

Holier Than Thou

Author: Jackie Hill Perry

Lesson Title: “Holy, Holy, Holy: Transcendence” (pp. 36-49)

Session 3

December 17, 2023

The main point of this lesson is: God’s holiness makes Him unique, distinct, and independent from everything and everyone else.

Focus on this goal: To help adults grow in their reverential fear of transcendent, holy God

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 3:2-6

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Ask adults to indicate if they have visited the Grand Canyon. Ask: What did seeing the Grand Canyon make you think and feel? Determine ways people can see the Grand Canyon (hike the rim or down into the canyon, ride a horse or train, raft the river, helicopter ride). Ask: Do you think anyone can ever fully take in all the Grand Canyon? Why? What can we learn about God from the Grand Canyon?

State: There’s no way to fully grasp the grandeur of God’s holiness; it’s just too immense. But just as people invest in ways to see specific parts of the Grand Canyon, we can focus on understanding specific aspects of God’s holiness, which Session 1 (p. 17) noted is “both His transcendence and His moral purity.” Point out Session 2 focused on God’s moral perfection. This session examines His transcendence.

Step 2. A Burning Bush, Part 1

Discuss Day One, activity 1 (p. 36). Ask why the bush wasn’t consumed by fire. Point out it was the revelation of the transcendent God. Invite adults to use their mobile devices to look up and read aloud definitions of transcendent.

Encourage the group to determine items people put into categories (plants, animals, food, music). Ask: What category can we put God in and why? Explain God’s transcendence means there is no category for God; He is His own category. The “otherness” of God means He is totally distinct and separate from everything else and has never had to be taught anything.

Discuss Day One, activity 2 (p. 37). Invite a volunteer to read the Day One Note (p. 37). Declare: An awe-inspiring aspect of this transcendent God is that He is also immanent—near to us. Invite a volunteer to read Isaiah 40:10-11.

Step 3. A Burning Bush, Part 2

Guide the group to explore how God’s transcendence is observable in a bush that wouldn’t burn. Discuss Day Two, activity 1 (pp. 38-39).

Encourage adults to quote (or read aloud) Genesis 1:1. Consider how the first verse of the Bible emphasizes God’s transcendence. Discuss Day Two, activity 2 (p. 40). Determine how truths from Acts 17 can help us frame how we think about God and ourselves.

Step 4. There’s Nobody Like the Lord, Part 1

Request volunteers read Isaiah 40:18; Psalm 71:19; Psalm 86:8; and Exodus 15:11. Inquire what each of these verses declare about God. Determine how the biblical writers responded to God’s otherness.

Invite volunteers to share their responses to Day Three, activity 1 (p. 41). Request another volunteer read the Day Three Note (p. 41). Ask if adults agree and why. Determine specific ways people, including Christians, treat God as commonplace. Ask: How can we avoid treating God as commonplace? (One way is to recall “Who is like you?” verses.)

Request a volunteer read Ezekiel 1:26-29. Ask: How was God’s transcendent otherness revealed to Ezekiel? Why did he use words like “likeness” and “appearance” when relating his experience?

Read the last two sentences of Day Three (p. 42), that are framed as questions. State “Only a Holy God,”1 a worship song, asks a similar series of questions about God and concludes only holy God. Readordirect learners to review some of those questions and the answer.

Step 5. There’s Nobody Like the Lord, Part 2

Request adults read the first few sentences of Day Four (pp. 42-43) and identify an error we make when we neglect considering God’s transcendence.

Discuss: How does saying “Love is God” disregard the holiness of God? What happens when our experiences with love become the primary framework by which we understand God? Read from the second paragraph of Day Four (p. 43), beginning with, “What happens is this: When we read the sentence, ‘God is love’ disconnected . . .” to the end of the paragraph.

Discuss Day Four, activity 1 (p. 43). Read and discuss the last paragraph of Day Four (p. 44).

Step 6. The Transcendent Lord

Observe: Just as a people put coins in a viewing scope at the Grand Canyon to zoom in on a specific feature, so Day Five zooms in on some specifics of God’s transcendence. Ask: What specific feature is revealed by Isaiah 55:9? How can that truth of God’s holiness help you trust Him? How does the gospel reveal God’s transcendence?

Discuss Day Five, activities 1 (p. 45) and 2 (p. 46). Invite a volunteer to read the final paragraph of Day Five (p. 46).

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Ask: Do we need to see something like the Grand Canyon to be in awe of God? What do we need to see to grow in our reverential fear of God? How can we gain a better glimpse of God’s transcendent holiness?

Invite a volunteer to read their song of worship from Day Three, activity 2 (p. 41) as your closing prayer.

(OPTION: Play a recording of or read the lyrics to “Only a Holy God” by CityAlight as your closing prayer.)

1.https://www.google.com/search?q=only+a+holy+god+lyrics&oq=only&aqs=chrome.0.69i59l2j69i57j46i67i650j0i67i650j46i67i340i650l2j69i61.2489j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

