

Holiness: A Family Trait

Psalm 99; Isaiah 6:1-4

INTRODUCTION

Question: what word or words come to mind when you hear the following **words:** **Candy?** How about **Sunset?** How about **Bride?** Here's the tricky one...**Holiness?**

Holiness isn't exactly an easy subject to "sell." It's not one of the top ten topics people look for in a Christian bookstore; there aren't a lot of hit songs about holiness.

"**Holiness**" is discussed in theology classes, but rarely in dinner table conversations. "**Holy**" is an adjective we apply to "Bible," "Communion," and "the night Christ was born." But how many contemporary Christians are really interested in devoting serious thought or discussion to holiness? We don't mind talking about holiness as an abstract concept. But if that concept gets too personal or starts to interfere with our lifestyle, we can quickly become uncomfortable.

So...what does it mean to be holy? The authors of *Seeking Him* provide helpful **words:** "*Holiness can be defined on two levels.*

_____ is what God imparts to us when we become His children. Since God is holy and we are sinners, we are reconciled to God by the blood of Christ shed on the cross (Colossians 1:19-22). God imparts Christ's righteousness to us and makes us holy and blameless before Him. That's our spiritual position in Christ. We have been separated from sin and set apart to God.

_____ (or practical holiness) on the other hand, is the outworking and fruit of positional holiness, evidenced by the way we think and live. Because we belong to God and His Holy Spirit indwells us, we are commanded and divinely equipped to live according to His will every day, in every way." (*Seeking Him*, p. 103)

Holiness may not be at the top of our list of things to talk about but let me remind you that those in heaven never stop talking about it! And the Scriptures are full of exhortations to make much of God because He is holy.

With that in mind, please turn in your Bible to **Psalm 99**. Did you note a repeating phrase and thought? **99:3, 5 & 9**

For this morning, we are going to explore not the positional holiness granted to each child of God at conversion but the personal (or practical) holiness that we are called to pursue and exhibit in our lives.

Please note...

I. The _____ of Holiness

The beauty of holiness, as it shines forth in the Scripture, is seen in **two related but distinct ideas.**

Holiness is about being...

A. Set _____

The word "*holy*" comes from a root that means "*to cut, to separate.*" It means "*to be set apart, to be distinct, to be different.*" Throughout the Scripture, we find that God set apart certain things and places and people for Himself; they were consecrated for His use. **See Exodus 16:23; Leviticus 27:30 and Exodus 26:33.**

In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was set apart by God to be a "*holy nation*" (**Exodus 19:6**). Not only were the Israelites set apart **by** God—they were also set apart **for** God. "*I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine,*" **God told His people** (**Leviticus 20:26**). The biblical concept of holiness carries with it a sense of belonging to God. In the **New Testament**, God set apart a new body comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. He called it the church. The Greek term "*ekklesia*" means "*a called-out assembly.*" The church is not a building or merely an institution; it is a body of believers who have been called out of this world and set apart for God's holy purposes.

To be “*set apart*” is not a punishment; it is not an attempt on God’s part to deprive us or to condemn us to a joyless lifestyle. It is a priceless privilege—it is a call

- *to belong, to be cherished, to enter into an intimate love relationship with God Himself, much as a groom declares his intent to set his bride apart from all other women to be his beloved wife*
- *to fit into the grand, eternal plan of our redeeming God for this universe*
- *to experience the exquisite joys and purposes for which we were created*
- *to be freed from all that destroys our true happiness*

Child of God...holiness is beautiful because you are set apart from the rest for His pleasure and His purposes.

There's more...yes, set apart and...

B. Morally _____

In this sense, to be holy is to reflect the moral character of a holy God. If you’ve ever tried to wade through the book of **Leviticus**, you may have found yourself wondering, “*Why did God bother to give all those detailed instructions about cleansing and ceremonial purity?*” God intended those regulations to be an object lesson to the children of Israel—and to us. He wants us to understand that He is holy, and that holiness is not an option for those who belong to Him. He wants us to know that He is concerned with every detail and dimension of our lives. **He wants us to understand the blessings of holiness and the consequences of unholy living.**

Holiness is not just for some select few spiritual giants; it is not just for pious people who sit around all day with nothing to do but “be holy.” Holiness is extremely practical. In her book **Holiness: The Heart God Purifies**, Nancy Leigh DeMoss writes: “*Holiness is for moms who battle a sense of uselessness and discouragement and who are tempted to escape into self-pity, romance novels, or the arms of an attentive man. It is for students who are constantly bombarded with pressure to conform to the world and to indulge in ungodly forms of entertainment. It is for lonely widows, divorcées, and singles who are struggling to stay*

sexually abstinent. It is for husbands and wives who wrestle with bitterness toward mates who have abused or abandoned them. It is for men who are tempted to cheat on their expense reports or their wives or to abdicate [relinquish, hand over, abandon, give up] their spiritual leadership in the home.” (DeMoss, Holiness: The Heart God Purifies, p. 33)

“*Everyone who names the name of the Lord*” is called to live a holy life! But it’s important to realize that God would not command us to do anything without also enabling us to do it. **He knows we cannot possibly be holy apart from Him..**

The beauty of holiness...next, please note...

II. The _____ of Holiness

Can you guess the enemy? _____

Before you yield to temptation, try reminding yourself of these consequences.

What are they?

A. Sin _____

Sin never pays what it promises.

B. Sin _____

The more ground you concede to sin, the more you dull your capacity for truth. As your conscience is violated, you gradually lose your moral compass—your ability to discern right from wrong.

C. Sin _____

Sin lures us with the illusion that it is the doorway to freedom. The truth is that those who dance with sin ultimately become sin’s slaves. “*The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.*” (Proverbs 5:22)

D. Sin _____

Most of us have become so familiar with sin that we no longer see it as a deadly monster. **What's the answer?** Repentance! Do you need to return to God? Have you become comfortable with “*a certain level of sin*” in your life? Is God opening your eyes to see the seriousness of your sin before Him?

The beauty of holiness, the enemy of holiness, lastly...

III. Two _____ for Holiness

Why pursue holiness? Let me share **TWO** incentives for the pursuit of personal holiness.

Above all other reasons, we are to be holy ...

A. Because God is _____

Isaiah 6 records Isaiah's life-transforming vision of God and subsequent call to prophetic ministry. It contains the dramatic testimony of a sinful man who had a life-changing encounter with God and lived to tell about it. Isaiah's gaze was lifted above and beyond his physical surroundings and he received a vision of God that immediately, completely, and permanently changed his life. And God's Spirit moved Isaiah to record his testimony in order to call you and me to a high view of God. Here's the point: **YOUR VIEW OF GOD IS EVERYTHING!** Jeremiah 9:23-24 puts it this way: *"Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understand and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."*

As a photograph is an image of an object, so our lives are intended to portray the image of God. People are supposed to be able to look at Christians and see what God is like! In our everyday life and conduct, we are to reflect what God is like and what it means to belong to Him and to be His redeemed, "*set apart*" people. Our lives are to make God believable to our world. As they see His image in us, they will be moved to worship and glorify Him (Matthew 5:16).

APPLICATION: *What does your life reflect to those around you?* Do your attitudes, words, and behavior give others an accurate picture of God? Or do you sometimes profane His holiness—perhaps by a complaining or controlling spirit, by harsh or angry words, by participating in coarse conversation, or laughing at off-color humor? Because God is holy, we must be holy. And here's the good news—because God is holy, we **can** be holy. Through His grace in Christ, God provides the needed **power** along with the **desire** to live holy.

B. Because _____ is God's

goal for every believer

God's goal in saving you was not just to make your few years on planet Earth easier or more enjoyable. He had an eternal end in view. The apostle Paul reminds us that God "*chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him*" (Ephesians 1:4). Your holiness is not secondary to whatever other goals you may have for your life—it is God's supreme purpose for your life. *It is something He desired, planned, and made provision for before He even created the world.* Not only is it our individual calling to be holy but also it is our collective calling, as the body of Christ. The church is a living organism, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God and we are called the bride of Christ. And the stated intent of our Bridegroom for His bride is that "*he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish*" (Ephesians 5:27).

CONCLUSION

Where do we go from here? There is indeed a wedding coming. And you can be a part of it! **Believing the gospel does make an eternal difference.**

Child of God.....Personal holiness is about the heart. How important is holiness to you? How much thought, attention, and effort do you devote to the pursuit of holiness? Are you intentional about putting away everything that is displeasing to God and living a holy life?