CARING FOR OTHERS

Leviticus 2 reveals another value God holds dear: caring for others. To paraphrase M. L. Andreasen, a well-known theologian, the burnt offering declares all we are to be the Lord's while the grain offering (also called the meat or meal offering) declares all we have to be His (The Sanctuary Service [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1937], p. 108). The two sacrifices were offered together, and both were to be used for God's glory and for the good of others. Although the grain offering did not require any blood, it represented another kind of sacrifice: giving up something of value for others' benefit.

A small portion of the grain offering was burned on the altar, but the remainder went to the priests for food (Lev. 2:1–3) in the form of baked loaves or cooked or grilled grain. Caring for others is a major theme in Leviticus. Another example is found in Leviticus 23, where landowners were commanded not to overharvest their grain and to instead leave some for the “poor” and “foreigner” to harvest (v. 22).

God wants us to give because He gave to us first (see also John 4:19). All the care we pour into others' lives should flow from a heart of gratitude for all the care we have received from our heavenly Father. Leviticus 19:33, 34 makes this very clear: “And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Our experience of God's care should be reciprocated and passed on to others.
Write out Leviticus 2 and 7:9–14 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out Leviticus 2:11–13. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map it.
SALT AND GRAIN

Leviticus 2:13 adds a fascinating practice to the grain offering: the priest was to always include salt with the offerings (see also Ezek. 43:24). In Matthew 5:13 God’s people are described as salt, and the apostle Paul wrote, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col. 4:6). As Adventists around the world embrace the Great Commission, they must see themselves as conduits of God’s care for others. As salt, they must spread out into all the world, turning people from sin and helping them discover the joy of walking with Jesus.

Caring for others is a wonderful form of praise. It’s an expression of gratitude for all that God has done and is doing in our lives (Heb. 13:15, 16). Praise is angelic! Though praying is a human act, praising is an act of the angels. When we care for others, we are embodying what it means to express gratitude to God. Matthew 25 reminds us that when we give care to the “least of these,” we are in fact giving care directly to God Himself (v. 40). There’s no better offering to bring to God than to care for the “least of these.”

Now notice that the grain offerings were given entirely to God, but they benefited the priests (Lev. 2). Throughout the book of Leviticus, the reader is reminded that it is his or her responsibility to care for the spiritual leaders in the church. This sentiment is repeated in the New Testament (1 Cor. 9:13, 14; 1 Tim. 5:18). By giving to pastors what they and their families need, we are giving to God. The priest received food not only from the grain offering but also from the fellowship, sin, and guilt offerings (Lev. 6:26; 7:6, 14, 31). They even received the hide from the burnt offering, which could be sold or used for clothing (Lev. 1:6; 7:8). In fact, the more the people loved and appreciated God, the more they brought offerings that provided for the practical needs of their spiritual leaders. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, tithe supports pastors, teachers, and church leaders around the world. Offerings, on the other hand, go directly to local church expenses. Through these two systems of giving, Adventists care for others in an ancient and biblical way.
THE BREAD OF LIFE

Imagine for a moment that you are with the 5,000 on the hillside where Jesus is preaching in John 6. Your stomach is growling, and you wonder if you will have the energy necessary to make it home. Then Jesus miraculously takes a little boy’s gift of five loaves and two fish and starts handing out lunch. After you have eaten the food—which, by the way, tastes better than anything you have eaten before or since—Jesus says these powerful words: “I am the bread of life.” Whoever eats Me will live forever (John 6:35). This sounds like cannibalism to the modern mind, but to a Jewish mind educated in Leviticus, Jesus was identifying Himself as the long-anticipated and promised Messiah—the one represented in the grain offering.

Although this offering did not require a blood sacrifice and was therefore not designed to provide atonement for sin, Jesus is still beautifully portrayed in the sacrificial practice. In John 6:33 Jesus describes Himself as “the bread of God.” The grain offering points clearly to Jesus, who sustains us with both physical and spiritual food. When Jesus referred to Himself as “the bread of God,” He was again identifying Himself in the grain offering of Leviticus 2.

In Isaiah 53:5, Jesus is described as having been bruised and beaten for us. To produce the “finest flour” needed for the grain offering, the heads of grain had to be “crushed” and refined through beating and thrashing (Lev. 2:1, 14, NIV). Again, we see that the grain offering pointed clearly to Jesus and His suffering for humanity.

In 1 Corinthians 5:8 we learn that yeast is a symbol of sin. Since Jesus was sinless and perfect in every way, we can understand why the grain offering was to be “without any yeast” (Lev. 2:4, NLT). Interestingly, wine was often included in the grain offerings (Num. 15:10, 24), pointing to how Jesus served His disciples both bread and wine and compared His body and blood to bread and wine at the Last Supper (1 Cor. 11:24, 25). Now, as mentioned earlier, the grain offering did not require any blood. However, accompanied offerings such as the burnt offering did require blood, and the burnt, sin, and fellowship offerings were accompanied by the grain offering (Lev. 9:4; Num. 15:4; 28:3–6; 6:14, 15, 17). Combine this knowledge with the fact that wine, a symbol of Christ’s blood, was included in this offering, and we again see Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross represented by the grain offering in addition to the accompanied offerings.

There are still other components of the grain offering that point to Christ, such as the oil, which represents the Holy Spirit, that was poured out on this offering (Zech. 4:6). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9) and Matthew 1:20 declares that Christ was “of the Holy Spirit” even before He was born. The phrase “a sweet aroma to the Lord” is yet another messianic pointer, found 17 times in the book of Leviticus. This same phrase is used to describe Jesus in Ephesians 5:2 and Philippians 4:18. The only thing that pleased God about the sacrificial death of the innocent animals was the fact that they pointed to His innocent Son Jesus, who would come as a “sweet aroma” to save guilty and lost humanity.
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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

1 Corinthians 9:13, 14
Colossians 4:6
Hebrews 13:15, 16
James 2:15–17
1 John 3:16–18

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Leviticus 2?
NO BIBLE, NO BREAKFAST

Some argue that the grain offering proves that a person does not need to be saved by the shed blood of Jesus. In their minds, acts of kindness are enough to save the soul. This concept is more popular than one might think and is the core philosophy of the false religions of the world. Perhaps you have heard of various famous people who led morally corrupt lives only to dramatically change when they got older and perhaps more aware of their mortality—celebrities who began to give liberally to others and even establish organizations of philanthropy.

Although at first glance the grain offering seems to imply that shedding blood is not necessary for salvation and the forgiveness of sins, the truth is that the grain offering was always offered with the other sacrifices that did require the death of a substitute. Also, as previously mentioned, wine, which Jesus said was representative of His blood, was offered along with the grain offering. Without Jesus’ blood, there can be no salvation. The grain offering is therefore another offering that points to Jesus and is motivated by His grace and amazing sacrifice on Calvary. It is not an exaltation of humanity’s attempt to please God, nor is it a means of earning one’s salvation.

There are many today who choose to skip church and therefore miss hearing the Word of God preached in the sermon or shared during the Sabbath School lesson. However, church is where our faith is strengthened and our spiritual stomach is filled. The Bible specifically warns against getting in the habit of skipping church, especially as we get closer to the end of time (Heb. 10:25). When preachers and teachers exalt Jesus, our grain offering and bread, we experience spiritual fullness. Interestingly, when David was being threatened by King Saul, he chose to go to church (1 Sam. 21:1). In the city of Nob, just northeast of Jerusalem, there was a place where 85 priests lived and served. It was there that David and his men ate the 12 loaves of showbread that were placed in the Holy Place of the sanctuary every Sabbath (v. 6).

This bread gave David and his men the strength they needed to endure their journey and escape their enemy. Jesus is our strength as well. He is our showbread, our spiritual grain offering! Perhaps you’ve heard someone say, “I don’t go to church because I don’t get spiritually fed there.” This is usually because they don't fill up on Jesus every day of the week. Imagine if you ate physical food only once a week. It wouldn’t matter how much food you ate or how good the food was; you would still be hungry. Jesus is our grain offering not only on the Sabbath but every day of the week.

Try enacting this little motto each morning: “No Bible, no breakfast!” Make it your custom to rise early every morning and feed on the Word of God before doing anything else. Take in as much of Christ’s Word as you can handle! You may have to eat quickly sometimes, but other times you should savor and enjoy His presence and power in your life, especially on the Sabbath! There are some who listen to the Bread of Life in the cars during their commute. If you do this, you will experience tremendous growth in your faith.
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Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of Leviticus 2, what are some personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications you must make in your school, family, workplace, and church?

THE BEST GIFT

“In the ritual service, salt was added to every sacrifice. This, like the offering of incense, signified that only the righteousness of Christ could make the service acceptable to God. Referring to this practice, Jesus said, ‘Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.’ ‘Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.’ All who would present themselves ‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God’ (Rom. 12:1, KJV), must receive the saving salt, the righteousness of our Saviour. Then they become ‘the salt of the earth,’ restraining evil among men, as salt preserves from corruption. Matt. 5:13, KJV. But if the salt has lost its savor; if there is only a profession of godliness, without the love of Christ, there is no power for good. The life can exert no saving influence upon the world. Your energy and efficiency in the upbuilding of My kingdom, Jesus says, depend upon your receiving of My Spirit. You must be partakers of My grace, in order to be a savor of life unto life. Then there will be no rivalry, no self-seeking, no desire for the highest place. You will have that love which seeks not her own, but another’s wealth” (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940], p. 439).

“Divine love makes its most touching appeals to the heart when it calls upon us to manifest the same tender compassion that Christ manifested. That man only who has unselfish love for his brother has true love for God. The true Christian will not willingly permit the soul in peril and need to go unwarned, uncared for. He will not hold himself aloof from the erring, leaving them to plunge farther into unhappiness and discouragement or to fall on Satan’s battleground.

“Those who have never experienced the tender, winning love of Christ cannot lead others to the fountain of life. His love in the heart is a constraining power, which leads men to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender, pitiful spirit, in the uplifting of the lives of those with whom they associate. Christian workers who succeed in their efforts must know Christ; and in order to know Him, they must know His love. In heaven their fitness as workers is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to work as He worked.

“ ‘Let us not love in word,’ the apostle writes, ‘but in deed and in truth.’ The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within. It is the atmosphere of this love surrounding the soul of the believer that makes him a savor of life unto life and enables God to bless his work.

“Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. ‘We love him, because he first loved us.’ In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around” (Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911], pp. 550, 551).
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

In what ways does the grain offering represent Jesus?

What makes the grain offering unique from all the other offerings?

Whom did the grain offering provide for?


How does faithfulness in tithes and offerings express care for others?

If giving to others is equivalent to giving to God, in what ways are you giving to God today?

What can you do every day to make sure you get spiritually fed on Sabbath?

How can you and your local church give in Jesus’ name to your church and community?