

Study Series: The Holiness of God

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Lesson Title: “The Trauma of Holiness” (pp. 109-120)

Session 9

October 31, 2021

The main point of this lesson is: Encountering holy God is unsettling and uncomfortable.

Focus on this goal: To help adults open themselves to God’s holiness despite its uncomfortableness

Key Bible Passage: Mark 4:35-41; Luke 5:1-8

Before the Session

1. Text each group member. Thank those present the previous session for a specific way he or she helped others during the study of session 8. Remind participants that the study is to learn about and respond to God’s holiness. They are not expected to already know everything about it but to discover more about God’s holiness and responding to Him.

2. Bring extra Bibles, pens, and copies of MasterWork to give to any new attendees.

3. Have available a marker board (or poster) and markers. (Step 1)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As group members enter, instruct them to fill the whiteboard by each adding a verb (action word), a noun (person, place, or thing) and an adjective (describing word) about what it’s like to encounter the holiness of God. As the leader, affirm at least one verb, noun, or adjective from each group member as you see him or her write it.

Note that even with the accuracy of all these descriptors, we might be surprised to learn that encountering God’s holiness is also unsettling and uncomfortable.

Ask: Would it surprise you to be unsettled and uncomfortable when encountering God’s holiness? How do unsettling and uncomfortable harmonize with other words on the board about encountering God’s holiness?

Step 2. A Storm Calmed

Read or invite volunteers to read “The main point of this lesson is” and “Focus on this goal” (p. 119).

Direct learners to leaf back through Session 8 (pp. 97-106) to see how Isaiah was unsettled and uncomfortable but approached God anyway.

State today’s study will explore two more sets of persons who encountered God’s holiness and chose to draw close to God: (1) disciples in a boat during a storm and (2) disciples near their boats seeking to catch fish.

Direct group members to Mark 4:35-41 to study it with the Day One content and activity 2 (pp. 109-111).

Read the pull-quote (p. 110) and ask the Discussion Question (p. 111).

Invite adults to share insights they discovered about the unsettling and uncomfortable nature of God’s holiness or about why they want to open themselves to God even with these realities (activity 1, p. 109).

Highlight the value of reading the whole session to get context as we now zoom in on the other four days.

Step 3. A Storm Caused

Acknowledge that Day Two brings up complex questions. Guide a conversation exploring these complexities with Day Two Discussion Question (p. 112).

Point out this is a diamond-type question—we will learn from all the facets we surface. Diminish any attitudes or words that communicate I-know-the-definitive-answer (because this Bible passage does not give that answer).

Review group members’ responses to Day Two, activity 2 (p. 112). Use the activity and the pull-quote (p. 112) to brainstorm more insights into why encountering Jesus’ holiness could prove to be an unsettling or uncomfortable experience.

Step 4. "I Am a Sinful Man"

Call again for two volunteers to read “The main point of this lesson is” and “Focus on this goal” (p. 119).

Explain that experienced fisherman Peter encountered both Jesus’ holiness and unsettled, uncomfortable feelings. Affirm we can learn from Peter how to draw close to and trust God even amidst feeling unsettled and uncomfortable.

Review Day Three, activity 1 (p. 113) and the Discussion Question (p. 114). Affirm that God Himself will guide us through the discomfort to know what to do next.

Encourage group members to talk with God about this, using Day Three, activity 2 (p. 114) as guidance. (TIP: DO NOT do activity 2 in class as it needs to be private between members and God.)

Step 5. A Safe Distance

Enlist a volunteer to read the pull-quote from Day Four (p. 116). Debrief it with Day Four’s Discussions Questions (p. 116).

As needed, supplement the discussion with insights from the content, especially the author’s observation that people like Jesus so long as they can keep Him at a safe distance from them.

Step 6. Too Close for Comfort

Call for a volunteer to read the Day Five pull-quote (p. 118).

Note that at any moment we might choose to be like the Pharisees or Sadducees.

Say that we must courageously find our own ways of receiving the genuine and of refusing to feed our annoyances. Let Day Five Discussion Questions (p. 116) and activity 2 (p. 116) guide this process.

Ask God to help learners recognize these misbehaviors before doing them.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Lead the group to text themselves this critical message: Open yourself to God’s holiness, despite your discomfort.

Call for the group to name other messages they want to text to themselves, based on what they discovered in today’s Bible study.

Close in prayer.

