



GROUP DISCUSSION

Our story to this point.

Genesis opens with God creating people in his own image. The story quickly shifts as man wants to become like God by deciding for himself right and wrong instead of trusting God. This fall damages man's relationship to God and others resulting in a spiral of ever-increasing sin.

The next major character we meet is Abraham. Through his family, God chooses to move his story of redemption forward. God establishes a covenant with Abraham that through him the entire world will receive blessing. Abraham's descendants prosper, until there is a famine in the land where they are living, but God has already prepared a place for that family to escape to and live out the devastation by sending one of Abraham's descendants into Egypt.

The next four hundred years, the family lived in Egypt but became slaves in that land. God hears their cries and chooses Moses to deliver his people from the hand of Pharaoh. God uses Moses to lead his people out of slavery where they spend the next 40 years wandering in the desert and learning to trust this God who has delivered them. God sets up a covenant where he promises blessing if the people if they keep up their end of the covenant.

In Exodus 19 tells us " Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to

say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, **you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." During this time God establishes what it looks like

Unfortunately, the Israelites cannot keep up their end of the covenant.

Question:

Share a time you were dropped into a completely new circumstance and had to learn to adapt.

Leviticus

The book of Leviticus is God's instruction to his people who have been living in Egypt for the last 400 years. They are a people who have been first refugees and then slaves. This book shows them how to be priests of this God who is very different than the gods of Egypt that they left behind. So, the book of Leviticus helps the people understand how to live as a kingdom of priests.

The book opens with a problem, Moses is not able to enter the tent to meet with God because of the sin of the people.

Read: Leviticus 1:1

Question: What were some ways your family taught you to say you were sorry as a kid? Was there anything they had you do?

As a new community God had to show the Israelite people how he expected them to look like a kingdom of priests.

Interpretive Key for Leviticus: God wants to dwell with His people, but they are perpetual sinners. Leviticus solves this terrible problem by giving direction for holy worship and holy living, so they can be in His presence and receive blessing.

You will see repeated sections in this book that talk about 3 main areas. First is the rituals the people are to perform. Next is the priest's duties and responsibilities. Finally, there is the purity of the people.

Read some of the headings to the sections in chapters 1 to 7 to the group to get a feel for what some of the different sacrifices looked like.

One thing that the sacrificial system teaches us is that when someone sins there is a cost to that sin. Because God is holy he requires the people who approach him to be holy. God is holy because he is in a different category than people or is ontologically different. God is also holy because he is morally perfect.

Question: Have you ever met someone who it was hard to relate to because they genuinely seemed like moral people?

The next section of the book is instructions for the priesthood. Priests were the mediators between the people and God and yet you remember the quote from Exodus where he told the entire community they would be a kingdom of priests. Or that each person would have a job of representing God to the watching world.

Question: What has been your experience with "priests" or people in your tradition dedicated to the work of serving God?

Read: Leviticus 16

Question: Why would God set up an annual day of atonement for the people?

The feasts section helps the Israelites remember who they are and how God has played a significant role in their story. It is reminding the people that they have a special

relationship to God, and he is and has been acting on their behalf.

The next section of Leviticus is about the purity of God's people. Through normal life and work people would become unclean, by coming in contact with different things. God wants his people to be clean when they approach him.

These laws and sacrifices seem to work, as we see the next book of the Bible Moses is able to reenter the temple. Read Numbers 1:1.

Spend some time as a group reflecting on what the New Testament authors say about this sacrificial system in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We are God's house – 1Cor 3:16-17

Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

We are the priests - 1 Peter 2:5

And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.

1 Peter 2:9-12

You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy." Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they

accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

Your everyday life is the altar and sacrifice
– Romans 12:1

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

Hebrews 10:1-4

The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Question: What can you do or change this week because of what you have learned today?

Make it achievable and tangible. Share it with the group.