

A HOLY PEOPLE

—WEEK 6—

Holy is one of those church words we use a lot. But do we know what it means? What comes to mind when we think of the word *holy*? Maybe we think of a monk living in an old castle doing God-stuff all day every day. Maybe we think of the preacher in a suit shouting about the evils of rock-n-roll and dancing. Maybe we think of things to stay away from—smoking, gambling, secular music, etc.

We need to think of holiness less about “being good” and more about devotion. When we read in the Old Testament, we see that the objects Israel’s priests used in worship are called holy—lampstands, oil jars, even bowls. The bowls weren’t holy because they didn’t run with the wrong crowd. No, they were holy because they were only used in the worship of the LORD. They were devoted to that purpose.

When we live holy lives, we are giving our complete devotion to a holy God who has loved us and saved. We give him our minds. We give him our actions. We give him our words. We give him our hearts. The holy life is a life of full devotion to God. Our lives are completely set apart for him.

Our Church Covenant reads: “We will constantly renew our minds to the truth of God’s holy Word, remembering that we were born again by his grace, having been brought into his kingdom in order that we should walk in holiness in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.”

In this section of the covenant, we are promising to pursue holiness together. The grace of Jesus came to each of us and saved us. By his grace we have been born again. We have been delivered from darkness and brought into the Kingdom of Christ. And all of this has happened so that we might live holy, devoted life to Jesus together.

The first commitment here is to renew our minds. This means we commit to read the Word and obey the Word, both personally and together. Research suggests that the single most significant factor in personal devotion to Christ is daily Bible reading. In our covenant, we are promising to be in the Word and renewed by the Word together. We are committing to allowing the Word of God to transform our lives.

The second commitment here is to walk in holiness in the world. Holiness is not just something we do when we’re sitting at a worship gathering. It’s a daily activity. It’s a

lifestyle. It's something that comes as naturally to us as walking. The world around us is full of ungodliness and worldly lusts. But our call from Jesus is to deny the world and to walk together in holiness. God is holy. We are called to be holy. Jesus saved us to be his holy people. And in our covenant we are committing to pursue holiness together, for our good and for the glory of Jesus.

Meditate on God's Word

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

—Romans 12:1-2

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

—Titus 2:11-14

"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 1:15-16

Questions for Application

1. Is holiness something that we think of often? Why does holiness seem to be in the back of our minds as Christians?
2. How can we think of holiness less about duty and more about delight? How does it help to think of holiness as complete devotion to Jesus?
3. What practical things can we do together to renew our minds by the Word and to walk together in holiness?

Close by praying as a group that God would help us to live holy lives together in the world.