

>>>Separated For God

5 Devotions on *What it Means to be Holy*

Truth #1>>>

God expects you to be holy

Let's just be honest for a moment: the word "holy" is thrown around a lot at church, but its meaning and importance kind of slip away from you, don't they? Could you come up with a definition of the word "holy" right now? Tough, isn't it? And if you can't really define "holy," it's virtually impossible to act "holy." The point of these five short devotions is to help you understand what the word "holy" really means, and what it has to do with your life.

To do this, we're going to sort of start at the end. Which, granted, is a weird way to start. But, hang in there and you'll see that it's a pretty good way to go about accomplishing our goal. What does it mean that we'll start at the end? Simple: we're going to look at what God expects of you, and then go back and show you exactly what it all means. Got it? Cool . . .

Let's make this really clear. When it comes to holiness, God's expectations are spelled out in no uncertain terms. God says in the Bible, "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). If God is holy, and expects us to be holy, then we really need to figure this out.

If something is "holy" it means that it is sacred by nature, as opposed to something that is worldly, or common. It means a certain separation from the world. What is holy is of God, not of this world. In the Bible, God is described over and over again as being holy:

- 1 Samuel 2:2 says, "There is no one holy like the Lord." But the Bible also calls us to be holy, just like God.
- Leviticus 20:26 says, "You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own."
- 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, "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."

The call is clear: God has a very real expectation that we act and live holy lives.

Like we said before, we're starting at the end. Now you know that God expects you to live a holy life. We're going to spend the next few days learning exactly what that means.

Follow Through>>>

- Spend a few moments in prayer to God, praising Him for His holiness and asking Him to open your eyes to learning more about His being holy.

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Truth #2>>>

God is Holy

God is holy. It's a simple truth with big consequences. If you remember, we've touched on this concept already. But, we're going to dig a little deeper in this devotion and take a look at exactly what we means when we say, "God is holy."

First of all, the Bible is full of references to God's holiness. There are way too many verses to list on this page, but here are a few:

- "In that day men will look to their Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel."—Isaiah 7:7
- "Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel."—Psalm 22:3
- "Sing to the Lord, you saints of his; praise his holy name."—Psalm 30:4
- "Let them praise your great and awesome name—he is holy."—Psalm 99:3
- "Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy."—Psalm 99:5

So, what Scripture is trying to tell us is that God is holy . . . OK, got it. But let's take it a step further and really flesh this out.

When the Bible says God is holy, it means that He is different than anything else in all the creation. It's kind of like a comparison. Picture God in a category all by Himself. This category could be called, "sacred," or better yet, "Things of God." Now, everything else in the entire world, in all of creation, would be in a category called "secular," or, "Things of the World." Do you get it? God alone is holy. We'll look a little later what it means for us that God has made us holy. But for now, it's enough for us to know that there is no one holy but God.

God is set apart from the world. God's ways are perfect. The ways of the world are flawed. God is perfectly good. The world is sinful. God is perfectly loving. The world teaches a selfish, unreliable form of love. God is eternally faithful, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The world is ever-changing; what is valuable today is thrown out tomorrow. See what we're getting at?

God *is* holy. And because of this, He alone is worthy of our love and devotion. We can safely and confidently give our lives to God knowing that He is separated from all things, and perfect in all that He is.

Follow Through>>>

- Think about the following questions:
 - Look back at the Bible verses above. Why is praise or worship the right response to God's holiness?
 - What does the fact that you have a relationship with a holy God mean for your everyday life?
- Respond to God's holiness by listening to your favorite praise song today. As you do, think of who it is you are praising, and how He alone is holy.



Truth #3>>>

You are God's. Therefore, you are holy.

Before we jump in, let's review a bit. We began at the end (remember?) and learned that God expects you to be holy. Then, we learned that God Himself is holy. In this devotion, we're going to have our minds blown a little bit at the next truth in this study of holiness. You're about to see how awesome God really is.

We've established that God is holy. Check! You've got that one down. But did you know that you are holy, as well? We're not talking about the way you act or talk . . . Actually, this has very little to do with you at all. You are holy, because you are God's. God has made you holy. Let's go a little deeper and flesh this out some.

If you've read your Old Testament, you know that God called the nation of Israel to be His people. Through Abraham, God created a nation to be set apart for Him. The nation grew, and was ultimately enslaved by the Egyptians. But through Moses and Joshua, God delivered His people to the Promised Land. Look at what God said about them:

- "I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy."—Leviticus 11:45

Wow . . . there it is again. The call to be holy. God was basically saying to the Israelites, because I saved you, you are to be holy. God gave the Israelites the Law to live as holy people. But the Israelites could not keep the Law. They could not live holy lives. Their sin made them unholy. But God knew this all along. So, He planned to send His Son, Jesus, as a once-and-for-all sacrifice for the sins of all humankind. God counted Jesus' death on the cross as the payment for the sins of all humankind.

Here's the cool thing: Jesus' death on the cross made us holy. Don't believe me? Look at what the Bible says:

- "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."—Ephesians 1:4
- "But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation."—Colossians 1:22

Remember when we said that God expects you to be holy? He does. But, He knew you could never do it on your own. He knew your sin would always keep you "un-holy," and that this un-holiness would always be a barrier between you and Him. So, God sent Jesus to make you holy. If you have professed your belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and have submitted your life to His lordship, then you are holy in God's sight. And not by anything you have done or ever will do. You are holy in God's sight because He sees you through the lens of Jesus' obedient death on the cross.

You are holy because Jesus made you holy. And that's pretty amazing.

Follow Through>>>

- How does it make you feel that Jesus went to the cross just for you, and that His sacrifice made you holy in God's sight?
- Do you understand what it means to have a saving relationship with Jesus? If you have any questions about what it means to have forgiveness from your sins, don't hesitate to go to your youth leader and ask him or her your questions.

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Truth #4>>>

Your life must be different from the world around you.

We've covered a lot over the past three devotions. And if we look back, it may seem like we find ourselves in an unusual situation. We know that God is holy. We know He expects us to live holy lives. But, we learned in the last devotion that Jesus made us holy through His sacrifice on the cross. So . . . If Jesus made us holy, and that had nothing to do with us, where do we come in? Are we off the hook? Does the work Jesus did on our behalf to make us holy mean we don't have to worry about how we live, or act, or think?

Not quite.

Here's a funny truth about our lives as Christ-followers. Jesus definitely made us holy through His death on the cross for our sins. But, God's call on your life to be a holy person is aimed specifically at the way you live your life. You see, Christ made you holy in God's eyes. But you were made holy to live a holy life. Your life on this earth is a testimony to Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf. Let's see what the Bible says about this:

- Let's not forget Peter's call in 1 Peter 1:15-16: "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."
- Colossians 3:12 reveals a little of what this looks like: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."
- Romans 12:1 calls us to live holy lives as our act of worship to God: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."
- Hebrews 12:14 spells it out pretty clearly: "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."
- 1 Thessalonians 4:7 says, "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

It's pretty straightforward: God expects you to live a holy life. Remember, the idea of "holy" is the idea of being separated for God, to be sacred instead of worldly. God desires for you to live like His children, like members of His family. Your life should look dramatically different from the world around you. Think about how this affects you . . .

What does the music you listen to say about your holiness? What about the movies you watch? How do your words testify to the fact that you have been made holy by Christ's sacrifice? How do the clothes you wear identify you as godly and not worldly? What about the way you interact online . . . the sites you visit, how you conduct yourself on Facebook™ and other social media outlets? It's a lot to consider, isn't it?

It's OK to feel a little overwhelmed. God never promised living for Him would be easy. But, He has given us life, and has made us holy so we can live holy lives. The coolest thing? If we live holy lives, we will actually draw people to Christ. They will notice the difference in us and they will recognize this difference is from our closeness with God.

Your holy living is a huge part of testifying to the difference Christ has made in your life.

Follow Through>>>

- Are there areas in your life that are not holy? Think about this for a moment.
- What do you need to do to make a change in your life? What do you need to do to give up the areas in your life that are keeping you from living as one who is holy?
- Take these concerns to God in prayer. Commit to making a change. And thank God for His loving forgiveness that enables us to live boldly for Him.

Truth #5>>>

The Holy Spirit will help you live a holy life.

We've covered a lot over the last few devotions. We've learned that God alone is holy. We've learned that God called us to Him and made us holy through the work of Jesus on the cross. But, we also have learned that God desires that we live holy lives, as well. This is where this final devotion comes in. If you were a little bummed out by the last devotion, don't worry . . . this devotion is just the one for you.

Here's a truth you need to know, one that you can carry with you for the rest of your life. Ready? Here it is: God never calls us without equipping us. Think about it. God does not call us to do a job without giving us the tools for that job. God has called you to be holy, to live godly lives that look different from the world around you. And God has given you the power necessary to live this life. What is that power? The Holy Spirit.

In Galatians, the Apostle Paul takes a few verses to describe what it looks like to live unholy lives:

- "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."—Galatians 5:19-21

Yikes! That doesn't look like holy living at all. That's worldly living at its worst. But Paul takes the next few verses to describe what it looks like to live holy lives. Check this out:

- "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."—Galatians 5:22-24

Now that's more like it. The key to this description of holy living is in the first verse. Paul says these characteristics are the fruit of having the Spirit in our lives. God calls us to live holy lives and He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us do it. We aren't alone. We have the power of God in us to help us stay strong in our commitments. The Spirit helps tell us what is wrong, but also helps give us the strength to do something about it.

God never calls us to do something He has not given us the tools to do. You have been given the tools to live a holy life. What are you waiting for?

Follow Through>>>

- How have you felt the Spirit helping you identify things in your life that aren't holy?
- In what ways has the Holy Spirit given you strength to turn away from things you know weren't pleasing to God?
- Say a prayer to God thanking Him for the gift of His Spirit and the power you have to live a life that honors God.

