



**LIBERATING  
FAITH STUDIES**

# SAMPLE

## COSTLY SACRIFICE

# **LIBERATING FAITH STUDIES SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

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# The Order of Service

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary  
as a signal for silence
  - II. Singing
  - III. The Apostles' Creed
  - IV. Prayer, closing with the  
Lord's Prayer in concert
  - V. Singing
  - VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
  - VII. Responsive reading  
of the lesson text by school
  - VIII. The Decalogue
- 

## The Lesson

- I. Organ interlude while  
the classes are being arranged
  - II. Class study of the lesson
  - III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
  - IV. Closing bell — silence
- 

## The Closing

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application  
of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

### Editorial Staff

Publisher • Rev. Dr. Roderick D. Belin

Editor • Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce

— Lessons —

Dr. Catherine S. Powell

### The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.



### The Church School Creed

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

A.M.E. Discipline

Hello, AME Church School Member!

Dont Forget to join us on Zoom and Facebook to facilitate our weekly Connectional Church School with teachers (lay and clergy) from around the AME Connection. They generously share their knowledge, talents, and expertise with a weekly average of 500 participants viewing via Zoom and 1500 on Facebook.

The blessings from the teachings of the virtual AME Connectional Church School have been immeasurable. We convene the Connectional Church School on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. EST. Join us! Zoom Meeting ID: 829 9325 1894. Visit our website- [www.iamame.org](http://www.iamame.org)- to find worship and study resources to empower you and enhance the life of the church.

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Thank you for purchasing *Liberating Faith Studies*. We are working every day to fulfill our mission to provide high quality resources to empower us to spread Jesus Christ's liberating gospel, pursue justice, and enhance the social development of all people.

And, always remember, I am praying for you.

Roderick D. Belin  
President/Publisher

**HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

**February 24–March 2**

<b>Monday</b>	Revelation 1:3-8 (We Are Priests)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Psalms 106:36-48 (Give Thanks to God's Holy Name)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Leviticus 19:1-10 (Be Holy)
<b>Thursday</b>	Leviticus 19:11-18 (Love Your Neighbor as Yourself)
<b>Friday</b>	Revelation 20:1-6 (Priests of God and Christ)
<b>Saturday</b>	Micah 6:1-8 (Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly)
<b>Sunday</b>	Exodus 19:1-14 (Treasured Possession)

## A Kingdom of Priests, a Holy Nation

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 19

Focus Scripture: Exodus 19:1-14

*Key Verses: "Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation." Exodus 19:5b-6a*

### EXODUS 19:1-14 (NRSV UE)

1 On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 They journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.

3 Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the Israelites:

4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

5 Now, therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine,

6 but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites."

7 So Moses went, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him.

8 The people all answered as one, "Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

9 Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after." When Moses had told the words of the people to the Lord,

10 the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes

11 and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Si-

### EXODUS 19:1-14 (KJV)

1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

9 And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.

10 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,

11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all

nai in the sight of all the people.

12 You shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Be careful not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Any who touch the mountain shall be put to death.

13 No hand shall touch them, but they shall be stoned or shot with arrows; whether animal or human being, they shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain."

14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He consecrated the people, and they washed their clothes.

the people upon mount Sinai.

12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:

13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

14 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

**KEY TERMS**

- **Consecrate** – Being separated (or set apart) to live holy lives, committed to our sovereign God and his service.
- **Mount Sinai** – Also known as Mt. Horeb; this is the place where God met with Moses, to give him the law and instructions for building the tabernacle.
- **Rephidim** – A wilderness site where the Israelites stopped just prior to reaching Mt. Sinai.
- **Sacrament** – Also known as an ordinance; a ritual or ceremony; a visual representation of beliefs in the special healing and saving power of Jesus Christ.
- **Wilderness** – Typically rocky,

uninhabitable geographical areas with little rainfall.

**INTRODUCTION**

The overarching theme for this quarter's lessons is *Costly Sacrifice*. We will explore

The overarching theme for this quarter's lessons is *Costly Sacrifice*.

a total of three units that focus on worship, sacrifices, and offerings. As you will see, sacrifice in this case refers to the act of totally surrendering our lives to Almighty God. The first lesson gives an accounting of events that occurred exactly three months after Moses, under God's direction, led the Israelites out of Egypt. Their first stop was

in the Rephidim wilderness. From there, they traveled to the Mount Sinai wilderness, and they are now encamped in front of the mountain (Exodus 19:19). Notably, this is the same site where God told Moses that



Israel would worship him after leaving Egypt (Exodus 3:12). Although the Israelites' 430-year existence in Egypt evolved into slavery, with despicable yet predictable life patterns, can you imagine how the Israelites may have felt about the uncertainties they faced here in the wilderness?

### TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

#### God Proposes Another Covenantal Relationship and Israel Responded, Exodus 19:3-9

As reflected throughout the scriptures, God reached out to Israel again, offering unprecedented aid and protection. Without nullifying his covenant with Abraham, God proposes another covenant, which will result in Israel being designated as his "treasured possession," and new life as a kingdom

of priests, who will form a "holy nation." Moses, who serves as God's messenger or mediator between him and the people, has been summoned to climb up the mountain to receive God's message for Israel. Perhaps, to strengthen the people's confidence in him and the reliability of his promises, God uses the imagery of an "eagle's wing" to remind

Israel of the strength, love, and compassion he has already extended to them as he delivered them from Egypt. To receive the blessings of God's proposal, Israel is required to confirm their acceptance and loyalty to the terms and conditions of this new covenant and to pledge total obedience to God. Moses faithfully delivers God's message to the elders of the people. Their response is unanimous: "Everything that the

As reflected throughout the scriptures, God reached out to Israel again, offering unprecedented aid and protection.

Lord has spoken, we will do" (Exodus 19:8). God responds by informing Moses that he plans to appear in the physical form of a dark cloud. He will speak audibly with Moses, in the presence of the people. As a result, Israel should no longer doubt or disbelieve Moses. Based upon the totality of the wilderness experiences, how would you rate Israel's confidence in Moses?

Life "as a holy nation and priestly kingdom" is totally different from Israel's life in Egypt. Hence, the covenantal relationship with God is absolutely essential. Before meeting with God to hear and receive the covenant, which includes the Ten Commandments and other laws (Exodus 20-23), the people must be consecrated! God instructs Moses on how



the people are to prepare themselves. The specifics are clearly stated in our text (vs. 10-11). In addition to detailed instructions on how the people are to prepare for the meeting, God also establishes strict boundaries to be observed throughout the meeting. Stiff penalties, up to and including death, may be incurred by those who disregard or violate God's instructions (v. 12).

### SANKOFA

As is often the case with biblical history, it is easy to see events, such as those at Mt. Sinai, as relevant only to Moses and ancient Israel. However, we are benefactors of a new covenant of grace, instituted by Jesus Christ to establish a new relationship between God and humankind. As members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, we are regularly encouraged to consecrate ourselves for two sacraments, ordained by Jesus Christ. They are Baptism and the Lord's Supper/Holy Communion (*The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 2021, p. 27). Both rituals are explained as "not only badges or tokens of Christians' profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace,

We are benefactors of a new covenant of grace, instituted by Jesus Christ to establish a new relationship between God and humankind.

and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him" (p. 27).

To fully appreciate parallels between Israel's meeting with God at Mount Sinai with similar faith-confirming experiences in our lives, you are encouraged to focus on the prescribed rituals for Holy Communion (pp. 652-658). Both sacraments are equally

important to our faith. However, we engage in Holy Communion services most often. With the more frequent occurrences of Holy Communion services, greater familiarity is a natural outcome. So, let's focus briefly on parallels between Holy Communion and the Israelites' preparation for meeting with God at Mt. Sinai. As with the

Israelites, penalties for "unworthily" partaking of the Holy Communion elements are also clearly articulated. Lest we forget, we are expressing gratitude for our salvation while also memorializing all of Jesus' blessings and sacrifices as well as the benefits of abundant living that only he provides. As you review and contemplate the rituals for Holy Communion that are referenced above, you

are urged to consider this question: “How do you prepare mentally and physically for Holy Communion services?” Also, “What boundaries are you careful to observe?”

### CASE STUDY

Moses’ faithfulness to God’s instructions and the effectiveness of his leadership are poignantly portrayed in today’s scriptures. These scriptures also highlight God’s faithfulness to Moses and Israel. We can rejoice over the fact that God has continually used ordinary people to bring hope and deliverance to believers. Parallels between Moses’ successes and those of Harriet Tubman (1820-1913) are easily recognizable. Ms. Tubman became known as “the Moses of her people.”

Harriet Tubman’s story is well-known, and many references to her story can be located on numerous websites. Most relevant to today’s discussion is the fact that Ms. Tubman attributed her personal success with escaping slavery and her success with leading as many as 300 other slaves to freedom to her faithfulness with “following the voice of God.” Tubman’s route, known

today as the Underground Railroad, required traveling through many miles of wilderness. Yet, Ms. Tubman reported that she never lost a passenger.

Many more contemporary instances of leaders who, through faith and obedience to God, have facilitated deliverance and greater protections for all. The (late) Representative John Lewis (1940-2020) is an excellent example. His desire to serve God as well

as his preparations for ministry are often less well known than his activism and significant contributions to effect social change, equity, and justice for all citizens. He is reported to have been preaching to chickens on his family’s farm at age 11. Later, he majored in Religion and Philosophy at Fisk University, and he attended the American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee. In

We can rejoice over the fact that God has continually used ordinary people to bring hope and deliverance to believers

spite of what may be seen as dual career paths, Representative Lewis is remembered as an activist minister whose pulpit extended beyond the walls of the church to the United States Congress and beyond. He is believed by many to have become “a sermon,” an embodiment that was visible to the whole world as opposed to having only delivered

sermons.

### LIFE APPLICATION

As we reflect more on the events at Mt. Sinai, it becomes obvious that God was nation-building in human and heavenly realms. He was preparing Israel to enter and possess Canaan, “The Promised Land.” Simultaneously, he was preparing them for residence in his “priestly kingdom and holy nation.” We are blessed beyond

measure as God offers us the same inheritance, but under a new covenant. Without abolishing either the Abrahamic or Mosaic covenants, Jesus instituted a new covenant of grace and mercy. This new covenant symbolizes God’s promises to forgive our sins and restore communion with those of us who believe and confess Jesus Christ to be his Son and the Savior of the world. Each Communion service memorializes Jesus’ “costly sacrifice.”

### QUESTIONS

1. What role does consecration play in your life?
2. What does life in a priestly kingdom and

holy nation mean to you?

3. What attitudinal or behavioral changes are you likely to make in regards to partaking of the Lord’s Supper/ Communion services?


### CLOSING DEVOTIONS

**Closing Song:** “Let Us Break Bread Together” (*AMEC Hymnal #530*)

**Closing Prayer:** God, our Father, you are

holy, and so merciful to us! You bless us in so many ways! We thank you for Jesus and his sacrifices for humankind. We praise you for the new covenant. Otherwise, our chances for abundant life and eternal salvation would be lost. Please bless us with determination to earnestly and frequently confess our sins, consecrate ourselves, and renew

determinations to follow Jesus, not just for formal communion services but as often as we possibly can. Let these changes be reflected in closer walks with you and greater love for other people. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.



We are blessed  
beyond measure as  
God offers us the  
same inheritance, but  
under a new covenant.

**HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS****March 3-March 9**

<b>Monday</b>	Ezekiel 14:1-11 (God Is Our Sanctuary)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Psalms 26 (Desire for God's Presence)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Ezekiel 43:1-12 (God's Glory Fills the Temple)
<b>Thursday</b>	Ezekiel 44:15-27 (Who May Draw Near?)
<b>Friday</b>	John 2:12-22 (The Temple of Christ's Body)
<b>Saturday</b>	John 4:13-26 (Worship God in Spirit and Truth)
<b>Sunday</b>	Exodus 25:1-9; 26:1, 31-37 (Prepare a Sacred Space)



## A Space for God

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 25–27

Focus Scripture: Exodus 25:1-9; 26:1, 31-37

Key Verse: They shall make me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them. Exodus 25:8

EXODUS 25:1-9; 26:1, 31-37 (NRSV UE)

### Exodus 25:1-9

- 1 The Lord said to Moses,
- 2 “Tell the Israelites to take for me an offering; from all whose hearts prompt them to give you shall receive the offering for me.
- 3 This is the offering that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze,
- 4 blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine linen, goats’ hair,
- 5 tanned rams’ skins, fine leather, acacia wood,
- 6 oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense,
- 7 onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and for the breastpiece.
- 8 And they shall make me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them.
- 9 In accordance with all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.”

### 26:1

- 1 “The tabernacle itself you shall make with ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue, purple, and crimson yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skillfully worked into them.”

### 31-37

- 31 “You shall make a curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns and of fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it.

32 You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, which have hooks of gold and rest on four bases of silver.

33 You shall hang the curtain under the clasps and bring the ark of the covenant in there, within the curtain, and the curtain shall separate for you

Exodus 25:1-9; 26:1, 31-37 (KJV)

### Exodus 25:1-9

- 1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
- 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.
- 3 And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,
- 4 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats’ hair,
- 5 And rams’ skins dyed red, and badgers’ skins, and shittim wood,
- 6 Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,
- 7 Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.
- 8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

### 26:1

1 Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them.

### 31-37

31 And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:

32 And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver.

the holy place from the most holy place.

34 You shall put the cover on the ark of the covenant in the most holy place.

35 You shall set the table outside the curtain and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the table, and you shall put the table on the north side.

36 You shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns and of fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework.

37 You shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them.”

16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.”

17 In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

33 And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.

34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place.

35 And thou shalt set the table without the veil, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side.

36 And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework.

37 And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them.

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## KEY TERMS

- **Ark of the Covenant (or *aron* in Hebrew Language)** - Also known as the Ark of the Testimony and the Ark of God; a gold-plated wooden chest that contained the two tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. Exodus 25:10-22 gives detailed descriptions.
- **Sanctuary** – A special place that is consecrated or set aside for worship.
- **Tabernacle (or *mishkan* in Hebrew Language)** – A portable sanctuary or place of worship, constructed by Moses, to make God’s presence known among the Hebrew tribes during their wanderings in the wilderness. The tabernacle was later replaced with the construction of King Solomon’s temple

in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6:1).

## INTRODUCTION

Many events happened between the events in last week’s lesson and today’s lesson. Last week’s lesson ended with Moses following God’s instructions to consecrate and prepare the people for a meeting with him three days later (Exodus 19:10-15). He also told Moses to set limits or physical boundaries (for human contact) around Mount Sinai, and to consecrate it (Exodus 19:12). Detailed descriptions of God’s actual meeting and speaking with Moses, while the people listened, are presented in Exodus 19:16-21. Exodus 20–24 covers God’s deliverance of the Ten Commandments and other laws to Moses. Upon hearing Moses’ report, the people said, “All that the Lord has spoken we

will do, and we will be obedient” (Exodus 24:7b). No dissenters are noted!

### TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

#### Instructions for Building God’s Tabernacle, Exodus 25:1-9; 26:1

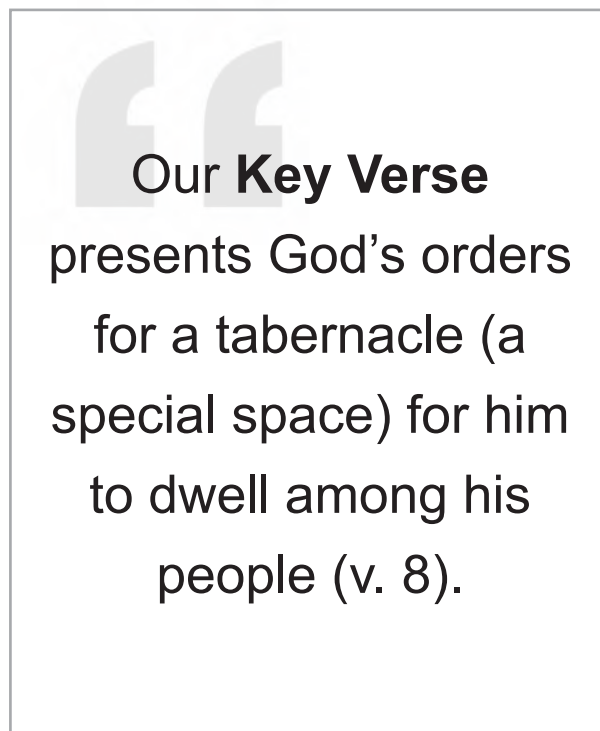
Our **Key Verse** presents God’s orders for a tabernacle (a special space) for him to dwell among his people (v. 8). He also gave Moses detailed instructions for the people to follow in constructing, consecrating, and furnishing the tabernacle. The tabernacle was portable and could be taken down, moved, and reassembled by the Levites as the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. In addition to showing the Israelites how to worship him (Ex. 20–24), God also extended opportunities for them to make special offerings for constructing the tabernacle. Actually, the Israelites could afford to give! As they were leaving Egypt, God gave them favor with the Egyptians. The Egyptians freely gave them whatever they wanted, and “the Israelites plundered the Egyptians” (Exodus 12:36). So, the enemies’ wealth was used for God’s

purposes. The blueprint for constructing and furnishing the tabernacle begins at Exodus 26:1. The first piece of furniture to be constructed was the Ark of the Covenant. Images of the completed ark are available at: <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/14382/ark-of-the-covenant/>.

#### The Tabernacle Curtain, Exodus 26:31-37

Moses ensured that the tabernacle was set up according to the plan God showed him on Mount Sinai (Exodus 26:30). The plan included the construction of a special curtain to separate the holy place, which was the outer room of the tabernacle, from the most holy place (see Exodus 26:31-35). The latter was the inner room of the tabernacle where the Ark of the Covenant was located. Only the high priest could pass

through the curtain to enter the most holy place... this was limited to once per year on the Day of Atonement. We learn from the New Testament writings of Matthew (27:51) that when Christ died on the cross, the curtain separating the holy place from the most holy place in the temple was “torn in two from top to bottom.” This action was



symbolic of our having gained full access to God's holy presence. Jesus is our supreme high priest! As our sacrificial lamb, he died "once and for all" for the remission of sins and the salvation of humankind. We can never rejoice or praise him enough for the fact that we don't need a priest, as Israel did. We are free to approach God directly and at any time.

### SANKOFA

As we consider the symbolisms of the torn curtain and its meaningfulness to us, a need to assess its impact on our own spirituality is strongly indicated. Does this knowledge inspire you to examine your faithfulness in creating "space for God" in your life? Throughout the ages, praying, meditating, and reading scriptures as well as attending church/religious services have been deeply rooted religious practices among black people. A February 16, 2021, report from the Pew Research Center provides some insightful data on contemporary "Religious Practices of Black Adults."


With regard to praying, the researchers

found that 80% of black Americans pray "at least a few times per month." However, 63% reported daily praying habits. Also, significant levels of trust in prayer are reflected in research findings that 72% of black Protestants rely on prayer when making major decisions, and 78% reported confidence in the ability of prayer to heal physical illness. Notably, black Protestant

adults who rarely attend church reported personal prayer to be a common practice for them. Among this group, 55% reported that they pray daily.

Though less often than praying, meditating and reading scriptures are frequent practices for many. About 40% of black adults reported engaging in meditation on a daily or weekly basis. This percentage exceeds that of United States adults, in general. For the latter group, about 27% compare with black

adult practices. Perhaps most surprising are the reports on scripture reading. In this case, 38% of black adults reported reading scriptures more than once per week while 15% reported reading scriptures about once per week, and 46% reported seldom/



Jesus is our supreme  
high priest! As our  
sacrificial lamb,  
he died "once  
and for all" for the  
remission of sins  
and the salvation of  
humankind



never reading scriptures.

Weekly religious service attendance was reported by 33% of respondents in this study. Twice a month attendance was reported by 28%, and 38% reported they seldom or never attend religious services.

Unsurprisingly, older adults were more likely to frequently attend religious services. This report, according to the researchers, was not likely affected by the coronavirus as most surveys were completed prior to the resulting church closures. What are your thoughts about all of the data reported here? For more detailed information, see the complete research report at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/02/16/religious-practices/>.

### CASE STUDY

Success with following God's plans did not end with Moses. Many successful people of later generations have attributed their achievements to faithfulness with listening, hearing, and following God's

instructions. Dr. George Washington Carver is one example. Although he was born into slavery and died in 1943 (birthdate unknown), Dr. Carver is still celebrated as one of America's most notable chemists. While employed at Tuskegee Institute (now

Tuskegee University), he labored diligently in his laboratory, which he called "God's Little Workshop." Among his many accomplishments, he is most recognized for research that yielded more than 300 innovative ways to use peanuts, which at that time were being primarily used as animal feed. His work was also a major catalyst for breakthroughs with sweet potatoes, pecans, soybeans, and other agricultural products.

Dr. Carver is also noted for having lived a holistic life of faith. In addition to the name for

his workshop, Dr. Carver's commitment to God is evidenced throughout his personal testimonies. His autobiography, *George Washington Carver: His Life and Faith in His Own Words*, provides many insights

Unsurprisingly, older adults were more likely to frequently attend religious services. This report, according to the researchers, was not likely affected by the coronavirus as most surveys were completed prior to the resulting church closures. What are your thoughts about all of the data reported here?


into the predominance of faith, prayer, and obedience to God in Dr. Carver's life. One of the most poignant examples occurred in 1921 when he was invited to speak for 15 minutes before the United States House of Representative's Committee on Ways and Means. The committee was so riveted by Dr. Carver's presentation, they extended his time to one hour and forty-five minutes. Affirmations of his faith in God were intertwined with his academic and professional testimonies throughout the meeting. When questioned about where and how he had learned so much, Dr. Carver said, "the Bible." When asked if the Bible speaks of peanuts, Carver said, "no." But, he explained that the Bible tells about God, who made peanuts. He also reported that he habitually asked God what to do with peanuts, and God would tell him. In other situations, Carver reported that he often went to bed with problems that he considered to be insoluble, but important for the improvement of human lives, and to have awakened the next morning with the answer. Although from different eras and circumstances, Dr Carver's life shows strong parallels with Moses' faithfulness,

commitment, and attentiveness to God.

### LIFE APPLICATION

The detailed plans that God instructed Moses to develop so he could "tabernacle with his people," give vivid insights into God's desire to commune with us. The portability of the tabernacle is even more insightful as this symbolic representation of God's presence went wherever the Israelites went as they traveled through

the wilderness. Because of Jesus, we don't need to rely on symbolism. Many scriptures, such as Psalm 48 and Romans 9, proclaim God is with us and within us. Therefore, you are encouraged to imagine that making space for God is really about creating space for God in your life.



Because of Jesus, we don't need to rely on symbolism.

### QUESTIONS

1. How comfortable are you with your "space for God?"
2. Considering the Pew Research data, what changes are you inclined to make in regards to praying, studying the scriptures, and meditating?
3. How do you believe making space for God in your life can impact your relationships with others?

**CLOSING DEVOTIONS**

**Closing Song:** “Lord, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary”

**Closing Prayer:** Father God, we thank you for your presence in our lives. Please

give us greater determination and more insights on how to make space for you... to acknowledge you in all our ways, knowing that you will direct our paths. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

**HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS****March 10-March 16**

<b>Monday</b>	Hebrews 5 (A Compassionate High Priest)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Leviticus 8:1-13 (A Chosen High Priest)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Leviticus 8:14-23 (A Cleansed High Priest)
<b>Thursday</b>	Psalms 133 (A Chaste Priest)
<b>Friday</b>	Hebrews 7:1-14 (A Commendable High Priest)
<b>Saturday</b>	Hebrews 7:15-28 (A Continuous High Priest)
<b>Sunday</b>	Exodus 29:1-9, 35-37 (A Consecrated High Priest)

## Preparation for Service

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 29:1-37; Leviticus 8:1-36

Focus Scripture: Exodus 29:1-9, 35-3

*Key Verse: The priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain Aaron and his sons. Exodus 29:9b*

### EXODUS 29:1-9, 35-37 (NRSV UE)

#### Exodus 29:1-9

1 “Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to serve me as priests. Take one young bull and two rams without blemish,

2 and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. You shall make them of choice wheat flour.

3 You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket and bring the bull and the two rams.

4 You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and wash them with water.

5 Then you shall take the vestments and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece and gird him with the decorated band of the ephod,

6 and you shall set the turban on his head and put the holy diadem on the turban.

7 You shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him.

8 Then you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them,

9 and you shall gird them, Aaron and his sons, with sashes and tie headdresses on them, and the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain Aaron and his sons.”

#### 35-37

35 “Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, just as I have commanded you; through seven days you shall ordain them.

### EXODUS 29:1-9, 35-37 (KJV)

#### Exodus 29:1-9

1 And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: Take one young bullock, and two rams without blemish,

2 And unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened tempered with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: of wheaten flour shalt thou make them.

3 And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bullock and the two rams.

4 And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.

5 And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod:

6 And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre.

7 Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.

8 And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them.

9 And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons.

#### 35-37

35 And thus shalt thou do unto Aaron, and to his sons, according to all things which I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou consecrate them.



36 Also every day you shall offer a bull as a purification offering for atonement. Also you shall offer a sin offering for the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it, to consecrate it.

37 Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy; whatever touches the altar shall become holy.”

36 And thou shalt offer every day a bull-ock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it.

37 Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.

**KEY TERMS**

- **Anoint (*mashakh*, Hebrew language)** – “Anointed” (or smeared, with oil) as a sign of consecration or being set apart.

- **Consecrate** – Being separated (or set apart) to live holy lives, committed to our sovereign God and his service.

- **Ephod** – A simple linen, priestly garment.

- **Ordination** – “The Ceremony of Consecration to the Ministry” (*Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 2016 ed., p. 822).

Our compassionate God, however, developed another plan to save Israel again!

and each individual would deal directly with God. However, Israel’s sinfulness caused God to abandon those plans. The Israelites proved to be unreliable and unworthy of this

kind of relationship with God. Our compassionate God, however, developed another plan to save Israel again! This plan involved the appointment of priests from the tribe of Levi and a new system of sacrifices (intermediaries) to enable the Israelites to approach him. Consequently, forgiveness of sins became contingent upon

the people offering certain sacrifices to be presented by the priest on their behalf. Exodus 28:1 explains that God selected Aaron (Moses’ brother) and his sons to serve perpetually as priests.

**INTRODUCTION**

In Lesson 1 of this quarter, we learned about God’s plans for the Israelites to become a “priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5b-6a). The nation, as a whole,

**TELLING THE BIBLE STORIES**

Today’s lesson begins with God instructing Moses to plan an elaborate seven-day consecration ceremony to prepare Aaron

and his sons for the priesthood. A ceremonial washing followed by dressing Aaron and his sons in priestly garments and anointing them with oil are included in today's texts. As always, God is clear and precise with his instructions, and he requires strict obedience to his instructions.

### **Preparing for the Ceremony, Exodus 29:1-4**

As you will see, this is to be an elaborate ordination service. Exodus 29:1 confirms that its purpose is to consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve God as priests. Plans for the sacrificial offerings to be made are clearly articulated as God instructs Moses on the items needed to prepare for the ceremony. In addition to the sacrifices, God requires Aaron and his sons to be "washed with water" (Exodus 29:4). This ceremony was actually carried out, and it is recorded in Leviticus 8.

The washing of Aaron and his sons was definitely a humbling experience. It took place outside of the tabernacle, and it was witnessed by the people. A special reminder to us is the fact that humility must precede cleansing from sin as demonstrated with

Aaron and his sons. Note also that the washing/cleansing also preceded the anointing of the priest. Consider ordination services in the AME Church; how can you relate those preparations to the ceremonial washing/cleansing of Aaron and his sons?

### **Clothing and Anointing the Priests, Exodus 29:5-9**

Until the coming of Jesus Christ, the priests were required to be representatives for the people before God. God ensured

As always, God is clear and precise with his instructions, and he requires strict obedience to his instructions.

that they were dressed in holy but spectacular ways that set them apart from clothing worn by other people. These sacred vestments were magnificently adorned in accordance with God's specific instructions (Exodus 28:2). It is also noteworthy that Aaron and his sons were dressed after

cleansing, and that no action was required of them except to allow the clothing to be "put on" them.

After dressing Aaron and his sons in priestly garments, Moses was instructed to anoint Aaron with oil and pour it on his head (Exodus 29:7). Leviticus 8:30 reports that Aaron's sons were also anointed with oil. Coverage of other

aspects of the ceremony begin with Exodus 29:10. All of this lesson brings greater clarity to the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf (Hebrews 10:1-14) and the significance of the torn curtain in Solomon's temple, which we studied last week.

### SANKOFA

Again, we must avoid tendencies to see the ordinations of Aaron and his son as historical events with little or no meanings to us. Of course, our ministers are not to be viewed as intermediaries between God and humankind. However, they are to serve as "spokespersons," who deliver God's messages to his people, and as servants who minister on behalf of God by serving his people. Remember, the purpose for ordination services is to consecrate or "set aside" individuals for specific services for

God. One such group that we are familiar with are the ministers in our church. Ordinations of ministers began with our founder, Richard Allen, who was ordained as a minister in 1799 and became the first bishop of the AME Church in 1816. His ordination was a catalyst for tremendous church growth as

more ministers were ordained and appointed to lead congregations in this structurally organized denomination, which is designed to holistically address the spiritual and social needs of parishioners.

Currently, ordinations in the African Methodist Episcopal Church are formalized, highly structured processes, with several stages that ministers (and others as

prescribed by *The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church*) must complete for the purposes of consecration and authorization to perform various religious duties and ceremonies. For ministers, the stages for ascendancy through ministerial ranks include candidacy, ordination as a deacon, ordination as an elder, and for some, ultimately, consecration as a bishop. Specific requirements and processes for advancing from each stage to the next, including

appropriate attire, vary accordingly.

### CASE STUDY

Have you considered required ordinations for other roles in the AME Church, such as the deaconesses? According to *The*

All of this lesson brings greater clarity to the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf (Hebrews 10:1-14) and the significance of the torn curtain in Solomon's temple, which we studied last week.

*Doctrine and Discipline 2021*, p. 889), a deaconess is “a woman selected by the pastor and Official Board and consecrated by the bishop; duties are similar to those of a stewardess, but more a ministry of special needs to the fallen, hungry, homeless, imprisoned or institutionalized.” Like our ministers, deaconesses have specific requirements, including eligibility, attire, and duties that extend beyond the home and church to the community.

Like our ministers, the attire is distinctive, but not as elaborate or elegant as God prescribed for the Levitical priests. To what do you attribute this difference?

One of the most well-known, consecrated deaconesses in the AME Church is Mrs. Rosa Parks. Mrs. Parks is remembered as a lifelong member of St. Matthew AME Church in Detroit,

Michigan. Along with other duties, Mrs. Parks served as a stewardess and a consecrated deaconess at St. Matthew.

Of course, Mrs. Parks is most renowned for her pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s. Her refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus because of her race and gender and her

involvement in other activist measures to end segregation were visible manifestations of her faith and commitment to social justice and equality. In essence, hers was an active faith that reached far beyond the walls of the church.


### LIFE APPLICATION

Today’s lesson has provided opportunities for us to explore the beginnings of ordinations to set aside and prepare

individuals for service. We are challenged to understand and appreciate the ordination processes for the Levitical priesthood as well as ordination processes within the AME Church. Differences between the two should force us to pivot and give greater attention to Jesus Christ and his role in establishing new relationships between

God on our behalf.

Through Jesus Christ, we gained eternal salvation (Hebrews 9:12). Therefore, the sacrifices and offerings that God requires of us today differ from the requirements he made of the people represented by Aaron and his sons (also known as the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood). Today, God requires



In essence, hers was an active faith that reached far beyond the walls of the church.

sacrifices of praise, and Romans 12:1 tells us to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” Consequently, we are to worship God with our words and our deeds, and not just on Sunday, but every day.

### QUESTIONS

1. What new insights and appreciations did you gain in regard to ordinations and their purposes?
2. How can you use the information in this lesson to strengthen your relationship with God and other believers?
3. Considering the attire of the Levitical priests and that of our ordained ministers, how would you explain the differences between the two groups?

### CLOSING DEVOTIONS

**Closing Song:** “Love Lifted Me” (*AME Hymnal* #461)

**Closing Prayer:** Father God, in the name of Jesus we bow before you. Thank you for Jesus and his sacrifices for us. Thank you for allowing us to personally approach you, to ask your forgiveness, commune with you, and live empowered lives because of our relationship with you. Father God, you are worthy of every praise that we can possibly give you. Even ten thousand tongues would not be enough for us. Please cleanse us of all unrighteousness and bless us with transformed minds to serve you and to be used by you, according to your will. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

### HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

March 17-March 23

<b>Monday</b>	1 Peter 2:1-5 (Building a Spiritual House)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Psalms 141 (Prayer Like Incense)
<b>Wednesday</b>	2 Corinthians 2:12-17 (The Fragrance of Knowing Christ)
<b>Thursday</b>	Zephaniah 3:14-20 (God’s Delight)
<b>Friday</b>	Romans 12:1-8 (A Holy and Acceptable Sacrifice)
<b>Saturday</b>	Romans 12:9-21 (Worship Through Loving Genuinely)
<b>Sunday</b>	Leviticus 1:3-17 (An Acceptable Offering)



# DECALOGUE

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**Superintendent**—And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord hath made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

My soul be on thy guard;  
Ten thousand foes arise:  
And hosts of sins are pressing hard  
To draw thee from the skies.

**Superintendent**—Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not kill.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not commit adultery.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not steal.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts.

Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee!  
E'en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me;  
Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to thee!  
Nearer to thee!

**Superintendent**—Hear what Christ, our Savior, saith: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All**—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

## Offering a Sweet Aroma to God

Lesson Scripture: Leviticus 1:1-17; 6:8-13

Focus Scripture: Leviticus 1:3-17

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

### LEVITICUS 1:3-17 (NRSV UE)

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 on your behalf before the Lord.

4 You shall lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be acceptable on 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 rest into smoke on the altar as a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor 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 rest and

### LEVITICUS 1:3-17(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.

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

turn it into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord.

14 If your offering to the Lord is a burnt offering of birds, you shall choose your offering from turtledoves 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 entrails close to its tail feathers 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 odor to the Lord.”

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, 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.

### KEY TERMS

- **Flock** – Refers to sheep or goats.
- **Hebrew People** – Early Israelites; the designation apparently began with Abraham to establish identities distinct from the Amorites.
- **Herd** – Refers to cattle.
- **Leviticus** – The third book of the Old Testament. It contains

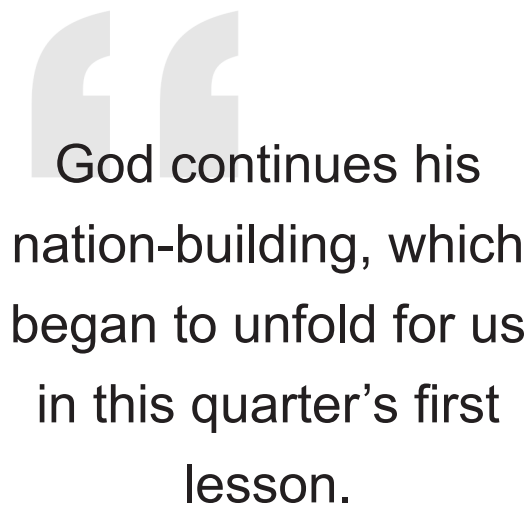
God’s instructions for the Levite priests and worship.

### INTRODUCTION

God continues his nation-building, which

began to unfold for us in this quarter’s first lesson. Critically important in this process is the fact that he is teaching the Hebrew people how to worship him. Last week, we were introduced to God’s instructions for ordaining Aaron and his sons to represent the people before him (Exodus 29). As a reminder, please note that the actual ceremony is recorded in Leviticus 8 – 9.

Many people tend to ignore the book of Leviticus, believing that it is comprised of ancient history that has no relevance to us. After all, God does not require us to make animal sacrifices as a part of our worship.



God continues his nation-building, which began to unfold for us in this quarter’s first lesson.

Actually, Leviticus is one of the most powerful books in the Bible. Giving prayerful, spirit-led attention to the meaningfulness of this book, as well as God's purposes for it, can richly enhance our own worship practices as well as our relationships with God. God's holiness exceeds all human understandings of perfection! As he emphasized with the Hebrew people, how we worship him matters! Inherent in this lesson are challenges to prayerfully seek spiritual discernment and deeper understanding of these instructions so that we might transfer knowledge from the Hebrews' worship experiences to our own lives. John 4:24 tells us "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

### TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

To live as members of God's holy nation, people need teachings that lead to new ways of life. In this case, God's emphasis is on atonement, which can be defined as reconciliation that is associated with sacrifices for the purpose of removing the effects of sin. To please God, it was imperative, in this case, that the Hebrew people should be cleansed and purged of the many pagan practices they

had adopted while in Egypt, and that proper worship practices should be restored. In this new system, animal sacrifices in addition to attitudes of remorse and repentance would be required. Why were animal sacrifices to be included? This will be discussed in more detail later. However, it is important to note that the symbolism in animal sacrifices was a foreshadowing of the coming of Jesus Christ, "The Lamb of God," who took away the sins of the world (John 1:29). The book

of Leviticus identifies five (5) key offerings that the Israelites were required to make: Burnt offerings, grain offerings, fellowship offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings. Today's lesson focuses on burnt offerings, exclusively.

### Regulations for Whole Burnt Offerings, Leviticus 1:3-17

God's call for animal sacrifices was not a

totally new practice for the Hebrew people. This was a commonly observed practice, even among pagans, some of which were known to sacrifice humans. But God's system is different! The context for understanding its significance begins with Leviticus 1:1, which tells us that God called to Moses from the Tent of Meeting to give him precise

“**John 4:24 tells us “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”**”

instructions to deliver to the people. No dialogue with others was appropriate for implementing these instructions. God was speaking!! “Yes” and “Amen” were the only appropriate responses!

As it is today, atonement was an essential component of God’s purposes and plans for humankind. This atonement system was premised upon plans for the lay people (or sacrifice presenters) to repent and present animal sacrifices to the priests, exactly as directed by God, to atone for their sins. The priests would subsequently burn the offerings and present them to God on behalf of the lay person (s). As you will see in the printed text, God assigned specifically distinct roles for both the bringers of the sacrifices and the priests. Only unblemished animals: Cattle, sheep, or goats and birds (doves or pigeons, only) were acceptable sacrifices to be presented to our holy God.

Regulations for burnt offerings of cattle were given first (vs. 3-9), followed by regulations for burnt offerings of sheep or goat (vs. 1-13), and completed with regulations for burnt offerings of birds (vs.

14-17). Notably, in each case the priest was responsible for burning the sacrifice, which became “an offering by fire of pleasing odor to God” (vs. 9,13,17).

In summary, the whole burnt offerings symbolized the bringer of the sacrifice’s total surrender of a valuable possession, without selfishly retaining portions for themselves. The human value of these animal sacrifices derived from the fact that meat was very expensive and not in great supply. By placing a hand on the head of the animal or bird, the presenter of the sacrifice/sinner acknowledged the animal as a substitute to which their sins were being transferred, and along with penitent hearts, atonement would be achieved. Moral perfection, which God demanded, and the perfect nature of Jesus Christ, the true sacrifice, were therefore to be

**Moral perfection, which God demanded, and the perfect nature of Jesus Christ, the true sacrifice, were therefore to be recognized and symbolized in each situation.**

recognized and symbolized in each situation. What similarities and differences do you see between Jesus’ role in our salvation and that of burnt offerings?

### **SANKOFA**

The aroma from burnt offerings was pleasing to God because of what it



represented: Repentance, spiritual cleansing, and transformed lives that restored “right” relationships with God. Let’s be reminded that Jesus shed his blood for the remission of our sins (Matthew 26:28). However, Romans 12:1 tells us to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” How can we expect to provide “reasonable service” unless we confess our sins, repent, receive forgiveness, and reconcile with Almighty God? From the perspective of that challenge, let’s look at our own worship traditions, especially through the lens of empowerment that can be derived from faithful participation in Holy Communion services presented in *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 2021 ed. (pp. 652-53,893).

As most of us will recall, our Communion services begin with the following invitation from an elder: “You that truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with faith and take this holy sacrament to your

comfort: and make your humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling.”

*The General Confession* follows:

“Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all people, we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness which we from time to time most grievously have committed by thought, word, and deed against your divine majesty, provoking most justly your wrath and indignation against us.

We do earnestly repent and are heartedly sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us.

“Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for your Son our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake; forgive us all that is passed and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please you in

the newness of life, to the honor and glory of your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

### CASE STUDY

The hymns or songs of our traditions are equally important to meaningful worship. “What Can Wash Away My Sin?” is one example. Blessings from this hymn are



The hymns or songs of our traditions are equally important to meaningful worship.

contingent upon how we personally engage with the lyrics and seek reconciliation that provides spiritual strength and facilitates recommitment of our lives to emulating Jesus. Consider these lyrics:

What can wash away my sin,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
What can make me whole again,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh, precious  
is the flow, that  
makes me *pure*  
*as snow*,

No other fount I  
know.

Nothing but the  
blood of Jesus.

You are encouraged to meditate on this verse from the hymn for new insights on atonement.

### LIFE APPLICATION

This lesson has transported us from the Old Testament and the worship traditions God established for the Hebrew people to the New Testament and the atoning work of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The role of blood in the remission of sins as well as the essential roles for humility, repentance, and forgiveness in living holy lives are

emphasized throughout. Reconciliation with God is to be a daily priority. Likewise, the practice of our own worship traditions cannot be relegated to Sunday worship services only! We must worship God daily!

### QUESTIONS

1. After studying this lesson, what does “sweet smelling aromas” for God mean to you?
2. What roles do you see for “brokenness and contriteness” in your walk with God?

3. How can you help others understand what God considers to be acceptable sacrifices?

### CLOSING DEVOTIONS

**Closing Song:** “What Can Wash Away My Sin” (AMEC Hymnal #405)

**Closing Prayer:** Father, in the name of Jesus, we glorify you as we praise you for who you are and

the loving care you provide in all aspects of our lives. Thank you for forgiving our sins and blessing us through reconciliation with transformed minds and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to serve and please you. Day by day, please give us closer walks with you. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

What can wash away  
my sin,  
Nothing but the blood  
of Jesus.  
What can make me  
whole again,  
Nothing but the blood  
of Jesus.

**HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS****March 24-March 30**

<b>Monday</b>	Psalm 40:1-8 (Delighting to Do God's Will)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Psalm 40:9-17 (Safe in God's Love and Faithfulness)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Hebrews 9:1-14 (A Preferred Sanctuary)
<b>Thursday</b>	Hebrews 9:15-22 (Christ's Perfect Sacrifice)
<b>Friday</b>	2 Corinthians 5:12-21 (Vertical and Horizontal Reconciliation)
<b>Saturday</b>	Leviticus 16:1-10 (Approach God in Awe)
<b>Sunday</b>	Leviticus 16:11-19 (Cleanse the Sanctuary)

# DECALOGUE

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**Superintendent**—And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord hath made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

My soul be on thy guard;  
Ten thousand foes arise:  
And hosts of sins are pressing hard  
To draw thee from the skies.

**Superintendent**—Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not kill.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not commit adultery.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not steal.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Superintendent**—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

**School**—Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts.

Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee!  
E'en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me;  
Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to thee!  
Nearer to thee!

**Superintendent**—Hear what Christ, our Savior, saith: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All**—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.





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