

A Revolution of Holiness

Light + Life Group Conversation and Study Guide



Based on *Holiness: Light + Life Podcast Episode #1*

The Lost Meaning of Holiness

Two of Light + Life's February authors, Kevin Mannoia and Miriam Swanson, led a breakout session, "A Revolution of Holiness," together at the 2019 [New Room Conference](#). Our friends at Seedbed graciously provided the session's audio for Light + Life to use in our new podcast.

Dr. Mannoia, a former Free Methodist bishop who now leads the [Wesleyan Holiness Connection](#), notes that many people "grew up in a day when *holiness* had a lot of baggage attached to it," and some people only know the word *holy* "as a precursor to a swear word." He adds, "*Holiness* has lost its meaning, its power, its weight in terms of what it really represents."

Why do you think the words *holy* and *holiness* have fallen out of favor among many Christians and lost their meaning in popular culture?

What do you think of when you hear the word *holiness*? Do you think of something that is legalistic or life-giving?

What is holiness? Pause with your group and discuss how you define holiness. If reading this for personal study, reflect for a few minutes and write your own definition.

The Essence of Holiness

Dr. Mannoia says, "We are not the agents of holiness. God is. This is the one theme of Scripture that does not tell us what God does to us or for us. It describes God's own self. It describes who God is — who He is as a holy God. "

If holiness describes who God is, is it possible for people to be holy on their own? Why or why not?

“If we don’t understand what holiness really is, then it’s very easy for our human nature to take control of it and to own it,” Dr. Mannoia says. “When we try to define holiness, we run into this paradoxical problem where we don’t have the capacity of fully defining who God is. ... We become holy by an openhanded surrender that says, ‘Not my will, but Thine be done. I empty myself. I humble myself.’”

Is it hard to humble yourself and truly pray for God’s will to be done instead of our own will?

How can we empty ourselves so that God’s holiness is reflected in and through us?

As Miriam asks, what’s happening “in your context, your life, your world, your mission field” that causes you to “think holiness is a relevant thing to be going after today?”

Holiness and Wholeness

According to Dr. Mannoia, our culture can be characterized by polarity, compartmentalization and independence. In our polarized culture, he says, “we push each other to extremes such that now our faith is no longer a vibrant faith but a religion that needs to be defended.” Meanwhile, “everything has become so compartmentalized that we have fractured the very wholeness of God when he created us whole.” At the same time, “we almost deify independence” with a culture that encourages individuals to do things in their own strength without showing signs of weakness.

What does it mean to be *whole* instead of polar?

What does it mean to be *integrated* instead of *compartmentalized*?

What does it mean to be *interdependent* instead of *independent*?

How does the Trinity reflect this wholeness, integration and interdependence? How can holiness restore these characteristics in us as humans created in God's image?

How can we set aside cultural expectations and grow in holiness? How can we contribute to a culture shift by encouraging others to grow in holiness too?

Training for the Race

The Bible compares the Christian life to a race (1 Corinthians 9:24–27, Galatians 5:7, 2 Timothy 4:7). Miriam says, “We are trying to train for a marathon here. We’re not expecting that in one discipleship meeting you’ve got this holiness thing down. ... The more you practice, the more that muscle gets stronger.” Dr. Mannoia adds, “It takes the exercising that Miriam is talking about to shift our focus onto the call of God into the loving identity of being a child of God surrendered to Him.”

What practices help you go deeper into holiness and surrender yourself to God's holy call?

John Wesley said that you can't have holiness without social holiness. If we are surrendered to God and reflecting His holiness, how should we engage with other people and what effect should this have on the world around us?

Miriam says “spiritual experiments with holiness” led her to move into a neighborhood of people struggling with poverty and addiction, and she came to a surprising realization: “The greatest privilege of my life was to discover Jesus there and to know more about our homeless, displaced rabbi through the faces of displaced people, through the hospitality of my neighbors, and understanding that there is something of the divine that I'm actually being changed by.”

How can encounters with imperfect people bring you closer to our holy God? *(If you're struggling with this concept or for further understanding, read Matthew 25:31–46.)*

Prayer

Join podcast host Brett Heintzman in praying this prayer:

Our Lord God, we thank you so much for these thoughts about being holy — not so much because it's anything we can do but, Lord, as we were taught today, it's because of who You are. Your essence is holiness. Holiness is needed today more than ever. And as Dr. Mannoia told us, help us to hold our hands open, to stand before You ready, to submit and surrender to your good and perfect will, to empty ourselves and say, 'Lord, fill us' — that when people see me, they would not see me, but they would see You. Lord, this is a desperate need today, and it's something we cry out to You: 'Change our society.' Actually what we need to do is cry out to You: 'Change me that You may change the world through me, that I may be holy as You are holy.' We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.