



Daily Devotionals: God Is Holy | August 22, 2021

Day 1 – Devotional

Holiness isn't a word many of us use in our daily vocabulary. We may hear someone utter, "Holy cow!" out of surprise or when they're excited, but we don't hear much about holiness in our culture as a concept. You've probably most often come across the idea of holiness in worship songs or when reading the Bible, but it would be helpful to gain a better understanding of what this word actually means.

Typically, when we think about something being holy or when we think about God's holiness, we think about something that is morally good. So and so is a *holy* person because he or she is always going to church, quoting Scripture, serving others, praying, and so on.

And when we think of holiness in relation to God, we often tend to think about how God is inherently good and how He opposes all sin and evil. This is not an incorrect understanding of holiness, but it's also not quite complete.

Holy means to be set apart. So, for instance, when the Bible talks about the "holy vessels" being brought into the Temple (**2 Chronicles 5:5**), they are referring to specific items that are *set apart* to the Lord. These items—a lampstand, a table, etc.—aren't intended for ordinary, everyday use. They're intended to be used for a specific purpose. In that sense, they are holy.

You probably have some idea of this with some items you own—a set of fine china that is used only on special occasions, a particular knife you use only when you go hunting, a certain journal you use to record your most intimate thoughts. All of these items are "holy" because they are set apart for their uniquely intended purpose.

When we think about God's holiness, we must also take into consideration God's otherness, His unique difference from us. In fact, He is so "set apart" from us (in purity, in goodness, in charity, in joy, in faithfulness, in justice, in power, etc.) that—before Jesus—we could not even come into His presence.



A good biblical example of this is in Exodus when Moses sees the burning bush (**Exodus 3**). God tells him to take off his sandals and not get any closer because he is on *holy ground*. Moses must show the proper respect by taking off his sandals and not getting too close to the bush because its power could harm Moses.

Perhaps *Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark* had the right idea of this when they shot the famous scene at the end of the movie where the Ark of the Covenant is opened, and the hero wisely instructs those with him to close their eyes because the power coming out from the Ark is dangerous. God's presence destroys the Nazi soldiers who thought they could harness this power. Some are saved because, in their humility, they didn't look upon God's holiness. While all the others, ignoring God's holiness in His presence, are destroyed.

While this movie is an obvious work of fiction, there are accounts in the Bible where people are killed by coming into improper contact with the Ark of the Covenant (**see 1 Samuel 6:19-21 and 2 Samuel 6:7, for example**).

The Ark was believed to be a representation of God's holy presence and power on earth. Once the Temple was built, the Ark moved into what was known as the "Holy of Holies" or "the most holy place" behind a thick curtain that only the chief priest could enter once a year. Only *ONCE PER YEAR!* There was even such fear about the chief priest entering God's presence that, even after performing the proper purification rites, the other priests would tie a rope around the chief priest's ankle in case he was killed for being impure in God's presence.

Considering all of this, God's holiness is not to be taken lightly. He is so different from us that even improperly stepping into His presence has dire consequences, just because of who He is.

With this in mind, when we read in the Bible about God's holiness, it isn't as surprising when we read about people being afraid in the presence of angels or even of God Himself. They don't want to be struck dead! That is why Isaiah reacts the way that he did in **Isaiah 5-6**.

We'll spend time in that text tomorrow. For now, take a few moments to watch the video below from The Bible Project on God's holiness and reflect on the questions below.



Questions for reflection:

1. What do you think of when you hear the word “holy?” What does God’s holiness mean to you?
2. Why do you think it’s good that God is different than you? Why is His holiness a thing to be celebrated?
3. Because God’s holiness can also be dangerous, there is a need to “make ourselves right” with God. The truth is, we cannot do this on our own. How does the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus justify you (make you right) with God? How can this be misunderstood by both Christians and non-Christians?



Day 2 – Look at the book

For today's work, let's look at the main text for this week: **Isaiah 6**. Here, you will read about Isaiah's encounter directly with God. Pay careful attention to Isaiah's response to God and His holiness.

As you read, do three things:

1. Star any time an aspect of holiness comes up
2. Circle responses to God's holiness
3. Underline any personally significant words or phrases

Isaiah's Commission

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of His robe filled the temple. **2** Above Him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. **3** And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of His glory.”

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. **7** With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”



9 He said, “Go and tell this people:

“‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding;
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’

10 Make the heart of this people calloused;
make their ears dull
and close their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.”

11 Then I said, “For how long, Lord?”

And He answered:

“Until the cities lie ruined
and without inhabitant,
until the houses are left deserted
and the fields ruined and ravaged,

12 until the Lord has sent everyone far away
and the land is utterly forsaken.

13 And though a tenth remains in the land,
it will again be laid waste.

But as the terebinth and oak
leave stumps when they are cut down,
so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”

Questions for reflection:

1. What has reading these verses done to your sense of God being holy?
2. Are there responses to God’s holiness in the text that you need to emulate?
3. What invitations do you sense God giving to you after this reading?



Day 3 – Scripture Survey

As we look at God’s holiness this week, we want to see what the whole story of Scripture has to say. Where else in Scripture can we read about God’s holiness?

Take a few moments to slowly read through the passages below. As you read, ask yourself these three questions:

1. What does this passage teach me about God’s holiness?
2. What questions do I have about this?
3. God, what are you inviting me into as I read and look through these verses?

Exodus 3:1-15; 4:1-17

Numbers 20:1-13

2 Samuel 6:1-15

Luke 4:31-37



Day 4 – Story Work

Holiness has probably always seemed like a very “churchy” word, but hopefully you now have a better sense of its full meaning. After the past three days of reflection, take time to read some of the passages below and then reflect on your own life. Today, we really want to press into how God’s holiness intersects with our own stories.

To begin today, read both **Psalm 24** and **Psalm 99**. Then use the questions below to interact with the theme of God’s holiness.

1. Reflect on how you have understood God’s holiness in your life. Have you ever felt like you weren’t good enough for God or that He wouldn’t want you? What made you feel that way? If you haven’t felt this way, have you interacted with someone who has talked this way?
2. What was the result of that mindset? How did that affect your faith, your relationships, or your perception of yourself? How did it affect your relationship with God?
3. What does it mean to you that Jesus, being perfectly holy Himself, chose to face death on our behalf to allow us to enter God’s holy presence?



4. Lastly, go directly to God with your thoughts and feelings.
 - a. Take 5 minutes and give thanks to God for sending Jesus to be our holy substitute, enabling us to enter God's presence with boldness!
 - b. Take 5 more minutes to bask in God's holy presence.
 - c. Take 5 more minutes asking God for help in making you holy.



Day 5 – Response

For this last day, let's slow down and pay attention to God's invitation as a result of our work this week. Find a quiet space and silence any technology around you. Spend time reviewing your devotions this week. Read the passage from **1 Peter** below and then jot down your thoughts to the following reflection questions:

1 Peter 1:14-16 says, "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 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.'"

As you look over this week, what words, phrases, or Scriptures have stood out to you? What was the most significant thing? Why?

How has your perspective of and relationship to God changed as you have better understood holiness? Are there barriers preventing you from being in God's holy presence? If so, what is the source of these barriers?

What is God inviting you to DO as a response to this week's reflections? How can you pursue holiness like Peter exhorts us to this week?



Consider some of these suggestions as possible action steps as you step into living this week's truths:

- Write a prayer praising God for His holiness and share it with your family and life group. Make it a prayer you use together for the next week.
- If you have put barriers up in your life preventing you from drawing close to God, reach out to a trusted Christian friend or discuss this in your life group. Ask them to encourage and pray for you to recognize that Jesus has removed any barriers between us and God.
- Ask a trusted Christian friend or family member for help identifying areas for you to pursue holiness. Then, create an action plan to help you pursue holiness in that area. Share your plan with your trusted friend for accountability.