IMPORTANT STUFF ABOUT GOD (no. 3)

Holy, Holy, Holy

(prologue)

People use the word *holy* in all kinds of ways today, often unrelated to God. The formula is simple. To express surprise or disgust, just add *holy* to another word. Think: *holy cow, holy moly, holy smoke, holy mackerel,* and so on. “*Holy …*” even has its own Wikipedia entry, devoted specifically to Robin from the 1960s TV show *Batman*.

The world doesn’t really understand *holy*.

Neither do many Christians, even though *holy* is in lots of the songs and sayings. Have you ever thought of *holy* as “really, really good” or maybe even “one-hundred-percent perfect?” Most of us have. But the true meaning of *holy* is much deeper and way more amazing.

The idea of being holy runs throughout the whole Bible, from the first pages when God declares the seventh day *holy* (Genesis 2:3), all the way to the last pages when four strange creatures repeatedly sing, “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty*” (Revelation 4:8).

From beginning to end, the Bible declares that God is holy, Jesus is holy, and the Spirit is holy. But the Bible also says this surprising thing: God’s people are holy. If you follow Jesus, you. are. holy. What does that even mean? How can that even be possible? It makes no sense. And yet it’s true.

As Paul writes in First Corinthians (and many other places):

> Some of you were once like that [living in sinful ways]. But you were cleansed; **you were made holy,** you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11, NLT)

*This video mentions Moses, Leviticus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other things that might be unfamiliar. Don’t worry. It will all make sense in the end.*

WARM-UP

- What are some ways you’ve heard *holy* used that have nothing to do with Jesus or God?
- How would you describe *holy* and *holiness*?
- What do you think the Bible means when it tells people to be *holy*?
- Why do you think *holy* is used in this phrase? *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*
WATCH
“Holiness” [6:34]

READ
Romans 12:1-21. If reading aloud with a group, you can divide into sections: verses 1-3, 4-8, 9-16, 17-21.

RESPOND
Thousands of years before Jesus was born, Moses (the guy from the burning bush story in the video) said this to God’s people:

You must love the LORD (Yahweh) your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Jesus repeated those words when he lived on earth:

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. (Matthew 22:37)

Body isn’t on either list. But Romans 12 (and other verses) say our bodies matter, both our actual physical bodies and Jesus’ metaphorical body, made up of all his followers (verses 4-5). Why do you think it’s important to love and worship God with our heart, soul, mind, and body?

Bodies are the most earthy and natural thing about human beings. How could they possibly be a “holy and pleasing sacrifice” to God? (Similarly, in the story of Moses and the bush, how could the ground possibly be holy?)

Think about all the boring, everyday, simple tasks we do using our hands, feet, eyes, ears, and more. How can those things be holy? How can they be viewed as worship to God?

ENGAGE
Make a list of ways people might copy or conform to the behaviors and patterns of this world. Make a list of ways God has transformed or changed the way you think. (This can be about your identity, your priorities, your views about others, your attitudes toward others, and more.) Make a list of ways you still need God to transform how you think and what you think about.

ERGO
This week, how will you offer your bodies and your everyday tasks to God as a holy sacrifice?

(postscript)
• The modern English word holiday started as holyday. It referred both to religious sacred days and also to non-religious days of festivity, recreation, or break from work.
• Maybe you learned the Lord’s Prayer this way:

  Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Hallowed is an old version of holy. In Greek the word is hagios. Ever heard of hagiography? (Probably not. No worries.) It’s from hagios plus graphia, which means ‘writing’ (think: autograph, calligraphy). So, a hagiography is a biography (see the resemblance?) of a saint or church leader. They were all the rage in the Middle Ages. Think: bestseller/binge-watching/viral.
• You can read about Moses and the burning bush in Exodus 3:1-6, the prophet Isaiah and the burning coal in Isaiah 6:1-7, the apostle John and the “burning” man in Revelation 1:9-18.