

# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

**Sermon Series:** Beyond Belief

**To be used with:** Session One, God is Holy

**Sermon Title Possibilities:**

Holy is He

Holy Holy Holy

**Scripture:** Psalm 99:1-9

**Connection to Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study of *Beyond Belief*, these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as are being studied in small groups, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The main point of Session 1 is, “God’s holiness calls me to be holy.” The introduction will lead group members to consider pieces of art or natural wonders they would consider “one of a kind.” This will lead into a discussion of God as holy and exalted above everything else in the universe.

## Introduction:

Eugene Peterson writes, “A friend showed me a series of pictures he had taken. The subject matter consisted exclusively of household items found in an ordinary kitchen: a matchstick, a pin, the edge of a knife. Household utensils are not ordinarily thought of as possessing much beauty, but all these photographs of very ordinary objects were quite astonishingly beautiful. The beauty was suddenly visible because the photographs had all been made through a magnifying lens. Small, ugly, insignificant items were blown up to great size, and we could see what we had overlooked in our everyday routine. And it turned out that what we had overlooked was careful, planned details that produced exquisite beauty” (*A Long Obedience In The Same Direction*, 78).

For many of us, God can easily become ordinary and somewhat common. But the Bible means to make war on such thinking. God is infinitely holy and unique. The Bible reminds us over and over that God is a holy God. Our text for today, Psalm 99, offers us a radical view of God’s holiness. Let’s read it and ask God to help us discover more and more of His holiness.

[Read Psalm 99:1-9]

As the psalmist extols the worth of God’s we learn a few things about what the Bible means when it calls God holy. Let’s consider three of these thoughts together.

## Point 1: God’s holiness means that God is unique (vv.1-3).

Verses 1-3 explain that nothing else is like God. He alone is unique, different, other. No one is like Him and nothing compares to Him. He reigns” (v.1) over all things. He sits enthroned as king “upon the cherubim” (v.1). He is over “all the peoples” (v.2). This can be said of nothing else and no one else. No other name is “great and awesome” (v.3). No other king, ruler, or authority is as high and exalted as this God. Of all the names and figures in history, no one is like this God.

What is interesting in this passage is that nothing is said here about God’s purity. A common misunderstanding about holiness is that it only refers to moral purity. But while holiness is not less than moral purity, it’s certainly more. A. W. Tozer said, “We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable” (*Knowledge of the Holy*,

104). This is not how we usually think about holiness. But the biblical authors knew how utterly different God is. He is unique in every way. This is cause for us to shout with the psalmist, “Holy is he!”

**Application:** Many of us tend to forget how vastly different God is from everyone and everything. Let this text remind you this week to pray to God and worship God as one who is utterly holy and unique.

**Point 2: God’s holiness means that God is just (vv. 4-5).**

The second refrain in this song focuses on God’s justice, which in another aspect of His holiness. He declares that God loves justice “in his might” (v.3). God alone has all power and sovereignty and authority, and yet He loves to use His power to bring help to the helpless. All the He directs His might toward is meant for good. He is good and does good (Ps. 119:68). Nothing God ever does, says, or ordains to happen is meant for evil. Joseph understood this when he told his brothers, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (Gen. 50:20).

Now notice how this truth about God prompts the author to turn his proclamation about God into worship of God. “You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob” (v.4). God’s holiness shown through his execution of justice is meant to prompt worship and adoration in us. We can praise this great God because He is committed to the good of His people and His creation. Of course we see the greatest example of this in the life of Jesus who said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me, to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim, liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Lk. 4:18).

**Application:** As we meditate on God’s justice, it should move us into the pockets of lostness in our own world. How might this look for you? Will you let God’s justice move you to compassion and action this week?

**Point 3: God’s holiness means that God is approachable (vv.6-9).**

Considering the first two points, this almost sounds like a contradiction. If God is utterly unique and completely just, how then can He have anything to do with sinful people like us? The Bible’s answer is: how can He not? It is precisely because He is holy that He wants to do good to us and desires us to know Him. He made Himself known the Moses, Aaron, and Samuel (v.6). He answered them (v.7). He forgave and, at times, disciplined them (v.8). He is a God who hears, loves, relates, and rescues.

We know this about God better than the psalmist did. We know that this God eventually took on flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:14). He became like us and pored Himself out for us on the cross. He is approachable because He approached us! God came near to us in Jesus. He made Himself known and it is only proper for us to worship Him and do all that He commands.

**Application:** When you think of God, do you think about how approachable He is? Are you approaching Him and seeking after Him? His holiness calls us to run to Him, not away from Him.

**Conclusion Idea:** J.I. Packer writes, "Christian minds have been conformed to the modern spirit; the spirit, that is, that spawns great thoughts of man and leaves room for only small thoughts of God" (*Knowing God*, 12). May this not be us. Let us think great thoughts of our great God that leads to worship and holiness.

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