

Learning to Love Leviticus

Leviticus 19:13-19

Even though Leviticus is the central book in the central section of the Old Testament, it is often ignored by Christians. This is in part because we miss the context of the book. It is not a list of rules and regulations. God has just entered into a covenant relationship with his people after the exodus; Leviticus provides the framework for that relationship – the book is all about relationship.

Leviticus provides Israel with rituals to live by. These are ways they can say sorry to God for what they have done and thank him for what he has provided. (And we remember that apologising and gratitude are important to all relationships!).

The book then goes on to outline role and requirements of the priesthood. The priests are to function as a third party – like a counsellor or minister – to help Israel and God restore their relationship when it becomes distorted.

Finally, Leviticus guides Israel on how to remain ritually and morally pure, so that a holy God can dwell in their presence. We know how severe conflict or tension in a relationship can make it hard for the two parties to be in the same room as one another. The same was true of Israel and God. Leviticus' instructions concerning purity are aimed to have God and his people abiding together in the same space.

When we understand its context and see Leviticus as a framework for relationship, it opens up to us, and we might even grow to love it!

Questions

1. Have you read Leviticus before? If so, what was your reaction?
2. What are some of the ways we apologise to God and express gratitude to him?