

Holier Than Thou

Author: Jackie Hill Perry

Lesson Title: “Holy, Holy, Holy” (pp. 7-20)

Session 1

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The main point of this lesson is: God’s holiness creates awe-struck woe in those who see Him.

Focus on this goal: To help adults recognize their woefulness before holy God

Key Bible Passage: Isaiah 6:1-5

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Ask: Would you trust someone described as “holier-than-thou?” Why or why not?

Explain this study explores the amazing truth that, since God is holy, He can and should be trusted. Analyze why God’s holiness should help us trust Him. (See the introduction, p. 6.)

A crucial first step in developing that deeper trust is recognizing and responding rightly to God’s holiness. Invite a volunteer to read the main point of this lesson statement (p. 18). State this session will explore how recognizing our woefulness before holy God can help us trust Him.

Step 2. Holiness Unveiled

Ask a volunteer to read Exodus 19:1-6. Lead a discussion with: What’s the first thing God wanted the Israelites to recall about Him and why do you think that is? What did God want from the Israelites? What did He want for them?

Discuss Day One, activity 1 (p. 8). Request learners skim through Exodus 20–24 and state what follows this experience with God at Mt. Sinai. Ask: Why did the people need to recognize God’s holiness before they received His laws?

Request a volunteer to read Exodus 20:18-21. Guide the group to describe the people’s response to God’s holiness. Consider how this frightening experience could have helped the Israelites trust God.

Step 3. God Is Holy

Write God Is . . . on a marker board. Invite learners to complete that statement with character qualities of God (i.e., love, forgiving, powerful, etc.).

Analyze how holiness is more than an aspect of God’s character. Declare: All that God is, is holy: His love is a holy love; His power is a holy power; His justice is a holy justice. His holiness is revealed in everything He does. Invite responses to Day Two, activity 1 (p. 9).

Determine how God’s holiness was revealed in His response to Adam and Eve’s rebellion (Gen. 3:16-19). Consider reasons people can’t see judgment as good and holy. Ask: Why must a holy God be a just God?

Discuss Day Two, activity 2 (pp. 10-11). Ask: How does God being “just and the justifier” (Rom. 3:26, NASB) emphasize His holiness? How does it explain how recognizing God’s awe-inspiring holiness helps us trust Him?

Step 4. Seraphim Sing

Guide the group to define “holy” (see Day Three paragraph beginning, “The root word . . . .” on p. 12). Ask the writer’s question (p. 12): “From what or whom is God separated?”

State: It’s difficult to define God’s holiness. The only way to begin to grasp His holiness is to experience it. The prophet Isaiah experienced God’s holiness and by the grace of God lived to tell about it. Discuss Day Three, activity 1 (p. 11). Explain Isaiah’s descriptions are his attempt to put in words the “otherness” of God that exceeds human language. Analyze why the seraphim repeated “holy” three times.

Request learners identify the timing of Isaiah’s vision and consider why that’s significant. Explain Uzziah was mostly a good king who ruled Judah over fifty years. His death created a great deal of uncertainty and ended a good era. God’s revelation of His holiness provided Isaiah the proper perspective to serve Him with endurance in increasingly difficult times. Ask: How can seeing a holy God seated on the throne help us trust and serve Him with endurance?

Invite a volunteer to read the final paragraph of Day Three (pp. 12-13). State: The seraphim’s refrain, “the whole earth is full of His glory” emphasizes God’s immanence—His nearness to us. The astounding truth of His transcendence and immanence is that this holy God stoops down to relate to humanity and act on our behalf. We can trust this fearfully holy God.

Step 5. Isaiah Sees God

Request adults identify what both the seraphim and Isaiah called God (Lord). Explore how that name emphasizes God’s holiness, using Day Four remarks (pp. 13-14) to add to the discussion.

Discuss Day Four, activities 1 (p. 14) and 2 (p. 15).

Step 6. Isaiah Sees Himself

Ask: We may respond with “Whoa!” when we see something amazing. How is that different than the “woe” Isaiah expressed?

Explain that as opposed to cheap views of a soft, tolerant God many people hold today, this vision did not immediately make Isaiah feel better. The more clearly he saw the Lord’s holiness, the more clearly he saw his sinfulness. Discuss Day Five, activity 1 (p. 15). Ask: Why is recognizing “I am undone” (KJV) a good place to be? How can that recognition help us learn to trust God?

Invite responses to Day Five, activity 2 (p. 17).

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Ask: What steps can we take this week to feel both woe and wonder in God’s presence? How can recognizing our woefulness before holy God help us learn to trust Him? What steps can you take this week to demonstrate you trust this holy God?

Close in prayer.

