

Session One, Exercise 1: Three Major Holiness Encounters

Background:

Central to Christian faith and teachings is the knowledge that Jesus Christ is God who entered creation by dwelling in a human body (i.e. Incarnation). The reason the Lord came in this manner says Athanasius (~325 AD) was to *"heal and to teach the way, and not merely to dwell here, but to put Himself at the disposal of those who needed Him, and to be manifested according as they could bear it, not impairing the value of the Divine appearing by exceeding their capacity to receive it."* In other words, God's divine presence has been momentarily veiled for our benefit and necessity otherwise His purpose to heal and teach would be ineffective to our own detriment. Like a light slowly brightening in a dark room, our eyes are being allowed to adjust to avoid being rendered useless by blindness. (Perhaps practicing holiness in the present age is the means to keep our eyes open to let His light in and be ready at the great unveiling)

The Book of Hebrews says we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire"

Sören Kierkegaard says that *"the Bible is very easy to understand. But... we pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand we are obliged to act accordingly... Dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Yes, it is even dreadful to be alone with the New Testament."*

Instruction:

Plan to spend some time this week and look upon the beauty of God, His holiness through the Word. In particular, you can read the suggested three passages below that describe some 'enlightening' holiness encounters between God and man.

- Isaiah 6
- Matthew 17:1-13
- Revelation 1:9-20

For each of these passages (compare and contrast them):

How is God presented? Consider the various senses (sight, hearing, touch, even smell)?
How is God positioned or shown in relation to His people (temple, disciples, church)?

How is man pictured? What is his reaction to the situation at hand?

How did God mediate the situation (or reconcile the difference between the man and God)?

What was the purpose (or task) given to the man (or men) as part of this encounter?

What other things do you see similar or different about these encounters? Is there relevance to each of their particular point in time of history?

Session One, Exercise 2: Personal Practices

As this class gets started consider one or both of the following exercises to help prepare your heart and direct your intentions.

1. Journal

This week and even future weeks, keep a journal of your thoughts. Consider this week what your thoughts are in regards to surrendering your life to God. What are some reasons you fear this, what are some areas that you are reluctant to surrender, and where have you experienced heavy burdens in trying to remain in control of your life?

2. Daily Declarations

CS Lewis says surrendering your life begins the very moment you wake up each morning. Where your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning is to shove them all back by listening to that other voice, the one that brings a life flowing in that is larger, stronger, and calmer. He adds this practice starts like paint laid on the surface, but regular practice makes it into a dye or stain that soaks right through us.

Place cards next to your bed or on the bathroom mirror asking "To whom am I listening?" or "Who is in control" which allows you to make conscious effort to push back the clamoring of your natural self as soon as you awaken, instead give ear to God, let Him guide and direct your thoughts and words.

NOTE: These two exercises in exercise 2 are based on Renovare's spiritual training; check this course's bibliography for more information and more exercises about Renovare.