

## **Life and Death Small Group Guide**

**Warm-up Question:** (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part altogether, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Have you ever had a close brush with death? Explain.
2. What is one food you really don't like?

**Read the following passage:** Leviticus 16:1-22.

The ancient Israelites saw nearly everything in terms of four big categories: holy, common, clean, and unclean. The first and last of these categories were diametrically opposed. Anything connected with God was holy; anything opposed to God's nature and character was unclean. Although this distinction is relatively clear, what's often not so clear is why particular things were considered to be sources of uncleanness. For example, why were certain foods unclean? Or why did giving birth cause a woman to become unclean? Or an emission of semen? Or a skin disease? Some scholars have made the argument that, in the mind of an Israelite, each of these things was associated with death. Holiness, then, was connected with life, and uncleanness was connected with death. Although we don't live under the law of Moses or categorize foods, bodily discharges and other such things as clean and unclean, we do still experience forces of death that disrupt our communion with God.

The Day of Atonement was established to purge the tabernacle of the "contamination" that accumulated from the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites. This annual ritual prefigured what Jesus would accomplish through his death and resurrection.

**Questions for Discussion** (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. In ancient Israel, the people's sin and uncleanness made it hard to get close to God. What are some of the realities that make it difficult for us to connect with God?
2. Read Mark 4:1-9, 13-20. How are you currently being impacted by each of the following?
  - The worries of this life
  - The deceitfulness of wealth
  - The desires for other things
  - Trouble or the fear of persecution
  - Spiritual warfare
3. Read Hebrews 9:1-14; 10:19-25. How does the author of Hebrews connect the Day of Atonement and the ministry of Jesus?
4. How does Jesus practically help us get close to God?

**Pray**