

The Book of Leviticus, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 1: Offerings of Worship: Burnt and Grain Offerings

Leviticus 1:1–2:16

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson establishes the foundation of the entire book and of the gospel itself: a holy God has made a way for sinful people to draw near, and that way is on His terms, through substitution and atoning blood, not through human invention. The burnt offering teaches total consecration and the costliness of forgiveness; the grain offering teaches thankful dedication of our labor. Both are explicitly shadows fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 10:1–14). Be careful to present the sacrificial system as God-given and good for its time, yet never to bind animal sacrifice or these specific offerings on Christians, who have in Christ a single sufficient sacrifice that needs no repetition.

But this lesson is not only about ancient ritual. It aims squarely at the heart of the student. The burnt offering asks each of us whether we have given God everything or kept a corner of the self in reserve. The grain offering asks whether we offer Him our daily work or treat worship as separate from ordinary life. Help your class feel the weight of approaching a holy God, and then feel the relief that the perfect offering has already been made. Lead them from the altar to the cross, and from the cross to a life laid down in living worship (Romans 12:1).

Question 1

Student Question:

In Leviticus 1:1–2, God calls to Moses and gives the offerings as something Israel is to bring when they 'draw near.' What does this opening reveal about who initiates worship and on whose terms a sinful people may approach a holy God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The first word of Leviticus matters: 'And the Lord called unto Moses, and spake unto him.' The book is bound by a conjunction to Exodus. The tabernacle has just been completed and filled with glory (Exodus 40:34–35), so full that Moses could not enter. Leviticus is God's answer to the problem that creates. The glory is here; now how does a sinful people live near it? God Himself breaks the silence and speaks. Worship begins not with human reaching upward but with God's word coming down.

Notice the phrase in 1:2, when a man 'bring an offering unto the Lord.' The Hebrew word often translated offering is *qorban*, from a root meaning to draw near or to bring near. The very vocabulary of the sacrificial system is the vocabulary of approach. These are not appeasements

flung at an angry deity; they are the God-appointed means by which a redeemed people may come close to the God who redeemed them.

Crucially, Israel does not design these offerings. God prescribes them in exhaustive detail. This is the bedrock principle of acceptable worship that runs through all of Scripture: we worship God as He directs, not as we prefer. Nadab and Abihu will learn this lethally just a few chapters later (Leviticus 10:1–2). The pattern from Eden to the present is that God reveals and humanity responds.

For us, this guards against two errors. It refuses the notion that sincerity alone makes worship acceptable, and it refuses the notion that we may approach God on a self-chosen path. The New Testament carries the principle forward: we come to the Father through the one mediator God appointed (1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6). Worship is response to revelation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God, not man, initiates the way of approach; worship is response to revelation.
- Qorban means to draw near; sacrifice is about access to God, not bribing Him.
- Acceptable worship is regulated by God's word, not human preference (Leviticus 10:1–2).
- Israel is already redeemed from Egypt; these offerings are for a saved people learning to live near God.
- The principle of approaching God on His terms continues through Christ the one mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it matter that Leviticus begins with God speaking rather than Israel acting?
- Where do we see people today trying to approach God on their own terms instead of His?
- How does the meaning of qorban, to draw near, change how you picture these offerings?

Question 2

Student Question:

The worshiper laid his hand on the head of the burnt offering (1:4) and it was 'accepted for him to make atonement.' What would it stir in you to lay your hand on a living creature knowing it would die in your place, and how does that act expose what sin actually costs?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The laying on of the hand in 1:4 is not a casual gesture. The worshiper pressed his hand on the head of the animal, identifying himself with it, designating this creature as his substitute. What follows is staggering: 'it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.' The acceptance of the worshiper depends on the death of the substitute.

Imagine the moment honestly. A man brings a healthy, valuable animal he has raised. He places his hand on its warm head, and then, by the design of the ritual, that animal dies in his place. Sin is not abstract here. It costs blood. It costs a life. The whole arrangement is designed to make the worshiper feel in his own hand the weight of what his sin requires.

This is the principle of substitutionary atonement in seed form. The innocent dies so the guilty may be accepted. Hebrews will later insist that the blood of bulls and goats could not actually take away sin (Hebrews 10:4); these were object lessons pointing forward. But the lesson they taught is permanent: God is holy, sin is deadly, and forgiveness is never cheap.

We do not lay hands on animals. But we are meant to feel what that worshiper felt when we look at the cross. There our hand, as it were, rests on the head of the Lamb of God, and He is accepted in our place. The gospel does not lower the cost of sin; it shows us Someone willing to pay it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Laying on of hands identifies the worshiper with his substitute.
- Acceptance of the worshiper depends on the death of the substitute (1:4).
- Sin is concrete and costly; it requires a life.
- Substitutionary atonement is pictured here and fulfilled at the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- We become guilty by our own sin (Ezekiel 18:20), and that sin is what required atonement.

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think the worshiper felt as he laid his hand on the animal's head?
- How does this ritual keep us from treating sin as a small thing?
- Where do you see your own need for a substitute when you look at the cross?

Question 3

Student Question:

The burnt offering was wholly consumed on the altar, none of it eaten by the worshiper (1:9). What is God teaching about total surrender and the wholeness of true devotion through an offering that holds back nothing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The defining mark of the burnt offering is that it was entirely consumed. The older name for it, the 'whole burnt offering,' captures it: nothing was eaten by the worshiper, nothing kept back. The Hebrew word olah means 'that which goes up,' the whole animal ascending to God in smoke. This is the only offering wholly given to God.

Other offerings shared portions with the priests or the worshiper. Not this one. Every part went up. The picture is total surrender, complete consecration, a life given wholly and without

reservation to God. It says with smoke what words can only approximate: all of me belongs to You.

This confronts the bargaining instinct in every human heart. We are willing to give God a tithe of our attention, a corner of our calendar, the leftovers of our energy, while keeping the controlling share for ourselves. The burnt offering refuses that arrangement. It models a devotion that holds nothing in reserve.

Paul reaches for exactly this image when he urges us to 'present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service' (Romans 12:1). The burnt offering's logic survives into the New Covenant, not as a slaughtered animal but as a whole life laid on the altar of God's mercy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The burnt offering (olah, 'that which goes up') was wholly consumed.
- Nothing was kept by the worshiper; it pictures total surrender.
- It confronts the human habit of giving God only a portion.
- Romans 12:1 carries the image forward as a living sacrifice.
- Whole-life devotion, not partial obedience, is the standard for God's people.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between giving God a portion and giving Him everything?
- What might a 'whole burnt offering' version of your week actually look like?
- Why does God want all of us rather than just our religious activities?

Question 4

Student Question:

Leviticus allowed a bull, a sheep or goat, or even turtledoves depending on what the worshiper could afford (1:3, 1:10, 1:14). How does this provision speak to you about a God who makes a way for the poor as well as the rich to come to Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Leviticus 1 graciously scales the offering to the worshiper's means. A wealthy man might bring a bull (1:3-5). One of more modest means could bring a sheep or goat (1:10). And the poor could bring two turtledoves or young pigeons (1:14). The same atonement, the same acceptance, was available across the economic spectrum.

This is no small mercy. God built into the very structure of worship a way for the poorest Israelite to draw near. No one was priced out of access to God. The God of Leviticus is not impressed by the size of the gift so much as by the heart and obedience of the giver.

We see this principle vindicated in the New Testament when Joseph and Mary, too poor to afford a lamb, bring two birds at Jesus' presentation (Luke 2:24), the offering of the poor. The Lord of glory entered the world into a family that brought the humble offering. And later He commends a widow's two mites above the gifts of the rich (Mark 12:41-44).

For us the comfort is profound. Access to God has never depended on our resources. It depends on the way He provides. And in Christ, that way is open freely to every person, rich or poor, who comes to Him on His terms.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Offerings were scaled to the worshiper's means (bull, sheep, or birds).
- The poor were never priced out of access to God.
- God weighs the heart and obedience of the giver, not the size of the gift.
- Mary and Joseph brought the offering of the poor (Luke 2:24).
- In Christ access to God is offered freely to all who come on His terms.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it tell you about God that He made room for the poor to worship fully?
- How does this challenge the idea that we must earn or buy our way to God?
- Where might you be measuring your worth to God by what you can give?

Question 5

Student Question:

The grain offering was made of fine flour, oil, and frankincense, the fruit of human labor, and a memorial portion was burned while the rest went to the priests (2:1-3). What does it mean to bring God the work of your hands as worship, and what does this offering add to the picture begun by the burnt offering?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The grain offering (Hebrew minchah, a gift or tribute) shifts the picture. No blood, no animal; instead fine flour, oil, and frankincense, the fruit of human labor and cultivation. Where the burnt offering speaks of surrendered life, the grain offering speaks of dedicated work, the produce of fields and ovens brought back to the God who gave the harvest.

A 'memorial portion' was burned on the altar, and the remainder belonged to Aaron and his sons (2:2-3). So this offering both ascended to God and sustained the priests who served Him. Worship and the support of God's appointed servants were woven together.

Notice what it means to bring God fine flour. This is not a wild animal caught in a trap; it is the result of plowing, planting, harvesting, grinding, baking. It is human labor offered up. The grain offering sanctifies the ordinary work of daily life by laying its fruit on God's altar in thanks.

The burnt offering said, my whole self belongs to You. The grain offering adds, and so does the work of my hands. Together they refuse the divide between the sacred and the secular. Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, it is to be done to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The grain offering (minchah) is a gift of flour, oil, and frankincense, not blood.
- It represents the fruit of human labor offered in thanks.
- A memorial portion ascended to God; the rest sustained the priests (2:2–3).
- It sanctifies ordinary work and refuses a sacred-secular divide.
- Worship includes offering God the produce of our daily lives (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Discussion Prompts

- What would it look like to offer your daily work to God as worship?
- Why do you think God wanted both a life-offering and a labor-offering?
- How does this offering challenge the split many feel between church and work?

Question 6

Student Question:

The grain offering was to contain no leaven and no honey, but every offering was to be seasoned with salt, the 'salt of the covenant' (2:11, 2:13). What might God be asking you to remove from your offering to Him, and what might the enduring salt of the covenant be asking you to preserve?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Two ingredients were forbidden in the grain offering and one was required. No leaven and no honey were to be burned on the altar (2:11), but salt was always to be added: 'with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt' (2:13). Each prohibition and requirement carries meaning worth weighing.

Leaven in Scripture often pictures the spreading, corrupting influence of sin and false teaching (1 Corinthians 5:6–8; Matthew 16:6). Honey ferments and may represent a sweetness that decays. What God burns on His altar is to be free of corruption. Honey and leaven were used elsewhere; they simply did not belong on the altar of ascent to God.

Salt, by contrast, preserves and does not decay. It is called 'the salt of the covenant of thy God' (2:13). Salt sealed covenants in the ancient world; to share salt was to bind a lasting agreement. Adding salt to every offering declared that the worshiper's relationship with God was a durable, covenant bond, not a passing mood.

Jesus calls His disciples 'the salt of the earth' (Matthew 5:13) and tells us to 'have salt in yourselves' (Mark 9:50). The grain offering, then, asks two questions of us. What corruption do we need to keep off the altar of our worship, and what covenant faithfulness, what enduring saltiness, do we need to preserve?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- No leaven and no honey were burned, picturing freedom from corruption (2:11).
- Leaven often pictures spreading sin (1 Corinthians 5:6–8).
- Salt was always required as 'the salt of the covenant' (2:13).
- Salt signified a durable, preserving covenant bond with God.
- Disciples are called the salt of the earth and told to have salt in themselves (Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:50).

Discussion Prompts

- What 'leaven' might God be asking you to keep off the altar of your worship?
- What does the salt of the covenant teach us about loyalty to God over time?
- How can you keep your devotion from souring into mere ritual?

Question 7

Student Question:

These offerings produced 'a sweet savor unto the Lord' (1:9, 2:2). What does it mean that an act of worship can be genuinely pleasing and acceptable to God, and how does that guard us from thinking all worship is automatically welcome to Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Several times these chapters describe the offering as 'a sweet savour unto the Lord' (1:9, 1:13, 1:17; 2:2, 2:9). The image is warm and almost startling: God is pleased. The smoke rises and He receives it with delight. Worship done His way genuinely gratifies the heart of God.

This phrase guards against a flat, joyless view of worship as mere duty. God is not indifferent to how His people draw near. When the offering is right, He is pleased; the relationship is one of real, mutual delight, not cold transaction.

But the phrase also guards in the other direction. If some worship is a sweet savor, then not all worship is automatically acceptable. The later chapters and the fate of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1–2) make plain that worship offered wrongly is not pleasing at all. Acceptability is not assumed; it is given by God to worship offered as He directs.

The New Testament uses the same fragrance language of Christ: He 'gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour' (Ephesians 5:2). And it speaks of our

lives and gifts the same way (Philippians 4:18). The aim of all true worship is to be, through Christ, a fragrance pleasing to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Worship done God's way is 'a sweet savour,' genuinely pleasing to Him.
- God is not indifferent to how His people approach Him.
- Not all worship is automatically acceptable (Leviticus 10:1-2).
- Christ Himself is the sweetsmelling sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2).
- Our worship becomes pleasing to God through Christ, not by assumption.

Discussion Prompts

- How does it change your view of worship to know God can be genuinely pleased by it?
- Why is it dangerous to assume that all sincere worship is automatically acceptable?
- What makes worship a 'sweet savor' rather than mere routine?

Question 8

Student Question:

Atonement in chapter 1 comes only through the death of a substitute, blood sprinkled on the altar (1:5). As you sit with that, where are you tempted to think you can make yourself acceptable to God by effort, sincerity, or good intentions rather than by a substitute?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Atonement in chapter 1 comes through a death and through blood: the priests 'sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar' (1:5). There is no path to acceptance here that bypasses the substitute. The worshiper cannot make himself acceptable by the quality of his intentions; he is accepted because something died in his place.

This strikes at a deeply human instinct. We want to believe that if we are sincere enough, sorry enough, or good enough, we can square ourselves with God. Leviticus quietly dismantles that hope. The structure of every offering insists that approach to a holy God requires atoning blood we cannot provide from within ourselves.

This does not mean the worshiper's heart was irrelevant; obedience and trust mattered deeply, as the prophets later thunder (1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:16-17). But heart and effort were the response of a worshiper already provided a means of atonement, never a substitute for it.

For us, the lesson lands at the foot of the cross. 'Without shedding of blood is no remission' (Hebrews 9:22). We are not saved by trying harder but by trusting the One whose blood was shed for us, and then walking in obedient faith. Effort flows from acceptance; it never earns it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Atonement requires blood and a substitute (1:5); sincerity cannot replace it.
- Human effort and good intentions cannot make us acceptable to God.
- The heart still mattered, as response, not as a substitute for atonement.
- Without shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22).
- Obedient faith flows from God's provision; it does not earn acceptance.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to think sincerity or effort can make you right with God?
- How does the necessity of blood humble our pride about being good enough?
- What is the right place for our obedience if it cannot earn our acceptance?

Question 9

Student Question:

Hebrews 10:1-14 says the law was 'a shadow of good things to come' and that these repeated sacrifices could never take away sin, but that Christ offered one sacrifice for sins forever. How do the burnt and grain offerings foreshadow Christ, and why does His once-for-all offering make any return to animal sacrifice both unnecessary and unthinkable?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here the lesson reaches its doctrinal summit. Hebrews 10:1 says 'the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things,' and verse 4 declares plainly that 'it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.' The Levitical offerings were never the reality; they were the shadow cast backward from the cross.

Watch how the burnt and grain offerings foreshadow Christ. The burnt offering, wholly given to God, points to the One who gave Himself completely, who could say 'not my will, but thine, be done' (Luke 22:42) and offered His whole self without reservation. The grain offering, the sinless fine flour with no leaven, points to the perfect, sinless life He laid before the Father. He is both the spotless victim and the flawless gift.

The decisive word is 'once.' Hebrews 10:10 says we are sanctified 'through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all,' and 10:14 'by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Where the Levitical priests stood daily offering the same sacrifices that could never take away sin, Christ offered one sacrifice and sat down (10:11-12). The sitting down means the work is finished.

This is why any return to animal sacrifice is both unnecessary and unthinkable for the Christian. To go back to the shadow after the substance has come would be to deny that Christ's offering was enough. The Old Law, with its altars and priests, was nailed to His cross and fulfilled in Him (Colossians 2:14-17; Hebrews 8-10). We do not rebuild the altar; we rest in the Lamb.

And so Leviticus, far from being obsolete, becomes a magnifying glass. Every careful instruction about blood and fire and surrender shows us how holy God is and how much our forgiveness cost. The more seriously we take these chapters, the more astonished we are by the cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The law was a shadow; animal blood could never take away sin (Hebrews 10:1, 10:4).
- The burnt offering foreshadows Christ wholly given to God (Luke 22:42).
- The grain offering, without leaven, foreshadows His sinless perfection.
- Christ's one offering is once for all and perfects forever (Hebrews 10:10, 10:14).
- He sat down because the work is finished (Hebrews 10:11–12).
- The Old Law is fulfilled and nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14–17).
- Returning to animal sacrifice would deny the sufficiency of Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- How do the burnt and grain offerings together point us to Christ?
- Why does the word 'once' in Hebrews 10 change everything for the Christian?
- If Leviticus is fulfilled in Christ, why is it still worth our careful study?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across these two chapters, the whole animal given up and the daily labor offered in thanks, name one specific way Jesus is using this passage to reshape what you surrender to God and how you worship Him with your ordinary life.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Step back and take in the whole movement of these two chapters. The burnt offering laid an entire life on the altar; the grain offering laid the fruit of daily labor beside it. Surrender and thanksgiving, the whole self and the ordinary work, both given to God. This is a complete picture of a life of worship.

Now bring it to Christ. Because He has offered the once-for-all sacrifice, we no longer come to God carrying a lamb. We come carrying ourselves. The altar has not disappeared; it has changed. Paul names it directly: 'present your bodies a living sacrifice' (Romans 12:1), and Peter calls us a holy priesthood offering 'spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 2:5).

So the question this lesson presses is wonderfully personal. In light of Christ's complete offering, what is your burnt offering, the part of yourself you have been holding back, and what is your grain offering, the daily work you have not yet consciously laid before God? Jesus is not after your religious leftovers. He is forming in you a whole life of worship.

Help your class name one concrete thing. Not a vague resolve to be more devoted, but a specific surrender or a specific way of offering their ordinary work to God this week. The smoke that once rose from Israel's altar was always meant to point to lives wholly given. In Christ, that is now possible.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Together the two offerings picture surrender and thanksgiving, a whole life of worship.
- In Christ we no longer bring an animal but ourselves (Romans 12:1).
- We are a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices through Jesus (1 Peter 2:5).
- The lesson calls for a specific surrender, not a vague resolve.
- Christ is forming His people into lives of whole, daily worship.

Discussion Prompts

- What is your 'burnt offering' right now, the thing you are still holding back?
- What is your 'grain offering,' the daily work you can lay before God this week?
- Name one concrete way Jesus is reshaping how you worship with your whole life.