

Holiness Beyond the Huddle

Light + Life Group Conversation and Study Guide

Video

Based on the [Miriam Swanson on Holiness](#) video from the New Room Conference

Miriam Swanson, the author of [Reclaiming Holiness as Good News](#), captivated the 2019 [New Room Conference](#) with her passion for spreading the gospel and a message of holiness among young adults. As the [Fusion Movement](#)'s global student mission leader, the British millennial helps local churches reach college students.

Learning From Past Awakenings

Miriam shares how she drew inspiration from another British evangelist, John Wesley, and prayed, “Lord, what do we learn from the awakenings of the past that help us live into the future in which You want to do it again?” Miriam decided to follow the lead of Wesley who traveled 250,000 miles around the United Kingdom by horseback. Using “horsepower,” she drove a Volkswagen van around the U.K. and assisted church leaders who requested help to reach young adults. She explained, “John Wesley went where he was invited. He was often invited by little, local parishes churches.”

What can we do to serve and support people who are isolated and in need of assistance and encouragement?

In this time of social distancing when travel may not be possible, how can we help and encourage other Christians to reach their communities for Jesus?

Discovering Holiness

In praying and considering what awakening looks like for their generation, Miriam and her team “came up with this word *holiness*” and began to realize “that awakening might look like thousands of us walking side by side in community holding hands in this kind of radical, daily, normal, contagious, extraordinary, subversive, disarming holiness.” She said this realization occurred even though she had “never heard a talk on holiness” in the church.

How can holiness be simultaneously *normal* and *extraordinary*?

Do you think an awakening of holiness is possible in 2021?

Why do you think many Christians talk about God's love but don't discuss His holiness?

White Jeans or Bleach?

Miriam says holiness includes getting out of "holy huddles" and "into the world," but that's not how some people see holiness. She gives this Calvin Samuel-inspired analogy of how many people see holiness:

You can view holiness like a pair of white skinny jeans, and if you wear white skinny jeans in public, it really affects your behavior. OK, when you're standing around people in the foyer with coffee, you are aware. You can't just sit down on public transport. ... Toddlers, they are not part of your story. You can't be around certain people eating certain things, doing certain things. ... Holiness can be seen as something pure, delicate and fragile that can get messed up by the dirty world. ... The Pharisees see holiness a little like wearing white skinny jeans.

There's another way to view holiness, however. Miriam continues:

What if holiness isn't the white skinny jeans? What if it is the bleach that made them white in the first place? What if holiness is an offensive, transformative power that everything it touches it makes holy? ... If holiness is the bleaching agent that made the jeans white in the first place, the best way that bleach is used is you pour it out on the dirt. ... Jesus takes holiness really seriously too, just like the Pharisees, but if Jesus sees holiness — the presence of God, the holiness of God in Him — as a bleaching agent, then He makes it His mission to sit in *those places* with *those people* eating that *food*, touching *that person/that body*, getting involved in *that situation* where the Pharisees wouldn't go near because of their white jeans.

Do we view holiness as white jeans to be protected or instead as bleach to be poured out where it's needed most?

Miriam adds that holiness *"means you're not afraid when your kids go to university that they're going to lose their faith, but the campus should be afraid because your kids are turning up full of the power of God. You suddenly see invitations to 'love thy neighbor' and become Good Samaritans walking across to a crime scene, because you're not afraid because you know Who you walk with. You know Who lives in you."*

Does this description of holiness challenge you or shift your perspective? If so, how does it differ from how you've seen holiness emphasized in the church?

Biblical Holiness

What does the Bible say about holiness? Miriam shares from Isaiah 6 and says, *“Part of the painful reality of holiness is that to encounter the holiness of God puts us in our rightful place, and we get grounded in the humility of our humanity, and we realize, ‘Whoa, you’re God, and I’m not, and I don’t know if I can be in your presence.’”*

Read Isaiah 6 and reflect:

What does it mean as individuals and as a group to have “unclean lips” (v.5)?

After we experience our guilt being “taken away” and our “sin atoned for” (v.7), are we ready to say to God, “Here am I. Send me” (v.8)?

The New Testament helps readers rethink what is holy. Miriam points to Matthew 9 where Jesus touches a paralyzed man considered to be unclean and then says “follow me” to a tax collector (Matthew), also viewed by the people around him as unholy and “colluding with the enemy.” Jesus even dined at Matthew’s home (an unthinkable action for a holy rabbi).

Who are the “unclean” people of our time with whom it would be scandalous to share a meal?

Do we believe Jesus has the power to transform these people, and are we willing to be sent to help these people?

Releasing Holiness Where It’s Needed

Miriam reveals how the Fusion Movement connects with young people where they spend time (such as nightclubs) and encourages them to “try church” — many for the first time. She also shares how she depends on the Holy Spirit as she connects with neighbors of other religions and backgrounds. She says, *“Holiness is best used and poured out and seen and experienced where it’s needed.”*

How can we connect with unchurched people in our communities and invite them to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8)?

Prayer

Spend time in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and reveal His presence to you. Ask Him to allow His holy fire to burn through you.

Pray with Miriam: *“King Jesus, will you reveal to us You as the King of Glory, the One of whom the burning ones sing, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty?’”*

Echo Miriam’s request; *“Holy Spirit, come and give us a deep revelation of holiness. We stand in your presence, and we wait.”*