

The Book of Leviticus, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 3: Guilt Offerings and Instructions for the Priests

Leviticus 5:14–6:30

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson asks students to feel the weight of two truths held together: God forgives sin, and God cares that wrongs are made right. The guilt offering with its added fifth refuses the cheap grace that says, I told God I was sorry, so the neighbor I cheated is no longer my concern. Doctrinally, what is at stake is the holiness of God and the seriousness of sin. Sin is not a private feeling; it damages real people and offends a holy God, and atonement is costly. The priesthood, the perpetual fire, and the careful handling of holy things all underline that approaching God is a serious matter He Himself must make possible.

Equally at stake is keeping the offerings in their proper place. These laws were a shadow, and the substance is Christ (Colossians 2:16–17; Hebrews 10:1). We do not bind animal sacrifice, an Aaronic priesthood, or a literal altar fire on Christians. Instead we let these shadows magnify our once-for-all sacrifice and our living High Priest (Hebrews 7–10). The continual fire becomes a picture of the living sacrifice of Romans 12:1, and the priest's holiness a picture of the royal priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5,9).

For the student's formation, the aim is heart-level honesty and steady devotion. Lead them to ask: Is there someone I need to make things right with? Is my devotion a public flame that dies when the crowd leaves, or a fire I tend even in the dark hours? And above all, draw their eyes to Jesus, so that the response is not guilt-driven striving but grateful nearness to the God who, in Christ, has opened the way home.

Question 1

Student Question:

According to Leviticus 5:14–19, what made the trespass or guilt offering necessary, and what does it teach us about the seriousness of sin, even sin committed in ignorance against the holy things of the LORD?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Leviticus 5:14–19 introduces the trespass or guilt offering (Hebrew *asham*), focused on sins against the holy things of the LORD and sins committed in ignorance. The very existence of an offering for unintentional sin is striking. God treats sin as real guilt even when the sinner did not realize he had crossed a line. The point is not to terrify but to teach: God's holiness is an objective reality, and our ignorance does not erase the damage sin does.

Notice the phrase repeated in this section, that the man is guilty and shall bear his iniquity (5:17). Sin creates a real burden that must be dealt with, not merely felt. The ram without blemish and the valuation in shekels (5:15–16) underscore that atonement is costly and specific; it is not a vague wish for things to be better. God provides the way, but the way involves the shedding of blood and real restitution.

For the church of Christ, this teaches the seriousness of sin without lapsing into the false doctrine of inherited guilt. Scripture is clear that the soul that sins shall die, and that the son does not bear the guilt of the father (Ezekiel 18:20). These are real sins of real people, including sins they stumbled into unawares. The holiness of the holy things of the LORD means that even careless or unintended trespass against what belongs to God is a genuine matter requiring atonement.

All of this prepares us for the gospel. Hebrews 10:1–4 says the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins; these offerings were a reminder of sin year by year. Their very repetition pointed to a final sacrifice yet to come. So when we read the guilt offering, we are meant to feel both the weight of sin and the longing for a better answer, an answer that arrives in Christ.

The takeaway for the student is sober and hopeful at once. Sin matters to God more than it usually matters to us. But God has never left His people without a way back. The guilt offering says, even your unknown failures are covered, if you will come His way and not your own.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin is real guilt before a holy God, not merely a feeling or a social problem.
- Even unintentional sin required atonement; ignorance does not erase guilt before God.
- Affirm Ezekiel 18:20: each person bears his own sin, refuting inherited guilt and total depravity.
- Atonement is costly and specific (a ram without blemish, a set valuation), not a vague wish.
- Hebrews 10:1–4: these offerings could not finally take away sin and so pointed forward to Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it matter that God provided an offering even for sins committed in ignorance?
- How does this passage help us hold the seriousness of sin together with the hope of forgiveness?
- How would you gently correct someone who taught that we inherit Adam's guilt, using Ezekiel 18:20?

Question 2

Student Question:

The guilt offering required the worshiper to restore what was taken and add a fifth to it (Leviticus 6:4–5). Where in your own life might genuine repentance call for more than an apology, and how does paying restitution change the heart of the one who repents?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Leviticus 6:1–7 lists sins against the LORD that are committed against a neighbor: lying about a deposit, robbery, oppression, keeping what was found and lying about it. Then verses 4–5 require the guilty party to restore the principal and add a fifth (twenty percent) on top, and only then bring his guilt offering. Confession to God and restitution to the neighbor go together.

This is convicting precisely because it is so easy to substitute one for the other. We tell God we are sorry and never face the person we wronged. Or we grudgingly pay someone back while our heart stays hard toward God. The guilt offering refuses both shortcuts. It says: make it right with the person, and come right with God.

The added fifth is significant. Repentance here costs more than was taken. It is not enough to restore the bare amount, as if sin were a neutral transaction. The extra portion is a tangible confession that the wrong inflicted real damage and that the repentant heart wants to over-correct toward honesty, not under-correct toward self-protection.

We see this principle alive in the New Testament when Zacchaeus stands and says he will restore fourfold what he took (Luke 19:8). Jesus responds, today salvation has come to this house. Real repentance shows up in the wallet and in the relationship, not only in the prayer closet.

For our formation, this is searching. Genuine repentance is more than an apology; it is a willingness to repair. Where we have taken, we restore. Where we have lied, we tell the truth. The cross frees us from guilt precisely so we can have the courage to make wrongs right.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sins against a neighbor are also sins against the LORD; the vertical and horizontal cannot be separated.
- Restitution plus a fifth shows repentance costs more than the bare amount taken.
- Confession to God does not cancel the duty to make things right with people.
- Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8–9) models repentance that restores generously.
- True repentance bears fruit; it is not merely feeling sorry (2 Corinthians 7:10–11).

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God require both an offering to Him and restitution to the neighbor?
- What does the added fifth teach us about the spirit of true repentance?
- Can you think of a time when making a wrong right cost you something, and what did it do in your heart?

Question 3

Student Question:

In Leviticus 6:1-7, the sins listed against the LORD are actually sins against a neighbor (lying, robbery, deceit, keeping what was found). What does this teach about how God views the way we treat one another?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Returning to Leviticus 6:1-7 from the angle of relationships, we see how seriously God takes the way we treat one another. The deposit a neighbor entrusts to us, the lost item we find, the partnership we are tempted to exploit, all of these are arenas where faith is proved real or shown false. God lists these everyday betrayals as sins that demand atonement.

It is easy to imagine that big worship moments are where we please or displease God, while ordinary honesty is a lesser matter. This passage flattens that distinction. How you handle your neighbor's property is a worship issue. The same God who designed the altar designed the law of the found purse.

This connects directly to Jesus, who said the whole law hangs on loving God and loving neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40), and to John, who insists that we cannot claim to love God whom we have not seen while hating the brother whom we have seen (1 John 4:20). Leviticus already wove these together; the gospel makes the weave unmistakable.

For the church, this guards against a hollow religiosity that is scrupulous about ritual and careless about people. God is not impressed by our assembling if we are cheating one another the rest of the week. The prophets thundered this very point (Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24), and it stands today.

The student should walk away asking a simple, costly question: am I a person of integrity in the small transactions of life, the ones no one audits? That is where God reads the truth of our devotion.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- How we treat people is inseparable from how we worship God.
- Everyday honesty (deposits, lost property, partnerships) is a genuine spiritual matter.
- Jesus binds love of God and love of neighbor together (Matthew 22:37-40).
- Ritual without integrity is condemned by the prophets (Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24).
- 1 John 4:20 warns against claiming love for God while wronging a brother.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God categorize cheating a neighbor as a sin against Himself?
- How does the way we handle small, unwatched transactions reveal our true devotion?

- Where are you tempted to separate Sunday worship from Monday honesty?

Question 4

Student Question:

When you have wronged someone, do you find it harder to confess it to God or to face the person you hurt? What does this passage suggest about why both are necessary?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the passage inward and asks where the harder battle lies, confessing to God or facing the person we hurt. Leviticus 6 will not let us pick only one. The worshiper must bring his offering to God and restore to his neighbor. Both directions of repentance are required because sin breaks fellowship in both directions.

For many of us, confessing to God feels safer because God is unseen and we can keep the conversation private. Facing the person means swallowing pride, risking their anger, and admitting we were wrong out loud. Yet that very difficulty is part of what makes restitution so healing. It tears down the wall of pretense.

Jesus pressed this when He said that if you are bringing your gift to the altar and remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift, go be reconciled, and then come and offer it (Matthew 5:23-24). Reconciliation with people is not optional spirituality; it is bound up with acceptable worship.

This is pastoral ground, so handle it tenderly. Some students carry shame over relationships they have never repaired. The good news is that the cross gives us both the forgiveness and the courage we need. We do not make things right to earn God's love; we make things right because we have already been loved.

Encourage one concrete step. Not every wrong can be fully undone, and wisdom is needed where contact would cause harm. But where a genuine debt of honesty or restitution remains, the call is to act, trusting God with the outcome.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin breaks fellowship both with God and with people; repentance addresses both.
- Confessing to the unseen God can feel safer than facing the person we wronged.
- Matthew 5:23-24: reconciliation with a brother is tied to acceptable worship.
- We make wrongs right out of gratitude, not to earn forgiveness.
- Wisdom and care are needed where contact could cause further harm.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is facing the person we wronged often harder than confessing to God?

- What does Matthew 5:23-24 add to our understanding of restitution?
- What one relationship is the Lord nudging you to make right, and what is the next small step?

Question 5

Student Question:

Study the law of the burnt offering in Leviticus 6:8-13. Why must the fire on the altar be kept burning continually, and what does the perpetual fire reveal about the worship and devotion God desires?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Leviticus 6:8-13 gives the law of the burnt offering, and at its center is a striking command: the fire on the altar shall be kept burning; it shall never go out (6:13). Each morning the priest fed it with wood, cleared the ashes, and arranged the offering, so that day and night, in every season, the flame continued.

The burnt offering (Hebrew olah, the ascending offering) was wholly consumed, rising entirely to God as a picture of total dedication. The perpetual fire underneath it preached a sermon without words: devotion to God is not an occasional spark but a steady, tended flame. It burned through the night when no crowd gathered and no one applauded.

There is real labor here. Fire does not stay lit by itself; someone rises early to remove the ashes and lay on fresh wood. So devotion does not stay warm by accident. It requires the daily, unglamorous work of tending, prayer offered when we would rather sleep, Scripture opened when no one is checking, obedience rendered in the dark hours of life.

The New Testament gathers up this image. Paul urges us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1). Jesus warns that in the last days the love of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:12), and the Spirit pleads, do not quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The altar fire still asks us whether our flame is burning or guttering.

For the student, the application is honest self-examination. We do not keep the literal altar, but we are called to a continual, tended devotion. The question is not whether we had a fire once, but whether we are feeding it today.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The perpetual fire pictures continual, tended devotion, not occasional enthusiasm.
- The burnt offering was wholly consumed, symbolizing total dedication to God.
- Devotion requires daily labor (removing ashes, adding wood); it does not sustain itself.
- Romans 12:1 fulfills the image: present your body a living sacrifice.

- Scripture warns against love growing cold and quenching the Spirit (Matthew 24:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Discussion Prompts

- What does the never-ending altar fire teach about the devotion God desires?
- What daily work does keeping our spiritual fire burning actually require?
- Where in your week is the flame strong, and where is it in danger of going out?

Question 6

Student Question:

What practices help keep the fire of your devotion to God burning when no one is watching, and what tends to let that flame die down in your life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the perpetual fire into practical territory: what keeps our devotion burning when no one is watching, and what lets it die? The honest answer for most of us is that the flame fades not through one dramatic rejection of God but through quiet neglect, missed prayer, an unopened Bible, a slow drift into busyness.

The priest tended the fire at set times, every morning. There is wisdom in rhythm. Devotion that depends on feeling will flicker, but devotion built on habit, a regular time with God, the weekly assembly of the saints, the Lord's Supper each first day, steady service, tends to endure. Faithfulness is often a matter of returning, again and again, to the same simple disciplines.

Scripture names the smotherers of the flame too. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word (Matthew 13:22). Forsaking the assembling of ourselves together starves the fire of fellowship's fuel (Hebrews 10:24-25). Unconfessed sin dampens it. Each of us tends to know our own particular ash that needs clearing.

Yet this is not a call to grim self-effort. The same God who gave the altar gives the grace. We tend the fire, but He is the one who set our hearts aflame to begin with, and He delights to rekindle a faith that has grown cold. The gift of His Son is the fuel that never runs dry.

Lead the student to one specific resolve. Not a long list, but one practice to feed the flame this week, and one ash heap to clear away so the fire can breathe.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Devotion usually fades through neglect, not one dramatic decision.
- Rhythm and habit (daily time with God, weekly worship, the Lord's Supper) sustain the flame.

- Cares, riches, and forsaking the assembly choke the word (Matthew 13:22; Hebrews 10:24–25).
- Unconfessed sin dampens devotion and needs clearing like ashes.
- God supplies the grace; tending the fire is response, not self-made righteousness.

Discussion Prompts

- What habits most reliably keep your devotion to God burning?
- What tends to choke the flame in your particular life?
- What one ash heap could you clear this week so the fire can breathe?

Question 7

Student Question:

In Leviticus 6:14–23, the grain offering and the priests' portion are described. What does it mean that the priests lived from the offerings, and how does this set apart the work of the one who mediates between God and the people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Leviticus 6:14–23 describes the grain offering (the minchah) and the special portion that belonged to the priests, along with the daily offering of the high priest. The priests, who had no inheritance of land, lived from these offerings. Their daily bread came from the altar of God. To serve at the holy things was their calling and their living.

This arrangement set the priest apart in a tangible way. His life was bound to the sanctuary. He could not pursue the ordinary livelihood of his neighbors because he was given to the service of God on behalf of the people. The offerings he handled were most holy (6:17), and his life was shaped accordingly.

The grain offering itself, fine flour with oil and frankincense, a portion burned and a portion eaten, pictures the dedication of the fruit of human labor to God. It was offered without leaven and seasoned with salt (Leviticus 2:11–13), the salt of the covenant, a reminder that fellowship with God was a bound, enduring relationship.

Here we begin to see the office of priest as mediator. He stands between a holy God and a sinful people, handling what is holy, eating at God's table, living from God's altar. This is precisely the office Hebrews takes up to explain Christ. Jesus is our great High Priest who has passed through the heavens (Hebrews 4:14), and unlike the Aaronic priests He needs no daily offering for His own sin (Hebrews 7:27).

For us, this guards against thinking we mediate our own access to God. We come through a Priest, not by our own merit. And under the new covenant, all believers are a holy priesthood (1

Peter 2:5), offering spiritual sacrifices through Jesus Christ, set apart not by tribe but by the blood of the Lamb.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Priests had no land inheritance; they lived from the offerings, wholly given to God's service.
- Handling the most holy things set the priest's whole life apart.
- The grain offering dedicated the fruit of labor; salt signified the enduring covenant.
- The priestly office foreshadows Christ our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14; 7:27).
- Under the new covenant all believers are a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9).

Discussion Prompts

- What did it mean that the priests lived entirely from the offerings of God?
- How does the priestly office prepare us to understand Christ as our mediator?
- If all Christians are now a holy priesthood, how should that shape daily life?

Question 8

Student Question:

The priest had to handle holy things carefully and live a set-apart life. In what concrete ways are you called to live set apart for God in a world that pulls the other direction?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question takes the set-apart life of the priest and asks how we, too, are called to live holy in a world that pulls the other way. The priest could not live like everyone else; his calling marked his food, his work, his conduct. In a quieter but real way, the Christian is also marked.

Peter draws the line straight from Leviticus to the church: as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy (1 Peter 1:15–16, quoting Leviticus 11:44). Holiness means belonging to God and therefore living differently, not out of pride, but out of love for the One who set us apart.

Set-apart living is concrete, not abstract. It shows up in how we speak, what we watch, how we spend money, whether our word is good, how we treat the vulnerable, whether we keep the marriage bed pure. The world has its patterns, and the Christian is called not to be conformed but transformed (Romans 12:2).

This is not isolation. The priest served on behalf of the people; he was set apart for them, not away from them. Likewise we are in the world though not of it (John 17:15–16), salt and light precisely where the darkness is. Holiness is not retreat; it is a different way of being present.

Lead the student to honesty about the specific pulls they feel and one specific way to live set apart this week. Holiness grows not in grand gestures but in small, faithful choices that say, I belong to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Holiness means belonging to God and therefore living differently (1 Peter 1:15–16).
- Set-apart living is concrete: speech, money, purity, integrity, treatment of others.
- We are transformed, not conformed to the world's patterns (Romans 12:2).
- Holiness is not withdrawal; we remain salt and light in the world (John 17:15–16).
- Holiness flows from love for the God who set us apart, not from pride.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean, practically, to live set apart for God today?
- Where do you feel the strongest pull to be conformed to the world?
- Name one concrete area where God is calling you to greater holiness this week.

Question 9

Student Question:

Leviticus 6:24–30 stresses that whatever touches the sin offering becomes holy, and that the priest who offers it eats it in a holy place. Drawing on Hebrews 7–10, how does the Aaronic priesthood and its sin offering point forward to Christ our High Priest, and what is better about His once-for-all sacrifice than the daily offerings of Leviticus?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Leviticus 6:24–30 closes with the law of the sin offering. Two themes stand out: holiness is contagious in this passage (whatever touches the flesh of the offering shall be holy, 6:27), and the offering is handled with great care, washed, eaten by the priest in a holy place, the vessel broken or scoured. The sin offering is most holy, and everything around it is governed by that holiness.

This contagious holiness is a vivid picture. We usually think of uncleanness as the thing that spreads, but here it is holiness that sets apart whatever it touches. The offering that bore sin became so saturated with the holy purpose of God that it transmitted that set-apartness to whatever contacted it. The atoning offering changes what it touches.

Now Hebrews 7–10 gathers all of this into Christ. The repeated daily offerings, with their many priests who died and had to be replaced, point by contrast to one Priest who lives forever and one sacrifice offered once. Christ entered not the earthly holy place but heaven itself, not with the blood of goats and calves but with His own blood, obtaining eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:11–12).

What is better about His offering is everything. The Levitical sacrifices were repeated because they could not perfect the worshiper; they reminded of sin year after year (Hebrews 10:1–3). But by one offering Christ has perfected forever those who are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:14). Where the priest's work was never finished, our High Priest sat down, His work complete (Hebrews 10:11–12).

And the contagious holiness finds its fulfillment too. The offering that bore our sin, Christ, makes holy everyone it touches. Those who come to Him are sanctified, set apart, by His blood (Hebrews 13:12). This is the heaviest weight of the lesson: the whole apparatus of priest, altar, and sin offering was a shadow, and the body is Christ (Colossians 2:17), our once-for-all sacrifice and ever-living High Priest. We do not return to the shadows; we rest in the substance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Holiness in this passage is contagious: the sin offering sets apart whatever touches it.
- The sin offering and its handling stress that atonement is most holy and serious.
- Hebrews 7–10: many dying priests and repeated offerings point to one eternal Priest and one offering.
- Christ entered heaven with His own blood, obtaining eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:11–12).
- By one offering He has perfected forever the sanctified (Hebrews 10:14); His work is finished.
- The shadows are fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:17); we do not bind them on Christians.
- Christ our offering makes holy all who come to Him (Hebrews 13:12).

Discussion Prompts

- What does the contagious holiness of the sin offering teach us about the power of Christ's atonement?
- From Hebrews 10, what is better about Christ's once-for-all sacrifice than the daily offerings?
- How should it change us to know our High Priest has sat down, His work complete?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking across this whole passage, the restitution, the continual fire, the mediating priest, the holiness that sets apart everything it touches, name one specific way the Lord Jesus is forming you through these chapters to make a wrong right, to keep your devotion burning, or to draw near to God through Him.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question looks back across the whole passage and asks for one specific way Jesus is forming the student. The threads are rich: restitution that makes wrongs right, the continual fire of devotion, the mediating priest, and the holiness that sets apart everything it touches. Each thread leads to Christ.

If the Lord has pressed restitution on someone's heart, the formation is courage and honesty, a willingness to repair what we have broken because we are secure in His forgiveness. If He has pressed the continual fire, the formation is steady, tended devotion that does not flicker out when the crowd goes home. If He has pressed the priesthood, the formation is humble nearness, drawing near to God through our great High Priest rather than trusting our own merit.

The key is that all of this is His work in us, not ours for Him. We come through Christ, and we are changed by Christ. Paul writes that we are being transformed into His image from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). These chapters are part of that transforming work, ancient shadows that still shape living disciples.

Encourage students to name something specific and doable. Not a vague intention to be better, but a concrete response: a wrong to make right, a daily practice to keep the fire burning, a fresh confidence to approach God through Jesus. Specificity is where formation becomes real.

Close with grace. The God who gave Israel a way to draw near has given us a far better and lasting way in His Son. We do not strive to earn His nearness; we walk in the access He has already won, tending our fire, making our wrongs right, living holy because we are His.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The passage's threads (restitution, continual fire, priesthood, holiness) all lead to Christ.
- Formation is His work in us, received by grace, not earned by effort (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- We draw near through our High Priest, not by our own merit (Hebrews 4:14-16).
- Specific, doable responses make spiritual formation real.
- We live holy and devoted because we are already His, not to become His.

Discussion Prompts

- Which thread of this passage is the Lord pressing on you most: restitution, the fire, or nearness through Christ?
- What one specific, doable response will you make this week?
- How does resting in Christ's finished work free you to respond without fear or striving?