

DG Guide: Attributes of God

#5 - Holy (Utterly Otherly)

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by acknowledging God's holiness and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and reveal areas where you need to grow in holiness.

Starter Question

Before you became a Christian (or if you asked someone outside the church), what would you have said "holiness" means? How has your understanding changed?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. Only God is holy - God's holiness means He is utterly and completely "other" - categorically different from us, not just a better version of humanity.
2. Unholy people are ruined before Him - Like Isaiah, when confronted with God's holiness, we recognize we are "done for" and cannot stand in His presence on our own merit.
3. We cannot make ourselves holy - We are entirely unable to cleanse ourselves or work our way to holiness.
4. God cleanses His people through Christ - God Himself provides the means for our holiness through Jesus' sacrifice and our union with Him.
5. We are called to live holy lives - Because we have been made holy, we pursue holiness in every area of life - not to earn God's love, but as a response to it.

Scripture Reading

Read together: Isaiah 6:1-7 and 1 Peter 1:15-16

Discussion Questions

Understanding God's Holiness

1. The Vision of Isaiah: In Isaiah 6, even the powerful seraphim cover their faces before God. What does this teach us about God's holiness? How does this challenge or change your view of God?
2. "Holy, Holy, Holy": Why do you think the seraphim repeat "holy" three times? What is Scripture trying to communicate to us through this repetition?

3. Utterly Other: The sermon described God as "utterly otherly" - completely set apart and different from us. How does our culture diminish God's holiness by making Him just "a bigger version of us"? Where have you seen this happen?

Recognizing Our Need

4. Isaiah's Response: Isaiah was the most holy man of his time, yet he said, "Woe is me, I am ruined!" Why did he respond this way? What does this teach us about self-righteousness?
5. Personal Reflection: The sermon said, "As Isaiah gets closer to God, he becomes less and less impressed with himself." Have you experienced this in your own walk with God? Share an example if comfortable.
6. Cultural Contrast: How does our culture's message of "you're perfect just the way you are" clash with the biblical understanding of holiness? How do we navigate this tension with both truth and grace?

Made Holy in Christ

7. The Burning Coal: In Isaiah's vision, a seraphim touched his lips with a coal from the altar, and his sin was atoned for. How does this point forward to what Jesus would do for us?
8. Already Holy: The sermon emphasized that we don't become holy by working our way up - God has already made us holy through our union with Christ. How does this truth change the way we approach Christian living?
9. Freedom in Holiness: How is pursuing holiness different when we're doing it because we've already been made holy, rather than trying to earn God's acceptance?

Living Holy Lives

10. All of Life: Peter says to "be holy in all your conduct." The sermon mentioned this touches our speech, thinking, money, work, sexuality, relationships, entertainment, ambition, and hidden life. Which of these areas is most challenging for you? Why?
11. Pursuing Holiness: Hebrews 12 tells us to "pursue holiness." How do we pursue something we already have? What does this look like practically in daily life?
12. Community Holiness: The sermon emphasized that holiness is pursued in community, not individually. How can this group help each other pursue holiness? What would that look like practically?

Personal Reflection

- In what area of your life is God's holiness exposing sin or compromise?
- Where are you tempted to think you can make yourself holy through your own effort?
- What would it look like to "pursue Jesus" more intentionally this week?

Group Commitments

Choose 1-2 of these to commit to as a group:

1. Confession and Prayer Partners: Pair up with someone in the group to confess areas where you're struggling with holiness and pray for each other this week.
2. Holiness Audit: Take inventory of one area of life (entertainment, money, speech, etc.) and honestly assess whether it reflects God's holiness. Share your findings next week.
3. Study God's Holiness: Spend time this week reading passages about God's holiness (Exodus 15:11; Psalm 99; Isaiah 57:15; Revelation 4:8). Journal what you learn about God and about yourself.
4. Family Resemblance: Identify one specific way you want to "look more like Jesus" this week. Share it with the group for accountability.
5. Mission-Minded Holiness: Think about one person in your life who doesn't know Jesus. How might living a holy life (not self-righteously, but authentically) point them to God's holiness and love?

Closing Exercise

Declaring Our Holiness: The sermon challenged us to claim our holiness - not from pride, but from truth. Go around the circle and have each person complete this sentence:

"I am holy, not because _____, but because God has made me holy through Jesus Christ."

Closing Prayer

Pray together, focusing on:

- Worship for God's holiness and glory
- Confession of areas where we've compromised or pursued unholiness
- Thanksgiving that God has made us holy through Christ
- Commitment to pursue holiness together as a community
- Boldness to display God's holiness to the world around us

For Next Week

- Follow through on your group commitment
- Memorise: 1 Peter 1:15-16 - "As the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct, for it is written, 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"
- Be prepared to share one way you pursued holiness this week and how the group can continue to support you

Leader Notes

- Be vulnerable about your own struggles with holiness - this will create safety for others to share
- Emphasize grace throughout - we pursue holiness from a place of being loved, not to earn love
- Watch for legalism creeping in - holiness is about relationship with Jesus, not rule-keeping
- Celebrate growth and encourage those who are struggling
- Remind the group that sanctification is a process - we're all works in progress

Or, if you just want a bunch of discussion prompts:

1. How does understanding God's holiness as His utter otherliness rather than just moral superiority change the way you approach worship and prayer?
2. Isaiah's response to seeing God's holiness was to say 'Woe is me, I'm ruined.' When was the last time you were genuinely confronted with your own sinfulness in light of God's holiness?
3. The sermon suggests we often diminish God's holiness to avoid confronting our own wretchedness. In what ways might you be guilty of making God more casual or comfortable than He truly is?
4. How does the truth that God Himself cleanses us and makes us holy, rather than us earning holiness, free you to pursue righteousness differently?
5. What does it mean practically to pursue holiness in community rather than as an individual endeavor, and how well is your church or small group doing this?
6. The sermon states that holiness touches our speech, thinking, money, work, sexuality, relationships, entertainment, and ambition. Which of these areas feels most challenging for you to surrender to God's holiness?
7. How can we confidently say 'Yes, I am holy' when asked, without sounding arrogant, while properly attributing our holiness to Christ rather than our own achievement?
8. In what ways might you be retreating from the world in fear rather than being set apart unto God while still engaging the world with holy living?
9. The seraphim had to shield their eyes from God's holiness, yet we are invited into union with this same holy God. How should this reality impact our daily reverence and gratitude?
10. Isaiah was made holy and immediately sent on mission. How does your understanding of being made holy in Christ motivate or change your approach to sharing the gospel with others?