens with the live goat?
21. What does it mean that the goat carries the sins of the people away?
22. What do the two goats show us about sin?
23. Why do people sometimes try to make sin sound smaller than it is?
24. What are some words people use to minimize sin? Examples: mistake, bad habit, reaction, everyone does it.
25. What is hopeful about God giving Israel a way for sin to be dealt with?

Leader Note:

Do not let this become only heavy. Leviticus 16 is serious, but it is also gracious. God is the one providing a way for the people to be cleansed and continue living near Him.

Part 5: Where Have We Seen Sin Carried by Another?

Read Isaiah 53:4-6

26. What words or phrases in Isaiah 53 sound similar to Leviticus 16?
27. What does the Servant carry or bear?
28. How does Isaiah 53 help us understand the idea of someone bearing sin for others?
29. How does this point us toward Jesus?

Part 6: Leviticus and Jesus

Read John 1:29

30. What does John the Baptist call Jesus?
31. Why does “the Lamb of God” connect back to sacrifice and atonement?
32. What does John say Jesus takes away?

Read Mark 5:25-34

33. Why would the bleeding woman have been considered unclean?
34. What would people expect to happen when someone unclean touches someone else?
35. What actually happens when she touches Jesus?
36. What does this show us about Jesus’ power to cleanse?

Read Matthew 27:50-51

37. What happens to the temple veil when Jesus dies?
38. Why does that matter if the veil guarded access to the Most Holy Place?

Read Hebrews 10:19-22

39. What does Hebrews say we now have through Jesus?
40. How does Jesus open the way for us to draw near to God?

Part 7: Bringing It Together

41. What part of Leviticus 16 makes more sense after asking, **Where have I seen this before?**
42. How does Leviticus help us understand Jesus better?
43. Why should we not treat access to God casually?
44. Why should we not make sin smaller than grace says it is?
45. What is one strange part of the Bible you could revisit this week by asking, **Where have I seen this before?**

Closing Prayer Prompt

Pray that students would:

- take God's holiness seriously
- be honest about sin
- be thankful that Jesus carries sin away
- have confidence to draw near to God through Jesus
- learn to notice patterns in Scripture that point to Jesus

Possible closing prayer:

Holy God, thank You for making a way for us to come near through Jesus. Help us not treat Your presence casually or make our sin small. Teach us to see Jesus as the Lamb, the Priest, the Sacrifice, and the One who opens the way. Amen.

Leader Tip

Leviticus may feel distant to students, so keep bringing the discussion back to simple connections:

God is holy. Sin is serious. Jesus opens the way.

A helpful line to repeat:

“Leviticus feels weird, but it helps us understand why Jesus is wonderful.”