

**Youth Week 2007**  
**Optional Midweek Lesson**

**Holiness Defined For A New Generation**

**LESSON BACKGROUND**

In the movie, *The Princess Bride*, one of the characters named Vescini keeps shouting the word, "inconceivable," as a reaction to everything. At one point, one of his hired henchmen, Inigo, turns to him and says, "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

Have you ever felt that way - that you keep using a word or it keeps popping up around you but you just aren't sure

<b>Students Should Learn:</b> 1. The basic tenets of the holiness message and why holiness is important in their own lives. 2. That holiness comes when we focus our life on Christ.	<b>What You'll Need:</b> A padlock that requires a key and some extra keys that don't fit 3x5 cards 3x5 cards with one of the eight tenets and corresponding question(s) written on it Pair of glasses with a strong prescription
<b>Scripture Focus:</b> Leviticus 19:1-2, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 12:2	

you're using it the way it was meant to be used. That's the way many people feel about the word, holiness. They have some idea of what it means, and a faint picture of what "holy" people are supposed to look like. But they're just not sure what it means personally.

In this lesson, we'll take another look at what the biblical message of holiness means, specifically trying to create a better understanding for this generation. The mere word holiness scares some people. It really shouldn't. Holiness is not just an abstract concept, a theory to be proved, or a doctrine to be dissected. Neither is it an argument won by stringing together a whole ream of Bible verses. Holiness describes a way of living made possible through intimate personal relationship with God. It speaks of life and relationship, not letter and law, not doctrine and theory. That changes the way we look at it.

During this lesson, you will walk your students through eight basic tenets of the holiness message. These tenets have served as the historical and biblical foundation for the holiness message. It is not crucial that your students completely understand each tenet. It is important that they see how each tenet fits into the overall picture of holiness.

First, God is a holy God, and He desires holy children (Leviticus 19:2). He wants a great life for us. He wants us to know only joy without sin's heartache. He wants us to do right.

Second, God created humanity with a special quality (Genesis 2:16-17). He flung a million stars in the sky across a million miles. He created planets beyond our wildest imagination. He created earth's plant life, animal life, and sea life both large and small. But when He created humanity, He included a unique quality -- free will. We can choose to love and obey God, or we can choose to break His heart. It's our call.

Third, We used our free will to disobey God (Genesis 3:6-7). Adam and Eve started the downward spiritual slide of humanity in the garden Fall. Humanity has carried on the tradition ever since. The choice to reject God created radical change in the hearts of the first parents and in the hearts of all of their future children. The spiritual infection of a sin nature spread quickly throughout the entire human race, manifesting itself most often in the form of self-preference. We want to do our own thing our own way.

Fourth, The good news of the Gospel message is twofold: a) God can forgive us of our past sins when we repent and confess them; and b) He can also change our hearts from within and reorient our fallen nature so we can return to His will and plan for our lives (1 John 1:9). When we use the term, "full salvation," we mean that we are forgiven for the acts of sinning and our hearts are changed to remove the inclination to sin in the first place.

Fifth, Sin does not leave us hopelessly programmed to repeat our past sinfulness over and over for as long as we live (Acts 3:19; Colossians 2:13). We are not doomed always to prefer our own ways to God's ways. The holiness message reminds us that sin's addictive power is not greater than God's healing power.

Sixth, We participate in God's salvation plan (Galatians 2:20). In order for Him to heal us of the infection we must surrender the control center of life to Him. We must let Him have complete control of everything we are or hope to be: our past, present, and future, our hopes, dreams, goals, and aspirations. He gets the keys to every door in our heart and life.

Seventh, God asks us to offer ourselves back to Him (Romans 12:1). We call this consecration. We make ourselves available to God as part of our worship.

Eighth, God accepts our offer by sanctifying us (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). The concept of sanctification is rich with meaning through Scripture, occurring more than 1,100 times. It's all that God does in us to restore our hearts to the way He created us to be - and, deep down, the way we really want to be as we relate to our Heavenly Father and others.

Over the years, an entire vocabulary has sprung up in the discussion of holiness. Many new words emerged in the process. Sometimes the meanings of the words have about a hair's width of distance between them, requiring a microscope and tweezers to separate them. Sometimes the distinctions matter; sometimes they don't. Either way, many of the words scare people. So we must find a way to talk about this relationship between God and His children without getting caught up in the tornado of abstract concepts and theological jargon. We must deliver this biblical message of holiness to our day with words people understand. At the same time, we must remain true to the Scriptures and the faith heritage passed to us.

Once again, we must return to the words that Moses proclaimed God's word to the nation of Israel, "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy." (Lev. 19:2) It all starts there. We must become a reflection of who God is, not striving to become gods ourselves, but allowing God to mold us more and more into His image everyday. In order to help this generation understand what holiness means, we must be able to tell our students how this relationship that we can have with God was forged. We must go back to the beginning and share the story of God's desire for a holy people from the start of it all, yet something got in the way of that. We must talk about the basics of repentance, surrender, and consecration - all of which are simply ways that we allow God to do His good work in us.

In the end, holiness will best be defined for our students by the way we model it in our own lives. Near the end of this lesson, you'll read from Hebrews 12:2, where the writer instructs the believers to "keep their eyes on Jesus." Jesus sets the example for each of us in what it means to be holy and to live it out. Many of our students may not have a clear picture of who Jesus is, but they can see you. I can recall many sermons from well-intentioned preachers on the subject of holiness that left our young people glassy-eyed and wondering if it would ever be something that they could achieve in their own lives. The message left them hopeful that there was a better way, yet discouraged that they didn't quite understand how to get there. It is our task to work together toward a redefining of holiness, not in an over-simplistic way, but in a practical way that makes sense to our students.

(adapted from article *Holiness Defined For A New Generation* by Frank Moore in the book, Holiness 101, Beacon Hill Press)

## **THE LESSON**

### **Who Holds The Key**

Before this lesson, get a padlock of some kind that requires a key to open it. You will also need some extra keys that are similar in appearance but don't fit the lock. At the beginning of this lesson, invite a number of students up front (the same number of students as you have keys) and tell them that you are going to ask them a series of questions. When a student answers a question correctly, he or she will receive a key. When all the keys are distributed, the students will have a chance to see if their key opens the lock. Whichever person successfully opens the lock will win a prize.

The types of questions you ask aren't important, only that you distribute a key in some way to each student that you bring up. Once all the keys are out, have your students try their key(s) in the padlock until someone is able to open it up. Award that person a prize or simple congratulations and move on to the next section by saying something like, **A padlock is meant to keep things secure from everyone except the person who holds the key. When you have the key, you have access to whatever the lock is protecting. In a spiritual sense, each one of us holds the keys to our own hearts. When we come to know God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we begin the process of handing the keys of our hearts over to Him. Sometimes that happens all at once or it happens over time. At the heart (get it?!) of understanding what it means to be holy is the idea of giving God the keys, or access to all areas of our lives. Today we're going to try and understand what it means at a deeper level.**

### **Back To Basics**

In this section, we're going to walk through some of the basic tenets of the holiness message. There will be eight reports that need to be given by your students back to the rest of the group. Before the class session, write down each of the tenets and the corresponding Scripture passage on a 3x5 card. You will hand this card to the group or student responsible to report back to the class. You can divide your class into eight groups or assign each tenet to a person or divide your group in half and give four tenets to one group and four to another.

Here are the eight tenets that need to be reported back on:

**Tenet #1.** God is a holy God.

Scripture: Leviticus 19:2.

Question(s) the group must answer and report on: What does God desire for us? How can imitate the character of God?

**Tenet # 2.** God created humanity with a special quality (free will).

Scripture: Genesis 2:16-17

Question(s) the group must answer and report on: Why did God give us the freedom to choose? How are we different from the other things that God created?

**Tenet # 3.** We used our free will to disobey God.

Scripture: Genesis 3:6-7

Question(s) the group must answer and report on: Why do you think Adam & Eve chose to disobey God? Why do we choose to disobey God? How does sin (disobedience of God's desires) affect our hearts? Our relationship with God?

**Tenet # 4.** God's good news to us is that He will forgive our sins and change our hearts.

Scripture: 1 John 1:9

Question(s) the group must answer and report on: Why is forgiveness important? What happens if we're forgiven but our hearts aren't changed?

**Tenet # 5.** Sin no longer holds us captive and we are free to live according to God's best.

Scripture: Acts 3:19; Colossians 2:13

Question(s) the group must answer and report on: When God forgives our sin, what does he do with the desire to sin? Do we have to keep on sinning or is there a better way?

**Tenet # 6.** We must surrender every area of our lives to God.

Scripture: Galatians 2:20

Question(s) the group must answer and report on: What does it mean to surrender my life to God? How do we hand the keys to our heart over to God on a daily basis?

**Tenet # 7.** We offer ourselves to God, to be used by God.

Scripture: Romans 12:1

Question(s) the group must answer and report on: In what ways does God use people in the world today? How is offering our lives, bodies to God different from surrendering ourselves to God?

**Tenet # 8.** God promises to sanctify us (restore our hearts and lives to the way He created us to be).

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Question(s) the group must answer and report on: What parts of our lives does God promise to sanctify? How do we know that God will do this in us?

In leading this exercise, you should be able to come alongside each report and assist those students or groups that might struggle with each of these tenets. The main idea here is to familiarize them with these concepts and allow them to interact with them, attempting to put them into their own words.

Follow-up questions:

- **Which of these tenets do you have the most difficulty understanding?**
- **Where do you think most young people today get stuck in this process?**
- **How have you experienced these tenets in your own life?**

### **Focus On Christ**

Prior to this lesson, get a pair of glasses that have a strong prescription (the stronger the better). You will invite your students one at a time to come up to the front of the class and walk through a maze of chairs with the glasses on. After each student that wants to has had an opportunity to try the maze, invite a few students to come up and attempt the maze without the glasses. Of course, there's a marked improvement.

Ask the following:

- **How difficult is it to accomplish things when the world is out of focus?**
- **How does a pair of glasses with a strong prescription affect our lives when we don't need them?**
- **What if you had to wear those glasses everyday but you didn't need them?**

Read Hebrews 12:2. Ask the following questions:

- **This passage instructs us to focus (or fix) our eyes on Jesus. What does it mean to focus on Jesus?**
- **What distracts us from focusing on Jesus?**
- **Based on what we've learned today, how do the tenets of holiness help us to focus on Jesus?**

Say something like, **Ultimately, no matter what generation you grew up in, holiness is really about being Christ like. It's about allowing God to shape us into people that receive and reflect His love into the world around us. While we may need to change some of the ways that we talk about it, explain it, and discuss it, holiness calls us to focus our eyes on Jesus and live out His plan for your life.**

### **Closing**

Close in prayer.