

Sacred 4-Letter Words: Holy

Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Application
Lynn Haven UMC – January 10, 2021 – Pastor Craig Carter

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“Four-letter words” are commonly understood to be profane curses that are not uttered in polite company (though they have grown more commonplace in recent years). A recent book by Charles Lake and Matt Ayars titled *Holy Is a Four-Letter Word* identifies a number of four-letter words that enable us to live a holy life in an unholy world. They are words that are key to living as God intends us to do. Our sermon series on this topic begins today with a look at the word **holy**.

You must be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. - Leviticus 19:2 NLT

*You were created to be like God, and so you must please him and be truly holy.
- Ephesians 4:24b CEV*

As God’s people we are called and expected to be holy. We have complicated this subject, and often view it with cynicism and skepticism. Yet God actually expects us to be holy. Let’s consider what is holiness, why it is important, and how we become holy.

What is holiness?

The original Hebrew and Greek words mean “division, separation, or set apart.”

It means something or someone who is set apart from the world and set aside for God. It is more than a set of do’s and don’ts, it means to be separated so that God can use us.

Why is holiness so important?

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. - Revelation 4:8 NIV

Holiness describes the character of God more than any other word. The Lord is completely set apart from all that is sinful and corrupt. In the same way, holiness is meant to be a core character trait of Christians – not just our outward behavior, but our inner hearts.

Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” - 1 Peter 1:15-16 NIV

How do we become holy and fulfill our God-given destiny?

Our own efforts to be holy always fall short, we cannot do this by our own willpower. The good news is that God helps us – we have to make an effort to set ourselves apart, but it is God who transforms our inner selves into something holy. Jesus' work opened the way for our salvation and holiness, and now we are called to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in our lives.

So set yourselves apart to be holy, for I am the Lord your God. Keep all my decrees by putting them into practice, for I am the Lord who makes you holy. - Leviticus 20:7-8 NLT

You were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. - 1 Corinthians 6:11 NLT

Conclusion

Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*
- John 11:25-26 NIV

God has called you and I to live by a sacred 4-letter word and be holy as He is holy.

⇒ Do you believe this? Do you believe you are called to be holy and somehow God can do that work in your life? What are some obstacles that stand in the way of truly believing you can live a holy life?

⇒ Will you give yourself wholeheartedly to God and to the work of the Holy Spirit to do for you what you cannot do yourself? Ask the Lord to do this holy work in your heart and life.

⇒ Will you agree to do whatever is necessary to cooperate with God's Spirit so that you can "be holy in all you do" and say? What is ONE THING you can do to live a holy life?