

Be holy, not holier-than-thou

By [Matthew Schlimm](#)

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Nowadays, if we hear the word "holy" outside church, it's usually in the expression "holier than thou." The phrase is reserved for pompous religious know-it-alls who think they're better at Christianity than everyone else. The title fits individuals who desperately need to re-read what the Bible says about humility.

As a seminary professor, I've seen my share of people with holier-than-thou attitudes, and it's never pretty. Spend time with these individuals, and you find yourself wanting to go sin just to distance yourself from them.

It's unfortunate that the word "holy" is caught up in a phrase with such negative connotations, because the word "holy" refers to what's beautiful, sacred, immaculate, and pure. When the author of 2 Peter tells readers to be holy, he isn't saying, "Start acting like you're better than everyone else." He's not saying, "Pray in public with fancy words." He's not wishing that his readers would draw attention to themselves.

He's saying that the day of the Lord is coming, and we should live in such a way that we feel at home in God's presence. Advent is less about making *our homes ready for Christmas*, and more about making *ourselves ready to be at home with God*.