



## Week One

**Draw near to God,  
and he will draw near to you**

James 4:8

*This study follows a pattern of gathering—reflection—sharing—prayer. If you spent time on all of the material offered, you would be meeting for about 2 hours. In each section there are two sets of questions — the first is for a 60 minute study. The second set of indented questions is if you have more time.*

### GATHERING

If your group is new to one another, please share your name and 3 sentences on the most life-giving thing that happens to you in the course of a week.

When you hear the admonition “Be holy, because I am holy” what feelings surface? (Does it sound bossy — inviting — intimidating — hopeless ...)

Who is a person in your immediate life experience that comes to mind when you think “holy”. (Not someone like Mother Teresa, unless of course you knew her personally!) What is the quality of their character or actions that causes them to come to mind?

### SHARED REFLECTION: 1 Peter 1:13-16 and Leviticus 11:45; 19:1-4; 20:26

Read each of these passages out loud. What strikes you about what is said concerning God’s holiness and our holiness.

Pastor Laurie spoke about three ways that God’s holiness has been understood: transcendence, purity, and consecration (dedicated to God’s character and God’s mission). Which of these understandings of holiness is most familiar to you? Which seems to be central in 1 Peter and the verses from Leviticus?

Read Exodus 3:1-10, which is the first time we are introduced to “holy” in the Old Testament. In the sermon on Sunday, Laurie used this and Isaiah 6 as examples of holiness as consecrated meeting place with God, for God to reveal God’s character and God’s purpose. What did you make of that discussion? Does it seem faithful to the way that God is revealed in the Old and New Testament writings? What questions remain?

**“God’s holiness is precisely that which is made known in his mercy, in his coming to the aid of his people, in his taking up their cause, in his bearing their sin, in his purifying of them and in his binding them to his own life. ... The Holy God is God *with us*, God *for us*.”** (John Webster, *Holiness*). Laurie suggested that the starting point of God’s holiness and ours is God with us — determined to meet us in mercy. Has this been the starting place in your own understanding of holiness? What changes if it is?

# Week One ...

## SHARED LIFE —

### Practicing holiness ...

**“That ‘seeing’ God everywhere and everywhen, that ‘sacrament of the present moment’, that ‘practicing the presence of God’, is the single most effective aid to becoming holy that I know.”**

Peter Kreeft, *How to be Holy*

This week’s practice for holiness is drawing near to God. Which of the following practices will you seek God’s grace to enact this week? Maybe another practice comes to mind?

- 30 minutes a day to meet with God in silence, Scripture and prayer
- Memorize the verse from James
- Set an alarm so that every hour on the hour you repeat this verse and take one minute to draw near to God in heart and mind
- Prayerfully journal each day on the following — read either Exodus 3:1-10 or Isaiah 6:1-5 and write out a conversation with God in response to the question, “Lord, where do I need you to come to my aid — to meet me in your mercy?”

### How goes it with your soul?

*These are questions that your group may be ready to use at some point for mutual accountability and encouragement. They can also be questions you use to meet up with each other in prayer partners between group meeting times. The goal is authentic discovery and mutual love as we seek to follow Jesus with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength.*

Where is God at work in your life?  
Where are you resisting?

Where are you cooperating?  
How can we pray & encourage you?

## PRAYER

*Be sure to dedicate time to praying together in God’s presence and for one another. You may want to take some notes here to remember how to hold each other in prayer during the week.*