

ENGAGE**Reflect**

When you have special guests for dinner in your home, how do you want them to feel about their relationship with you and importance to you? What things do you do in planning, preparing, serving, and engaging with them during the meal that reflect these desires? In what ways do you take the same care in your daily life to celebrate your relationship with the Lord and honor his importance to you? Reflect on these things, and journal your thoughts below.

Pray

Heavenly Father, as I study your word in Leviticus, help me to know your desire to have fellowship with those who worship you. Help me understand more deeply how we might better acknowledge your fellowship with us in our homes, your sovereignty over our lives, and the honor you are due for your redemption, which has brought us into your covenant community. In Jesus' name I pray and give you thanks. Amen.

Read

- Read Leviticus 3, which concerns the fellowship offering. Keep in mind the fellowship offering was meant to underscore the offeror's covenant relationship with the Lord and other Israelites. See "Context" chart (88).
- In the commentary, read "Introduction" sections 4.g.iv (53-54), 5.e (71-72), and "Context" (101-102).
- Read Leviticus 3 again.

UNDERSTAND

A. Function of Fellowship Offerings—Review “Comment,” first paragraph (102): The fellowship and burnt offerings were similar. In each, the offeror brought an unblemished animal to the tent of meeting and laid their hands on the animal’s head, after which it was killed, its blood thrown on the altar by the priest and the sacrificial portion of its meat burned in offering to the Lord.

1. What is the key *difference* between these two offerings?
2. What part of the animal was burned on the altar in a fellowship offering?
3. What happened to the rest of the animal?
4. Who were the parties that consumed the offering?
5. What function of the fellowship offering do these differences highlight?

B. Atonement in the Fellowship Offering—Read Lev 3:2, 8, 13; and “Comment” on Lev. 3:2 (102).

1. Though the fellowship offering does not explicitly focus on atonement, why is it apparent from Lev. 3 that atonement was still taking place during this offering?
2. Why shouldn’t this surprise us?

C. The Fat of the Fellowship Offering—Read “Comment” on Lev. 3:3-5 (102-104).

1. Why was all the fat of a fellowship offering burned?
2. How did Israelites think of “fat” differently than we moderns may think of it?
3. So what portion of the sacrificial animal or “meal” were the Israelites giving to the Lord, and what did that acknowledge?

D. Significance of Shared Meals—Read “Comment” on Lev. 3:6-15 (104-105). In ancient Israel and other places in the Near East, a meal was to be shared with guests as a sign of hospitality, as it is today. But a shared meal also often signified much more.

1. What purpose could a shared meal serve when the guest was given the very best food?
2. As applied to the fellowship offering, what function did it serve?
3. What other important purpose could a shared meal serve in ancient Israel in terms of the relationship among those eating?
4. As applied to the fellowship offering, what function did it serve?

E. Prohibition Against Consuming Fat or Blood—Read “Comment” on Lev. 3:16-17 (105-106), and Lev. 17:11 (220-222). As we’ve seen, the Israelites were prohibited from eating the fat of the fellowship offering, which was to be given to the Lord as the very best part and burned on the altar. They were also prohibited from eating blood—that is, raw meat with blood still in it.

1. What was a key reason for this prohibition?
2. What did the Israelites acknowledge by abstaining from raw meat?
3. The prohibition against consuming fat or blood applied not only to animals offered at the tent of meeting, or tabernacle, but also to those eaten at home, whether sacrificial animals or not (see Lev. 3:17). What two things did an Israelite family acknowledge by not eating the fat of the meat, or raw meat with the blood still in it?

APPLY

A. Shared Meals and the Covenant—Read “Meaning” (106-107). As we have seen, Israelites often confirmed a covenant relationship by sharing a meal with other parties to the covenant. Thus the fellowship offering, which was shared among offerors, priests (Lev. 7:28-35), and the Lord, confirmed the covenant between the Lord and Israel, both as a *celebration* and *rededication*: The Israelites celebrated their covenant relationship with the Lord and rededicated themselves to their covenant responsibilities. The fellowship offering was typically eaten with one’s household and other members of the covenant community, reminding the Israelites that they belonged to a covenant family (107). **What are some concrete ways a church or Christian fellowship group might eat meals together to celebrate their relationship with the Lord and rededicate themselves to reflecting his holiness to the surrounding world?**

B. Celebrating the Lord's Supper as a Fellowship Meal—Review “Meaning” (107). Jesus used the concept of a shared covenant meal when he instituted the Lord's Supper for members of the new covenant (cf. Lk 22:20 with Exod 24:8). **What are some concrete ways Christian churches might structure their communities' participation in the Lord's Supper to emphasize both celebrating our relationship with him and rededicating ourselves to reflecting his holiness?**

RESPOND

Meditate—Meditate this week on Jesus' words and prayers as he celebrated the Lord's Supper with his disciples. Read John 15 and 17, taking time to reflect on what Jesus is saying, especially how his words in John 15 lead us to *rededicate* ourselves to him as our covenant Lord and to our covenant brothers and sisters, and how his prayer in John 17 leads us to *celebrate* the redemption he has won for us.

Take Action—As you think about the two purposes of the fellowship offering in Israel (106-107), how might you reflect them in your relationship with the Lord? What are some practical ways you might celebrate his redeeming presence in your life and affirm your covenant relationship with him,—both in corporate worship and in your personal walk? Write down a simple plan for implementing your ideas, and start it this week as you meditate on the Lord's desire to have fellowship with his people.

ANALYZE

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we study your word in Leviticus, help us to know your desire to have fellowship with those who worship you. Help us understand more deeply how we might better acknowledge your fellowship with us in our homes, your sovereignty over our lives, and the honor you are due for your redemption, which has brought us into your covenant community. In Jesus' name we pray and give you thanks. Amen.

Share Reflections**5 min.**

Have each person share one reflection from the Reflect exercise on the first page of the Individual Study. You can do this in pairs, or in the larger group if you have time. This is not a time to critique or ask lots of questions of each other, but simply to share something God has put on your heart.

Clarify Issues from the Lesson**10 min.**

Back in the larger group, prepare for your discussion by clarifying any uncertainties about the Scripture or commentary, but be careful with your time. The purpose here is to focus on a few issues that may be particularly difficult, not to open a broad discussion about the lesson.

Meaning of Leviticus for Today**20 min.**

Take turns reading aloud each point below, and discuss the questions as a group:

A. Acknowledging the Lord's Worthiness and Sovereignty—Israelites were forbidden from eating fat and from eating meat with the blood still in it (Lev. 3:17). They were forbidden from eating fat, which was the choicest part of the meat and meal; it was to be given to the Lord as a way of showing he is worthy of all honor and praise (Lev. 3:16; "Comment" [103, 105]). They were forbidden from eating an animal's blood because it was equated with its life and thus belonged to the Lord, who is sovereign over all life. He permitted the Israelites to atone for their sins by using the animals' blood in sacrifice, but they were not to eat the blood as though it belonged to them. See 4.g.iv (53-54); "Comment" (106; 220-222). We no longer follow the Old Testament laws of sacrifice because Jesus became the final sacrifice for sin. See Lesson 1; Heb. 9-10. Still, we are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to the Lord as our spiritual act of worship (Rom. 12:1). **How should acknowledging the Lord's worthiness and sovereignty, which was signified by the fat and blood of the fellowship offerings, impact the ways in which we offer ourselves to him as living sacrifices?**

Sharing Meals in Community—Sharing a meal with guests in ancient Israel often signified more than hospitality. Guests could be given special honor by providing them with the very best portions of the food. Shared meals could also affirm a covenant relationship among those partaking (104-105). Though church life does not always need to center around meals, they are a special way to experience fellowship. **Brainstorm ways your small group or other church community meetings might incorporate the significance of Israel’s “shared covenant meal,” either in gathering for special meals or in other forms of community. Write down some ideas and make a short plan for sharing them with others in your church or implementing them in your own small group gatherings.**