

Holiness

Look at my holey jeans!! My brother held his pants with the holes in the knees as if they were sacred! Neither one of us knew what "holy" meant. If you wonder whether you need to know what holiness means, consider this: "Make every effort...to be holy, *without holiness no one will see the Lord*" (Hebrews 12:14). Though holiness is essential to our relationship with God, it is difficult to define because its meaning is several layers deep.

THE PERSONAL LAYER

Holiness has to do with a Person: God. Holiness is not an attribute of God, it is His nature. Angels in the presence of God continuously sing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). Why aren't they chanting "Love, love, love," or "Good, good, good"? What are they saying about God? Here is the key to understanding the first level of holiness.

The angels are saying something about the central feature of God's nature: His *otherness* or *transcendence*. God's awesome majesty is unparalleled by anything we can know or experience (Exodus 15:11). His splendor (Psalms 96:9), truth (Revelation 6:10), and moral perfection are beyond human comprehension (Isaiah 5:16). God is *the* "Holy One" (Isaiah 43:15).

THE RELATIONAL LAYER

God alone is the source of all holiness, so other things become holy only as they relate to Him. Therefore, at the next level, holiness is a *relational* word meaning "something that belongs to God." The Sabbath was holy because it was God's day. The temple was a holy building, Zion a holy mountain, Israel a holy people—all because they belonged to God.

Belonging to God meant they were “*marked off, separated, withdrawn from ordinary use*” (W. Eichrodt) because of God's exclusive ownership.

The New Testament word “saint” or “holy one” simply means a person who belongs to God. The words “sanctify” and “hallow,” mean *to make holy*. Through the sacrifice of Jesus we've been made holy so we can live in God's presence.

THE MORAL LAYER

If being holy means we belong to God, it also means we recognize His ownership and obey Him. This moral level of holiness requires us to “purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

In the Old Testament, holiness includes ceremonial purity as well as right moral behavior (Leviticus chapters 11 and 19). The motive behind these regulations is, “Be holy because I, the LORD, am holy.” Only by moving into God's sphere of holiness can we hope to relate to Him. Therefore, holiness has religious as well as daily application (1 Peter 1:14-16).

THE SPIRITUAL LAYER

Here is where many people distort their faith. The command of God is to “be holy,” not “do holy things.” You won't become holy by doing holy things—even “unholy” people can do holy things. Only after God has made us holy by His Spirit, word, and sacrifice of Christ are we really able to do what's right (Romans 15:16; Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 10:10). R. C. Sproul reminds us we aren't supposed to conform to the world. But he says the answer isn't *nonconformity*- like wearing different styles of clothing or boycotting entertainment. The biblical response isn't to be non-conformed, but *transformed* (Romans 12:2). Holiness is a work of God that transforms our hearts leading us to integrity and complete devotion to His will.

Some Christians think holiness means flawless perfection. They tend to be legalistic and judgmental. But every church Paul addressed, as "saints" also had to be told to give up anger, greed, theft, lies, gossip, and immorality. Like other aspects of Christian growth, becoming holy is a process that is worked out in our daily actions as we walk with God. Our holiness is important enough to involve God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:10; 13:14; etc.). Because Moses underestimated the importance of standing up for God's holiness, he was barred from entering the promised land (Deuteronomy 32:51).

Holiness-which is also related to health and wholeness-affects our whole being: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). God's goal is for your life to be wholly His.

If you would like to learn more about holiness, please call.