

JOURNEY THROUGH SCRIPTURE

H O L Y

IS HIS NAME

STUDY GUIDE



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ISBN: 978-1-64585-286-5

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Acknowledgements: We sincerely thank all those whose generosity of time, talent, and treasure made this project possible.

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Front Cover Image: *Joshua Passing the River Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant*, Benjamin West

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WELCOME TO JOURNEY THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Journey Through Scripture is the St. Paul Center's dynamic Bible study program designed to help ordinary Catholics grow in their knowledge of Scripture while deepening their understanding of the riches of our faith. Distinctively Catholic, Journey Through Scripture reads the Bible from the heart of the Church, considering both the Old and New Testaments and how they work together. It's grounded in history, yet it actively engages topics faced by today's Catholics. More than just an ordinary Bible study, it's biblical catechesis.

Holy Is His Name is the sixth study in the Journey Through Scripture series. In twelve beautifully produced lessons, Scott Hahn takes us through his quest to define “holiness” as it is found in the Scriptures. Catholics are taught to prize holiness—to admire it in others and to strive for it in our own lives. But we're never quite told what holiness is.

Tracing the meaning of holiness first through the Old Testament and then the New, Scott demonstrates for us how God gradually transmits his holiness to his people—through creation, right worship, and more—and ultimately transforms them through the sharing of his divine life.

Study Components

Holy Is His Name is designed for both group and individual study. It contains two suggested components, both of which can be ordered at JourneyThroughScripture.com.

- This study guide
- *Holy Is His Name* DVD set or video streaming

This study is based on Dr. Scott Hahn's book *Holy Is His Name: The Transforming Power of God's Holiness in Scripture*. This book is also recommended reading for the study. You can find it at StPaulCenter.com

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This study guide will serve as just that—your guide through the duration of the study. The first thing to note is that this guide contains the Scripture verses discussed, lesson summary notes, review and discussion questions, and memory verses.

At the end of every lesson, you will see a “Going Deeper” section with suggested readings from Dr. Hahn’s book *Holy Is His Name: The Transforming Power of God’s Holiness in Scripture* and at times paragraphs from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to enrich your study.

Sample Journey Through Scripture Session

Journey Through Scripture is intended to be a very flexible study. It can be an individual study for personal enrichment or a faith-building exercise with friends or fellow parishioners. Below is an example of how a typical session might run:

Amount of Time	Section
5 minutes	Opening prayer
25–30 minutes	Video
10 minutes	Break
10–15 minutes	Review questions (omit if running short on time)
10–15 minutes	Discussion questions
5 minutes	Review of memory verse and “Going Deeper”
1 minute	Closing prayer

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Lesson 1 THE GENESIS OF HOLINESS

Scripture Verses Discussed in Lesson 1

- Genesis 1:1–31
- Genesis 2:1–15
- Genesis 28:1–22

LESSON 1 SUMMARY

Holiness is something all Catholics hear about at an early age. It is something we are encouraged to strive for and something we admire when we see it in others. But we're never quite told what it is. One of the messages of the Second Vatican Council was the universal call to holiness. In the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, we are summoned: "All the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive." But we don't read a definition of this high calling.

We read hints of it in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2809 when we read:

The holiness of God is the inaccessible center of his eternal mystery. What is revealed of it in creation and history, Scripture calls "glory," the radiance of his majesty. In making man in his image and likeness, God "crowned him with glory and honor," but by sinning, man fell "short of the glory of God." From that time on, God was to manifest his holiness by revealing and giving his name, in order to restore man to the image of his Creator.

This is a good start, but let's go deeper into the study of holiness.

Love is not all you need

Growing up in the late 60s during the “Summer of Love,” Scott and many of his young contemporaries had contempt for the rock star mottos: “Make Love Not War,” and “All You Need is Love.” After experiencing a profound conversion to Christ, Scott was thirsting for something deeper; a knowledge of God through Scripture.

It was then that he discovered the Ligonier Valley Study Center founded by a rising Protestant preacher named R. C. Sproul. The Study Center was where he delved deeper into his faith through thought-provoking lectures on Scripture. But one series in particular resonated with him like no other: the holiness of God.

Based on the book *The Idea of the Holy* by Rudolf Otto, Sproul lectured on the presence of God, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*—a mystery that makes one tremble yet also fascinates. Scott found he was drawn to this aspect of God, recognizing his desire to draw near to God for whom men tremble and yet being aware of his own weaknesses.

By the 70s, the “all you need is love” attitude had seeped into the Church. All Scott heard in his church is that God is love and that we should love one another. All true but not entirely true. This new teenage convert wanted everyone to know about the mighty and awesome God that he was learning about at the Study Center.

This set him on a religious quest to know more about what made men tremble in the presence of God. He discovered that the word used by scholars to describe the awe and terror inspired by God was his “holiness.” He knew its effects on creatures, but he wanted to know what it was. Many writings defined holiness in illusive terms or described what it wasn’t. So he then turned to Scripture itself to find answers.



Holiness in the Scriptures

The Book of Genesis tells us that we are made in God’s image, after his likeness; but we are more unlike God than like him. God is the creator of all things, which means he must exist apart from all creation. Otherness is the original meaning of holiness.

In Scripture we find the Hebrew word *kadosh*. This word in all its derivations means holy, set apart. Marriage, *kiddushin*, for example, is sacred because it is a covenant but also because the man and woman are “set apart” by this bond.

God and objects associated with God are *kadosh*. He is “other” also in that he is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good. These divine qualities are manifest in the iconic encounter between Moses and God in the burning bush. First

Moses is fascinated and curious. As soon as he approaches, he's struck with fear and awe.

But this iconic moment doesn't occur until the Book of Exodus. What about the notion of holiness in Genesis?

Holiness in the beginning

Kadosh appears right at the beginning, in the second chapter when God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it and dedicated it to himself in his rest. Thus the seventh day, the Sabbath, would be considered holy, because it is specially inhabited by God.

Though this is the only instance where *kadosh* is used in Genesis, the phenomena of the holy runs through it. We read about Jacob's dream: he sees a ladder with angels ascending and descending, then awakens to a profound sense of the presence of God. Awestruck, he renames the site Bethel.

A sense of unworthiness overcomes those who are in the presence of God. Abraham describes himself as "dust and ashes" when speaking to the Lord. This is a typical response to God's holiness.

But why is the word "holy" only reserved for the Sabbath in Genesis? And why would the patriarchs in this book not mark the day as holy as Israel does in the Book of Exodus? To find the answer, we must read Genesis like the ancients did.

Bound by covenant

The act that bound ancient cultures was covenant. This was understood as the kinship bond between two parties, established by an oath creating a family relationship where none had existed before. Marriage and adoption are just two examples. Covenants imposed obligations on the parties involved, rewarding its fulfillment, and punishing infidelity. Both parties swear an oath to God, invoking him as their witness. He would enforce the terms of the covenant. His presence in the invocation would provoke the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

These oaths were the foundation to ancient societies. Scripture tells the story of such human covenants but the overarching story that unites both the Old and the New Testaments is God's covenants with humanity. In the Old, we read



LESSON 1

about covenants that are broken then renewed, many times over. But ancients agree that the original covenant between God and man was established in creation.

The original covenant

The key which allows us to understand God's covenantal action in creation to make the Sabbath holy is found in the term *sheva*. This Hebrew term for seven also serves as a word for oath. To "seven oneself" was to swear an oath. In Genesis 21 we read of a covenant established between men, exchanging seven ewe lambs and then renaming the site *Beer-sheva*, or the Well of the Oath.

On the Sabbath, the seventh day, God establishes a primordial form of covenant, blessing the cosmos and creating a family bond with humanity. In this covenant, Adam is the mediator called to serve as God's son, given dominion over the earth. Fulfilling these obligations will bring him reward and punishment if he fails.

This is the beginning of the human story. It begins with a covenant with creation. If we do not see this, we cannot understand the rest of the story. God's later covenants hearken to this covenant. In this first covenant, God shares his holiness with his creation, and with it came peace, fruitfulness, and integrity. Adam's sin violated the covenant bringing discord, arduous work, pain, and suffering upon humanity.

To understand holiness then, we must see the unity of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. It must be read as a single story. The covenant that was established with creation in Genesis will find its full expression in the following book, in Exodus.



NOTES

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is a *kadosh*?

2. What is the only thing called “holy” in the Book of Genesis?

3. What is the significance of the number seven in establishing covenants?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What struck you in this lesson?

2. What was your early church experience like? What kind of homilies do you remember?

3. When have you been overcome with awe, wonder, or trembling in the presence of God?

MEMORY VERSE

“So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.”

— *Genesis 2:3* —



GOING DEEPER

Supplemental Reading

- *Holy Is His Name: The Transforming Power of God's Holiness in Scripture*, chapters 1–2
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2807–2815

