

## Offering a Sweet Aroma to God

Malachi jumped when his cell phone alarm clock went off. Then, for several seconds, he forgot where he was—the parking lot of his church. It was 9:30 a.m. and soon the parking lot of Mount Zion would be filling up.

At 7 this morning, Malachi had taken a shower, washed his face, brushed his teeth, and dressed at a 24-hour gas stop for truckers. It was quicker for Malachi to park his truck at the church when he got off the road.

Malachi's schedule as a truck driver was a rough one. Still, he was grateful to God, his company, and Pastor Jones.

"Why don't you park your rig behind the church, Brother Malachi," Pastor Jones had said. "Then you can be here in time for church."

During the worship service, Malachi lifted his voice and his hands. He didn't care how tired he was, God had been more than good. He had saved him, gave him a good job to take care of his family, and so much more.

At offering time, Malachi got out his prepared tithe envelope, because he was "old school." He gave in cash, not online. His wife, however, was concerned about whether they "had enough money to be tithing and giving to God."

"I don't care how little or how much money I make," Malachi said, "There is no way I'm going to not tithe and give offerings to the Lord."

**1.** *What are some things that you are currently sacrificing to God?*

**2.** *Are these sacrifices the best you have to give?*

**3.** *What is your heart's attitude about your sacrifices to God?*

## Offerings That Please the Lord

*Leviticus 1:3–9 KJV*

3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. 4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. 5 And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 6 And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces. 7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire: 8 And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: 9 But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

*Leviticus 1:3–9 NIV*

<sup>3</sup> "If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you. <sup>5</sup> You are to slaughter the young bull before the Lord, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting. <sup>6</sup> You are to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. <sup>7</sup> The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. <sup>8</sup> Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. <sup>9</sup> You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD."

When we read Leviticus 1, we might picture an Israelite drawing near to the tabernacle to offer worship to God. Our passage details God's expectations for *burnt offerings*. What makes this particular sacrifice unique is that the whole of the animal is burned and consumed. It represents devoting one's entire worship to God through a sacrifice, giving everything to God and holding nothing back.

God details three kinds of burnt offerings, all "from either the herd or the flock" (Lev. 1:2). God requires domestic animals (not wild animals), "males without defect" to ensure that offerings are of value (v. 3). The Hebrew behind "without defect" is the same word as "blameless" when used to describe people (Gen. 6:9; 17:1; Deut. 18:13). The unblemished animal functions as a substitute for the sinful worshiper, as well as an illustration of God's unmatched character: just, pure, life-giving.

God describes the ways these offerings are to be given. First, the worshiper is to present the animal (v. 3). Second, the worshiper is to lay hands on the animal's head (v. 4)—probably to signify the substitution for the worshiper's sin. The animal can then be "accepted" on behalf of the worshiper in order "to make atonement for [him or her]" (v. 4). Atonement means that God is accepting the sacrifice. Third, the worshiper is to slaughter the animal to complete the act of substitution (v. 5). The unblemished animal receives the death, instead of the "blemished" worshiper. The person can walk away with a renewed relationship with God, because of the sacrifice of a "blameless" life.

Finally, the priest splashes the blood on the altar to cleanse it (v. 5). Blood is associated with life, and Leviticus 17:14 says "the life of every creature is its blood." The priest continues to prepare the sacrifice for burning (vv. 6–9), which transforms the animal into smoke that then ascends to God as "an aroma pleasing to the Lord" (v. 9). God says plainly the effect of this offering in a spirit of obedience: God is pleased!

**4. What is the significance of the burnt offering, which**

*is completely consumed on the altar?*

**5.** *Why would it be important for the animal to be “without blemish” (v. 3 KJV)?*

**6.** *What does the burning of the offering accomplish?*

## **Offerings That the Lord Accepts**

*Leviticus 1:10–17 KJV*

10 And if his offering be of the flocks, namely, of the sheep, or of the goats, for a burnt sacrifice; he shall bring it a male without blemish. 11 And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar.

12 And he shall cut it into his pieces, with his head and his fat: and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: 13 But he shall wash the inwards and the legs with water: and the priest shall bring it all, and burn it upon the altar: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

14 And if the burnt sacrifice for his offering to the LORD be of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons. 15 And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off his head,

*Leviticus 1:10–17 NIV*

<sup>10</sup> “If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, you are to offer a male without defect. <sup>11</sup> You are to slaughter it at the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall splash its blood against the sides of the altar. <sup>12</sup> You are to cut it into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. <sup>13</sup> You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of them and burn them on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

<sup>14</sup> “If the offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, you are to offer a dove or a young pigeon. <sup>15</sup> The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off the head and burn it on the altar; its

and burn it on the altar; and the blood thereof shall be wrung out at the side of the altar: 16 And he shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, by the place of the ashes: 17 And he shall cleave it with the wings thereof, but shall not divide it asunder: and the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that is upon the fire: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. <sup>16</sup> He is to remove the crop and the feathers and throw them down east of the altar where the ashes are. <sup>17</sup> He shall tear it open by the wings, not dividing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is burning on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

This section details two other kinds of burnt offerings—sheep and goats (vv. 10–13) and birds (vv. 14–17)—following the same basic pattern in verses 1–9. Each is framed the same way: “It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord” (vv. 13, 17).

The main difference between the kinds of offerings is the value of each type. Instructions for less expensive offerings (birds) may have been a provision for the poor, who might not even own a more expensive animal like a bull. So long as the worshiper’s sacrifice represented a reasonable sacrifice offered with a sincere heart, God would be pleased with the sacrifice, no matter its financial value. Readers of Luke’s Gospel will notice that pigeons are used for an offering of purification, for Jesus’ own earthly family (Luke 2:24).

**7.** *What is one possible reason God provided instructions for less expensive offerings?*

**8.** *Why can God be equally pleased with “food offerings” that vary in size and value?*

## A Sacrifice that Counts

Lately, in my weekly church group, we've been talking a lot about sacrifice. Usually when it comes up, someone will connect it to the woman who gave only a penny, even though that was all she had. My group's leader has said a few times that if we're truly being sacrificial in our giving, it's going to hurt. Maybe you've been saving up for a nice new kitchen appliance, or a new computer, or to have the repair shop change your car's oil for you; but then you give, and it comes right out of that "for me" fund.

But I keep feeling like there must be more to sacrifice. After all, doesn't Jesus urge us to carry our crosses—our very instruments of death—and follow Him? To someone with a stable job and a stable paycheck, financial giving doesn't always feel like that much of a sacrifice. Is there something more that I am missing, a costly sacrifice that I've been avoiding?

Ever since I was a child, I've valued my time. If I don't have a specific, uninterrupted routine, I get upset, or at least demotivated. I like to wake up at 6:30 a.m., read my Bible, work out, and eat breakfast by 8:50 a.m.—just in time to log into my work computer by 9:00. Then, when I log off in the evening, I have a routine that takes me until I get into bed at 9:30 p.m. And if my habits get interrupted, it can feel as though my entire day is ruined.

Maybe, for me, a sacrifice would be to give up some of my precious "routine time." I could offer my time to God. I could lose some of my rigidity and be ready for a call to serve, even when it feels inconvenient.

**9.** *Does proper sacrifice in today's church context have to be financial?*

**10.** *What's something you've sacrificed that wasn't directly financial?*

**11.** *What's something that would be a sacrifice for you, but might be easy for someone else to give up?*

## What We Sacrifice

For every sacrifice, God demands that His people give their best. God doesn't want His people to give something that they wouldn't miss. After all, that wouldn't be a sacrifice. His people needed to follow God's instructions and enter His presence with clean hearts.

► *Reflect on your own sacrifices. Are you giving your best? Is there something that you're holding back, something that God might ask you to give up? In the space below or on paper, write out a prayer. You might ask God to give you discernment to better know what and how to sacrifice to Him.*

### KEY VERSE

But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord. —Leviticus 1:9 KJV

You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord. —Leviticus 1:9 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of March 24 through March 30

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 40:1–8—Delighting to Do God's Will.
- Tues.** Psalm 40:9–17—Safe in God's Love and Faithfulness.
- Wed.** Hebrews 9:1–14—A Preferred Sanctuary.
- Thurs.** Hebrews 9:15–22—Christ's Perfect Sacrifice.
- Fri.** 2 Corinthians 5:11–21—Vertical and Horizontal Reconciliation.
- Sat.** Leviticus 16:1–10—Approach God in Awe.
- Sun.** Leviticus 16:11–19—Cleanse the Sanctuary.