

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 19



DAY
1

Holiness Deuteronomy 7:6; Luke 1:69-75

Holiness! It is a BIG idea and an even BIGGER reality. God is Holy and God is creating a holy people. We were created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24). God wants us to share in his holiness (Hebrews 12:10) and we are to make every effort to be holy (Hebrews 12:14).

Holiness is a major theme that is mentioned multiple times in the first books of the Old Testament: Exodus (28x), Leviticus (56x), Numbers (25x), and Deuteronomy (10x). “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 7:6).

What is holiness? There are two main ideas about holiness and both are essential. First, holiness is a quality of life that is pure, sacred, godly, moral, ethical, and good. Second, holiness is a life that is set apart from all that is NOT holy. Holiness is the very life and nature of God that is given to us. God is completely separate from what is sinful, evil, bad, false, and wicked. God engages with what is wrong, but God is never a part of what is wrong. God draws near to heal, save, and make holy all that is not holy. The word *purity* was central to the Old Testament understanding of holiness. To be set apart was to be consecrated to the Lord. God’s people are a holy people because our God is a holy God.

In Deuteronomy, there are two themes that explain holiness.

The first theme is *covenant*, which is the unbreakable relationship God establishes with us. What is astonishing is that a holy God invites a people who are not yet holy to be his people. God is very clear that we are to become holy as he is holy (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15–16).

The second theme is *idolatry*, which is the greatest of sins. Idolatry is worshipping anything other than the one true and holy God. Anything that becomes more important to us than God has become an idol. Holiness means the rejection of all idols. Holiness means complete devotion to and worship of God alone.

What are some of today’s idols that lead people away from God?

What idols have been in your life?

DAY
2

The Way of Holiness Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9; 33:3

“So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good” (Romans 7:12). This is what Paul said as he thought about the Old Testament law God gave to his people.

Christians often have unhelpful (and unbiblical) perspectives on God’s law. Jesus came to fulfill the law. Paul says the law is holy. The law is the will, the way, and the word of God for how his people should live. Exodus through Deuteronomy is full of God’s law-will-way for his people.

Jesus does not set us free from the law, he sets us free from the penalty of not obeying the law. He sets us free to obey God’s commandments. But there are different kinds of law in Deuteronomy.

There is **moral law**, like the 10 Commandments. The moral laws are always normative and binding. The New

Testament is full of moral law. Paul's letters are Spirit-filled versions of God's law.

There is **ceremonial law**, which is the ways God's people were to offer sacrifices in the Old Testament. This law has not only been fulfilled, it is now ended. We no longer need to follow Old Testament instructions about the sacrificial system. Jesus is the sacrificial lamb of God for the sins of the world.

Then there is **civil law**, which is the instructions for how God's people should live together as a new society. They are instructions on family, sexuality, raising children, economics, justice, lawsuits, refugees, foreigners, canceling debts, conducting warfare, and more. Some implications are:

- 1) God has a will and plan, a word for everything about life.
- 2) At the very least, we look for vital principles that support any practical law.
- 3) We prayerfully ask, how do we apply those principles in our context today?
- 4) We seek moral and ethical wisdom to live that way even if the culture around us is NOT living that way.
- 5) We are not surprised when the non-Christian culture departs from God's way of civic, social, and political life together.

DAY
3

An Encounter with Holiness Isaiah 6:1-8; Deuteronomy 7:9

An encounter with holiness always leaves an impact. Whether it is Jacob wrestling with God, Moses meeting God in the burning bush and on Mt. Sinai, or in an incredible vision like Isaiah, each of these experiences left an indelible mark on those who had them.

In the case of Isaiah, we see two very different responses to being in the presence of the holiness of God. The seraphim (angels) are worshipping and declaring "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty" (Isaiah 6:3). Meanwhile, Isaiah is so overwhelmed by being in God's holy presence that he says, "Woe to me!... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips... and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5).

When we have an encounter with the Holy God, our thoughts easily go to our failures and inadequacies, and we fall to our knees, like Isaiah, in fear of judgment. This is where the idea of covenant needs to be remembered. "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments" (Deut. 7:9). Instead of judgment, Isaiah, in his humility, is met by God's faithfulness with grace and mercy, as the sin that should have condemned him is taken away.

Knowing a promise is not the same as experiencing the impact of it for ourselves. Isaiah's experience leads to him answering God's call and becoming his prophet. For us, God shows us his holiness through the love of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How has God's holiness impacted you?

If you've never experienced God's holiness, take a moment to pray and ask God to show you more of himself.

DAY
4

Holiness and Peace Hebrews 12:14-17

Make every effort to live at peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

In the passages that you read this week from Deuteronomy you see that God is greatly concerned with holiness. Even though there was nothing about Israel that made them better than their neighbors, God still chose them. And holiness means living in a way that is different—set apart from things that are not of God. To be holy, as you read on Day 1, is to be consecrated to God.

In the New Testament passage this week, we began by reading Hebrews 12:14. The writer of Hebrews then goes on to talk about the example of Esau, who gave up his special blessing as the first-born son in exchange for a meal. Esau also was disobedient in marrying a wife who was a Canaanite. (See Genesis 25–28 for more on the story of Esau.)

It is interesting how Hebrews 12:14 compares living in peace and holiness. Sometimes we can easily give up our lives of holiness in the interest of getting along with others. We go along with the crowd when we know that we shouldn't.

At the same time, we can pursue holiness at the expense of peace with others. We can become legalistic and judgmental, lording our righteousness over others and not being concerned with our relationships with them.

Balancing holiness and living at peace is a strange paradox. Ask for the Holy Spirit's help to be both holy and gracious in your interactions with others.

How are you doing with the delicate balance between peace and holiness? Do you have any behaviors that you might need to work on in light of God's call for holiness?

How about peace? Do you need to work on being less legalistic and judgmental in the interest of living in peace with others?

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP CONVERSATION

ONE: How often do you think about holiness? How much do you think about your own life of holiness? How often do you pray to be more holy than you are?

TWO: What are one or two areas of your life where you know Jesus wants there to be more holiness? This is for your own personal reflection. You won't be sharing these with the group, but it will be a valuable reflection.

THREE: Holiness is a status. You are declared holy by God. That is what it means to be a saint. A saint is a holy one. Holiness is also a journey. You are in the process of becoming holy. It is a lifelong process, full of twists and turns. You are not yet what you are meant to be. But one day you will be, because holiness is a destination. What matters most is that you desire to be holy and that you are set on that journey. Paul uses the language "I press on" (see Philippians 3:10-14). What can you do to be more intentional about pressing on to holiness?

FOUR: Have you had an encounter with God's holiness? How have you been met with grace and mercy in your relationship with God?

FIVE: How are you doing in the balance between holiness and living at peace? Do you find that you tip one way or the other, either living at peace to the detriment of your holiness, or being holy but struggling with living at peace?