

ADULT UNIT I: Tabernacle, Sacrifices, and Atonement
ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Offering a Sweet Aroma to God
ADULT TOPIC: Up in Smoke

LESSON 4
DATE: March 23, 2025

DEVOTIONAL READING: Romans 12:1-8
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Leviticus 1:1-17; 6:8-13
PRINT PASSAGE: Leviticus 1:3-17

Home Daily Bible Reading

Mar. 17	M	1 Peter 2:1-5	<i>Building a Spiritual House</i>
Mar. 18	T	Psalms 141	<i>Prayer like Incense</i>
Mar. 19	W	2 Corinthians 2:12-17	<i>The Fragrance of Knowing Christ</i>
Mar. 20	Th	Zephaniah 3:14-20	<i>God's Delight</i>
Mar. 21	F	Romans 12:1-8	<i>A Holy and Acceptable Sacrifice</i>
Mar. 22	Sa	Romans 12:9-21	<i>Worship through Loving Genuinely</i>
Mar. 23	Su	Leviticus 1:3-17	<i>An Acceptable Offering</i>

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or learner

Celebration – “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood” - #342 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Leviticus 1:3-17 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively)

³ If the offering is a burnt-offering from the herd, you shall offer a male without blemish; you shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, for acceptance in your behalf before the Lord. ⁴ You shall lay your hand on the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be acceptable in your behalf as atonement for you. ⁵ The bull shall be slaughtered before the Lord; and Aaron's sons the priests shall offer the blood, dashing the blood against all sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁶ The burnt-offering shall be flayed and cut up into its parts. ⁷ The sons of the priest Aaron shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸ Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the parts, with the head and the suet, on the wood that is on the fire on the

altar; ⁹ but its entrails and its legs shall be washed with water. Then the priest shall turn the whole into smoke on the altar as a burnt-offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odour to the Lord.

¹⁰ If your gift for a burnt-offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, your offering shall be a male without blemish. ¹¹ It shall be slaughtered on the north side of the altar before the Lord, and Aaron's sons the priests shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar. ¹² It shall be cut up into its parts, with its head and its suet, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; ¹³ but the entrails and the legs shall be washed with water. Then the priest shall offer the whole and turn it into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt-offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odour to the Lord.

¹⁴ If your offering to the Lord is a burnt-offering of birds, you shall choose your offering from turtle-doves or pigeons. ¹⁵ The priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head, and turn it into smoke on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out against the side of the altar. ¹⁶ He shall remove its crop with its contents and throw it at the east side of the altar, in the place for ashes. ¹⁷ He shall tear it open by its wings without severing it. Then the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire; it is a burnt-offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odour to the Lord.

Affirmation – We affirm that sacrifice maintains and restores the covenant relationship. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

People know that their relationships with others require effort. How can we maintain our relationships? In Leviticus, God's people are instructed to offer burnt sacrifices to maintain and restore their relationship with the LORD.

Break into small groups and discuss what you feel is the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships, and respond to the following questions: 1) How much do you value relationships with friends and family? 2) How are relationships broken and what can be done to restore them? 3) What personal sacrifices may be necessary to restore such relationships? Explain your answers. 4) What is the sacred nature of blood? Since blood gives life to the human body, how do you regard "blood relations"? How do you regard the donation of blood to help save other people's lives?

Leviticus 1:3-9: The Book of Leviticus contains God's instructions to the priests on the proper forms of sacrificial rites to be conducted in worship of God in order to maintain God's relationship with His people. The title "reflects the fact that the book relates to the tasks of the Levites, who assisted the priests in carrying out duties associated with worship at the tabernacle. (We recall that all priests were Levites [belonging to the tribe of Levi], but not all Levites were priests.)" (Standard Lesson Commentary 2024-2025, Large Print edition, p. 256). Sacrifice is significant as a mechanism to allow people to pray to God, thank God, preserve sacred space for God, and be in a relationship with God. The whole offering or burnt offerings, in which all edible material was burned, served as a basic and general gift and was meant to invoke God's presence. Only unblemished male animals were deemed suitable as sacrifices to God. For this reason, in Jesus' time, those offering a sacrifice would purchase the animal at the Temple to avoid it being injured during travel. Great care was taken in draining the blood of the sacrificed animal because it was recognized



that the blood was the life force of all living creatures (see Leviticus 17:11). Note that the priest officiant is told that his laying of his hand on the head of the burnt offering is an indication of the animal being accepted on his behalf as an atonement for his sins. Note also in Hebrews 9:22, the assertion that almost everything is cleansed with blood "and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [of sin]."

Leviticus 1:10-17: The description of the burnt offering as providing God with a "pleasing odor" may indicate that God participates in a fellowship meal shared with (or provided by) those sacrificing the animal. Sacrifice is an opportunity for restored fellowship and thus implies the sharing of the two entities. "A key word in Leviticus is the word holy. Of its 600-plus occurrences in the Bible, more are found in Leviticus than in any other book of the Bible. Holiness refers to a state of being set apart, including both ritual and ethical purity" (Ibid., p. 259). Holiness distinguishes God from people and Yahweh's people from other people. Ritual impurity is not the same as sin, but either can restrict access to Yahweh's presence. Yet in the general since, "'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy' (Leviticus 19:2) is directed not only to all the people of ancient Israel but to all of God's people through time (1 Peter 1:15-16, quoting that verse) (Ibid.). The description of these sacrifices recalls the slaughter of animals in Genesis 15:7-21 where God makes a covenant with Abraham. Sacrifice maintains and restores the covenant as well.

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Break into small groups and challenge one another with the following questions and suggestions: 1. Read this passage a couple of times. Underline every time a phrase mentions the need to keep the fire burning continuously. How do you keep your faith fire burning? 2. Maintain communion with God and others by eating with your community regularly, even if you live alone. Make note of how recommitting to or skipping the discipline affects your spiritual well-being. 3. Watch a movie with themes of forgiveness. For example, the movie *Levity* (R, 2003), offers a parable of forgiving, making amends, and seeking reconciliation. What new insight did you gain from looking for these themes in the story? 4. Create daily rituals of forgiveness and reconciliation. For example, pull a weed (forgive someone) and plant a seed (be reconciled). 5. What have you sacrificed that became a pleasing aroma to God? How can you make sacrificial living for God a priority? 6. Turn on a battery-operated candle and let its light remind you of God's call to continual service and worship.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Discuss how daily animal sacrifices offered the laity the opportunity to be actively involved in the worship of God and the maintenance of the covenant.
2. Summarize the biblical understanding of ritual purification and atonement. Emphasize the priority of Yahweh's grace that provides the context for reconciling sacrifices.
3. Compare the purpose of animal sacrifice with the goal of worship today: an expression of devotion, commitment, confession, and complete surrender to God.
4. How do baptism/baptismal renewal and the Eucharist (Holy Communion) maintain and restore the relationship with God?
5. Create a worship ritual that expresses the value of the sacrifice—that the offering is to be of quality to the worshipper and indicative of the worshipper's heart attitude. What would you sacrifice to God?

KEY VERSE: **The priest shall turn the whole into smoke on the altar as a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord. Leviticus 1:9**