

# THE LEVITICUS FIVE

Part 5 • March 8, 2026 | Pastor Jason Smotherman

## THE FILTER

Leviticus is answering one central question:

***How do a sinful people live with a Holy God in their midst?***

At the end of Book of Exodus, the Glory of God fills the tabernacle. God moves into the center of the camp. His presence is no longer distant. It's near. And when a Holy God lives in the middle of your community, everything about how you live has to change.

That's what Leviticus is about.

It's not random rules. It's not ancient religious bureaucracy. It's a training manual for living near the presence of God.

One of the biggest themes in the book is the idea of clean and unclean.

Listen to what God tells the priests in

***LEVITICUS 10:10 (NKJV)***

*that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean*

That word distinguish is everything. God was teaching His people to live with categories.

Holy and common.

Clean and unclean.

Without those categories, the whole system breaks down.

Clean meant something was fit for God's presence.

Unclean meant something was incompatible with God's presence.

Now this is important. Unclean didn't always mean sinful. Sometimes it was something natural. Sickness, disease, contact with death, things that were simply part of living in a fallen world.

But God still said those things could not mix with sacred space. Why? Because God was teaching Israel something deeper than behavior.

He was teaching them discernment. He was forming a people who knew how to filter their lives.

When you get to chapter 11 of Book of Leviticus, we find a section that a lot of people skip when they read the Bible. It's a long list of animals that are clean and animals that are unclean. Most people read that and think, "Why would God care about their diet?" But this wasn't just about food. This was about formation.

Three times a day, every single day, Israel had to ask a question before they ate something: ***Is this clean?***

Before they touched it.

Before they consumed it.

Before they allowed it into their bodies.

God embedded discernment into their daily routine. He was training them to think before they consumed. To evaluate before they allowed something into their lives. Holiness is formed through repeated filtering.

***You don't drift into holiness. You train into it.***

Now here's something else Leviticus teaches us.

In the Old Testament system, uncleanness spread. If you touched something unclean, you became unclean. If something unclean entered the camp, it affected the community. Uncleanness was contagious.

But when Jesus shows up, everything begins to reverse. When Jesus Christ touches a leper, He doesn't become unclean. ***The leper becomes clean. Holiness becomes contagious.***

The greater power overtakes the lesser. Grace reverses the direction.

But that doesn't mean discernment disappears. Sometimes people hear about grace and think it means the filter is gone. But the New Testament still calls believers to live with distinction.

Paul echoes the language of Leviticus when he writes in 2 Corinthians, "Come out from among them and be separate."

The covenant changed. But the call to holiness did not.

Here's where this message gets very practical for us. Israel had to ask:

What am I eating?

What am I touching?

What am I bringing back into the camp?

Today we have to ask:

What am I consuming with my eyes?

What voices am I letting disciple me?

What conversations am I entertaining?

What environments am I normalizing?

Because here's the truth: what you repeatedly allow will eventually shape you. This leads to something I want us to really grab hold of today.

***Holiness is not just what I don't touch.***

***Holiness is what I refuse to allow to touch me.***

Most people define holiness by avoidance. "I don't go there." "I don't do that." "I don't say that."

But Leviticus shows us something deeper.

Holiness is about guarding what has access to you.

What enters your mind.

What enters your heart.

What influences your spirit.

Jesus could walk into dark places without darkness shaping Him. He could sit with sinners without becoming like them. Why? Because He carried holiness with Him.

The danger for us today isn't persecution. It's confusion.

Our culture thrives on blurring lines. Everything becomes acceptable. Everything becomes normal.

And when the categories disappear, holiness disappears with them.

That's exactly what happened to Israel later in their history. They stopped distinguishing between the holy and the common. They stopped filtering.

And slowly the culture disciplined them instead of God disciplining them.

Leviticus reminds us that not everything belongs in our lives. Not everything belongs in our minds. Not everything belongs in our homes.

As this series continues, we're going to see something powerful unfold. After teaching Israel about clean and unclean, the book eventually leads us to the Day of Atonement in Book of Leviticus 16.

Because even when you try to live with the right filter, you still pick up residue. Life in a broken world leaves its mark. So God made a way for cleansing. Even the sanctuary had to be purified.

Here's the good news for us today. Holiness isn't about perfection.

***Holiness is about returning to the right filter.***

Letting God cleanse what doesn't belong. Letting the Holy Spirit restore what has been compromised.

So the question I want to leave us with today is simple.

***What filter are you living with?***

Are you asking, "Is this technically wrong?" Or are you asking, "Is this clean enough to host the presence of God in my life?"

Because the goal of Leviticus was never to produce fearful people. The goal was to produce a people who could carry the presence of God.

And when clean and unclean become clear again, the presence of God rests comfortably among His people.

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