



A “Crash Course” on Leviticus

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I. Introduction

Leviticus can be frustrating and disorienting to read. My goal is to help us move into and through Leviticus in such a way that we (at least kinda) know what’s going on, and can benefit from the message of this book of the Bible.

II. Tips for Understanding Leviticus

A. Adjust how you read.

The big idea here is that Leviticus is going to read a lot differently than Genesis and Exodus. Genesis and Exodus have had *lots* of stories. We meet lots of people. There’s action and plot. Leviticus is a different sort of book than that. If Genesis and Exodus are more like a novel, Leviticus is more like a “how to” manual you pick up at the hardware store.

B. Keep the big picture in mind.

1. **Keep the big picture of the Bible in mind:** God is working to redeem a sinful people for Himself. God created humanity good, we sinned (and blew it), and God begins working through the family of Abraham, the nation of Israel, by initiating a promise-filled relationship with them that offers hope to the whole world. By the time we get to Leviticus, God has initiated this relationship and done a LOT to stay faithful to His promises and keep them viable. Leviticus presses “pause” on the advance of this storyline so God can show His people how they can live in right relationship with Him.
2. **Keep the main message of Leviticus in mind: Holiness.** God is holy and we are sinful. (We know that from Genesis and Exodus.) Leviticus, then, shows us *how* sinful humanity can live in covenant relationship with a holy God. That’s the bottom line we’ve got to keep in mind.

C. Process all the laws in a responsible way.

1. Approaching Old Testament laws by way of three categories:
 - a. **Ceremonial laws** - laws that govern Israelite worship

- b. **Civil laws** - laws that apply God’s moral standards to the larger Israelite society as governed by an Israelite king (who himself acknowledges and submits to the authority of Yahweh)
 - c. **Moral laws** - these are laws that reflect God’s own moral character and are closely connected to the 10 Commandments (personal character, relationships, sexual ethics, etc.)
2. Having these categories in place is valuable, because it helps us process the laws and how we should think about them today.
- a. Israelite **ceremonial laws** point ahead to and find fulfillment in Christ (e.g. Matthew 5:17; Acts 10:9-16, 28; Hebrews 10:11-14). *How do these ceremonial laws help us appreciate the meaning and magnitude of Jesus Christ and His work for us?*
 - b. As we read the **civil laws**, we need to factor in that we live in a different time and place, and under a different form of government. *What principles can we learn from these civil laws that guide how we live in our particular time and place?*
 - c. **Moral laws** ask for continued reflection and application as we live out God’s moral requirements individually and as the church - in terms of our character, our relationships, etc. *What does this mean for my own character and how I relate with others?*

III. Tips for Working Through Leviticus (Getting Practical)

As your group works through Leviticus, what are some practical, innovative ideas for making this something that people will remember and find helpful?

- A. **Check out this short video** (appx 7 min) that summarizes the book of Leviticus in a creative, helpful way: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmvyrLXoQio> (Or access it via jointhebibleproject.com >> Book Videos >> Leviticus).
- B. **Pass along a few Scripture passages** that give some perspective on all the laws. For example: Psalm 51:16-17; Matthew 22:34-40; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 9:24-28; Hebrews 10:11-14.
- C. Make a list of specific ways that reading Leviticus helps you appreciate the **meaning and magnitude of Jesus** and what He’s done for us.
- D. Stay focused on **“big picture” take-aways**.
- E. **Celebrate progress**.