

The Beauty of Holiness

Embracing the Character
and Call of God

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SAMPLE PAGES:

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Lesson One

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Lesson *One*

Glorious in Holiness

God is holy. Most Christians are very familiar with this truth. If you have been a Christian for long, you have probably heard (and perhaps memorized) the words of Isaiah 6:3—

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!”

You may also know that “holy” is the only attribute of God that the Bible repeats three times in succession. You may be able to define “holy” as meaning “set apart” or “undefiled.” Perhaps you even know that Scripture’s first mention of the word “holy” is when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Exodus 3).

But as worshippers of a God who is glorious in holiness, we must ask ourselves: Do we have a true understanding of what holiness is? Have we studied it? Meditated on it? Do we *really* (as much as is humanly possible) understand what it means that God is holy? Do we live in light of His holiness? Do we really care about holiness—if so, does it show? Does God’s holiness, and our own pursuit of holiness, make a difference in our everyday lives?

When I asked myself these questions, the answers were not always as I wanted them to be. The following prayer expresses the desire of my heart at the time that I began asking myself these questions. If you desire the same, would you pray these words with me as you begin this study?

Glorious God and Father,

I come before Your throne to humbly confess that there are many things in this world that distract my thoughts from You. Forgive me—it should not be so. But you know the desire of my heart today. You know that I want to love and understand and embrace the truth that You are holy. I want to worship You in the beauty of holiness and I want to be pleasing in Your sight. Please teach me. . . and as you teach me, please change me to be more like You.

*“Who is like You,
O LORD,
among the gods?
Who is like You,
glorious in holiness...”*

Exodus 15:11

DAYS ONE AND TWO

“Who _____ You, O _____ , among the gods?
 Who _____ You, glorious in _____ ...”
 Exodus 15:11

By reading and examining the Scriptures, we can see the greatness and incomprehensibility of God. He is unlike us. He is loftier and higher than our minds can understand! We, the finite, cannot fully understand God, the infinite.

Even so, we can learn much about Him, and He commands us to do so. We must strive to know Him and diligently search out His truths.

This is not always easy! Yet we must not give up when the work becomes difficult. If we do, the Christian life can too quickly become for us merely a routine, a ministry opportunity, or an activity. **We must faithfully practice prayerful meditation and fervent striving to understand our God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture!** When we do so, the Spirit draws our hearts to true worship and leads us to live our lives to His glory.

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
 Nor have entered into the heart of man
 The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’...
 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God,
 that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God...”
 1 Corinthians 2:9-13

1. In Psalm 50:16-23 the LORD speaks to the wicked. In verse 21, He accuses the wicked of making a grave mistake—what mistake did they make?

2. Scripture repeatedly tells us, describes for us, and reminds us that God is not like us. He is separate and fully unlike sinful man. (In other words, He is transcendent.) As you read and meditate on the following passages, record the phrases which indicate that God is unlike man. (If time is limited, complete only the bold entries.)

Who is like You, O LORD?

a. **1 Samuel 2:2**

b. **Job 11:7-9**

Who is like You, O LORD?

c. Job 26:14 (*see vv. 7-14*)

d. Psalm 33:13-15

e. Psalm 86:8-10

f. Psalm 104:1-4

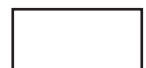
g. Psalm 113:4-6

h. Isaiah 40:18, 25-26 (*see vv. 15-26*)

i. Isaiah 55:8-9

3. God is unlike man in being, in power, in knowledge, in greatness, in thought, in glory, *in holiness...* **and we must never make the mistake of thinking that He is altogether like us.** Why might God repeat this truth so many times and in so many different ways? (*Take time to answer thoughtfully.*)

4. As you begin this study on holiness, will you commit to prayerful meditation and fervent striving in order to grow in your understanding of God? It is this kind of desire and commitment which our Lord will reward with an increase in spiritual understanding. After expressing the desires of your heart to your Lord, initial the box.



DAY THREE

“ _____ You, O LORD, among _____?
 _____ is like You, _____ holiness...”
 Exodus ____:11

Why is it important to study holiness? Today you will explore a few of the reasons.

Why Pursue an Understanding of Holiness?

Reason #1 **God is not like us: He is holy.** If we want to know and walk with our God, we must have some understanding of His holiness. Read or recite this week’s memory verse, taking time to think about the second line. Then write out Amos 3:3 in the space below.

Reason #2 **Holiness is commanded by God.** If we don’t understand it, how can we respond in obedience? And if we can’t respond in obedience, how can we walk with a holy God? You will study this call to holiness in more detail in Lesson Two, but for now, record what you learn from 1 Peter 1:15-16.

Reason #3 **Holiness is part of fulfilling God’s purpose for my life.** Every believer has been created for God’s glory (Isaiah 43:7) and chosen to be holy. Read Ephesians 1:4 out loud and note when God purposed for every believer to be holy...and His motivation for doing so.

Reason #4 **Holiness is essential to acceptable worship.** True worship is not self-generated—it is the redeemed heart’s spontaneous response to the person and work of God. If we do not understand the essential nature of God (that He is holy), then our response in worship will be affected. We will not be adequately aware of our sin (and thus drawn to humble confession), nor will we be able to see God in all of His beauty (and thus drawn to heartfelt adoration and praise). In the space below, record the words of either Romans 12:1 or Psalm 29:2.

Reason #5 **Holiness is essential to effective prayer.** The word “hallowed” is closely related to the word “holy.” When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, the foundational request was “hallowed be Thy name.” If our ultimate desire is *not* for the holiness of God’s character to be manifested and honored, then our prayers are amiss. Read James 4:3.

Reason #6 **Holiness is emphasized in Scripture.** Holiness is the only thrice repeated attribute of God (one commentator describes it as the “attribute of attributes”) and the word, in noun and verb forms, is used over 900 times in Scripture. Where God puts emphasis, we should also put emphasis!

God is declared to be “Holy, Holy, Holy” in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4. Record the verses in which these words occur and the identity of the speakers. Conclude by writing out one or both of the verses.

God is acknowledged as “Holy, holy, holy” in:

Isaiah 6: _____

The speaker(s) _____

Revelation 4: _____

The speaker(s) _____

Reason #7 **Holiness is a prerequisite for seeing the LORD and enjoying heaven.** Do you yearn for heaven? Do you long to see your Lord? Do you earnestly desire to one day hear, “Well done...enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:21-23)? Finish each passage below.

a. Hebrews 12:14

“Pursue...holiness, without which _____.”

b. Revelation 21:27

“But there shall by no means enter it [heaven] anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those _____.”

Reason #8 **Holiness is not well understood in today’s culture.** It has been noted that most people have a better developed concept of sin than they have of holiness—although it seems the concept of sin is fading rather quickly! If we wish to truly understand holiness (and to be holy), then we must go to the Scriptures! (*This week’s lesson talks about holiness and gives you some thoughts as to what it includes, but Lesson Two will begin leading you into a much deeper understanding.*)

Read 1 Peter 1:13-16 (*you read vv. 15-16 in Reason #2*). What two things should believers not do or be? v. 14

Other reasons? As you think about the holiness of God, and the holiness believers are called to, record:

a. Additional reasons every believer should strive to grow in their understanding of holiness

or

b. The one reason listed above which most motivates you to desire and study holiness. Why did you pick that reason?

DAYS FOUR AND FIVE

“Who is _____ , _____ , among the _____?
 Who is _____ , _____ in _____...”
 _____ 15:11

The book of Leviticus is almost entirely dedicated to explaining how the people of Israel were to be holy (set apart) to the LORD. However, it is the book of Exodus which contains the first mention of the word “holy.”

1. Read Exodus 3:1-6 and answer the following questions.

- a. What did Moses see and hear? vv. 2-4

- b. *(Optional)* From your knowledge of Scripture, had God previously used fire to signify His presence? If so, when...and why might He use fire again?

- c. What commands did the LORD give to Moses? Why? v. 5

- d. What made the ground around the burning bush “holy”? Was it different from other ground on Mount Horeb? If so, how or why?

- e. How did Moses respond to this call from the LORD—and why? v. 6

- f. What lessons about approaching or coming near to God can you draw from this first mention of the word “holy”? *(After recording your own thoughts, you may consult a reliable commentary.)*

2. Read Exodus 19 and answer the following questions.

- a. What were the people of Israel to be to the LORD? v. 6

- b. Sum up the preparations they were to make in order to meet with their LORD. vv. 10-15

- c. What things did they see, hear or feel in this meeting with the LORD? vv. 16-20

- d. What warnings were given to the people? Why were they given? vv. 21-25

- e. What lessons about God were the children of Israel learning through this experience?

3. The last sixteen chapters of Exodus (chapters 25-40) primarily focus on instructions for the tabernacle. The tabernacle was the central place of worship for the people of Israel. It had three areas, each set apart from the others, and the whole of the tabernacle was set apart from the rest of the Israelite camp by lengths of linen hanging from pillars.

The linen hangings formed a court which held the altar of sacrifice and a laver (for washing hands and feet). Just past the laver, there was a structure supported by boards overlaid with gold. It had a tent roof made of curtains and animal skins. A screen of fine woven linen covered its door—and so this structure was set apart from the rest of the court.

This structure itself was divided into two sections: the larger one was called the Holy Place and the smaller, the Most Holy Place. The two were separated by a thick veil suspended from four pillars. The priests served the LORD within the Holy Place; however, the Most Holy Place was set apart even from the priests (with one exception).

- a. What was the purpose of the tabernacle (also called the sanctuary)? Exodus 25:8

- b. What took place above the mercy seat (which was in the Most Holy Place)? Exodus 25:21-22 and Leviticus 16:2

- c. What restrictions were put on access to the Most Holy Place (where the presence of the LORD was manifested)? Hebrews 9:6-8 and Leviticus 16 (*There is much detail here. If time is limited, read only 16:1-5.*)
- d. What lessons were the children of Israel learning about their God in the regulations for the tabernacle?

- e. If you have previously studied the tabernacle, you know that it was a copy, or shadow of “good things to come.” (Hebrews 10:1) Christ’s death on the cross has made the ceremonies of the tabernacle obsolete (Hebrews 8:13) and given us access through Him into the very presence of our God. (Hebrews 10:19-22) And not only does He give us access, but He also bids us to come “*boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” (Hebrews 4:16)

It should go without saying that our privilege of boldly entering into God’s presence does *not* imply that we may do so irreverently or thoughtlessly. We must still recognize the boundaries between God’s transcendent state and our human, “creaturely” state...and we must still be concerned about cleanliness and purity.

In what way(s) should we be concerned about cleanliness or purity when coming into the presence of the LORD?

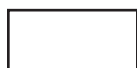
Should this concern for purity carry over into daily life (not just coming before the LORD in worship and prayer—but living daily in His presence)? If so, why?

What is one area of life in which you need to be more aware of the constant presence of the Holy One?

4. Based on the passages you have just studied, how would you define or describe “holiness”? (*Begin with the words, “Holiness is...” or “Holiness involves...”*)

5. As you have considered holiness as seen in the book of Exodus, what one insight stands out?

6. End your time of study by responding to the LORD in the boldness and reverence due the One who alone is holy. Begin with the words of your memory verse (also from Exodus!) and then initial the box when you are finished praying.



Lesson One

Meditations of my Heart

LORD, may the eyes of my understanding be enlightened, that I may know the hope of Your calling, the riches of Your glory and the exceeding greatness of Your power... Adapted from Ephesians 1:18-19a

DAYS ONE AND TWO

DAY THREE

DAYS FOUR AND FIVE

Notes: