

Holiness to the Lord in Everyday Life

Elder Gerrit W. Gong—Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—October 2024

1 Holiness to the Lord makes daily living sacred. It draws us closer and happier to the Lord and each other.

2 All around us are opportunities to laugh, delight, see with grateful eyes. Ours is a gospel of joy and holiness in everyday life. Holiness sets things apart for sacred purpose. But holiness also invites us to infuse daily living with the sacred—to rejoice in daily bread amidst this world's thistles and thorns. To walk with the Lord, we must become holy, for He is holy, and to help us become holy, the Lord invites us to walk with Him.

3 You live seven Cs: communion with God, community and compassion with each other, commitment and covenant with God, family, and friends—centered in Jesus Christ.

4 What researchers call “religious structural stability” offers clarity, purpose, and inspiration amidst life's twists and turns.

5 The household of faith and community of Saints combat isolation and the lonely crowd. Holiness to the Lord says no to the profane, no to snarky cleverness at others' expense, no to algorithms that monetize anger and polarization. Holiness to the Lord says yes to the sacred and reverent, yes to our becoming our freest, happiest, most authentic, best selves as we follow Him in faith.

6 “As a missionary I taught that Heavenly Father promises us power in our prayers, but sometimes I forget that for myself.”

Our treasury of missionary holiness-to-the-Lord blessings is rich and full. Finances, timing, and other circumstances are often not easy. But when missionaries of all ages and backgrounds consecrate holiness to the Lord, things can work out in the Lord's time and way.

7 Holiness to the Lord in everyday life looks like a young returning missionary who learned to let God prevail in his life. Earlier, when asked to bless someone who was very sick, this missionary said, “I have faith; I will bless him to recover. Yet,” the returning missionary says, “I learned in that moment to pray not for what I wanted but for what the Lord knew the person needed. I blessed the brother with peace and comfort. He later passed away peacefully.”

8 Holiness to the Lord in everyday life feels like a spark arcing across the veil to connect, comfort, and strengthen. An administrator at a major university says he feels individuals he knows only by reputation praying for him. Those individuals devoted their lives to the university and continue to care about its mission and students.

A Holy is something set apart for a sacred purpose

At the entrance of every temple, we see the phrase, “Holiness to the Lord—The House of the Lord”. Anciently, the word *holy* referred to something that was set apart for a sacred purpose. In other words, holy refers to something reserved for and devoted to God. As the One appointed by Heavenly Father to be the Savior of all humanity, Jesus Christ came to earth with a unique purpose. Everything He said and did was done to obey His Father in Heaven. He Himself stated that He obeyed the “will of the Father in all things from the beginning” (3 Nephi 11:11). His life is the perfect example of how to treat others, how to face adversity, how to forgive, and how to lift and support those in need. The Savior dedicated His time, His energy, and His very existence to obeying and honoring His Father in Heaven. In every sense of the word, He is holy.

Draw Nearer to Christ

[<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/temples/nearer-christ-through-temples>]

B Graded Holiness

[B1] Holiness is an important concept in the Old Testament. It was the determining factor in God's desire for Israel to be a peculiar people. “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth” (Deuteronomy 14:2). Holiness was the antithesis of the profane and the unclean. In Leviticus 10:10 we read, “And that ye may put difference between holy and profane [*ho*], and between clean and unclean” (author's translation). Holiness, however, was not a one-dimensional state, where you were either in a state of holiness or you were not. Rather, there were levels of holiness. Perhaps the most obvious example of this was the Tabernacle, in which the inner sanctum was called the holy of holies—or, in other words, the most holy (*qōdeš haqōdašim*)—and was separated from the holy place (*haqōdeš*) by a veil (see Exodus 26:33).

[B2] There is a distinction between the Lord's command to Moses to put off his shoes because the ground was holy and his hope that Israel would be a holy people. The English translation for both of these verses does not do justice to the nuances of the original Hebrew words. Although in both instances the word translated “holy” comes from the Hebrew root *qdš*, two different forms are used. When speaking of the ground, the Lord uses the noun form *qōdeš* (accented on the first syllable, and the final consonant sounds like “sh”). In and of itself the ground was not holy, but it had been made holy by the presence of God. When he speaks of his desire for the children of Israel, however, he uses the adjectival form *qadōš* (accented on the second syllable).

[B3] Jan Wilson has shown that there is a significant difference in meaning between these two forms of *qdš*. In the Old Testament these two words “are not used in the same contexts: i.e. the one is *not* just the adjectival form of the other, but rather, they have linguistic ranges that do not overlap significantly. . . . While *qōdeš* simply denotes a state of belonging to the realm of the divine, those things which are *qadōš* all possess the ability to move things (or people) into, or at least toward, the realm of the divine” (emphasis added). This lexical nuance is important: *qōdeš* refers to a static state that encompasses the divine realm, whereas *qadōš* is much more dynamic, with a characteristic of enabling others to enter a state of holiness. In what follows I will discuss how an understanding of the nuances in these two words in the Old Testament can help modern temple patrons better appreciate the Lord's purposes in inviting them to enter temples where the phrase “Holiness to the Lord” is engraved above the entrance.

Gaye Strathearn “Holiness to the Lord” and Personal Temple Worship (2009)

[<https://rsc.byu.edu/gospel-jesus-christ-old-testament/holiness-lord-personal-temple-worship>]
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9 A sister does her best each day, after her husband was unfaithful to her and the children. I deeply admire her and others like her. One day while folding laundry, her hand on a stack of garments, she sighed to herself, "What's the point?" She felt a tender voice assure her, "Your covenants are with me."

10 For 50 years, another sister yearned for a relationship with her father. "Growing up," she says, "there were my brothers and my dad, and then there was me—the only daughter. All I ever wanted was to be 'good enough' for my dad.

"Then my mom passed away! She was my only liaison between my dad and me.

"One day," the sister said, "I heard a voice say, 'Invite your dad and take him to the temple with you.' That was the beginning of a twice-a-month date with my daddy to the house of the Lord. I told my dad I loved him. He told me he loved me too.

"Spending time in the house of the Lord has healed us. My mom could not help us on earth. It took her being on the other side of the veil to help mend what was broken. The temple completed our journey to wholeness as an eternal family."

The father says, "The temple dedication was a great spiritual experience for me and my only daughter. Now we attend together and feel our love strengthen."

11 Of course, holiness to the Lord in everyday life includes coming more often to the Lord in His holy house. This is true whether we are Church members or friends.

Three friends came to the Bangkok Thailand Temple open house.

"This is a place of super healing," said one.

In the baptistry, another said, "When I am here, I want to be washed clean and never sin again."

The third said, "Can you feel the spiritual power?"

12 With nine sacred words, our temples invite and proclaim:

"Holiness to the Lord.

"The House of the Lord."

Holiness to the Lord makes daily living sacred. It draws us closer and happier to the Lord and each other and prepares us to live with God our Father, Jesus Christ, and our loved ones.

13 As did my friend, you may wonder if your Heavenly Father loves you. The answer is a resounding, absolute yes! We can feel His love as we make holiness to the Lord ours each day, happy and forever.

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C Frequent Temple Visits

[C1] Remember that when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his face was shining (see Exodus 34:29–35). He had a residual effect from his Temple experience in the presence of God. It was so visibly manifest that he had to cover his face with a veil. We also, can take with us a portion of that holiness as we leave the Temple, return to the world, and work to help others become sanctified.

[C2] Unfortunately, just as the shining eventually dissipated from Moses's face, so too the level of holiness we gain in the Temple can fade as we return to the world. Robert J. Matthews, the first president of the Mount Timpanogos Temple, once compared going to the Temple to lifting weights. He said that lifting weights only has the power to increase our strength if we do it regularly enough that the effect of our last workout does not wear off. Lifting weights once, twice, or even three times a year will not increase our strength. Brother Matthews's analogy reminds us that if we are to become holy we must go to the Temple often enough that the residual effects do not wear off. That does not mean that we should mandate a specific frequency with which we should attend the Temple. Instead, the Brethren encourage us to attend "as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow." But do we understand the principle?

[C3] Going to the Temple can confer holiness because we are in a holy place, but the goal of Temple worship is that we become holy beings. That is one important reason why the Lord has directed us to seek out our ancestors and do Temple work for them. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18 teaches us that the dead cannot be made perfect without the ordinance work that we perform for them. But it also teaches us that we cannot be made perfect without them. What does that mean? In part, at least, it means that doing the work for our dead ancestors provides us an opportunity we need to return often to the Temple so that we can build on the holiness received from our previous Temple experiences. It also provides us an opportunity to help them, and thus we become holy.

[C4] If we are diligent in worthily going to the Temple, having the phrase "Holiness to the Lord" indelibly imprinted upon our thoughts, we can become holy. We will achieve the Father's greatest desire for us, and we will be able to enter his presence, not just to stand and be judged (see 2 Nephi 2:10) but to dwell with him and be as he is, working to bring salvation to others. As we begin to develop a state of holiness, the changes will be manifest outside of the Temple as well. We will leave the Temple with a greater desire and a more focused resolve to help people move into the realm of the divine, not just through Temple work but with missionary work, home and visiting teaching, and magnifying our callings to an even greater extent.

[C5] I think that is what President Gordon B. Hinckley was referring to when he declared, "I make a promise to you that every time you come to the temple you will be a better man or woman when you leave than you were when you came. That's a promise. I believe it with all my heart." These changes will not be externally motivated, but they will be motivated by an internal yearning to have others participate with us in holiness.

[C6] Although he does not use the word *qadōš*, President Faust has described this state of being: "Holiness is the strength of the soul. It comes by faith and through obedience to God's laws and ordinances. God then purifies the heart by faith, and the heart becomes purged from that which is profane and unworthy. When holiness is achieved by conforming to God's will, one knows intuitively that which is wrong and that which is right before the Lord. Holiness speaks when there is silence, encouraging that which is good or reproving that which is wrong."

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