

— WEEK 14 —

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN

— GOD'S STANDARDS FOR HIS PEOPLE —

GOD SETS BOUNDARIES. GOD GIVES PURPOSE. HOLINESS BRINGS BLESSING.



FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

FAITH. FAMILY. ORDER. LEGACY.

Week 14: Clean and Unclean - God's Standards for His People

A Sabbath Family Bible Study

Introduction

God called Israel to become a people set apart for Himself. As part of that calling, the Lord established clear distinctions between what was clean and unclean, teaching Israel that belonging to a holy God should affect every detail of life.

The laws concerning clean and unclean animals demonstrated that God's people were not free to determine their standards. God established boundaries, and His people were expected to trust His wisdom and obey His commands. These distinctions continually reminded Israel that they belonged to the Lord and were called to live differently from the nations around them.

But the biblical principle of separation reaches far beyond food. Throughout Scripture, God's people are commanded to distinguish between holiness and corruption, righteousness and wickedness, truth and error. The New Testament continues this call when believers are told, *“Come out from among them, and be ye separate.”*

This week, we will examine God's standards of clean and unclean and the larger principle they teach: a holy God calls His people to be a distinct people. As families, we should learn to respect God's boundaries, examine the influences we allow into our homes, and willingly order our lives according to His Word. Holiness should be visible in the choices we make every day.



Scripture Reading

(Deuteronomy 14:2–3, Leviticus 11:1–47; Isaiah 66:15–17; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18, Psalm 24:1–6)

With Commentary Throughout

Deuteronomy 14:2–3 - A Holy and Peculiar People

2 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

3 Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.

Commentary

Before God gives Israel instructions concerning clean and unclean foods, He reminds them who they are and to whom they belong. Israel was a holy people, chosen and set apart unto the LORD. Their obedience was therefore connected to their identity as God's covenant people. They were not simply another nation free to adopt whatever practices surrounded them.

The distinction between clean and unclean reminded Israel that belonging to God affects how His people live. Families can learn an important principle from these verses: God's commands

are not disconnected rules but part of living as a people devoted to Him. If we belong to God, His Word should establish the standards by which our household lives.

Leviticus 11:1–8 - Clean and Unclean Land Animals

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.

3 Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

4 Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

5 And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

6 And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

7 And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.

8 Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you.

Commentary

God gave Israel clear standards for distinguishing between clean and unclean land animals. An animal permitted for food needed to both **divide the hoof and chew the cud**. If it possessed only one of these characteristics, it remained unclean. The camel, coney, hare, and swine are specifically given as examples.

For families, this passage reinforces a principle that reaches throughout Scripture: we should allow **God's Word rather than cultural custom or personal desire to define our standards**. Holiness reaches into practical, everyday decisions. When God establishes a boundary, faithfulness means trusting His wisdom and ordering our lives accordingly.

Leviticus 11:9–12 - Creatures of the Waters

9 *These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat.*

10 *And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you:*

11 *They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcases in abomination.*

12 *Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you.*

Commentary

God also established a clear distinction among creatures living in the water. Those possessing both fins and scales were permitted for food, while those lacking these characteristics were declared unclean. These instructions reinforced the daily discipline of discernment. Before God's people consumed something, they were expected to recognize the distinction He had established and act accordingly.

For families, the larger lesson is that obedience appears in ordinary choices. Faithfulness to God is not limited to worship services or great moments of faith. God's people should learn His standards, recognize His boundaries, and trust His wisdom even when the surrounding culture follows different ones.

Leviticus 11:13–23 - Birds and Flying Creatures

13 *And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray,*

14 *And the vulture, and the kite after his kind;*

15 *Every raven after his kind;*

16 *And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind,*

17 *And the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl,*

18 *And the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle,*

19 *And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat.*

20 *All fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you.*

21 Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth;

22 Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.

23 But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you.

Commentary

God continued His instructions by identifying which birds and flying creatures Israel was not to eat. Unlike the simple physical tests given for land animals and creatures of the water, many of the prohibited birds are specifically named. God also distinguished among flying creeping things, permitting certain kinds that were equipped to leap upon the earth while declaring the others unclean.

Once again, the lesson is one of discernment and obedience. Israel was expected to learn the distinctions God established rather than decide for themselves that every creature was equally suitable for food. For families, these verses reinforce the importance of learning God's Word. God establishes boundaries for His people, and faithful obedience means respecting those distinctions even when we might not fully understand every reason behind them.

Leviticus 11:24–40 - Contact with Unclean Animals

24 And for these ye shall be unclean: whosoever toucheth the carcase of them shall be unclean until the even.

25 And whosoever beareth ought of the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.

26 The carcasses of every beast which divideth the hoof, and is not clovenfooted, nor cheweth the cud, are unclean unto you: every one that toucheth them shall be unclean.

27 And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcase shall be unclean until the even.

28 And he that beareth the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: they are unclean unto you.

29 These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind,

30 And the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole.

31 *These are unclean to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even.*

32 *And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel it be, wherein any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed.*

33 *And every earthen vessel, whereinto any of them falleth, whatsoever is in it shall be unclean; and ye shall break it.*

34 *Of all meat which may be eaten, that on which such water cometh shall be unclean: and all drink that may be drunk in every such vessel shall be unclean.*

35 *And every thing whereupon any part of their carcase falleth shall be unclean; whether it be oven, or ranges for pots, they shall be broken down: for they are unclean and shall be unclean unto you.*

36 *Nevertheless a fountain or pit, wherein there is plenty of water, shall be clean: but that which toucheth their carcase shall be unclean.*

37 *And if any part of their carcase fall upon any sowing seed which is to be sown, it shall be clean.*

38 *But if any water be put upon the seed, and any part of their carcase fall thereon, it shall be unclean unto you.*

39 *And if any beast, of which ye may eat, die; he that toucheth the carcase thereof shall be unclean until the even.*

40 *And he that eateth of the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: he also that beareth the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.*

Commentary

God's instructions concerning clean and unclean extended beyond what Israel could eat. Contact with certain dead animals also produced ceremonial uncleanness, sometimes affecting clothing, vessels, food, and other objects. God therefore taught His people to recognize distinctions not only at the dinner table, but throughout the activities of household life.

These verses also show that uncleanness was not always identical with personal sin. A person could become ceremonially unclean simply by handling a carcass, after which God prescribed washing and a period of separation until evening. For families, the broader principle is that holiness should never be confined to one small portion of life. God taught Israel to practice discernment in their food, possessions, work, and homes. Belonging to God affects everyday life, and His people should learn to distinguish carefully between what He calls clean and what He calls unclean.

Leviticus 11:41–47 - “Be Ye Holy; For I Am Holy”

41 And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten.

42 Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination.

43 Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby.

44 For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

45 For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

46 This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth:

47 To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

Commentary

Leviticus 11 reveals God's commands concerning clean and unclean were connected directly to His holiness and Israel's calling to be a holy people: “Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” The Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt to be His people, and their lives were therefore to reflect that they belonged to Him.

Verse 47 emphasizes another important principle: God's people were expected “to make a difference between the unclean and the clean.”

For families, this passage brings the chapter back to its central lesson. God establishes standards, and His people are called to learn, respect, and obey them. Our lives should demonstrate that we belong to Him. God calls His people to make distinctions, live differently, and pursue holiness because He is holy.

Isaiah 66:15–17 - God’s Judgment and the Unclean

15 For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

16 For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

17 They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD.

Commentary

Isaiah presents a sobering picture of God's judgment. The practices condemned here combine false worship with deliberate participation in things God had declared unclean. The people attempted to “sanctify” and “purify” themselves through their own religious practices while disregarding the standards God had established.

Verse 17 specifically mentions eating swine's flesh, the abomination, and the mouse, connecting this warning directly with the distinctions given in Leviticus 11. For families, the warning is clear: we cannot redefine holiness. Religious activity does not substitute for obedience, and sincerity does not transform what God has forbidden into something acceptable.

2 Corinthians 6:14–18 - “Come Out From Among Them”

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Commentary

Paul carries the principle of separation and holiness into the life of God's people. He contrasts righteousness with unrighteousness, light with darkness, Christ with Belial, and the temple of God with idols. These things are fundamentally different and should not be treated as though no distinction exists between them.

The command: *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate."* God's people are called to live differently because they belong to Him. Just as Israel was taught to distinguish between clean and unclean, believers must exercise spiritual discernment concerning the relationships, practices, influences, and loyalties that shape their lives.



Discussion Questions for All Ages

Young Children:

- What kinds of animals did God say we can eat?
- Why does God want us to be different from the world?
- What happens when we obey God even with our food?

Older Children & Teens:

- How does eating clean animals help us remember that we belong to God?
- Why does God still care about what we eat today?
- What should we do if others say "God doesn't care about that anymore"?

Adults:

- How can we uphold God's dietary standards without legalism?
 - What are some practical ways to teach our children to eat biblically?
 - How does separating from unclean foods shape our identity as set-apart people?
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Psalm Reading

Psalm 119:1–3 - Blessed Are the Undefined

1 "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD."

2 "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart."

3 "They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways."

Commentary:

Walking in God's ways brings blessing. His testimonies include moral law, family order, worship practices, and His instructions about food. The one who seeks to obey God in every area will be blessed and undefiled.

Hymn: "Take Time to Be Holy"

By William D. Longstaff (1882)

1.

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

2.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

3.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide,
And run not before Him, whatever betide.
In joy or in sorrow, still follow thy Lord,
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.

4.

Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,
Each thought and each motive beneath His control.
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.



Family Application Points

1. **Teach God's Dietary Boundaries:**

Help your children learn which animals are clean (e.g., those that chew the cud and have split hooves; fish with fins and scales). Reinforce that God sets the standards—not man.

2. **Purge the Unclean from Your Home:**

Examine food labels, restaurants, and freezers. Remove pork, shellfish, and other unclean items from your family diet as an act of repentance and obedience.

3. **Celebrate Obedience Together:**

Turn the decision to eat clean into a joyful expression of holiness. Use it as a teaching moment to explain why your family chooses to live according to God's Word.

4. **Be Ready to Give an Answer:**

Equip your household with Scripture (Leviticus 11, Isaiah 66, 2 Corinthians 6) so that when questioned, you can boldly declare: "We obey because He is holy."

5. **Emphasize Wholeness, Not Legalism:**

Obedience is not about earning salvation but honoring the God who saved us. Teach your family that obedience flows from love, not from fear or ritualism.



A Sabbath Feast Prayer (Used later when the Sabbath Meal is Ready)

"Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Sabbath - a holy day of rest, joy, and renewal. As we partake in this meal, may our hearts be lifted in gratitude for Your provision and peace. Let this table reflect the peace of Your Kingdom and the love that binds our household together in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen."



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, You are holy and You have called us to be holy in all our ways, even in what we eat. Forgive us for any area where we have ignored Your clear instructions. Help us to love Your law, to embrace Your standards, and to walk in daily obedience. May our family honor You at the table, in the kitchen, and in every corner of our lives. Teach us to choose what is clean, to reject what defiles, and to glorify You in body and spirit. In the name of Jesus our Savior, we pray. Amen.