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Living Like You Belong to God

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Kay Arthur, David & BJ Lawson

4minute
BIBLE STUDIES

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PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



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LIVING LIKE YOU BELONG TO GOD

In today's churches, the concept of *holiness* seems a bit archaic, or "old school." On the rare occasions the word *holy* comes into conversation, most people picture a preacher in a robe or a woman wearing a long skirt and her hair in a bun—individuals whose lives are devoid of fun, joy, and laughter.

Perhaps you associate the concept with an offensive holier-than-thou attitude sported by some self-appointed member of the piety police. Or does the word *holy* bring a sense of defeat and discouragement at the thought of the perfect life you know you will never attain?

Our goal in this study is to turn those misguided notions on their heads and help you see that in fact a life of true holiness is the key to true happiness. Rather than some arbitrary standard set by the church or an unreachable goal of sinless perfection, holiness is about

pleasing God, about living in such a way that it's clear you belong to Him. Holiness is what makes the believer unique and easily distinguishable from the unbeliever.

Although it's been neglected in recent years, holiness is a biblical idea, one that is mentioned over six hundred times in the Bible. It is even the key theme for some of the books in the Bible, such as Leviticus. If holiness is such a basic biblical concept, then we should know what it is and what it is supposed to look like in our lives.

In the next six weeks we will learn what holiness is, what God thinks about it, and how the practice of holiness should guide the daily life of a believer.



WEEK ONE

Although some people prefer to believe that a loving God looks upon all His creatures as being the same, from the very beginning He has chosen to set certain things and people apart from others. This week we'll look at some of the clear distinctions God has set to mark specific people and things as holy.

OBSERVE

As we begin our study we need to go back to the Creation account in order to see who God is and what His desire was from the very beginning.

***Leader:** Read Genesis 1:1–5 aloud. Have the group say aloud and...*

- mark every reference to **God**, including pronouns, with a triangle: 
- draw a cloud shape like this  around the word **separated**.

As you read the text, it's helpful to have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases. Do this throughout the study.

GENESIS 1:1–5

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

⁵ God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.


DISCUSS

- Look at where you marked *God* in this passage and list out all that He did.
- So you don't miss it, what specifically did God separate?
- Isn't that exciting? The first recorded words of God are "Let there be light." His first act was to separate the physical light from the physical darkness. And spiritually speaking, He has been separating light and darkness ever since. Keep that in mind as we continue our study on holiness.

OBSERVE

The people of Israel, God's chosen nation (Genesis 12), had been slaves in Egypt. God chose a man named Moses to lead them out and to serve as a mediator between them and Himself. The passage we're going to look at begins after God's chosen people had sinned greatly against Him. He forgave the sin but threatened to withdraw His presence from them. So Moses was pleading with God.

Leader: Read Exodus 33:15–16 aloud.

- Have the group draw a cloud around the word *distinguished*: 

DISCUSS

- What did Moses say distinguished Israel from all the other nations?
- So with that in mind, what did Moses want more than the knowledge the nation was forgiven?
- What about you? Would you be content to simply know your sins are forgiven, or do you want more than that? What distinguishes you from the world around you?

OBSERVE

As outlined in Leviticus 21, the priests were expected to preserve the holiness of the sanctuary and the uniqueness of the people of Israel. Therefore, they were subject to a higher standard than the average Israelite.

EXODUS 33:15–16

15 Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.

16 “For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?”

LEVITICUS 21:6

They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they present the offerings by fire to the LORD, the food of their God; so they shall be holy.

DEUTERONOMY 33:10

They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, and Your law to Israel. They shall put incense before You, and whole burnt offerings on Your altar.

Leader: Read *Leviticus 21:6* and *Deuteronomy 33:10* aloud. Have the group say and...

- put a **P** over each occurrence of the word **they**, referring to the **priests**.
- draw a cloud around the word **holy**.

INSIGHT

The word *profane* here means “to defile, make common, dishonor, to violate a covenant.”

DISCUSS



- What did you learn from marking the references to priests? What were they responsible for?

OBSERVE

Israel had not obeyed God’s laws, and the priests were partly to blame.

Leader: Read *Ezekiel 22:26* aloud. Have the group...

- put a **P** over each reference to **priests**, including pronouns.

- draw a cloud shape like this  around the words **holy** and **clean**.
- draw a cloud with a slash through it over the words **profane** and **unclean**, like this: 

DISCUSS

- What charges did God, speaking through Ezekiel, bring against the priests?
- We have seen that the priests were to teach Israel the difference between the clean and unclean. They were taught in Leviticus how they were to live in order to be an example to the nation. From all we have seen so far, were the priests following God's commands? Explain your answer.
- How seriously does God take making the distinction between holy and profane, and why?

EZEKIEL 22:26

Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

LEVITICUS 10:1–5

1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.


2 And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

3 Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what the LORD spoke, saying, ‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.’” So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

OBSERVE

As we’ve seen, it was the duty of the priests to guard the holiness of the nation. By strict obedience to God’s law, they showed themselves to be separate and made a clear distinction between holy and unholy.

Leader: Read Leviticus 10:1–5 aloud. Have the group...

- underline the references to **Nadab** and **Abihu**.
- mark every reference to **the Lord**, including pronouns, with a triangle: 

INSIGHT

Nadab and Abihu had been privileged to stand on the holy mount with Moses and their father (Exodus 24:9). Having heard the words of the Law, they knew what God required.

DISCUSS

- Were Nadab and Abihu doing what the Lord had commanded? Explain your answer.

- How does verse 1 describe the fire that they used?
- Was that a problem? Why?
- From what you have seen so far, how would you describe the attitude of Nadab and Abihu?
- Was God pleased with their worship? How did He respond?

INSIGHT

Fire from heaven is used twelve times in the Old Testament—six times as a sign of God’s approval and six times in judgment.

In this context *holy* means to be set apart from the common and to be treated with great respect. The priests treated God as common and with great disrespect.

- God took Nadab and Abihu’s disobedience seriously. Discuss how this relates to us today.

⁴ Moses called also to Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron’s uncle Uzziel, and said to them, “Come forward, carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary to the outside of the camp.”

⁵ So they came forward and carried them still in their tunics to the outside of the camp, as Moses had said.

- What was God's command in verse 3?
- Can you walk in disobedience and be in His presence?
- Can you enter God's presence without regard to His holiness? Explain your answer.

ROMANS 15:4

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

OBSERVE

The Old Testament passages we've looked at so far make clear God's concern with separating holy from profane in ancient times. But we need to know whether such distinctions still apply today. Let's look at some New Testament passages to find out.

Leader: Read Romans 15:4.

- Have the group say aloud and draw a squiggly line under the word **written**:



DISCUSS

- What did you learn from marking *written*, and how does it relate to our study?

OBSERVE

What does all of this talk about priests have to do with us?

Leader: Read 1 Peter 2:5, 9. Have the group say aloud and...

- circle each occurrence of the pronoun **you**, which refers here to **believers**.
- draw a cloud around the word **holy**.
- put a **P** over the word **priesthood**.

INSIGHT

The word *priesthood* here carries the idea of a fraternity, a body of priests. It is referring to all believers.

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about believers from these verses?
- According to verse 5, as priests what are they called to do?

1 PETER 2:5, 9

5 You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ....

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

ROMANS 12:1–2

¹ Therefore I [Paul] urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

OBSERVE

Although Jesus' death on the cross ended the need for blood sacrifices once and for all, Christians today are still expected to present sacrifices to God. Let's look at how this ties in to the call to be different from the world around us.

Leader: Read Romans 12:1–2 aloud. Have the group say and...

- circle the pronouns *you* and *your*, which refer here to **believers**.
- draw a cloud around the word **holy**.

DISCUSS

- As a priest, each believer has the incredible privilege of coming into the presence of God, but with that privilege also comes responsibility. What are the responsibilities of the believer-priest?
- If the believer-priest does this, what will the result be? Explain your answer.

OBSERVE

Let's look at two more passages that highlight the responsibilities of believer-priests.

Leader: Read 1 Peter 1:14–16 and Ephesians 5:6–10. Have the group say aloud and...

- circle the pronouns **yours, your, yourselves, and you**.
- draw a cloud around the word **holy** as well as the phrase **you shall be holy for I am holy**.
- draw a box around the words **former** and **formerly**:

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about believer-priests in these verses?
- How does what you see in these verses relate to what we saw earlier in this lesson regarding God's people making a distinction between the holy and unholy?

1 PETER 1:14–16

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

¹⁶ because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

EPHESIANS 5:6–10

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them;

⁸ for you were formerly darkness, but

now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

⁹ (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

- From all we have seen this week, what is the connection between separation and holiness? What does it look like to be separate?
- As we bring this lesson to a close, discuss how the truths you've seen have impacted you and how that will shape your personal choices.
- How does the way we handle these truths affect our representation of Jesus in the world?

WRAP IT UP

The first recorded words of God in Scripture are “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). His first recorded act, after creating the heavens and the earth, was to separate light from darkness. This actual physical separation became a metaphor for a spiritual truth. In John 1, Jesus is described as the Light of the world shining into the darkness. In Matthew 5, Jesus taught that, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, believers are the light of the world (verse 14). “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (verse 16). Jesus then went on to describe holy living in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7).

Light is to be the characteristic of Christians. We are to be clearly separated from the darkness. No gray, no shade, no shadows. We, as people who name the name of Christ must be light—bright pure light, shining in the darkness so that everyone will see the truth and some will even seek our Father.

Are you living as a child of light? Is your holiness clearly visible to a dark world?

Sometimes, in too many places, the people called the church are living in the shadows. Spend some time in prayer, asking God to show you areas of darkness in your own life, areas where you are not walking in holiness. If God shows you an area of darkness, confess it as sin, knowing that He has promised to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Then walk in light; live out the holiness that shows you belong to God.



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