

# Worship Foundations, art 2, GOD's HOLINESS

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Last Sunday, we began a new worship series called "Worship Foundations."  
In this series, we're going to search the scriptures for the core of Biblical worship –  
move beyond our traditions and opinions and pre-conceptions,  
and make sure that we're building our worship on a Biblical foundation.

Last week we saw that "worship is responding to God's worth."  
We talked about how we naturally respond to whatever has great worth to us.  
In fact, every one of us has something that our life declares to be of ultimate worth.  
That's what we worship. And only GOD deserves that.  
He alone is "worthy" to be worshipped.

So worship has a great deal to do with God's "worth."  
This morning, I want us to spend a moment digging a little deeper to look at what's behind God's great worth.

The Bible teaches that GOD is "HOLY."  
The Hebrew word is "qodesh" which means "set apart, separate, other." קֹדֶשׁ

So saying that GOD is "holy" means that GOD is set apart, He is different,  
He is "other," He is unique. The Bible says:

There is no one holy like the LORD;  
indeed, there is none like You. 1 Samuel 2:2

For You alone are holy. Revelation 15:4b

I think it's very important for us as worshipers to take a moment and really nail this down. Identifying GOD as "holy" – as utterly different, unique – is a much bigger deal than it first seems.

The word "unique" actually means "one of a kind."  
(You know "uni" means "one" as in "uni-cycle.")  
But, in our modern usage, "unique" really just means "unusual" or "uncommon."  
Anything that's a little out of the ordinary, we call it "unique."

I searched the internet for "unique" gifts and found a ladies handbag made from recycled rubber tires, and a set of men's cufflinks with built-in compass.

Now, these things are unusual, they are uncommon, but they are NOT unique!

And I know that they're not unique, because you can go online and order a dozen of both of them, right now!

In no way are these items "one of a kind!" They're not truly unique.

Well then, what's an example of something that IS truly unique?

They say that each snowflake is "unique," and apparently that's true - scientists tell us that, statistically speaking, each snowflake is, essentially, "one of a kind."

But, you know... there are also billions & billions of other snowflakes that are very, VERY similar.

Your fingerprint – how about that? It's unique, right?

Yes, but again, there are millions of others that look an awful LOT like it – sometimes close enough to even confuse the experts.

The Mona Lisa may be “one of a kind,” but you know - you can create copies that are nearly indistinguishable from the original.

But with GOD – there are NOT millions of others, or dozens of others, or even ONE other that is remotely similar. There is NONE like Him!

None that are even close!

He is utterly unique. Absolutely, completely one-of-a-kind!

GOD is in a class all by Himself!

This is an incredible attribute!!

Everything else you can think of belongs to a “class” – a group, a classification.

We are all humans – we belong to that classification.

The maple in your front yard is a tree. (there are others)

Your pet Rover is a dog.

The Mississippi is a river. The Earth is a planet. The Sun is a star.

Gabriel is an angel. Satan is a demon.

But GOD is... what?? Exactly how are you gonna classify HIM?!!

GOD ...is GOD! And only GOD is God.

There is none like Him. He is in a class all by Himself!

He is truly unique – “one-of-a-kind.” GOD is HOLY.

And His unmatched HOLINESS is a major component of His WORTH.

(God's HOLINESS and His WORTH are closely related.)

Think about it – rare things are valuable.

Diamonds, for example, are valuable because they are relatively rare.

Pink diamonds are the most valuable type of diamond, because they are the most rare.

In fact, there's a rare 5-carat pink diamond that's being sold at auction in a few months. It's expected to bring between 5 & 7 million dollars.

Why is it “worth” so much? Because it's quite rare.

Well, GOD is not just “quite” rare. He is ultimately, infinitely rare. Unique. Holy.

Isaiah 46:5, 9

“To whom will you compare Me? Who is My equal?

I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me.”

This has tremendous implications for our worship.

A. W. Tozer said: “Left to ourselves, we tend to reduce God to manageable terms.”

We think we want a God we can figure out.

We want to get Him where we can use Him. (maybe even control Him a little?)

And, before you know it, we start thinking about God in very ordinary terms.

But, in Psalm 50, God rebukes His worshippers for this kind of thinking, saying:

“You thought that I was just like you...”

The clear implication being, “you thought wrong.” (Very wrong.)

The prophet Isaiah got a healthy dose of this when he “saw the LORD...”

Isaiah 6:1-5

...I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Now, that's a weird image, but in ancient times, a ruler's status was measured by the train of His robe. The longer the train, the greater the status.

GOD's robe rolled completely off His exalted throne, down into the room, and filled the temple where He was seated. That symbolizes outrageous, one-of-a-kind status!

Above Him were the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

These angelic beings, created to dwell in God's presence, were created with extra wings just for the purpose of covering their faces in the presence of GOD's holiness.

And they called out one to the other,  
"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is the Lord of hosts,  
the whole earth is filled with His glory."

Why do they say it 3 times? Well, repetition is a Hebrew means of emphasis. This is like us printing something in giant, bold, italicized, underlined letters! Super-emphasis!

They're not content to worship God as simply "holy." Or even "holy, holy."  
They take it to the third degree, the superlative degree – HOLY, HOLY, HOLY.  
**No other attribute of GOD is praised like this in scripture.** (not that I can find)  
Not His love or mercy or justice or sovereignty. Only His HOLINESS.

The foundations of the thresholds trembled at the sound of their voices,  
and the temple was filled with smoke.

Even inanimate structures have the good sense to tremble in the HOLY presence of GOD. And so does Isaiah. He responds:

Then I said, "Woe is me; I am un-done!" (I'm ruined, I'm doomed!)  
One glimpse of God's holiness, and Isaiah falls apart at the seams.

So, do we think that we're just going to casually stroll in here,  
and go through the motions of a few songs, listen to somebody talk a while,  
and then stroll back out like nothing much happened... and call that WORSHIP??  
And call that an encounter with living GOD??  
That's our response to His endless worth, to His matchless holiness?

That kind of mindset would suggest (to me) a people who are **not at all** seeing GOD as He truly is.

To encounter the holiness of GOD is to be undone!

Oh, we can keep our focus on each other and the stuff going on around us, and probably feel just fine about ourselves.

But the moment we lift our gaze and contemplate a holy GOD, we will be broken.  
Reduced to trembling. Awestruck.

The Bible calls this the "fear-of-the-Lord."

**And it should absolutely transform our corporate worship.**

The Bible teaches a close relationship between “fear” and “worship.”

Psalm 96:9

**Worship** the Lord in all His **HOLY** splendor;  
**tremble** before Him, all the earth!

Psalm 2:11

**Worship** the Lord with **fear**, and **rejoice** with **trembling**.

So yes, there is joy in our worship! There’s celebration in our worship.

We rejoice with trembling, because we’ve been rescued from the brink of destruction by GOD, through Jesus Christ.

And now we stand in His presence... it’s like standing at the very edge of the Grand Canyon, with our knees wobbling and our hand trembling, not with worry that we might perish, but with awestruck wonder at the depth of His holiness.

Worship thrives on **wonder**.

And we might “appreciate” God, and maybe even “admire” God without a sense of wonder.

But **we cannot worship without wonder**.

Without a sense of awestruck trembling at a HOLY God.

In the Revelation, John saw this incredible throne in Heaven – much like the throne Isaiah saw – surrounded by worshippers who, day and night, never cease to say:

“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is the Lord God, the Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come!” Revelation 4:8

God is HOLY.

Unrivaled in power. Unequaled in splendor.

There is nothing outside of GOD that explains Him...  
nothing that didn’t come from Him.

All else is creation. **He alone** creates.

All else begins. **He alone** always was. (and is, and is to come.)

All else depends. **He alone** is sufficient.

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY** is the Lord God, the Almighty.

PRAYER

Father, I ask that You would fill us with wonder and awe and trembling this morning as we consider your complete and utter HOLINESS.

O GOD, we need a fresh vision of You.

We have reduced You to “manageable terms” in our minds for far too long.

Open our eyes to see You as You truly are,

To worship as You truly are

High and lifted up, shining with glory... HOLY, HOLY, HOLY.

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