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## HOLINESS

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**Exodus. 3:1-6; I Samuel 2:2; Psalm 99:1-9; Isaiah 6:1-12; and Revelation 4:1-11**

How do you feel about your relationship to God at this moment? If you are doing well, or if you are feeling "down," knowing about Holiness will greatly help you!

Sadly, most of the churches in America will never preach on sin or Holiness for fear of offending someone's sensibility or bringing conviction on someone who does not want to be convicted. Thus, in an age of exaggerated political correctness, many pastors and church leaders will play it safe, seeking not to offend anyone, thinking this will prevent them from causing division. They think they are safe if they tiptoe around such subjects rather than attacking them head-on, and presenting a challenge for people to live by. The result of *playing it safe* has created much more division than could possibly be known. It has left many people in the church suspended in a fog of ambiguity and relativism, alienated from a deeper, more complete knowledge of our Lord.

This attitude has led countless people in the church into that bog, and has even filtered into secular society, causing misunderstandings and suspensions that lead away from Truth. One cannot know truth if one has convinced oneself not to see it, or has prevented others from seeing it. People are left not knowing, or not even desiring to know, the great truths of the Christian faith. Rather, they are seeking only what is interesting and exiting in the moment of the *now*.

In these new belief systems, God is placed in a nice box, removing the knowledge of His majesty, wrath, and judgment from us. In so doing, we have placed God in a bog of indistinctness, preventing ourselves from the realization of who He is, and what He has done for us. When this happens, the average person in the pew will fail to see Holiness as relative, so, they will live life based on what feels good, and what they desire. With these ideas, they will fail to grow in maturity and faith, and they will not be able to take His call to the next level of action, as He collectively calls on us to do.

Why do we fear Holiness and conviction? Most secular people, and even some Christians, perceive Holiness in the wrong way. They see it as a set of rules and judgments, not the majesty and awe of God. They fail to see the benefits of seeking and knowing Holiness that, in turn, produces character, maturity, and growth. They fail to see the harsh reality and destructive nature

of sin, how much they need to be forgiven, and how much Christ is willing to forgive.

God calls us, not to conform to the world, but to Him. This requires conviction, and the willingness to persevere through difficult times and people who have opposing ideas. We do this because we desire to because of what He has done for us, not because we feel obligated, or forced. Holiness is also a trust that many do not see, a trust that He is there, and that we can have comfort and confidence in Him in all aspects of life. Otherwise, we remain chained to the despair of loneliness and self-destruction.

When I was a small child, my grandma taught me to say grace before each meal. She taught me these effortless, easy to remember, yet profound words, "*God is great, God is good, and thank You for this food!*" It was a very simple and uncomplicated prayer, but it had an insightful, reflective meaning and depth to it.

Even though, as a child, I did not comprehend the depth, this effortless prayer did help me understand, at a young age, that God was different. I was able to see that God was not only my Provider, who gave me the food I was about to eat, but also that He is different from me. He was not like my father or grandfather, or that pastor who scared me. He had an awesome-ness to Him that mere people did not have. Yes, He provided, but this was not what He was all about. This prayer meant to me that there is much more to God than the food that was in front of me.

Sadly, most people seem to seek God only for what they can get from Him. They see only the food, not from whence it came. If all we seek is a divine vending machine, we will not see much in God, nor will we respond much with what He does give. We have to understand who He is before we can understand and respond to what He does, what He did for us. I did not fully comprehend this prayer of grace until my seminary days when I started to learn more about Holiness. I realized further that by knowing who God is, I would come to appreciate Him more, and would strive harder to make my life more pleasing to Him.

This prayer is about whom God is, that He is Great and Good. In His greatness is purity, Holiness, and, of course, righteousness. These are some of the things that describe His character. These give us, within our ability to comprehend and understand, glimpses of who He is. God, in being, transcends space and time. He is omnipresent (all present everywhere), and omniscient (all knowing all of the time). He is unknowable to our limited and finite being and understanding. It is just as we are unknowable to a worm, or to the bacteria that resides within us.

So, how can we know Him? By what and how He has revealed Himself to us. These revelations are coupled to and filtered through our limited human

understanding. Because He has sought us, and revealed Himself to us, we can now comprehend Him in a limited way. And, what we need to know about His character and attributes is His Holiness.

Holiness is the fundamental aspect and essence of the core nature of who God is, that He is all pure and perfect, sinless. God is unique and unapproachable by anything that is not pure itself. Because He is so perfect, and we are so sinful, He is the object of dread and fear to us! Just as He awes us, He also terrifies us. He is great! His pureness cannot tolerate any form of sin (Isa. 6:5; Hab. 1:13). Therefore, we cannot approach Him. That is why as Christ lived in perfection, without sin, His purity and sinless state was imputed upon us. He took our place of wrath with His perfect life, so we can be seen as pure, covered by His nature so we can commune with Him.

Because He is holy, He is also just in all that He does, including His judgments (Gen. 18:25; Psalm 7:11; 96:13; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5-16; 7:12; Rev. 16:5-7; 19:1-4). He is good! We can trust that He always makes the right choice in bestowing the call upon our hearts. He has what is best for us in mind. Even when bad things happen, we can trust in His providence, and that He will bring us through.

The primary attribute of His character that is given to us is His Holiness. Holiness means *pure* righteousness, right actions, and right being. Because He is *set apart*, far beyond us, He is the *Object* of awe to us.

There is a profound difference between God, humanity, and creation. God is transcendent and majestic, which causes an imposing barrier. This runs the range from *adoration* to *dread*. He is ultimately perfect, and we are ultimately sinful, in need of His love and forgiveness. Thus, we can see how important this subject is, as it will show us how we really are, filled with sin, and in need of a Savior.

Even in God's pure state, He is filled with love, forgiveness, and compassion, when we turn our hearts to Him (Isa. 51:5-6; 56:1; 63:1; Rom. 3:25-26; 1 John 1:9). He is of more *good* than we can ever imagine! Our punishment has already taken place. Christ is the One who took it on our behalf.

Holiness also means being *set apart*, because pure holiness cannot be in contact with that which is not, thus God is *set apart* (sometimes put theologically as *apartness* and *otherness*) from us, and from all that is sin. Thus, we can have no direct contact with Him. The Fall caused a great partition that we could not bridge, and it separated us from God. God is greater than we could ever imagine!

This attribute of Holiness shows us we are set before a God who is transcendent, with pure, moral perfection. His virtue surpasses not only our understanding, but also our ability to mimic it. This majesty is more than just a word in a praise song; it is a picture of God's ultimate superiority. He is God. There is only one God, and, guess what? You are not HE! If you get this point, you will be light-years ahead of most people who live, and believe, that the universe orbits around them, and where God is an afterthought, or a scheduled appointment on Sundays at 9am, when there is time.

Holiness equals Pureness; this refers to the God who does what is right, always, and continually, even if, and when we do not understand it. God's nature is Holy, which means He is great and His actions are holy; this means He is good (James 1:17). Holiness is what makes Him great and good. This is very hard for us to understand, especially in the event of the loss of a loved one, and most especially, a child. Knowing that God never does what is wrong helps us to trust and rely on Him, and the deeper aspects of the faith are manifested as we start to yield our lives over to Him.

When tragedy happens, we are quick to blame God. Yet, we have to take comfort in the thought that there is no evil in God, thus there can be no malevolent action against us. He may allow things to come to pass that are caused by our sin, or the sin of others, but He continues to work things out, even to our benefit and good, further proving His goodness (Rom. 8:28-39).

Because of His perfection and purity He cannot tolerate any form of sin (Hab. 1:13)! He is absolutely just in His ability to judge, and is the ultimate *Promise Keeper* (Gen. 18:25; Psalm 7:11; 96:13; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5-16; 7:12; Rev. 16:5-7; 19:1-4). This means we have to be perfect. Now, how many of you have ever tried to be perfect for an hour, let alone for a lifetime? You may think you are, but your spouse or parent would have a very different tale to tell—Huh? This means we are in a state of subjugation before Him. It is not a pleasant way to exist.

Yet, this also means He is the ultimate Pardoner of sin, counteracting that hopeless state we should be in because of sin! This may seem like a contradiction--and it is, in our logic, but remember, God is beyond logic. Because God is just, He is active in saving His people from the various covenants and law of the OT and makes possible the state of Grace we enjoy today (Isa. 51:5-6; 56:1; 63:1; 1 John 1:9). So, when God justifies us, He is rescuing us by paying the cost for that sin, which our Lord Jesus Christ did on our behalf. We become justified by our faith in Christ! So, Holiness and Justification are connected, and justice is done (Rom. 3:25-26)!

There is also a call for us to heed and to respond to Holiness. In His majesty are pure love, glory, and goodness, that seek us out, bridging the chasm dug out by our sin, and which divided all of humanity. *Majesty* calls for

worship, honor, reverence, and adoration. As John said, *He is Love* and *He is Light*, there is no darkness or reason to fear Him, other than the *fear* of awe, reverence, and respect (Prov. 3:5).

When you get God's goodness you should have no problem to be willing to surrender all to Him (Gal. 2:20-21)!

Holiness and Glory means He alone is worthy to be praised. We are to seek to please Him over and against our pride and personal agendas. This includes anything God has touched. When Moses approached God, the ground was holy, and he had to remove his sandals. God's presence and being there made it holy--set apart for His purpose and reason.

The objects for the Temple were also set apart for use in order to honor and worship God (Ex. 25-28). Thus, these, too, were Holy, in the sense that they were put aside for the purpose and reason to glorify God. Some of the ordinary objects, as well as the ground we use and walk on, were made to glorify Him, yet the rest of the objects and ground were normal. Another picture of God; He is majesty, and set apart. We are normal, needing His love and approval.

We are called to be Holy! This means we are different from other people. We are not better; we are saved by His Grace, and set apart for His service and glory. We are to do our best to understand and learn about Jesus so we can be more like Him in our character and behaviors. This does not mean we share in His divine nature, for He is still the One and only God and we are still human, but now we have a place in eternity and fellowship in Him!

There are two categories of God's nature and character: communicable and incommunicable. The incommunicable are the types of God's character we do not share nor can we emulate, such as His omnipresence, as we cannot be everywhere all at once let alone two places at a time. The communicable is what we can share, that God asks us to emulate in the practice of our lives, such as goodness and holiness.

Our Holiness is to reflect our gratitude and love for what He has given us, for His rescue of our soul. This is a response to His great gift of atonement and salvation. Because He saved us, we should live a life pleasing to Him. This does not mean we are perfect, but we can strive our best to be our best for His glory!

The work and cross of Christ is so essential for us. Without Jesus, we could never know God, because He covers our sin and replaces that separation with an intimate relationship. This is called *Atonement*; Christ covered us so we can come before God as clean and pure. Our responsibility

is to pursue Holiness by living a righteous life, which will reflect what Christ has done for us!

Being a receiver of Holiness as a Christian is freedom, because of the bond we have by being in Christ. *Bond* means we have been grafted in Him, and the Holy Spirit is living in us. We do not have the freedom to do whatever we desire, thus sinning and breaking God's moral law. We must surrender, and yield ourselves to Him to obtain true freedom (Rom. 6:1-14) (*Instruments* in v. 13 refers to a weapon, as soldiers presenting arms to their Sergeant!) Pursuing holiness means we live with the knowledge that our sin is covered (Atonement) and must remain dead (Gal. 2:20; 3:20).

There is only one kind of people--sinners--and one kind of Holiness--Jesus! God places His Holiness in us. We are not to be copies, but real, as Christ is exhibited in us, and to be filled with His fullness (Eph. 3:19), not ours. We must see our sin and weakness, and be humble before the Holiness of God. We may not be able to overcome all of our sins, but our desire must be to go in the right direction.

Our response is to pursue Holiness to the best of our ability, to be communicable in our faith, as in infectious. We can do this by growing in character and living righteously by Christ's example. Our concern and pursuit is to learn and grow in Him in maturity and faith through obedience and the practice of the Christian walk (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Heb. 12:10-17; 1 John 1:5-2:1). We may not be able to be perfect as He is perfect, but we can strive our best in receiving His Spirit and Word, and applying it in all aspects of our lives.

Holiness does not mean we set ourselves apart from others whom we do not like, or whom we consider sinful, because we are all sinful. Remember, Jesus Himself had direct contact with the sinners of life, and called the worst sinners, like Paul, to spread His Gospel. Yet, we are not to yield to or undertake their sins and temptations. Being salt without losing our saltiness, or being light not hidden under a bowl means being there in love and care without becoming like the world (Matt. 5:13-16). As A Christian, we all called to reach out and be effective to those around us, so our salt will remain salty and our light can shine (Duet. 30:1-10; Matt. 5-6; Eph. 4:17-5:14; 1 Pet. 1:13-22).

Our human tendency is to try to persuade others to agree with our views. God's purpose is to get us in line with His views. Yet, so many Christians spend all of their time as pursuers of arguments, not pursuers of Holiness! There are times when we need to take a stand for correct doctrine and virtue with His Word, and there are times we need to separate childish, petty things from real things. For example, I love the KJV Bible, but thinking that the KJV is the only true version of God's Word is just plain stupidity, and goes against Hebrews 4:11-16. Yet, so many fight for this belief, and do not

pursue what they are called to do! So, all of our church energies are put into conflict and not into perusing Holiness and His call!

What effect will Holiness have on me? When we grasp the incredible Holiness of God, and start to realize the inconceivable magnitude of the forgiveness we have received by what Christ has done, it takes hold and our lives are changed forever (Eph. 3:18)! We are humbled, and motivated to yield our will to His, causing us to hate sin, and preparing us to take our faith seriously with more conviction and passion, as we have a deeper sense of reverence for God. It helps conform our character to His standards and we begin virtuous living, embracing the beauty of the holy life. It allows us to proclaim His glory to others with excitement and confidence. We will realize that we are called to be of noble character, set apart for His purpose. We are no longer of this world; neither do we desire its distractions or causing others to be distracted from perusing Christ (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Heb. 12:10-17; 1 John 1:5-2:1).

The result of pursuing Holiness in the Christian life is realizing the importance of passion and conviction so we are determined in our faith. We have a deeper and more unwavering trust and belief for our Lord that gives us more faith; so all aspects of our life are transformed. Holiness will help us cultivate a life long pursuit of knowing and making known our Lord Jesus Christ. Being pursuers of righteousness, seeking His knowledge through His Word, as well as seeking growth and maturity in our faith development, put into action, will cause a *fire* we do not nor cannot put out.

So, let us go out and live as if our life belongs to our Lord, as it does, and be Holy!

More Scriptures to mediate upon: Exodus. 3:1-6; Lev. 11:44-45; Deut. 30:1-10; Josh. 24:19; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 99:1-9; Isaiah. 1:4; 5:18-19, 24; 6:1-12; 30:8-11; 31:1; 41:14-20; 45; 9-12; 57:15; Ezekiel 39:7; Amos 4:2; John 17:11; Acts 5:3-4; 32; Eph. 4:17-5:14; 1 Pet. 1:13-22; Revelation. 4:1-11; 15:4

## **Youth Lesson on Holiness: Holiness Talk**

IF you were playing the word association game and someone said the word *holiness*, what would you think of? You'd probably associate holiness with God. But did you ever stop to think about what God's holiness really is? What does the Bible mean when it says, "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty*" (Isaiah 6:3)?

The word translated "holy" in the Old Testament means, "separated" or "cut apart." God is holy in that He is absolutely separate from everything He has created. He is a cut above everything in the universe. He is perfect, pure, separate from the slightest hint of sin, error or evil.

We've played a word-association game; now let's play an imagination game. Try visualizing perfection. It is not easy, is it? Try visualizing purity. That's just as difficult. But how are we to understand God's holiness if we can't picture what it means?

God provided a Way for us to understand Him, a model for us to picture. Jesus said, *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father"* (John 14:9). If we want to "see" the holiness of God more clearly, we need to look at the life of God's Son. Jesus was holy in that He was perfect. He never made a mistake. He never miscalculated, misspoke, or misjudged. He always did the right thing at the right time in the right way. God is like that.

Jesus was holy in that He was and is pure. He never sinned (can you imagine that?). Yes, He walked among sinners. He mingled with them, ate with them, laughed with them, cried with them, healed them, and loved them. But He never became attached to their sinful attitudes or actions. And, with love and care, He called them to leave their lives of sin (John 8:11). God is like that.

But that's not all. Our holy God Expects us to be holy too: *"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'"* (1 Peter 1:15-16). That's a tough standard--so tough that we'll never reach it in this life fully, but we must try anyway. But we can get closer to God's standard of holiness every day by following Christ in our prayers, devotions, and relationships. And we can rejoice that a day is coming when we too will stand in God's presence as holy people singing *"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty"!!!!*

So let us go out and live as our life belongs to our Lord, as it does, and be holy!

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