

# A HOLY PEOPLE

**+** **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

As God is pure in all of His ways, He calls His people to live likewise in response to all He has done for them in Christ.

**+** **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

1 Peter 1

**+** **SETTING:**

Throughout the Israelites' time in the wilderness, both the year of rescue and the remaining forty years of punishment, God's people found occasion after occasion to rebel against their sovereign Savior. Yet God remained holy in all His interactions with His people because that is who He is—God is holy. He displayed His holiness through His abundant patience, His faithful provision, His swift discipline, and His good law. In all of this time, God worked to make for Himself a holy people because God's image-bearers should be holy as He is holy, a principle picked up in the New Testament book of 1 Peter.

# DAY 1

## READ:

**1 Peter 1:1-16**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**1 Peter 1:13-16**

## NOTES

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

"God's ways are distinct from the ways of a fallen world, and he does not deal with the world on its own terms ... Therefore, his people are to identify with him by being set apart and by relating to the world on the terms that God prescribes."<sup>2</sup>

-Karen H. Jobs

It is no secret—there is an obvious correlation between our beliefs and our actions. If someone whom you had no reason to distrust told you there were ten \$100 bills in a hidden location and gave you simple instructions to find them, you most likely would take the time to search for the hidden cash. What you do corresponds with what you believe.

In 1 Peter 1:13-16, Peter was spelling out this correlation in the lives of believers. His primary point was that as believers, we are called to be holy and pure in our conduct because we have been called by a holy and pure God. The basis for our pure and holy conduct is our understanding and embrace of who God is. To obtain and keep this right perspective, Peter mentioned the importance of keeping our minds ready for action, and he related the importance of being sober-minded.

As believers, we cannot let our thoughts run away from us and expect that we will be holy as a result. As pastor Matt Chandler noted: "People don't stumble into godliness; they don't wake up one day knowing Jesus deeply and pursuing the conformity that Jesus commands and the Spirit empowers."<sup>1</sup> Rather, we are to avoid falling back into our old ways of thinking, when we did not seriously consider the things of God. And instead, we are to pursue by grace those things that profoundly reorient our thinking and, as a result, change our actions.

As believers, we are to recall the revelation of Jesus Christ, the freeing gospel by which we have been called. Then, with a whole new perspective grounded in faith and humility, we are able to walk in obedience. We seek to be holy because the God who called us is holy. What we believe about God will influence the way we strive to live for Him.

**What practices help you reorient your thinking and get your focus back on the things of God?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

1 Peter 1:13-25

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Peter 1:17-21

## NOTES

Fear is often thought of as a negative emotion, one we seek to avoid at all costs. However, fear can be positive and powerful motivator too. Throughout the Old Testament, God frequently interacted directly with His people, providing for and protecting them and disciplining them when they went astray. Some people portray God in the Old Testament as a mostly vengeful deity, seeking to assert His dominance. When detached from the covenantal context of the Old Testament narrative, it wouldn't be difficult to cast God in this light, but doing so would be a mistake. To represent God accurately, one must acknowledge His holiness and consider what a proper response to His holiness should be.

In 1 Peter 1:17-21, Peter was addressing churches that were facing persecution. He reminded these believers of their status as “strangers” or “exiles”—earthly sojourners who were here temporarily but who were journeying steadily toward their heavenly home. The temptation to bend toward culture for acceptance and escape from persecution is palpable, yet the Christian life is, in most respects, antithetical to the ways of the world. These believers knew fear in the tangible, earthly sense—fear of those who could destroy their body—and yet, they were challenged with regard to their fear to respect the One who looked after their body and soul (Matt. 10:28).

God has gone to great lengths to restore our relationship with Him. Peter pointed out that we have not been saved by mere perishable currency, such as gold or silver. Rather, we have been redeemed by the shed blood of Christ, a payment for sins that endures forever. Reflecting on Christ's sacrifice and situating the events at Calvary within the eternal plans of God ought to give us great confidence in pursuing holiness out of reverence for our holy God.

**How should thoughts about God's holiness affect the way you live?**

# DAY 3

## READ:

**1 Peter 1:22–2:10**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**1 Peter 1:22-25**

## NOTES

Everyone's experience of church on Sunday is different. For some, the hurried walk through the front doors of the sanctuary is marked by forced smiles after tense family conversations during the van ride earlier that morning. For others, church attendance seems obligatory, but if they are honest, they just aren't "feeling" it anymore. Still others are joyful at the prospect of being gathered with everyone once again.

One miracle of Sunday morning gatherings is the picture of a God-wrought conglomeration of people from different ages, backgrounds, and social statuses. Truly only God could piece together the stories represented in your local congregation. Attentiveness to the people around you there and the story God is continuing to tell through your congregation collectively is key.

In 1 Peter 1:22-25, Peter turned his attention from giving out directives for individual believers to relating the impact one's pursuit of holiness should have on others. The aim of Peter's instruction to the congregations was to encourage brotherly love among them—sacrificial, giving love demonstrated for the good of others. This sort of love should absolutely characterize believers gathered together. After all, the picture of a tight-knit community bent on demonstrating brotherly love to one another stands in stark contrast to the backbiting and selfish posture of the culture at large.

This kind of love is not easy to give, however. Sometimes it is difficult to receive too. Thankfully, we have an incredible model of sacrificial love given to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The word of the Lord—the gospel of Jesus Christ—is, for us, an enduring example and constant motivation for the kind of love we are to demonstrate toward others.

**What is Christ's love compelling you to do for someone else today?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

Ephesians 2

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Ephesians 2:8-10

## NOTES

Sailboats are a sight to behold. Commanding one of these vessels can be simplified, but mastery over them can be a lifelong pursuit. Familiarizing yourself with points of sail, proper knot-tying techniques, and how to manage sail trim will go a long way in keeping a boat pointed in the right direction and its occupants relatively dry. Yet with all the preparation and work onboard, only one thing can truly make the sailboat go: the wind. Without the preparation, the work of the sailor, or the wind guiding the vessel along, sailing would be a miserable and boring experience.

Living a life of godliness is similar to sailing. While we are freed through the gospel of Christ to live free from the grip of sin, pursuing holiness means making conscious decisions to do what is right in the sight of God. Yet we do not work in this regard to earn grace. Rather, we are motivated by grace to walk in step toward godliness. Author Dallas Willard puts it this way: “Grace is not opposed to effort, but is opposed to earning.”<sup>3</sup> Grace and effort work in tandem: We have been redeemed by God through the blood of Christ; now, the gospel informs and motivates us to strive toward godly living.

Perhaps you’ve heard a different version of this message. Maybe you have heard that by being good, you are brought into the good graces of God. This, however, is contrary to the gospel of Christ. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-10 that our salvation is a function of God’s grace through faith and not something we can earn or boast about for ourselves. Furthermore, our salvation by grace is the ground for our good works, not the other way around.

Believer, you’re unburdened now. Nothing you can offer God will do the trick. Instead, bring your “nothing” to God and in that moment find He is your everything.

**Who in your life could use this reminder of the truth of the gospel? Who can you think of that needs to hear the gospel for the first time?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

Isaiah 6

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Isaiah 6:1-8

NOTES



### ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #12: GOD IS HOLY

God's holiness refers to His uniqueness in being separate from all He has created. The Hebrew word for "holy" means "separate" or "set apart." God's holiness also refers to His absolute purity. God is unstained by the evil of the world. His goodness is perfect, and the moral code we find in the Scriptures is a reflection of His holy nature. As people made in God's image, we are called to holiness.

At the 2003 Passion OneDay Conference, John Piper recounted the story of preaching a different kind of sermon once at his church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He felt led to preach a particular passage but strangely felt no urge to include points of application. Typically, preachers will explain the background of a text, perhaps discuss what the text meant for the original audience receiving it, and then will move on to making modern applications of the text, seeking to find situations in the present-day where the principles found in Scripture readily apply. This time around, Piper was content simply to preach the text as it was found, reveling in its truths about the holiness of God and leaving the "application" to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of congregants in the days and weeks that followed.

Unbeknownst to John, a family in his congregation was going through an especially difficult season in life, marked by unimaginable tragedy and trauma. Three months after the sermon was preached, the husband and father in the family reached out to John. He mentioned that his family had been through the worst few months of their entire lives. He told John that the only thing that had gotten them through, that helped them hold on, was John's sermon on Isaiah 6 and the vision of God's holiness laid out before the church three months prior.

At times, we complicate the issue, don't we? We suppose the Word of God ought to be form-fitting to our exact situations or else it has nothing for us. In reality, Scripture puts forth again and again a grand vision of God. If we really knew and understood it, it would change our lives for good.

**How does the vision of the holy God seated on His throne strengthen you for the circumstances you face?**



# GROUP

NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment—hating what He hates—loving what He loves—and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man."<sup>4</sup>

-J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

### POINT 1: God's people are to be holy, having been called by a pure God (1 Pet. 1:13-16).

Peter wrote his letter to Christian believers who were struggling with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, not unlike the ancient Israelites. Our shared hope is found in the \_\_\_\_\_ promises of God.



**Why should Jesus' second coming impact our lives today?**

### ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #12: GOD IS HOLY

God's holiness refers to His \_\_\_\_\_ in being separate from all He has created. The Hebrew word for "holy" means "separate" or "\_\_\_\_\_." God's holiness also refers to His absolute \_\_\_\_\_. God is unstained by the evil of the world. His goodness is perfect, and the moral code we find in the Scriptures is a reflection of His holy nature. As people made in God's \_\_\_\_\_, we are called to holiness.

### POINT 2: God's people are to live reverently, having been redeemed by a pure sacrifice (1 Pet. 1:17-21).

God's people are to pursue \_\_\_\_\_ with a posture of reverence toward God. But we do so \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus has redeemed us from our sin with His own blood.



**How does a pursuit of holiness honor God?**

Jesus is central to God's sovereign \_\_\_\_\_ over creation and to our \_\_\_\_\_. So we should believe in Him and desire to be like Him.



**What has been your favorite foreshadowing of Christ in the exodus narratives? Why?**

NOTES

**POINT 3: God's people are to love sincerely, having been given a pure heart** (1 Pet. 1:22-25).

The holiness granted to us through faith in \_\_\_\_\_ and the work of the \_\_\_\_\_ should overflow in love for one another in the church.

The reason we can love others like Jesus is because we have been \_\_\_\_\_ to be like Jesus through the gospel. Believers are a holy, loving people blessed with the promise of \_\_\_\_\_ life.



**How should we, as people changed by the gospel, show love to others?**

## MY RESPONSE

Because we have been forgiven of our sin through Christ and credited with His perfect righteousness, we strive to live as a holy people before God and the watching world, showing God's power and work in our lives.

- **HEAD:** How will you think about yourself now in light of God's holiness?
- **HEART:** Does God's holiness lead you to fear for yourself or worship for God, or both? How will you purify yourself in light of God's holiness?
- **HANDS:** What are some ways you will show the holy love of God to others this week?

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Christian community is not an ideal we have to realize, but rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. The more clearly we learn to recognize that the ground and strength and promise of all our community is in Jesus Christ alone, the more calmly we will learn to think about our community and pray and hope for it."<sup>5</sup>

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)