

**Introduction:**

- We are going to look at a topic that is not talked about much-in the church. It is rarely, if ever found in children's church materials. But, I believe that if it were understood by children ...and adults; the church would be stronger, Christians would be happier and God would be really happy. It is the topic of holiness–The holiness of God.
- IE. When my granddaughter was three or so, she would make me sit down on the floor so she could serve me coffee and a bacon and egg sandwich. When she delivered my order, the cup was empty and the plate had no food on it. But here's the amazing thing: my granddaughter had the ability to see both the coffee in the cup and the sandwich on the plate. And I, of course ate it up! And she would giggle as I told her what an excellent cook she was!
- All children have this powerful capacity to imagine. Sadly, as we grow into adulthood and the real concerns of life fills our thoughts... our ability to imagine dims.
- Let me give you a brief definition of imagination as it pertains to faith: imagination is the capacity to see what is real but unseen.
  - To enable us to imagine, God has given us two things: One, we see physical things with our physical eyes, and two, we see real unseen things with the eyes of our heart. God has given us this set of eyes so we can "see"/perceive the unseen world of spiritual reality. Seeing gives us understanding. *"Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing."* Judy, the elf, from The Santa Clause.
  - The problem is the sin that infects our heart also renders us spiritually blind or with dim sight. So, God blesses us with the eye-opening ministry of the Holy Spirit so we can "see" what cannot be seen with the physical eyes, but is every bit as real.
- I want you to understand this before I start talking about holiness. Why? Because I know that what we're about to consider is dependent upon the Holy Spirit opening our eyes to see. The holiness of God is so far beyond anything in our ordinary experience that we have no grid to understand it. Help us Holy Spirit!
- So, to understand the holiness of God I am going to start by painting pictures and I want you to imagine the scriptures as I share them today. Let me start with emotional responses to God's holiness. Put yourself in the place of these people as they experience the holiness of God.

**I. The Holiness of God is:** Terrifying, threatening, scary wonderful, captivating and humbling.

- A. The holiness of God is Terrifying: Cheap grace has made God appear as our best buddy and friend. God loves us. He wants to be with us. But God only reveals a little of himself at a time. PTL!
  1. I remember when Prophet John Paul Jackson was with us a 12 years ago. He was describing a God encounter in which he found himself in the throne room of God. He describes it as the most terrifying thing in his life...to be in the actual presence of God. His words, "I could not wait to get out of there!"
  2. Here is how terrifying the holiness of God is. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and dropped dead.
    - a) *"As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified."* (Acts 5:5, NLT)

- b) *"The entire church was seized with a powerful sense of the fear of God, which came over all who heard what had happened."* (Acts 5:11, TPT)
3. Aron's sons (who were priests) presented 'strange fire' to the Lord and died right there. Nu 3:4
  4. Isaiah the prophet encounters God in a beautiful vision and it terrifies him. Is 6:5 "Then I said, *"It is all over! I am doomed, ..."* Result is the fear of the Lord
- B. The Holiness of God is Very Threatening: Not just terrifying.
1. Moses is at the burning bush. He hears his name twice. He is commanded to come no closer and to take off his shoes...for he was on holy ground. *"When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, **"Moses! Moses!"** "Here I am!" Moses replied. **"Do not come any closer,"** the Lord warned. **"Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.** I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God." (Exodus 3:4-6, NLT) Afraid - to be filled with dread.
  2. Mt Sinai - God instructs Moses to tell people not to touch the mountain. *"Mark off a boundary all around the mountain. Warn the people, 'Be careful! Do not go up on the mountain **or even touch** its boundaries. Anyone who touches the mountain will certainly be put to death."* (Ex 19:12, NLT) IE. How many of you have heard dad say, "DON'T EVEN TOUCH!" It results in the fear of the Lord when God speaks this way.
- C. The Holiness of God is Scary Wonderful Breathtaking/Awe:
1. John the Apostle - *"When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! ..."* (Rev 1:17, NLT) Afraid - an emotion that startles and makes one want to run away. But John couldn't get his feet to go.
  2. The first two times I fell out in the Spirit were both scary and wonderful! Scary in that I was encountering God on a whole new level and it was wonderful because I was enjoying what was happening. IE. Like riding a roller coaster for the first time. John's encounter with the holiness of God produced the fear of the Lord
- D. The Holiness of God is Captivating - And leads to one being speechless and perplexed:
1. Peter, James and John at the transfiguration. Peter does not know what to do but wants to do something. Duh, let build three tabernacles...one for each.
  2. God then speaks and they all fall upon their faces afraid. *"The disciples were terrified and fell face down on the ground."* (Matthew 17:6, NLT)
  3. Often people find themselves in the presence of God and do not know what to do.
- E. The Holiness of God is Humbling:
1. Let's go back to Isaiah 6. This encounter with God's holiness comes as a rebuke and humbles Isaiah. Although, God never rebukes Isaiah.
  2. Isaiah 6 *"I am man of unclean lips"*. Who told him that? No one! He encountered the holiness of God.
- F. Are you beginning to see what the holiness of God can do? It will change you!

## II. God is holy and he wants us to be holy.

- A. Here are a few scriptures stating that. Holiness is important to God. It is who He is Holy!
1. "So set yourselves apart to be holy, for I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 20:7, NLT)
  2. "For I am the Lord your God. You must consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy..." (Leviticus 11:44, NLT)
  3. "But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy." (1 Peter 1:15, NLT)
  4. "Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes." (Ephesians 1:4, NLT)
- B. God Is Holy. IE. I saw a guy at the gym this week and he was huge, huge, huge! How big do you think that guy was?
1. God declares He is holy. The Word declares that God is holy. Both OT and NT declare He is holy. And those who encountered Him testify that He is holy.
  2. So in Isaiah 6:3 the angels cry, "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of heavens armies! The whole earth is filled with His glory.*" Notice that it wasn't enough for the angels to say, 'God is holy.' They said it three times with emphasis! The repetitive emphasis of the word holy causes us to 'see' His holiness in a big way.
  3. You need to know that God is in an entirely different category of holiness; He is much holier than you or I ever thought holiness could be.
  4. But even "holy, holy, holy" was not enough for the seraph as they tried to capture God's holiness. They had to add, "The whole earth is filled with his glory." There is enough of God's holiness for the whole earth to experience!
  5. These are words crafted by Holy Spirit so that we can see...God's holiness. "*They're meant to humble you with the realization that God is fundamentally different from you. They're intended to help you understand that who you're dealing with is Someone greater than anyone and everyone you have ever dealt with before.*" Paul Tripp.

## III. What Is Holiness?

- A. Holiness comes from the Hebrew word **qadowsh** which means "to cut."
1. To be holy means to be cut off, or set apart, from everything else. It means to be in a class of your own, distinct from anything that has ever existed or will ever exist.
  2. To be holy means to be entirely morally pure, all the time and in every way possible.
  3. When we look at God with these two definitions we are left with just one conclusion: God, Himself is the sum and definition of what it means to be holy. There is nothing like Him when it comes to holiness!
    - a) Song of Moses "*Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?*" (Ex 15:11 ESV)
    - b) Hannah's prayer. "*There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.*" (1 Sam 2:2 ESV) God's holiness is the essence of who He is. Just look at all He has done, does and will do! He is holy.
- B. Holiness Convicts Us

1. Is. 6 *"Woe is me...I am a man of unclean lips."* God did not tell him that. He experienced God's holiness and conviction hit him.
  2. Isaiah does not have a wow experience of God's holiness...he is broken because he realizes he is morally separated from the Lord. Isaiah realizes the spiritual disaster that is going on inside of him!
  3. Sin does not always appear sinful to us. Often it is attractive and draws us to it. Sin is more than a list of bad behaviors and breaking of rules. Sin is the tragic condition of the heart that causes us to willingly and repeatedly rebel against God and do wrong.
  4. It's the holiness of God that tells we cannot escape ourselves, and we all need a Savior who can do what we can't – rescue us from us. You can't consider the holiness of God without also mourning your sin and crying out for the grace of Jesus.
- C. Holiness Defines Calling
1. Because holiness is the essence of God's character, it becomes our calling as his children by inheritance. Peter says: *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"* (1 Peter 1:14-16, ESV)
  2. To say you are holy, means that you have been set apart by God's grace for God's purpose. IE Set apart like Israel the nation. "I choose you, therefore you are holy!"
  3. Third: you have been called to holy living. Obedience matters! Every thought, every desire, every word, every choice and every action must be done in a spirit of humble surrender to the commands of God. God calls us to be holy, then gives us his Holy Spirit to live inside of us so that we would have the wisdom and strength that we need to surrender to his holy call in all that we do. Holy Spirit and fire John said. To burn up the chaff not the wheat. The fire destroys sinners and it destroys sinful habits, work of the flesh.

### Conclusion:

- Writer Anne Paden shares a lesson of submission and obedience from Jack London's classic story WHITE FANG about a half dog, half wolf learning to live among men:
- White Fang was very fond of chickens and on one occasion raided a chicken-roost and killed fifty hens. His master, Weedon Scott, whom White Fang saw as a man-God and 'loved with a single heart,' scolded him and then took him into the chicken yard. When White Fang saw his favorite food walking around right in front of him he obeyed his natural impulse and lunged for a chicken. He was immediately checked by his master's voice. They stayed in the chicken yard for quite a while and every time White Fang made a move toward a chicken his master's voice would stop him. In this way he learned what his master wanted--he had learned to ignore the chickens.
- Weedon decided to test the training by locking him in the chicken coop for the day. Locked in the yard and there deserted by the master, White Fang lay down and went to sleep. Once he got up and walked over to the trough for a drink of water. The chickens he calmly ignored. So far as he was concerned they did not exist. At four o'clock he executed a running jump, gained the roof of the chicken house and leaped to the ground outside, whence he sauntered gravely to the house. He had learned the law. APPLICATION: Out of love and a desire to obey his master's

will, White Fang overcame his natural, inborn desires. He may not have understood the reason but he chose to bend his will to his master's desire. Lord, help me realize that my life will always be full of 'chickens.' What I have to settle is, whom will I serve

- The holiness of God drives us to the Savior, who alone is able, by his life and death, to unite an unholy people to a holy God. God reveals his holiness to us not as a warning that we should run from him in eternal terror, but as a welcome to us to run to him, where weak and failing sinners always find grace that lasts forever.