

Prized Possessions

Set Yourself Apart for God's Purpose

When we got married, Sharilyn inherited one of her family's most prized possessions — a set of fine china. Yet, despite its beauty and sentimental connection, we've never once eaten with it. We've rarely even touched it since it's packed away safely in a box in the garage to avoid damage. Well, God has a set of fine dishes set apart for special use too! The difference is, he wants to use us! *"Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work"* (2 Tim. 2:21).

We're modeling our reverence after Jesus' reverence as we continue our [Cross Training](#) journey. Reverence comes when we know God, fear him, worship him, and live in holiness. So how do we live as God's special people, *"set apart as holy"*?

What You Need to Know

Though God created humans to enjoy his presence (cf. Gen. 3:8), sin distanced us from God's holiness (Isaiah 59:2). We see it in the cherubim blocking the Garden gate (Gen. 3:24) and the command not to touch Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:12). We see it in the temple veil that kept people afar, and most all, the *"blood of Jesus"* that lets us enter *"through the curtain"* to *"draw near"* at last (Heb. 10:19-22)!

Holy means different or unique — not in the sense that each person is unique or snowflakes are different — because each person is still a person. Each snowflake is still a lot like every other of its kind. But God is unlike anyone or anything else. *"There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God"* (1 Sam. 2:2). That's what we mean when we say God is holy. He is utterly apart, transcendent, and distinct by his very nature. That's why the heavenly creatures *"never cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!'"* (Rev. 4:8; cf. Isaiah 6:3). Full of goodness, righteousness, and creative power, God's eternal existence depends on no one. So what does God mean when he says for us to be holy as he is holy (1 Peter 1:16)?

When God separates anyone or anything for himself, he sanctifies them — he makes them holy. What is holy is distinguished — not just from what is unholy — but from what is common (Lev. 10:10). Under the Levitical system, before Christ's new covenant (Heb. 7:21-24), nothing common was used in God's service; everything in the temple was set apart by God. He distinguished his priests from regular, righteous Israelites who didn't have that particular function (Ex. 28:1). The incense, the furnishings, and even the vessels used in the temple were set apart (Num. 4:16-20). That doesn't mean other vessels were evil; they were fine for common, everyday purposes. But what God sets apart for his service is holy. And we *"are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession"* (1 Peter 2:9).

Yet when God decides to live in the midst of a special people, they must reflect his character. So, holiness also means moral purity and freedom from sin, through Christ's perfect sacrifice and our ongoing obedience (1 Peter 1:14-19).

What You Need to Do

Cleanse your heart, your habits, and your house (1 Cor. 5:7). In order to be holy, we must be clean (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1). In the Old Testament, cleanness involved a whole host of ceremonial rules. But in the new covenant, we're not clean because of what we eat or what we touch, but because of what we think and what we do (Mark 7:18-23). Are there any dirty little secrets in your heart that make you unsuitable to serve before God? *"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded"* (James 4:8). Examine the shows you watch, the sites you visit, the music you hear, the words you say, and the way you view people in your life. The Christian life is a continual process of searching ourselves and repenting when we find anything out of alignment with God's will. He will forgive, but we must repent (Rom. 2:4). Hold your thoughts and behavior to God's standard, not your own. Remembering the price Christ paid to make us holy, let his grace train you (Titus 2:12) inspiring greater heights of righteousness.

Another word related to holiness is godliness. Godliness is our deep reverence for God that leads to piety and devotion. We make life choices that honor him because we live before a holy God. Instead of filling up the "in-between" bits of your day — the walk from a meeting to your office or the drive home after dropping off the kids — pause to remember that holy God is near. As his temple (1 Cor. 6:19-20), everywhere you go, you stand on *"holy ground"* (cf. Ex. 3:5). The more we realize and remember that truth, the more our lives will reflect his goodness.

Go into each interaction with the intention of shining God's light (Matt. 5:14-16). Make a habit of praying for people before and after you meet with them (1 Tim. 2:1). *"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord"* (Heb. 12:14).

Through the Week

- **Read** — John 17:6-19; Phil. 2:12-18; 1 Tim. 2:15-22; 1 Peter 1:13-2:12; 1 John 3:6-10
- **Reflect** — Ask yourself, *"Have I set myself apart for God's purposes?"*
- **Request** — Pray, *"In your grace, Lord, train me to live a godly life"* (cf. Titus 2:12).
- **Respond** — Walk through your house, looking carefully for any signs of "leaven" that needs cleansed from your life (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7).
- **Reach Out** — Ask someone, *"What do you find is the hardest part about being separate from the world while living in the world?"*