

LESSON
1

He Is Holy

Our lives are changed when we come to know God's holiness as expressed in His love and justice.

LIFE NEED

An important part of teen faith development is the freedom to ask deep questions about who God is and why He does the things that He does. Pat answers to these kinds of searching questions just don't cut it. Teens are looking for answers they can use to shape their lives. Some of your students may have a real desire to have *all* the answers to *all* their questions—to completely understand God and how to be holy. When they discover the double truth that no human has all the answers to God's holiness and that we're all growing together, they might become frustrated and discouraged.

Use this lesson to give them the answers about God's holiness that we do have. Explore together His awesomeness. Let them experience the awe of understanding what pure holiness might be like and lead them to worship our holy God. He is worthy of our praise. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8).

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1 Samuel 2:2; Revelation 16:4-7; Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 John 4:7-12

When people experience the undeserved favor of God, one of their first reactions is to recognize and rejoice in His holiness. Hannah, mother of the famous prophet Samuel, did this when she dedicated the infant Samuel to God (**1 Samuel 2:2**). She acknowledged God's holiness as a characteristic unique to Him; no other god, nor even any of His own creatures, can compare to Him.

God's holiness can be described as a mix of His justice and His love. God's holy nature is expressed, in part, by His just and righteous opposition to evil (**Revelation 16:4-7**) and in the way He deals justly with people (**Deuteronomy 32:4**). It follows that people who belong to God are called to live up to certain moral standards that are built in to His just and righteous nature.

The other essential character of God's holiness is His love (**1 John 4:7-12**). His holiness cannot exist apart from His love. It was love that compelled Him to send His one and only Son to live and die for us so that we might live through Him. Holy people reflect God's holiness when they practice the same type of self-giving love. In fact, John says that only those who have this type of love can truly know God. When we truly know God and really love one another, then His love is made complete in us. And when God's love is made complete, we become more like God (holy). Being a holy person doesn't make you better than anyone else, it just makes you a loving person.

RESOURCES

- Copies of the *Let's Design a God* handout
- Scissors
- Pens and pencils
- Bibles
- Chalk/marker board
- Box or bag of 12 miscellaneous items from home
- Copies of the *Who Is God?* handout
- Copies of the *To Know Me Is to Love Me* handout

PREPARING THE TEACHER

How could He?
Why would He?
Why didn't He?

Questions like these are asked every day by Christians and non-Christians alike. We don't understand the true nature of God's holiness. It's a pure holiness that we've not seen in humans. In fact, pure love responses in our world might be hard for some of us to swallow. We're used to half-love responses in our world that may move us to be sorry but don't move us to change our behaviors.

It takes all time and eternity to know God.

—Oswald Chambers

Do you remember some of the struggles you had as a teen in coming to know who God is and what He is like?

There must have been a thousand thoughts and questions coming and going in your mind. Even as adults we struggle with knowing who God is and comprehending His essence. But we are fortunate in that we have God's Word in which He gives us a glimpse of himself. Does His Word answer all of our questions? No, but it does reveal what kind of a God we serve and what He is like. He's a God of holiness, a God of justice, and a God of love.

God could have answered all our questions. But of all the things He could have revealed about himself, He chose the most beautiful and important aspect of who He is—the aspect of God that influences all others. We may

want to know how He could be eternal or how He could let evil exist, but the real issue of who He is and why He does what He does is settled in that *He is a God of holiness and love*. All that He has done is based on that simple fact. Does that answer all of our questions? No, but it does give us an unshakable foundation upon which to build our further understanding.

Though our feelings come and go, His love for us does not. It is not wearied by our sins, or our indifference; and therefore, it is quite relentless in its determination that we shall be cured of those sins, at whatever cost to us, at whatever cost to Him.

—C. S. Lewis

Think about your teenage years:

- ☞ How did you view God? How did He show himself to you?
- ☞ Did the way you perceive God affect the way you acted? Did it affect your feelings toward Him?
- ☞ What was the one issue about God's character that bugged you the most as a teen?

How do you perceive God now?

- ☞ When you hear God mentioned, what image comes to your mind?
- ☞ What reason would you give for why that particular image comes to mind? What experiences in your life do you think may have caused you to view God in that light?
- ☞ What's your definition of "holiness"? Do you see that as being a positive word or a negative word? Do you consider yourself, as a Christian, capable of being holy?

Think about your class:

- ☞ Are there members of your class that have a less than healthy view of God? If so, how does it affect the way they see God and respond to Him?

TEACHING THE LESSON

NOTES

LIFE

Student Goals: Explore human versions of God's characteristics; begin thinking about who God is.

Let's Design a God ⌚12

Divide your class into three groups (one person can be a group). Then say, **Today, you have been specially chosen for a new project. One of the major television networks has developed a concept for a new show. The show is about a new planet and its interactions with its god. Your job is to design that god. You need to define what their god is, its characteristics, and its relation to the people—in other words, will it be friendly and personal, or will it be distant and uncaring. You have five minutes.**

Pass out copies of the *Let's Design a God* handout. After five minutes, bring them back together and allow each group to explain their god to the rest of the class. When all three groups are finished, ask these questions:

- **Was it easy or hard to design your own god? Why?**
- **How did you decide what qualities your god should have?**
- **Were the gods you created similar to or different than God?**
- **What are some of the characteristics that God has?**

Our Holy God ⌚3

Say the following in your own words: **There's another word that's often used to describe God. It's often misunderstood by folks, but it's a word that we need to understand as Christians because God asks us to live in such a way that people describe us that way too.** You could hum a few bars of the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy" to give some hints, or simply write in large letters on your chalk/marker board the word "HOLY."

Ask for two students to read aloud to the rest of the class these Scripture passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:7 and 1 Peter 1:15-16. Each of these verses indicates that God intends for Christians to be holy.

Then, as you move into the TRUTH section of the lesson, make this statement, using your own words: **It's obvious that being holy is a part of what God is all about. He is holy. He wants us to be holy. Often, though, it's tough for us to get a handle on just what living a holy life is like—from day to day. We ask ourselves, "What is holiness? I know God is holy, but can I really live that way?" Let's look together for answers to these questions.**

TRUTH

Student Goal: Explore how Scripture describes God.

NOTES

Missionary Endeavor ⌚15

For this part of the lesson, you will need to bring a box or bag of 12 miscellaneous items from home (for example, rocks, rope, wall hangings, tools, clothing, canned food, towels, soap, etc.). As you begin this activity, have your students form a circle with their chairs (or sit on the floor, if they can) and put this collection of items (still in the box or bag) in the middle of the circle.

Begin by saying:

You are about to leave on a mission that will take you into the rain forest, the deepest jungle. Your mission is to find the most remote village in the mountains, find at least one person in that village, and explain to that person who God is and that He is a holy God. You know this about the people in the village: They worship gods made of stone, clay, and rock. They speak the same language you do, but they don't understand the words that we often use to talk about God (i.e., salvation, holiness, etc.).

You've been provided with four Scripture passages and several items to choose from to help you illustrate or explain who God is. You can also use hand movements to communicate. For each passage, choose an item or develop a hand movement to serve as a symbol of who God is.

At this point in the activity, distribute copies of the *Who Is God?* hand-out, which is printed at the end of this lesson. It contains the four Scripture passages the students will rewrite for the village native. Included here for your convenience is a brief synopsis of each passage in relation to God and His holiness.

Deuteronomy 32:4—As Moses came to the end of his life, he knew that the Israelites, who were easily distracted, might forget who God was and turn to other gods. Moses gave a poetic speech (called the Song of Moses) to the Israelites. This verse is part of that speech: “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just.” God’s holiness is seen in His strength, in the perfection of the things He’s done and created, and in the way He deals justly with people.

1 Samuel 2:2—This passage is part of the prayer Hannah prayed after God answered her prayer for a child. God moved in a mighty way in this barren woman’s life. Hannah knew that her pregnancy happened only because God caused it to happen. She became fully aware of God’s complete holiness, both His power and His love.

1 John 4:7-12—This passage explains the overriding aspect of God’s holiness—His love. He is love—holy, pure love.

NOTES

Revelation 16:4-7—John wrote the Book of Revelation after having a vision. In his vision, one of the Lord’s angels described God as a just God, again in connection with the word “holy.” John is one of many writers in the Bible who talk about God as the ultimate in fair judges. His justice is a part of His holiness.

Allow your students to work individually or in groups to plan their explanation of God to the native villager. After 10 minutes ask each person or group to present how they would describe to the villager who God is, showing which item or hand movement they would use to symbolize an aspect of God.



*Student Goals: Discover the true meaning of love;
open the door for change through the power of God’s holiness.*

To Know Me Is to Love Me 🕒 **5**

Distribute copies of the *To Know Me Is to Love Me* handout. Ask students to read it silently and to seriously consider God’s command for each person to be holy, being people who love with God’s kind of love. Allow them opportunity to commit to that kind of lifestyle, and then close in prayer.

As you pray, thank God for being a holy God, whose holiness includes love, power, justice, and a whole lot more. Then ask Him to help each class member in the weeks ahead to begin to form a personal idea of who God is and to decide what difference that will make in their everyday life.

CREATIVE OPTIONS

Group Singing

Sing “Cry of My Heart,” “Refiner’s Fire,” and/or “Hungry,” all from the *Guitar Praise!* chorus book (Lillenas Publishing Company, MB-901) available at www.barefootministries.com.

Who I Am

As an optional LIFE activity, list each person’s name on the chalk/marker board, and ask students to agree on a one-word description of each of their classmates. The word chosen for each person should capture the essence of that person’s personality. Discuss how love is the overall essence of God’s holiness.

God for a Day

Before class begins, photocopy the descriptions printed at the end of this activity. Each section contains instructions that ask the holder to behave in a way that demonstrates an aspect of God’s nature: power, love, justice.

Distribute the three role plays to three different students or three groups. Ask the students to begin playing their role immediately by interacting with the others in the class. After the rest of the students get a hint of what the different roles might be, ask the following questions:

- **How did playing your role make you feel? What was easy for you? What was hard?**
- **Describe what you think the others were trying to do.**
- **These different roles have a common theme. What do you think that theme might be?**

If necessary, summarize the activity by saying, **The roles you were asked to play are all aspects of God’s nature. Power is a part of who He is. God is a God of judgment who opposes evil. God is a God of love. All of these adjectives—powerful, just, loving—help us understand Who God is. Are the ways we showed power, justice, and love good examples of how God demonstrates these things? How might His version of these things be different?**

Follow this activity with the Our Holy God activity.

Descriptions for God for a Day activity:

Power is a characteristic of God. Your job is to assume the role of someone who is powerful. You decide how you define “power.”

Love is a characteristic of God. Your job is to assume the role of someone who is loving. You decide how you define “love.”

Justice is a characteristic of God. Your job during this activity is to assume the role of someone who is just. You decide how you define “just.”

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*® (NIV®). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.