

Holy Forever Study Guide

© 2025 Christie Smith for Cross Road Christian Church
and Seventeen : Eleven Young Women's Studies

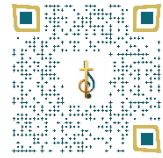
CCLI Song # 7201044

Brian Johnson | Chris Tomlin | Jason Ingram | Jenn Johnson | Phil Wickham

© 2022 Brian and Jenn Publishing; Capitol CMG Paragon; S. D. G. Publishing; Be Essential Songs;

My Magnolia Music; Phil Wickham Music; Simply Global Songs; Bethel Music Publishing

For use solely with the SongSelect® [Terms of Use](#). All rights reserved. www.ccli.com



More interactive studies online!

HOLY FOREVER by Chris Tomlin

Last week we talked about relational worship songs and their place in Christian music. Songs like Shoulders by For King & Country can be very helpful to us when we are going through a rough patch. King David wrote many psalms about his struggles, and thousands of years later those are still a testimony to God's sovereignty.

This week's song is different though. It is pure worship. Its sole purpose is to praise Him for His glory, His majesty, His holiness.

So let's start by defining what "holy" is. Without looking at a dictionary, what do YOU think it means?

Now check out what Miriam-Webster's dictionary means.

This is an adequate definition for God's Holiness with a capital H. He is uniquely set apart because of His sinless perfection. For us, when God declares us holy, it is with a little h... not divine perfection, but set apart for His purposes. That's for a different lesson. Today we're going to focus on the awesome perfection of God and why Chris Tomlin was inspired to write it and also what at least one random blogger said inspired him about the song.

Have you ever been anywhere that completely took your breath away and left you marveling at how incredible God's creation is? Scott Savage (Air1 Radio) [blogged](#) about being overwhelmed like that a few years ago when he visited Glacier National Park during the summer of CoVid. He'd gone paddleboarding on a lake in the park, and he said the water was as smooth as glass.

(Revelation 4:6 and again in chapter 15:2 also mention a “sea of glass like crystal” before God’s throne.) Savage said he was surrounded by absolute silence and was enveloped by the loving presence of God. Overwhelmed by the grandeur of it all, and with a new-found clarity regarding a challenge he was personally facing.

In an interview with [The Christian Post](#), Tomlin describes two styles of worship music; deliverance style (which I call relational) and transcendent. No doubt God transcends everything else.

"There are the songs of deliverance, which when it comes to worship, those are the songs of rescue like 'Lord, I need You, rescue me, I need your grace," Tomlin described. "We need those songs. Then there are those other songs of transcendence. There's nothing about me in the deal; it's just taking our eyes off ourselves and just [switch focus] onto the glory of God."

"Think about 'Amazing Grace,' an incredible hymn of deliverance. Then think about 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' an incredible hymn of 'Oh, wow, I just got to get on my face," he added.

"I just tried to capture a piece of Heaven in this song that never ends, this eternal song. What's amazing is that there is an eternal song and we know the lyrics. It's 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.' That's what the Bible says throughout, and in Revelation, it says, 'Day and night, they never stopped saying it,'" he echoed.

Tomlin is referring to a couple of passages in the above quote. Most people would probably associate it with Revelation 4, but it was also said by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 6:1-3. Both Isaiah and John (who authored Revelation) were either given a vision of (Isaiah) or were supernaturally transported “in the Spirit” (John) to witness this in heaven. Isaiah was struck with horror at his own sinfulness in the presence of God. John had already fainted for that reason when encountering Jesus prior to entering the throne room. Both visions describe winged creatures covering their face and feet, possibly symbolizing their unworthiness compared to God’s Holiness.

Three is used throughout scripture to emphasize importance, whether it is an event or a lesson to be remembered. Holy x3 is all that because it indicates the completeness of the triune nature of God.

Verse 1

*A thousand generations falling down in worship
To sing the song of ages to the Lamb
And all who've gone before us*

*And all who will believe
Will sing the song of ages to the Lamb*

The song begins with a reference to a thousand generations. Is this just a random number that Tomlin picked out of the blue, or is there anything to support it? Read Deuteronomy 7:9 and highlight it.

Verse 2

*If you've been forgiven and if you've been redeemed
Sing the song forever to the Lamb
If you walk in freedom and if you bear His name
Sing the song forever to the Lamb
We'll sing the song forever and amen*

What is the primary difference between the first and second verses of the song?

Pre-chorus

*(Jesus) Your name is the highest
Your name is the greatest
Your name stands above them all
All thrones and dominions
All powers and positions
Your name stands above them all*

Why is Jesus' name "the highest" above everything and everyone else? Read and highlight 1 Peter 3:21-22, Nehemiah 9:6, Romans 13:1-4, and also Philippians 2:8-9. Who exalted Jesus to that position, and why?

Let's take note of something else in Philippians 2. In verse 6, it says Jesus existed in the form of God but still did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. This is a little off the subject matter of the song, but in today's culture where so many are deceived into thinking that we are our own god, or even some religions that believe that when we die we become "little gods", it's critically important to realize that even Jesus, who is God, submitted to the Father. He humbled Himself to take on the flesh of humanity, literally and figuratively, and was obedient even to the point of being tortured and crucified far beyond what any human has ever been. WE can never be what He is.

Chorus

*And the angels cry Holy
All creation cries Holy
You are lifted high Holy
Holy forever*

*Hear Your people sing, Holy
To the King of kings, Holy
You will always be, Holy
Holy forever*

In the first half of the chorus, the song is no longer specific to a thousand generations of saints including ourselves. It talks about heavenly beings. Read Isaiah 6:1-8, and highlight the first three verses. Also read Revelation chapters 4. Compare the descriptions of the seraphim in Isaiah with the "four living creatures" that we read about Rev 4:6-8. Is it likely that Isaiah and John are talking about the same creatures?

Read and highlight Rev. 4:9-11 and also Rev. 5:8-14. Name those who are mentioned in these passages.

When Tomlin writes Holy “Forever”, where is the idea of “forever coming from? Read and highlight the following: Rev 1:8, John 1:1-3, and Hebrews 13:8

When you pray, acknowledge that God has set you apart from the world for His purposes. Ask that He will give you wisdom and discernment as to how to fulfill that purpose and express gratitude for God’s grace that does not expect the perfection that we can not achieve here on earth.

Challenge: This week as you go about your daily life, offer a “hey... you matter” card to at least one person that seems to be hurting. Bonus points if you write a little note on the inside of the card.