

## Leviticus 5:14-6:7 — Guilt Offering

**December 20, 2015**

Its that time of year. It is time to buy things people don't need with money we don't have. We do it because there needs to be something under that Christmas tree. While everyone claims they are cutting back on holiday spending, the January credit card bill tells a different story. We always spend more than we planned.

While your credit card bill may not be out of control this January, for most Americans, their bill is out of sight. The average US household is carrying \$15,355 in credit card debt. That is enough to make you skip Christmas.

It is easy to think Americans are simply compulsive spenders. It isn't that simple. Since 2003 the average household income increased 23 percent. Unfortunately medical costs rose more than 51 percent. The cost of food increased 37 percent. When you add up everything, it costs more to survive today than it did 14 years ago. As a result, many of us are carrying more debt for daily life.<sup>1</sup>

This morning, maybe that is you. Are you up at night trying to figure out a how to pay that credit card bill? This morning, I don't have easy steps to get out of financial debt. I do have some very important words on how to get out of a much more serious debt. A debt that each of us is facing. It is a debt that non of us are in a position to pay. It is the debt of our sin to God.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/credit-card-data/average-credit-card-debt-household/>

This Christmas season Pastor Jordan—our Spencer campus—and myself on the Spirit Lake campus, are teaching a short series from the book of Leviticus called Christmas from the book of Leviticus. We are looking at the five offerings God gave the Israelites that are described in the beginning of the book of Leviticus. We are learning how they point us toward Christ and why he came.

Last week we looked at the sin offering. Today we finish the series by looking at the guilt offering. Sometimes you see the guilt offering called the trespass offering or the reparation offering. They are just different names for the same thing.

Last week, in the sin offering, we described sin as an archery term. It means being off the mark. Today, we learn sin is also described as debt, a debt we have to God. A debt that we can not pay.

### **Sin is Debt.**

This idea of sin as a form of debt is not just in the Old Testament. Jesus talks about sin as debt in the New Testament. In the Lord's prayer, he taught us to pray for forgiveness of our debt of sin

and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us... Luke 11:4 (ESV)

Some other translations paraphrase this to say "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." The idea is that sin is a debt. As we are asking God to forgive our debt of sin, we also promise to forgive others the debt of their sin to us.

Even those who don't know the Bible recognize sin as debt. Think of the language we use when someone says or does something hurtful toward us. We

say, “they owe us an apology.” Their sin created a debt toward us. In the same way, when we sin, we are indebted to God. The problem is to fix the debt of our sin we owe God much more than an apology. The debt of our sin is far beyond our ability to pay. We need someone to pay it for us. That is why Christ came at Christmas.

### **What are the differences between the sin offering and the guilt offering?**

Almost every book I read on the sin and the guilt offering begins with a phrase something like this. “Distinguishing between the sin offering and guilt offering isn’t easy.” To help those who like to study a little deeper in Life Group, let me run through a few of these before we jump into our study. With that in mind, I will do my best to explain the difference before we jump into the bulk of our study.

- 1. The sin offering is taking something that is unholy into a place that is holy place. The guilt offering is taking something that is holy into an unholy place.** The sin offering is similar to bringing unholiness, that is pollution, into the temple. The temple needs to be cleansed of sin. The guilt offering is the opposite. It is about taking something holy and sacred and treating it like it was insignificant.
- 2. The sin offering is more vertical in character in that it focuses more on how our sin affects God’s holiness. The guilt offering is both vertical and horizontal because it focuses not just on how our sin affects God but how it affects others.** Both of these offerings touch both God and people but the guilt offering is usually, but not exclusively, orientated toward people.

3. **The sin offering had six different options depending on your financial status. For the guilt offering there is only one option, a ram, that is a male sheep, or its financial equivalent.** It didn't matter if you were rich or poor. You only had one way to fix the guilt of your sin.
4. **The sin offering could be offered for the collective sin of a community. The guilt offering can only be offered for individual sin.**

In shorthand, I call this the stealing offering. It is the offering people were to use when they stole something. It is the way to find forgiveness when you took something from God or man that wasn't yours.

#### **1. Stealing from God.**

As we look at stealing from God we find it falls under two headings. There is unintentional stealing from God and potential stealing from God.

##### **Unintentional stealing from God.**

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally (stagger into sin but regrets it) in any of the holy things of the Lord, he shall bring to the Lord as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven. Leviticus 5:14–16 (ESV)

The first question is, "What is a breach of faith?" That means a break in trust. For instance, if you promise your wife you will be home at 5:00 pm for dinner but you don't show up until 7:30 pm and you have no other excuse other than you decided to go to hang out with the guys at the gym and didn't care enough to call her, you broke her trust. You didn't keep your word. You didn't respect her.

In a more serious way, when a husband or wife are unfaithful in their marital commitment, that is a breach of trust. It is a breakdown in the relationship because you acted unfaithfully.

What would unfaithfulness to God look like? This could happen by unintentionally stealing stuff that belongs to God. How would someone do that in the Old Testament? Let me give you a hypothetical scenario.

Earlier in this series we learned there was a grain offering. For this offering bread was baked and brought to the temple. Some of that bread was dedicated to God and it was given for the exclusive use of the priest. Maybe somebody came to the temple to offer a fellowship offering, this was the party offering. Maybe they unintentionally grabbed some of the bread that was dedicated to the priest and they used it to make roast beef sandwiches for their meal. After polishing off the sandwiches the priest asks, “Hey, where is my loaf of bread?” The guy that unintentionally took the bread for sandwiches unintentionally stole God’s stuff. It was bread dedicated to God for the sole use of the priest.

Another example This might be someone shortchanging God on their offering. Malachi describes people shortchanging God on their offerings as a way of robbing God.

Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Malachi 3:8–9 (ESV)

It looks like shortchanging God on offerings was done intentionally in Malachi but sometimes that can happen unintentionally. Maybe the husband thought his wife was writing the offering check and the wife thought her husband

wrote the check. At the end of the month, when they balanced the check book, they realized nobody was writing the check. They were shortchanging God. Were they guilty of sin? Yes, even though they did it unintentionally. I know needing a sacrifice for the sin of unintentionally shortchanging God for offerings sounds harsh. We need to remember they lived in a theocratic society. Their tithes were their taxes. If we shortchange our government on taxes, it doesn't matter if it was unintentional. They consider us guilty.

### **How were people to make things right with God?**

There was two parts to making things right. First, there was a perfect ram that needed to be offered. A ram is a male sheep. This ram was offered to God to pay for the debt their unintentional sin created in their relationship with God.

You couldn't offer just a sacrifice for sin. You also had to restore what you took. In this case, if the person stole unintentionally from God's house, such as a loaf of bread, they needed to restore a loaf of bread. Not only were people to restore what they took but they were to give back an additional 20 percent. Why were people to return 20 percent over and beyond what they stole? I think they were to give the extra 20 percent because going above and beyond what you took shows true repentance. It helps restore the relationship.

Let me give you a modern example. Imagine you go over a friend's house to help him build his barn. He is excited because he just bought a new DeWalt 18 volt multiple power tool kit. He spent several hundred dollars. Both of you have a great time using the new power tools to build the barn. At the end of the day, you unintentionally grab the power tool kit and put it in the back of your

truck. Supplies get piled on top of the tool kit and you forget it is there. You eventually find it a month later when you empty the garbage out of your truck. For the month your friends was looking everywhere for his power tools. He was baffled what happened. Of course you should return his power tools but is that all you should do? This passage tells us that you should stop at Starbucks on the way to return the tools and buy a \$20 gift card and give it to him along with the tools. You apologize for unintentionally taking his tools and you give him a little something extra in the form of a Starbucks card to help restore the relationship. That makes good sense. Leviticus has some practical advice.

### **Possible Stealing from God.**

“If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the Lord’s commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity. He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven. It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the Lord.” Leviticus 5:17–19 (ESV)

These verses talk about a time when someone sins in any of God’s commands but *they did not know it*. What does that mean? This is when someone feels guilt in their heart because they think they may have sinned against God but they aren’t sure so they live with a guilty conscience.

This is the guy who eats bread in the temple but later he is not sure if he grabbed the wrong bread. He may had eaten bread dedicated to the priest, but he is not sure.

What is he to do?

If he feels guilty, but he isn’t sure, he should act as if he is guilty. He needs to offer a guilt offering. He needs to sacrifice a ram to God for his potential

guilt. By offering the guilt offering he can guarantee God's forgiveness and sleep well at night.

How can we apply this one to our life? There is a simple principle. If you think you may be guilty of sin, act as if you are guilty of sin. Go out of your way to make things right.

What does this look like in real life? This fall, I saw a friend from church in Walmart. I was in the band-aid aisle. At the time I was preoccupied with a number of things. My mind was not on what I was doing. I was in the zone. My wife has told me to be careful about the zone. When I get consumed thinking about one thing, I can come across short or rude toward others. My family has lovingly warned me about this.

When my friend from church said hello and I quickly said hello back, I didn't think anything about it. Later I had this guilty feeling that I might have come across short and almost rude toward him inadvertently. I didn't know if I had come across rude or not. What was I to do? Follow the instructions for the guilt offering. If you think you may be guilty, act as if you are guilty and go out of your way to restore what may be broken in the relationship.

I went home and got on the City and jotted him a quick note apologizing if I came across rude or uncaring. I wanted to clear up potential guilt.

When your heart feels potential guilt, treat it like you are guilty and do what you need to make it right with other people and God.

## **2. Stealing from people**

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the Lord by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or



through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby— if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt. And he shall bring to the priest as his compensation to the Lord a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty.” Leviticus 6:1–7 (ESV)

This is where things get interesting. Last week, when I was teaching on the sin offering, I taught there was no offering for intentional sin. There was only an offering for unintentional sin. That is what many pastors and popular writers teach. That is true, but it is not totally true. There is no sin offering for intentional sin but there is a guilt offering for intentional sin of which we repent.

The guilt offering is a sacrifice available for the unintentional stealing of God’s stuff but it is also available for intentional stealing of other people’s stuff if we repent of what we did.

When I first read these verse it really threw me for a loop because it challenged the way I was brought up. I was always taught there was no offering for intentional sin. As I read this I kept wonder, how can you rob somebody, extort somebody, find something and lie about it or be dishonest in a matter or deposit or security, then swear falsely about it and have done it all unintentionally? You must have done these intentionally and then repented of them.

In addition, Numbers 5 retells the details of the guilt offering. It is even more explicit that these could intentional sins of which we repent.

“Speak to the people of Israel, **When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the Lord**, and that person realizes his guilt, he shall confess his sin that he has committed. And he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong....in addition to the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for him. Numbers 5:6–7 (ESV)

This will challenge us. Some of us never realized there was an offering for intentional sin. The guilt offering is available to those who sinned against others intentionally and repented of their sin.

What about somebody who doesn't repent of their sin? That is called high-handed sin. It is somebody who doesn't feel guilt and express repentance to God for their sin. There was no sacrifice for that according to Numbers 15:30.

**But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Numbers 15:30 (ESV)**

Lets walk through what this teaches us about finding forgiveness for intentional sin of which we repent.

It says, “if anyone sins and they commit a breach of faith against the Lord by deceiving their neighbor.” Ripping people results in a break in your relationship with God. Just as stealing from God breaks your relationship with God, so does stealing from people. Ripping people off, it is the same as ripping God off, because people are created in his image.

Let's look at the different ways people get ripped off.

**Deposit or security** — This is when somebody asks for a one month security deposit on a room they were renting. When the renter leaves, even though they left the place reasonably clean, the owner of the apartments keeps the security deposit, just because they could. This make the former renter mad but it also

makes God mad. This is leaving your grandmother's silver with a friend while you go south for the winter because you feel it would be safer in their occupied house rather than in your empty house. When you return from going south for the winter you count only 11 place settings instead of 12. Your neighbor claims they didn't touch your stuff but they actually stole from you. They broke trust with you and with God.

**Robbery** — This is taking something that isn't yours This could be going through somebody's garage and stealing their bicycle. This could be not returning the jumper cables after your neighbor loaned them to you to help you start your wife's car. Either way is stealing. The result is not just a breakdown in your relationship with your neighbor but a breakdown in your relationship with God.

**Oppression and Extortion** — This is using your position of authority to oppress or extort things from people. This is knowing somebody is desperate for work so you give them a job that has almost no paycheck because you know they will do almost anything for absolutely nothing. This is a contractor that gets paid for work but then doesn't do the work or doesn't do quality work because they already have the money.

**Finding something that is lost and lying about it** — This is finding an iPod but not bringing it to the lost and found.

These are serious offenses that can be compounded by swearing falsely in God's name that you didn't do them. How many people have heard someone say, "I swear to God I didn't take your *fill in the blank*."

In a similar way, there are two parts to making this sin right. The person must first restore what they took plus 20 percent. You give back what you took plus a little something extra. Then they needed to offer a male lamb for the guilt offering to pay for their sin against God.

Notice when it tells you to restore what you took. It says “on the day you realize your guilt.” After you realize your guilt, on that very day we are to restore what we took. Not a week later. Not a month later. On that day. After you have restored what you took, then you bring to the Lord a male sheep for your guilt offering and you will be forgiven.

This is the same thing Jesus tells us.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23–24 (ESV)

It is easy to repent of our sin to God. It is hard to repent of sin to people. The Bible says to make sure we repent of our sin with people right away.

### **How does the guilt offering point to Christ and Christmas?**

Isaiah 53 speaks prophetically about Jesus and why he came. The 53 chapter of Isaiah is some of the most explicit words about the coming of Christ in the Old Testament.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Isaiah 53:10 (ESV)

Isaiah tells us that Jesus came to be our guilt offering to pay our debt of sin.

Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Isaiah 53:11 (ESV)

Jesus will make many righteous by bearing their guilt.

In the beginning of the Gospel of John, John the Baptist saw Jesus walking toward him and what did he say?

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin (guilt) of the world! John 1:29 (ESV)

The word for sin in the word for guilt. John the Baptist saw Jesus as the one true guilt offering, the male lamb that would take away the guilt of the sin of everyone.

Paul also saw Jesus as the one who came to be the true guilt offering.

And you, who were dead in your trespasses (sin that brought guilt) and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Colossians 2:13–14 (ESV)

Even Jesus’ final words on the cross tell us he was the one true guilt offering. Look at his last words.

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30 (ESV)

The phrase, “It is finished” is an English translation of the Greek word *tetelestai*, which means “Paid in Full”. It was the words stamped on the front of a bill once you made the final payment on your debt.

Jesus came at Christmas so he could stamp across the front of our debt of sin the words “Paid in Full” written in his own blood.

This morning we learned a lot more than Jesus is our guilt offering. Leviticus has a practical application.

## Applications for life

1. There is no sin offering for intentional sin but there is a guilt offering for intentional sins of which we repent.
2. When our sin involves taking something that isn't rightfully ours, either from God or from other people, repentance doesn't just mean seeking God's forgiveness, it means we restore what we took plus a little something extra.
3. If our consciences leave us feeling guilty of sin, even if we are not sure, we should act like we are guilty of sin and go out of our way to make it right.
4. When we steal from people either through robbery, extortion, or lying, we are not just breaking faith with people, we are breaking faith with God.
5. When we realize our sin against someone, we should make it right on the day we sense our guilt, not weeks or months later.
6. In both the Old and the New Testament getting right with God is more than a sacrifice for sin. It also means getting right with others.



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