

The Book of Leviticus, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 2: Peace, Sin, and Guilt Offerings

Leviticus 3:1–5:13

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson holds together two truths that the modern conscience tends to pull apart: God's holiness is so serious that even unintentional sin requires atonement, and God's love is so warm that He desires to sit at table with His people. The peace offering pictures fellowship secured by blood; the sin and guilt offerings picture cleansing and the repair of wrongs. As in Lesson 1, present these as God-given shadows fulfilled in Christ, never as ongoing obligations for Christians, who have a single sufficient sacrifice in Jesus.

Be especially careful with the category of unintentional sin. Scripture is clear that we become guilty by our own wrongdoing (Ezekiel 18:20), not by inheriting another's guilt; the point here is that genuine moral failure can occur even without rebellious intent, and it still matters to a holy God. This is not about inherited guilt but about the breadth of human sinfulness and the depth of our need.

The lesson also aims at the heart. It invites the student to take sin more seriously, to practice honest confession, to make restitution where wrongs have harmed others, and at the same time to draw near with confidence to the table Christ has set. Lead your class from a sober look at sin to a grateful seat at the feast of fellowship with God in Christ.

Question 1

Student Question:

The peace offering (3:1–5) was the one sacrifice the worshiper shared in as a meal, with portions going to God, the priests, and the offerer. What does this fellowship offering reveal about God's desire not merely to forgive His people but to commune with them?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The peace offering, the Hebrew *shelamim*, is rooted in the word *shalom*, peace and wholeness. Unlike the burnt offering, which ascended entirely to God, this sacrifice was shared three ways. The fat and certain portions went up to God, specified portions went to the priests, and the rest of the meat the worshiper ate, often with family and friends, in a joyful meal near the sanctuary.

This is communion in the fullest sense. The same animal that made peace with God became the centerpiece of a feast in His presence. God was not merely tolerating His people from a distance; He was hosting them at His table. Fellowship, not just forgiveness, was the aim.

It is worth noting the categories: peace offerings could be given for thanksgiving, for a vow, or as a freewill offering (the fuller list comes in chapter 7). They were the worship of a glad heart, the response of someone overflowing with gratitude for God's goodness who wanted to celebrate it in His presence.

This anticipates the heart of the gospel. Christ 'is our peace' (Ephesians 2:14), and through Him we are reconciled and brought near to feast with God. The Lord's Supper itself is a shared meal of communion with God and one another, made possible by the sacrifice that secured our peace. God still wants His people at the table.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The peace offering (shelamim, from shalom) was shared by God, priests, and worshiper.
- It was the only sacrifice the offerer ate; it ended in a joyful meal.
- Its aim was communion and fellowship, not only forgiveness.
- It could express thanksgiving, fulfill a vow, or be a freewill gift.
- Christ is our peace and brings us near to the table of God (Ephesians 2:14).

Discussion Prompts

- What does it tell you that God wanted to share a meal with His people, not just forgive them?
- How does the peace offering enrich the way you think about fellowship with God?
- Where do you experience communion with God most deeply in your own life?

Question 2

Student Question:

The fat of the peace offering, considered the best part, was burned to God, and Israel was forbidden to eat fat or blood (3:16–17). What does giving God the choicest portion stir in you about whether He gets your best or your leftovers?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

A striking detail governs the peace offering: the fat was God's portion. 'All the fat is the Lord's' (3:16). In the ancient world the fat was considered the richest, choicest part. God claimed it for Himself and forbade Israel to eat it, just as He forbade the eating of blood (3:17).

This is more than a dietary rule. It is a principle of the heart. God receives the best, not the leftovers. The choicest portion ascends to Him in smoke while the people feast on the rest. Even in a celebration meal, the first and finest belongs to God.

The prohibition against blood points forward to its sacred use in atonement; life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), and it was reserved for the altar. But the claim on the fat speaks to priorities.

What is the best of my time, my resources, my energy, and does God receive it or do I keep it for myself and offer Him the remainder?

Malachi would later rebuke Israel precisely for offering God their worst, the blind and lame animals nobody wanted (Malachi 1:8). The peace offering, by contrast, models a worshiper who gladly gives God the best part. The question for us is whether God still gets our first and finest or merely what is left when everything else has had its share.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The fat, the choicest part, was burned to God: 'all the fat is the Lord's' (3:16).
- Israel was forbidden to eat fat or blood (3:17).
- God receives the best, not the leftovers.
- Malachi rebukes offering God our worst (Malachi 1:8).
- The principle calls us to give God our first and finest.

Discussion Prompts

- In practice, does God get your best or your leftovers?
- What would change if you gave God the 'fat,' the choicest part of your week?
- Why is it so tempting to offer God what is left over rather than what is first?

Question 3

Student Question:

Chapter 4 repeatedly addresses sin committed 'through ignorance' (4:2, 4:13, 4:22, 4:27), insisting it still brings guilt and requires atonement. What does this teach about the holiness of God and the true nature of sin, even when we do not intend it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Four times chapter 4 raises the case of one who sins 'through ignorance,' unintentionally, without meaning to (4:2, 4:13, 4:22, 4:27). The Hebrew describes sin committed in error, by inadvertence, the wrong done by someone who did not set out to do wrong. And yet the verdict is unwavering: it is still sin, it still brings guilt, and it still requires atonement.

This cuts against a deep modern instinct. We assume that intention is everything, that if we did not mean it, we are not really guilty. Leviticus teaches that God's holiness sets a real standard that we can breach without ever intending to. Sin is not merely a matter of bad motives; it is any falling short of God's holy character and law.

We should be careful here. This is not the doctrine of inherited guilt or total depravity; Scripture is clear that the soul that sins, it shall die, and that a child does not bear the guilt of a parent (Ezekiel 18:20). We become guilty by our own wrongdoing. The point of Leviticus 4 is rather that our own wrongdoing is broader than we admit; we sin in ways we never notice.

This should produce humility, not despair. David prayed, 'Cleanse thou me from secret faults' (Psalm 19:12), knowing his sins ran deeper than his awareness. The good news is that God provided atonement precisely for the sins we cannot see. And in Christ, His blood cleanses us 'from all sin' (1 John 1:7), including the failures we never recognized.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin committed unintentionally still brings real guilt (4:2, 4:13, 4:22, 4:27).
- God's holiness sets a standard we can breach without intending to.
- Sin is any falling short of God's holiness, not only bad motives.
- This is not inherited guilt; we become guilty by our own sin (Ezekiel 18:20).
- David prayed to be cleansed from secret faults (Psalm 19:12).

Discussion Prompts

- Why do we tend to excuse the wrongs we did not intend?
- How does the category of unintentional sin enlarge your sense of your own need?
- How can this truth humble us without driving us to despair?

Question 4

Student Question:

The sin offering required differed by the standing of the sinner, with the priest and the whole congregation bringing the costliest offerings (4:3, 4:14). As you consider that those with more influence bore a heavier accountability, where does your own influence over others raise the stakes of your obedience?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 4 organizes the sin offering by the standing of the sinner, and the pattern is revealing. When the anointed priest sins, or when the whole congregation sins, the offering is a costly young bull and the blood is brought right up to the veil (4:3-12, 4:13-21). When a ruler sins, he brings a male goat (4:22-26); when a common person sins, a female goat or lamb (4:27-35).

The heavier requirements for the priest and the congregation are not arbitrary. The priest represented the people before God; his sin could lead the nation astray and defile the sanctuary itself. The greater the influence, the greater the accountability and the costlier the remedy. Leadership in God's house is a weighty trust.

The New Testament echoes this principle. 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required' (Luke 12:48). And James warns, 'be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation' (James 3:1). Influence multiplies the consequences of our sin, for good or ill.

Each of us has some sphere of influence: as parents, teachers, employers, older Christians, examples to younger believers. The sin offering quietly asks us to reckon with the fact that our failures do not stay private. They ripple outward to those who look to us. That ought to make us more careful, not less, in how we live.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The sin offering scaled by the sinner's standing (priest, congregation, ruler, commoner).
- Priest and congregation brought the costliest offering, a bull (4:3, 4:14).
- Greater influence carries greater accountability before God.
- To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48).
- Teachers receive the greater judgment (James 3:1).

Discussion Prompts

- Whom do you influence, and how does that raise the stakes of your obedience?
- Why does God hold leaders and teachers to a heavier accountability?
- How might remembering your influence change a choice you are facing this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

In the sin offering the blood was applied to the horns of the altar and sprinkled before the veil (4:6–7, 4:17–18), making atonement so the sinner 'shall be forgiven' (4:20). Why does Scripture tie forgiveness so closely to the application of blood, and what does that say about the cost of cleansing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The mechanics of the sin offering center on the blood. For the gravest cases the priest brought blood into the holy place, dipped his finger, and sprinkled it 'seven times before the Lord, before the vail' (4:6), then put some on the horns of the altar of incense and poured the rest at the base of the altar of burnt offering (4:7). The result is stated plainly: the priest 'shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them' (4:20).

Notice how forgiveness is tied to the application of blood. It is not enough that the animal died; the blood must be brought and applied, placed against the very furniture of God's dwelling. Atonement is an active, costly, deliberate thing. Sin defiles, and only blood, rightly applied, cleanses.

Leviticus 17:11 gives the reason: 'the life of the flesh is in the blood... it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.' A life had to be given and its blood presented because sin's penalty is death. The blood on the horns of the altar was a vivid, undeniable testimony that someone had died so the sinner could be forgiven.

Hebrews draws the line straight to Christ: 'without shedding of blood is no remission' (Hebrews 9:22). The blood applied to the altar was a shadow of the blood of Christ, who entered the true holy place 'by his own blood' (Hebrews 9:12). Our forgiveness is no less costly than Israel's; it is infinitely more so, purchased by the precious blood of the Son of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Blood was sprinkled before the veil and applied to the altar's horns (4:6–7).
- Forgiveness is tied to the application of blood, not merely the death.
- Life is in the blood, which makes atonement for the soul (Leviticus 17:11).
- Without shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22).
- The applied blood foreshadows Christ entering by His own blood (Hebrews 9:12).

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Scripture tie forgiveness so closely to blood?
- What does the costliness of atonement reveal about the seriousness of sin?
- How does the applied blood deepen your gratitude for the cross?

Question 6

Student Question:

When a person realized their guilt, they were to confess 'that he hath sinned in that thing' (5:5) before bringing the offering. What is the role of honest confession in your walk with God, and what sin have you been reluctant to name plainly before Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Tucked into chapter 5 is a quiet but vital requirement: 'he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing' (5:5). Before the offering was brought, the worshiper named the sin out loud. Atonement was not a mechanical transaction; it began with honest acknowledgment of specific wrongdoing.

Confession means agreeing with God about our sin, calling it what He calls it. The worshiper did not bring a vague sense of unease; he confessed 'in that thing,' the particular failure. There is a world of difference between admitting we are generally imperfect and naming the actual sin we have committed.

This is the pattern throughout Scripture. David, after his sin, prayed 'I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me' (Psalm 51:3). 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy' (Proverbs 28:13). Hidden sin festers; confessed sin can be healed.

The New Covenant keeps this central: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9). The grace of God in Christ

does not make confession unnecessary; it makes it safe. We can name our sin plainly because we know the blood that answers it has already been shed.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Confession of the specific sin preceded the offering (5:5).
- Confession means agreeing with God and naming the actual wrong.
- Hidden sin festers; confessed sin finds mercy (Proverbs 28:13).
- David modeled honest acknowledgment of sin (Psalm 51:3).
- If we confess, God is faithful to forgive and cleanse (1 John 1:9).

Discussion Prompts

- Why is naming a specific sin harder, and more freeing, than admitting general imperfection?
- What sin have you been reluctant to confess plainly before God?
- How does the cross make honest confession safe rather than terrifying?

Question 7

Student Question:

The guilt offering (also called the trespass offering) in 5:1–13 addresses specific failures such as withholding testimony, touching the unclean, or rash oaths. What does it tell us about God that He attends to these concrete, everyday failures rather than only grand sins?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The opening of chapter 5 lists strikingly ordinary failures. Refusing to testify when one has knowledge of a matter (5:1), touching something unclean even unawares (5:2–3), swearing a rash oath and forgetting it (5:4). These are not the scandals that make headlines. They are the small breaches of integrity that fill an ordinary life.

What does it tell us that God legislates for these? It tells us He cares about the texture of our daily faithfulness, not just our dramatic moments. The withheld testimony, the careless word, the overlooked uncleanness: God sees them, and He provides a way back from them. Nothing is too small to matter to a holy God, and nothing is too small for His grace to cover.

There is great comfort in this. We can become discouraged thinking God only attends to the big things and is indifferent or impatient toward our daily stumbles. Leviticus says the opposite. He made specific provision for the small failures precisely because He wants His people whole in the details.

Jesus carried this forward when He said we will give account 'of every idle word' (Matthew 12:36), and yet also assured us that not a sparrow falls without the Father (Matthew 10:29). The God who notices our smallest failures is the same God who has provided, in Christ, full cleansing for every one of them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Chapter 5 addresses ordinary failures: withheld testimony, uncleanness, rash oaths (5:1–4).
- God cares about the texture of daily faithfulness, not only dramatic sins.
- Nothing is too small to matter to God, and nothing too small for His grace.
- Jesus says we account for every idle word (Matthew 12:36).
- The God who notices small failures provides full cleansing in Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it comfort you that God attends to small, everyday failures?
- Which 'small' area of integrity is God pressing on in your life?
- How does God's care for the details shape the way you live an ordinary day?

Question 8

Student Question:

Leviticus 5:11–13 again makes provision for the poor, allowing fine flour when a person cannot afford a lamb or birds, yet still securing atonement. How does this gracious provision speak to you about a God who ensures no one is shut out of forgiveness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Once again Leviticus bends low to the poor. If a worshiper could not afford a lamb, he could bring two birds (5:7); if he could not afford even the birds, he could bring 'the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering' (5:11). And the promise still held: 'the priest shall make an atonement for him... and it shall be forgiven him' (5:13).

This is a remarkable grace. The full forgiveness of God was not reserved for those who could pay the most. The same atonement, the same 'it shall be forgiven him,' was available to the poorest Israelite who brought a humble handful of flour. God made certain that poverty would never lock anyone out of His mercy.

Notice that the flour brought here as a sin offering had no oil or frankincense added (5:11), unlike the grain offering of chapter 2. This was a sin offering, somber, not a celebration; even in its humility it kept the gravity of dealing with sin. Yet humble as it was, it secured real forgiveness.

This points unmistakably to the openness of the gospel. 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Revelation 22:17). In Christ, forgiveness is not for sale and cannot be earned by the size of our gift. It is offered freely to every person who comes to God on His terms, rich or poor, strong or weak. No one is shut out.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The poor could bring birds, or even flour, and still receive atonement (5:7, 5:11–13).
- Full forgiveness was not reserved for those who could pay the most.
- The sin-offering flour had no oil or frankincense, keeping the gravity of sin (5:11).
- God ensured poverty never locked anyone out of mercy.
- In Christ forgiveness is offered freely to all (Revelation 22:17).

Discussion Prompts

- What does God's provision for the poor reveal about His heart?
- How does this guard us from thinking we must earn forgiveness?
- Who around you needs to hear that God's mercy cannot be priced out of reach?

Question 9

Student Question:

Hebrews 9:11–14 says Christ entered the holy place 'by his own blood' and that this blood purges our conscience in a way the blood of bulls and goats never could. How do the sin and guilt offerings, with their applied blood and confession, foreshadow the once-for-all cleansing accomplished by Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here the lesson rises to its doctrinal height. Hebrews 9:11–14 sets the sin and guilt offerings against the work of Christ and shows how far the substance surpasses the shadow. The Levitical priests applied the blood of bulls and goats again and again; Christ entered 'the greater and more perfect tabernacle' and 'by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us' (Hebrews 9:11–12).

The sin offering foreshadowed Christ in its very structure. An innocent victim died; its blood was applied to make atonement; the worshiper confessed his sin and was forgiven. Every element finds its fulfillment in Jesus: the sinless Lamb, His blood applied, our confession answered, our forgiveness secured. The shadow was real, but it was always pointing past itself.

Yet Hebrews insists on a decisive difference. The blood of bulls and goats could 'sanctify to the purifying of the flesh,' but the blood of Christ purges 'your conscience from dead works to serve the living God' (Hebrews 9:13–14). The old sacrifices touched the outside; they could not finally cleanse the guilty conscience. They reminded the worshiper of sin year after year without ever removing it (Hebrews 10:3–4).

Christ's offering is once for all because it actually accomplishes what the shadows only signified. He does not enter again and again; He entered once, having obtained eternal redemption. This is why the Christian does not return to the sin and guilt offerings. To do so would be to leave the reality for the shadow, the substance for the picture, the finished work for an endless repetition that never could finish.

And so the careful blood rituals of Leviticus, far from being irrelevant, become a lens that magnifies the cross. The more we feel the weight of all that applied blood, all those repeated offerings, the more we marvel that one offering of the Son of God has cleansed us forever and brought us, with clean consciences, near to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ entered the true tabernacle by His own blood (Hebrews 9:11–12).
- The sin offering's structure (victim, applied blood, confession, forgiveness) foreshadows Christ.
- Animal blood cleansed the flesh; Christ's blood cleanses the conscience (Hebrews 9:13–14).
- The old sacrifices reminded of sin but never removed it (Hebrews 10:3–4).
- Christ's offering is once for all and obtains eternal redemption.
- Returning to these offerings would exchange the substance for the shadow.
- The blood rituals magnify the wonder of the cross.

Discussion Prompts

- How do the sin and guilt offerings foreshadow the work of Christ?
- What is the difference between cleansing the flesh and cleansing the conscience?
- Why can the Christian never improve on Christ's once-for-all sacrifice?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back over the fellowship of the peace offering, the seriousness of unintentional sin, and the cleansing power of blood, name one specific way Jesus is using this passage to deepen both your reverence for His holiness and your nearness to His table.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Draw the threads of this lesson together. We have seen God's holiness, so serious that even unintended sin defiles and demands atonement, and God's nearness, so warm that He sets a table and invites His people to feast in His presence. Holiness and intimacy are not at war in God; they meet in the way He has provided to deal with sin.

In Christ, both are ours at once. His blood has cleansed not only the sins we meant but the ones we never saw, purging our conscience so that we can serve the living God without the nagging weight of guilt (Hebrews 9:14). And the same Christ who is our sin offering is also our peace, who reconciles us to God and brings us near to the table (Ephesians 2:14).

So this lesson invites a double movement of the heart. On the one hand, a deeper reverence: take sin seriously, even the unintended and the small, and confess it honestly. On the other

hand, a deeper nearness: come boldly to the table, knowing the breach is healed and the feast is set. Reverence and intimacy grow together in the disciple of Jesus.

Help your class name one concrete way this passage is forming them. Perhaps a sin to confess and forsake, perhaps a wrong to make right, perhaps a fresh confidence to draw near to God in worship and at the Lord's table. Let them leave both more sober about sin and more glad in their nearness to God through Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Holiness and intimacy meet in God's provision for sin.
- Christ's blood cleanses both the sins we meant and those we never saw (Hebrews 9:14).
- Christ is both our sin offering and our peace (Ephesians 2:14).
- The lesson calls for deeper reverence and deeper nearness together.
- Students should name one concrete way Christ is forming them.

Discussion Prompts

- How can reverence for God's holiness and nearness to His table grow together in you?
- What is one sin to confess, or one wrong to make right, after this study?
- Name one specific way Jesus is deepening both your awe of Him and your closeness to Him.