

DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE OF THE HOLY LIFE

Shepherds Global Classroom exists to equip the body of Christ by providing curriculum for rising Christian leaders around the world. We aim to multiply indigenous training programs by placing a 20-course curriculum tool into the hands of spiritual trainers in every country of the world.

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Lead writer: Dr. Randall D. McElwain

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Course Description

This course gives a biblical description of the holy life that God expects and empowers for a Christian.

Explanations and Directions for Class Leaders

This course examines the doctrine and practice of the holy life. You should schedule 90-120 minutes for each class session, in addition to time for doing assignments outside of class.

Discussion questions and **in-class activities** are indicated by arrow bullet points. Whenever you come to one of these, ask the question(s) that follows it, and let students discuss the answer. Try to make sure that all students in the class are involved in the discussion. If necessary, you can call on students by name.

Many footnotes refer to a **scripture** reference. If the verse(s) are not given in the text, please have students look them up and read them during the class.

Each lesson will include two **assignments**:

1. A **short essay** on an assigned topic. At the discretion of the class leader, this essay can be a written essay or presented orally.
2. A **scripture memory** assignment. These should be reviewed at each class session. At the end of the course, students should be able to quote all the verses memorized during the course.

One of the purposes of the course is to prepare students to become teachers. The class leader should give students **opportunities to develop their teaching skills**. For example, the class leader should occasionally let a student teach a short section of the lesson to the class.

Each student will prepare a **final project**. This project will consist of three sermons or lessons on the topic of the holy life. These can look at either biblical or practical aspects of the holy life. If possible, each student should present each sermon or lesson and record it for the class leader.

If the student wants to **earn a certificate from Shepherds Global Classroom**, he should attend the class sessions and complete the assignments. A form is provided at the end of the course for recording the assignments completed.

LESSON 1

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Appreciate the beauty of God's holiness and his plan to make us holy.
2. Reject false concepts of holiness and recognize biblical concepts of holiness.
3. Be equipped to explain to a new believer what it means to be holy.
4. Memorize 1 Peter 1:14-16.

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

Holiness is one of the central themes of the Bible. In scripture, God showed us who he is: he is a holy God (Leviticus 19:2). Then, God showed us who we can become by his grace: we can be a holy people (1 Peter 1:15-16).

In every true believer, there is a hunger for holiness. As God's children, we yearn to be like him. Sadly, much of the modern church has accepted the false idea that holiness is impossible. Many Christians live in bondage to willful sin. They do not believe that a victorious life, free from the controlling power of sin, is possible in this life.

More than 100 years ago, John Hyde, the great missionary to India, said, "What we need today is a revival of holiness." If that was true then, it is certainly true in the sinful world of the 21st century.

If holiness is so important to God, we must ask, "What does it mean to be holy?" If holiness is commanded in scripture, we must ask, "Is it possible to live a holy life?"

In this course, we will learn what God means when he says, “Be holy, for I am holy.” As we understand the message of holiness in the Bible, we will see that a holy life is possible for every Christian. Each lesson will include three elements:

1. We will study the meaning of biblical words such as *holy*, *sanctification*, and *perfect*. This section is a biblical theology of holiness.
2. We will study practical aspects of the holy life. We will learn what the Bible teaches about a holy life, a pure heart, and a Christlike spirit.
3. We will look at the life of a Christian who demonstrates what it means to be holy. We will see how a holy person acts in daily life.

Scripture to Read and Discuss

Before continuing this lesson, read each of the following scriptures carefully and discuss the questions. This will introduce some of the topics we will study in these lessons.¹

- » Read Leviticus 19:2. According to this passage, why was Israel to be holy?
- » Read 1 Peter 1:15-16. What kind of conduct are believers to have?
- » Read Hebrews 12:14. According to this passage, what two qualities must Christians pursue if they want to see the Lord?
- » Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. God calls every believer to abstain from what sins? God has called his people to what?
- » Read Revelation 20:6. What is the spiritual characteristic of those who will take part in the first resurrection?

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

- » When you hear a person described as “holy,” what image comes to mind? Is your image positive or negative? Why?

A missionary once visited an old African chief. The chief asked, “What is a Christian?” The missionary answered, “A Christian doesn’t steal his enemy’s cattle. A Christian doesn’t run off with his enemy’s wife. A Christian doesn’t murder his enemy.”

1 These questions were collected by Rev. Timothy Keep.

The chief said, “I understand. Being a Christian is the same as being old! When I was young, I attacked my enemy and stole his wife and cattle. Now I am too old to attack my enemy; I am a Christian!”

Sadly, this is how many people think of the message of a holy life. They think holiness is no more than a list of sins to avoid. They miss the beauty of holiness as it is taught in God’s Word.

False Ideas of Holiness

God is a holy God. God’s people must be holy. This message is central to the Bible. However, there are many wrong beliefs about holiness.

1. **Some people believe that only a few people can be holy.** They divide Christians into two groups. The first group is Christian in their beliefs, and they have accepted Christ as their Savior, but they do not faithfully obey God in their actions and attitudes. The second group is made up of Christians who have reached a higher level—priests, pastors, or saints. According to this idea, only a few Christians are holy.
2. **Some people believe that we become holy by living apart from other people.** Many years ago, some “holy people” went into the desert to live. One man spent 37 years on a platform high above the ground. He believed that we become holy by avoiding other people.
3. **Some people believe that we become holy only when we die.** They believe that we will never fulfill God’s purpose in this life, but that we will be made holy when we die. With this belief, death is not our enemy but our friend. In death, we finally achieve God’s purpose for his people.
4. **Some people believe that we become holy by following rules.** They believe that we become holy by dressing in a certain style or by following a list of “do’s and don’ts.” They believe that holiness is about outward appearances, not a transformed heart.
5. **Some people believe that the evidence that a person is holy is a special gift of tongues or miracles.** They measure holiness not by a holy life, but by signs and wonders.
6. **Finally, many people believe that holiness is impossible!** They believe that holiness is an ideal that God gave to challenge us to do our best, but it is not realistic in this world. With this belief, no one can achieve God’s command to “Be holy.”

However, God’s command to be holy is a command that he intends us to obey. God is a good Father; he never commands us to do something that is impossible through his grace. To be holy is to be what God created us to be. In our own power, a holy heart is impossible,

but in God's power, a holy heart is possible for every believer. Holiness comes from God's grace, not from our efforts.

- » Which of these false ideas of holiness is most common in the area where you minister? Is holiness seen as beautiful among Christians in your community?

The Bible's Picture of Holiness

Unlike the negative ideas of holiness listed above, the Bible shows holiness as a beautiful possibility for God's children. Think of the things called holy in the Bible. None of them are ugly and repulsive; they are beautiful and attractive.

- God's holy nature is beautiful and glorious (Isaiah 6:1, 3; Psalm 105:3).
- God's Temple and the holy objects used for worship were beautiful (Luke 21:5, Isaiah 64:11, Exodus 28:2).
- Israel was called to be a holy nation that would draw other people to God (Isaiah 49:3). Her holiness attracted people (1 Kings 8:41-43); it did not drive them away.²
- The church is called to be a holy people (1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Peter 2:9). She is to be a beautiful bride prepared for her Bridegroom (Ephesians 5:27, Revelation 19:7, Revelation 21:2).

Each of these pictures is attractive. The Bible shows that true holiness is not abusive and fearful. Instead, it is the loving gift of our heavenly Father. If we see holiness for what it is, we should hunger for a holy heart and a holy life. If we preach holiness as the Bible teaches it, our people should hunger for a holy heart and a holy life. Holiness is a beautiful gift from a loving Father.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS IS SEEN IN GOD'S ORIGINAL CREATION

God Created a Perfect World

Begin in Eden, a beautiful garden. Think of the sweetest fruit you have ever eaten; the fruit in Eden was sweeter. Think of the most beautiful flower you have ever seen; the flowers in Eden were more beautiful. God created a perfect world, a world without the effects of sin. He created a world without pain, tears, or death.

2 You might say, "But what about the Pharisees? They were considered 'holy' people, but they drove others away." We will see in these lessons that the Pharisee's "holiness" was not genuine holiness. Their righteousness was an outward profession, not true holiness.

Most importantly, God created a world of intimate friendship between God and man. Nothing separated man from his Creator. Each day, God visited Adam and Eve. No other creature had this privilege. God created man for a special relationship with himself. In the Garden of Eden, there was perfect peace between God and man.

Satan Corrupted God's Perfect World

Satan wanted to destroy this perfect world. Satan hated everything that God had created. Above all, Satan hated the close friendship between God and man. He was determined to destroy this relationship of love and trust.

Satan could not destroy man directly, so he determined to destroy the relationship between God and man. Satan knew that God is holy and that God created man in his image. Satan wanted to destroy God's holy image in man. Holy God and holy man would have an unbroken relationship, but Satan could destroy this relationship by tempting man into sin.

Satan came to Eve in the form of a snake. The snake questioned God's command. He asked, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" He wanted to cause Eve to doubt God's goodness. Eve answered, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" (Genesis 3:1-6).

The snake accused God of keeping good from Adam and Eve. The snake said, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The snake tempted Eve to pride: "You will be like God" (Genesis 3:4-5).

Eve ate the fruit, gave it to Adam, and he ate. Adam and Eve knew they had broken God's law. When God came to the garden, they were ashamed and hid from him. The close friendship between God and man was broken.

God Did Not Give Up on His Creation

Because of their sin, God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. Sin broke the relationship between God and man. Sin damaged the image of God in man. But because of his love, God did not leave man in this horrible condition. God could have said, "Adam, you caused this disaster. It is your problem! I'm walking away." Instead, a loving God became part of our world and provided a remedy for our sin.

This remedy included a path to forgiveness. God provided a way to restore the relationship between a holy God and fallen man. The church has always preached, "Sinners can be made right with God." Through the cross, we can be forgiven of our sins.

This is wonderful news! But sometimes the church has forgotten the other part of God's remedy. God's remedy for sin included not only a path to forgiveness but a path to restoration. God provided a way to restore his image in man.

God was not satisfied to say, "You can be free from the penalty of sin, but you will never be free from the power of sin." No! God provided a way by which man could be made holy. God walked in the garden with a holy people; he cannot walk with a sinful people. God wants relationship with his people, so he provided a way to make us holy.

Throughout scripture, we see God working to make a holy people with whom he can have relationship. God does not say, "I know you are sinful, but I will close my eyes to your sin and pretend you are righteous." Instead, God promises to make his people holy.

The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways (Deuteronomy 28:9).

God wants to make his people holy. This is God's purpose for his people. God promises that his people will "be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD" (Isaiah 62:12).

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS IS SEEN IN THE NATURE OF GOD

Because of the fall, man was no longer holy. We soon forgot the holy nature of God. God had created us in his image. Now, we created gods in our image—jealous, hateful, and proud.

The Babylonians told the story of Marduk who became the chief god by killing his mother. The Greeks told the story of Zeus who had many mistresses. The Romans told the story of Bacchus, the god of drunkenness and sensuality.

These gods were not holy. The people who worshipped these gods were like their gods. People lied, stole, and cheated just as their gods lied, stole, and cheated. Sinful man created sinful gods. In turn, these gods allowed man to continue in our sin. We became like the gods we worshipped.

Jehovah is not like these false gods. God is holy. Repeatedly, scripture testifies to God's holiness. After crossing the Red Sea, the people of Israel praised their holy God. They sang, "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness..." (Exodus 15:11).

The psalmist sang, "Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3). Israel praised God for his holiness. The psalmist called God the "Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 71:22; Psalm 78:41; Psalm 89:18).

The prophets testified that God is holy. Like the psalmist, they called God the “Holy One of Israel.”³ Isaiah honored “the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isaiah 57:15). Holiness is so much a part of God’s character that for God to swear by his holiness was the same as to swear by himself (Amos 4:2; Amos 6:8). Habakkuk testified that God is of purer eyes than to see evil (Habakkuk 1:13). The prophets knew that God is holy.

In heaven, the worship of God celebrates his holiness. The seraphim sang, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3). John the Revelator saw four creatures praising God. They sang, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8). God is a holy God.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS IS SEEN IN GOD’S PLAN FOR HIS PEOPLE

A holy God created humanity for relationship with himself, but our sin separated us from God. However, God was determined to restore relationship with his people. Since only holy people can live in the presence of a holy God, he provided a way to make us holy. God taught the meaning of holiness to people who were not holy. There are two parts to this process:

1. God taught man the nature of a holy God. Marduk, Zeus, and Bacchus were powerful but immoral. God revealed himself as powerful and holy.
2. God taught man the nature of holy people. God said, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). Since God is holy, his people must be holy.

Isaiah preached to a sinful nation. Sin had destroyed the beauty of God’s people. From God’s chosen people, Israel had fallen to the shameful status of a conquered people carried away into captivity. She was no longer beautiful; she was a disgraced slave. But Isaiah foresaw a day when Israel’s righteousness goes forth as brightness. On that day, Israel will be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord (Isaiah 62:1-3).

People who misunderstand the message of holiness in the Bible often portray holiness in terms of legalism, rigid rules, and stern faces. This is not a biblical view of holiness. Instead, to be holy is to show the beauty of God’s own holiness. To be holy gives the joyful freedom to live in intimate relationship with a holy God. In the Bible, holiness is never a gloomy term; it is a term of joy and beauty!

In the Bible, God reveals his holy nature. Then, God teaches his people how to live holy lives. Even more importantly, God shows that he will give his people power to be what he has

3 Isaiah 5:19; Isaiah 10:20; Jeremiah 50:29; Jeremiah 51:5; Ezekiel 39:7

called us to be. Through his grace, God can make a holy people. God does not ignore sin in his children; instead, he makes us holy. A holy God desires relationship with a holy people.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HOLY?

Through his Word, God taught his people what it means to be holy. When God began to teach his people, they knew nothing about holiness. They had never seen a holy God or a holy people. God taught the meaning of holiness much like we teach language to a child.

When we teach a young child, we point to a chair and say, “Chair.” We point to a car and say, “Car.” Step by step, the child is learning the meaning of words. The child learns the meaning of the word “love” by experiencing their mother’s love. The child learns the meaning of the word “justice” when a parent gives a just punishment for disobedience.

God taught the meaning of holiness in the same way. As fallen people, we did not know what it means to be holy. God gradually revealed the meaning of holiness to his people through word pictures that illustrate what it means to be holy. As we trace the meaning of the word holiness through the Bible, we will see:

1. **To be holy is to maintain a close relationship with God** (2 Corinthians 6:16-18). Holy men in Genesis (men like Enoch and Abraham) were men who had a close relationship with God. They walked with God. By showing the life of holy men, God revealed that a holy person is a person who has a close relationship with God.
2. **To be holy is to reflect the image of God** (Colossians 3:10, 2 Corinthians 3:18). Holiness is not a natural characteristic of man. Holiness is an attribute of God alone. Israel was called to be holy, because God is holy (Leviticus 19:2). To be holy means to reflect the image of God in our lives. To be holy means to be like God.
3. **To be holy is to be separated to God** (Exodus 29:44, Leviticus 20:26). The first time the word *holy* is used in the Bible, it refers to a day that has been set apart for God’s special purposes (Genesis 2:3). The Sabbath day was holy; it was separated, or set apart, from the other six days. Like a child learning the meaning of “chair,” God pointed to the seventh day and said, “It is holy.”
4. **To be holy is to have an undivided heart** (1 Kings 8:61). In the Historical Books, God used the word *perfect* to describe people who had an undivided heart. To be holy means to be single-minded in our commitment to God. A holy heart loves God without division.
5. **To be holy is to live a righteous life** (Colossians 1:22, Titus 2:12, 14). The prophets preached to a people who thought, “We worship in the Temple and offer sacrifices. We are holy.” The prophets showed that it is not enough to follow rituals. To be holy

means to live righteously towards God and others. Holy people do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

6. **To be holy is to have perfect love for God and our neighbor** (Matthew 22:36-40). The Gospels show God's fullest revelation of holiness in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus had a holy heart that was fully submitted to the will of the Father. Jesus had holy hands that acted in perfect love towards others. Jesus showed that to be holy means to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.
7. **To be holy is to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit** (Ezekiel 36:27, Ephesians 5:18). In Acts, we see the example of Christians who were filled with God's Spirit. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they lived holy lives. We are holy only as we live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
8. **To be holy is to be Christlike** (Romans 8:29). Jesus was the perfect example of a holy heart and holy hands. The Epistles show that it is possible for ordinary Christians to follow the example of Jesus Christ. The Epistles provide practical guidelines for living a holy life on a daily basis. These letters teach us how to live as Christlike people.
9. **Holiness prepares us to see God** (1 John 3:2-3, Hebrews 12:14). In Eden, God prepared a garden where a holy people could live in perfect relationship with our Father. Because of sin, we were driven from the garden. But God did not give up on his plan. In Revelation, we see that God's people will someday see his face. No sinful person can look on him, but God is preparing a holy people who will spend eternity in his presence. This is God's purpose for his people.

**"We must be holy,
because this is one grand
purpose for which Christ
came into the world.
To talk of men being
saved from the guilt of
sin without being saved
from its dominion in their
hearts is to contradict the
witness of all Scripture.
Jesus is a complete Savior.
He does not merely take
away the guilt of sin;
he breaks its power."**

**Paraphrased from
Bishop J.C. Ryle**

CONCLUSION: A HOLY GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO BE HOLY

Dr. John Stott was one of the great Christian leaders of the twentieth century. In one of his last sermons, Dr. Stott spoke about God's purpose for his people.⁴ We have been saved by grace through faith; we have been brought from death to life. Why? God's purpose for saving us is to make us like Christ. Dr. Stott said, "Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God."

Three New Testament texts show how our growth in Christlikeness on earth prepares us to live with God. These texts show the importance of holiness in the life of the believer.

Romans 8:29 looks to the past and shows God's eternal purpose for his children:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God's eternal purpose is that we be conformed to the image of his Son. From the beginning, God's purpose was to make us like Christ. Romans 8:28 promises that for those who love God all things work together for good. This promise is for those who are called according to his purpose. What is his purpose? God's predestined purpose is to make his children in the image of his Son. God saved us to make us holy.

Paul reminded the Colossian Christians of the wonderful change God had made in their lives: "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death." Through the death of Christ, these people who had been hostile to God were now reconciled with him. Paul then reminded these believers of God's purpose in reconciling them to himself: He reconciled them in order to present them holy and blameless and above reproach before him (Colossians 1:21-22).

"God has one destined end for mankind—holiness. His one aim is the production of saints. He came to save men because He had created them to be holy."

Oswald Chambers

Paul does not say simply, "You have been reconciled to God so that you can spend eternity in heaven." That is wonderful news! But it is not the complete Good News. Paul says, "You have been reconciled to God so that you can be holy." God's purpose is to make his children holy and blameless.

4 John Stott Address at Keswick. (June 20, 2014). Retrieved from <https://leightonfordministries.org/reflections-essays/john-stott-address-at-keswick/> March 8, 2023.

2 Corinthians 3:18 looks at the present and shows how this purpose is being accomplished in the life of the believer today:

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are being changed from one degree of glory to another. God's purpose is accomplished in the transformation of his children through the power of the Holy Spirit. Day by day, we are made more like Christ.

1 John 3:2 looks to the future and shows the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose:

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

The Book of Revelation looks to a day when we will see God face to face. On that day, we will be like him. God's purpose will be fulfilled completely and eternally. John Stott concluded, "We will be with Christ, like Christ, forever."

As Christians, our pursuit of a holy life is preparing us for the day when we see God and his purpose in our life is fulfilled. This should make us earnest about growing in holiness. Each day we are being transformed more and more into his image.

Holiness is not a human idea; holiness is God's character. Our

understanding of holiness is based on God's character revealed in the Bible. As we seek to be more and more like him, we are cooperating with God's eternal purpose. Holiness is God's eternal purpose for every believer. As God's children, we should have a passion to see this purpose accomplished in our hearts and lives.

A Prayer for Holiness

**"Finish, then, Thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
perfectly restored in Thee:
Changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
Sing and cast our crowns before Thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise."**

Charles Wesley

HE FOUND THE SECRET - SAMUEL KABOO MORRIS

In 1873, Samuel Morris⁵ was born in Liberia, West Africa as Prince Kaboo, the son of a tribal chief. When his father was defeated in battle, Kaboo was held for ransom. One day, Kaboo saw a bright light and heard a voice from heaven telling him to run. The ropes that held him fell to the ground, and Kaboo ran into the jungle.

He walked through the jungle for days until he arrived in the city of Monrovia. In the city, a young boy invited Kaboo to church. When Kaboo visited the church, a missionary was telling the story of Paul's conversion. As she told about the bright light and voice from heaven, Kaboo recognized that this was the voice he had heard in the jungle! He soon accepted Christ as his Savior and was baptized with the name Samuel Morris.

During the next two years, Samuel Morris painted houses to support himself while he studied the Bible. He was particularly interested in learning about the Holy Spirit and life in the power of the Spirit. After a missionary told him she had taught him all she knew, Morris asked, "Who was your teacher?" She told him about a preacher in America named Stephen Merritt. With no money and no transportation, Morris walked to the nearest seaport to find a ship to America. He was determined to learn more about living in the Spirit.

He slept on the beach waiting for a ship. When a ship landed, Morris asked the captain to take him to America. The captain refused, but a short time later, two of his crew members ran away. The captain then told Morris that he could work in exchange for transportation to New York. During the voyage, he was mistreated by the crew and given the most dangerous tasks on board. However, Samuel showed the love of Christ to his shipmates until, by the time the ship arrived in New York, the captain and most of the crew had been converted.



When Morris arrived in New York, he found Stephen Merritt's mission and told him of his desire to learn more about the Holy Spirit. Mr. Merritt had to go to a meeting but left Morris at the mission for the evening. When he came back, he found Samuel leading a prayer meeting. On his first night in America, Samuel Morris led nearly 20 people to Christ.

Stephen Merritt helped Samuel Morris enroll at Taylor University so he could prepare to evangelize in Liberia. Morris arrived at the campus in Indiana with no money, but with complete faith in God's provision. He said to the president, "Please give me a room that no

5 Image: "Samuel Morris", *Samuel Morris: A Spirit Filled Life* (1921), retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39596012>, public domain.

one else wants.” Late at night, his fellow students would hear him talking to his Father. His absolute trust in God influenced the campus as well as surrounding churches.

Although Morris planned to return to Liberia, God had a different plan. Within two years of arriving at Taylor University, Samuel Morris died from pneumonia. He was only 20 years old, but he was at peace with God’s plan. Samuel told the president of the university, “It is not my work. It is his. I have finished my job. He will send others better than I to do the work in Africa.”

Morris’s life impacted so many people that hundreds of people lined the streets for the funeral procession. Several fellow students went to Africa as missionaries, serving “in memory of Prince Kaboo.” The president of Taylor University said, “Samuel Morris was God’s messenger to Taylor University. He thought he was coming here to prepare himself for his mission. Instead, God sent him to prepare Taylor University for her mission to the whole world. All who met him were impressed with his sublime, yet simple faith in God.”

Today, a memorial plaque at Samuel Morris’ grave in Fort Wayne, Indiana reads:

Samuel Morris
1873-1893
Prince Kaboo
Native of West Africa
Famous Christian Mystic
Apostle of Simple Faith
Exponent of the Spirit-filled life

The short life of Samuel Morris shows that every believer can live in the power of the Holy Spirit. A holy heart and a holy life is God’s purpose for every believer.

LESSON 1 IN REVIEW

1. The beauty of holiness is seen in God's original creation. God created a perfect world without sin.
2. The beauty of holiness is seen in the nature of God. God is a holy God.
3. The beauty of holiness is seen in God's plan for his people. Even though sin corrupted man's nature, God did not give up on his plan for a holy people. To restore relationship between a holy God and fallen humanity, God taught:
 - What a holy God is like
 - What a holy person is like
4. There are many false ideas about holiness. These include:
 - Only a few people can be holy.
 - We become holy by living apart from other people.
 - We become holy only when we die.
 - We become holy by following rules.
 - The evidence that a person is holy is a special gift of tongues or miracles.
 - Holiness is impossible.
5. The truth about holiness is simple. This is what it means to be holy:
 - To be holy is to maintain a close relationship with God.
 - To be holy is to reflect the image of God.
 - To be holy is to be separated to God.
 - To be holy is to have an undivided heart.
 - To be holy is to live a righteous life.
 - To be holy is to have perfect love for God and our neighbor.
 - To be holy is to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
 - To be holy is to be Christlike.
 - Holiness prepares us to see God.
6. Three New Testament texts show the importance of holiness in the life of the believer.
 - Romans 8:29 shows God's eternal purpose to form us in the image of his Son.
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18 shows that God's purpose is being accomplished as we are transformed daily into the image of Christ.
 - 1 John 3:2 shows the fulfillment of God's purpose; when we see God, we will be like him.

LESSON 1 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Imagine that a new Christian said to you, “I read in the Bible that God calls us to be holy as he is holy. That seems impossible! What does it mean to be holy?” Write a one-page answer to this new believer. At your next class meeting, each student should read their answer. Give time to discuss the answers as a class.
2. Begin the next class session by quoting 1 Peter 1:14-16.
3. This course includes a final project that is due on the last day of class. You should begin work on this project now. Look at the back of the course for details about this project.

LESSON 2

HOLINESS IS RELATIONSHIP

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Appreciate God's provision for a daily relationship with his people.
2. Recognize that we are holy through relationship with God, not through human effort.
3. Be committed to spending time building a daily relationship with God.
4. Be equipped to help other believers grow in their relationship with God.
5. Memorize 1 John 1:6-7.

ABRAHAM: A MAN WHO WALKED WITH GOD

Imagine that you are 75 years old living in a nation of idol worshippers when you suddenly hear God speak! How would you respond?

God said to Abraham, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). "Leave everything and follow me!" God did not tell Abraham where he would lead. He simply said, "Follow me."

Abraham believed God and followed God from Ur to Haran, and from Haran to Canaan. Abraham traveled more than 1,000 miles in obedience to God's command.

Abraham trusted promises that seemed impossible. He believed that God would give him a son, even though Sarah was past the age to bear children. He believed that God would give him the land of promise, even though he owned no land in Canaan. He believed that God would make him a great nation, even though he had no children.

Abraham, a man from a pagan society, was called a friend of God (James 2:23). He walked with God.

- » Ask three members of your class to give a testimony of their walk with God to this point. How did this walk begin? What lessons have you learned during your walk?

HOLINESS IN THE PENTATEUCH: WALKING WITH GOD

Holy people walk with God; they spend time with God. As they walk with God, they grow more like him. **To be holy means to walk with God, to build a deep relationship with God.**

God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After sin broke that ideal relationship, Adam and Eve hid from God. Sin separated man from God.

Sin breaks relationship with God; sin breaks relationships between people; Adam blamed Eve. Adam and Eve shared in the sin, but sin damaged their relationship with each other. God's goal is for his children to walk in peace with himself and with each other. Satan's goal is to destroy our relationship with God and with each other.

Sin damaged the relationship between God and man, but God provided a way to restore this relationship.

The sacrifices provided a way to maintain relationship with a holy God. We cannot become holy through human effort; we become holy through relationship with a holy God.

Throughout the Old Testament, we find examples of holy people who walked with God. They no longer walked with God in a beautiful garden. Because of sin, men now walked with God in a dark world of sin. But even in a sinful world, it is possible to walk with God. This is holiness.

A Prayer for Holiness

**“Lord, I give up my own
plans and purposes,
All my own desires and hopes
And accept Your will for my life.
I give myself, my life, my all,
Utterly to You to be Yours forever.
Fill me and seal me with
Thy Holy Spirit,
Use me as You will,
Send me where You will,
Work out Your whole will in my life
At any cost now and forever.”**

Betty Stam

(A martyr in China)

Walking with God Requires Self-Discipline

A close walk with God requires the self-discipline to say “no” to sinful desires (Titus 2:12). Joseph was an overseer for an important household in a foreign country. It was at that time that Joseph encountered sexual temptation. Joseph’s relationship with God governed his response to temptation. Other people may have said, “This pleasure looks good; I will enjoy it.” But Joseph said, “...How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). Joseph was unwilling to damage his relationship with God for the sake of physical desires.

We do not earn holiness by self-discipline. It is God’s grace alone that makes us holy. We are saved by grace; we are made holy by grace. However, grace does not mean that self-discipline is unnecessary.

Dallas Willard wrote, “Grace is not opposed to effort; grace is opposed to earning.”⁶ Walking involves effort, but even the effort comes as the result of God’s grace. Our effort does not earn God’s grace; our effort is a joyful response to his grace. As God’s children, we do not earn God’s favor through our efforts, but we recognize the need for self-discipline (1 Corinthians 9:25-27).

Walking with God Requires Obedience

God called Abraham to a place he had never seen. “So Abram went, as the LORD had told him...” (Genesis 12:4). Abraham walked with God in a life of obedience. A holy heart is an obedient heart:

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8).

God did not give Abraham a map to Canaan. He did not give Abraham details of the journey. He simply called Abraham to follow—and Abraham obeyed. Walking with God requires obedience. A life of holiness requires obedience (1 Peter 1:2; Romans 6:16, 22).

“The rule for understanding in spiritual matters is not intellect, but obedience.”

Oswald Chambers

6 Dallas Willard, *Hearing God* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 254

Walking with God Involves Growing Faith

When Abraham left his home, there was no evidence for God's promises. Abraham walked with God in a life of faith. As we walk with God, we learn to trust him fully. Our faith deepens as we spend time with him. This was important for Abraham because he faced an even greater test than leaving his homeland.

In Canaan, God called Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. After many years, Abraham and Sarah had a son. Now, God asked Abraham to give his son Isaac as a sacrifice. The writer of Hebrews says, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac" (Hebrews 11:17).

Because Abraham walked with God, he trusted God. Abraham had walked with God, so he could trust God even when he could not fully understand God's commands. Abraham walked with God in a relationship of growing faith.

Walking with God requires that we trust him. When we walk with God, we trust him even in difficult places. We allow God to do what he sees is best in our life.

This principle is seen throughout scripture. In unimaginable trials, Job learned that he could trust God. In exile, Jeremiah brought God's promise to bring good from tragedy (Jeremiah 29:10-14). Suffering from a painful thorn in the flesh, Paul learned that God's grace was sufficient for him, because God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The story of Abraham and stories of God's people through history teach us that walking with God involves complete obedience to his commands and complete trust in his promises. As we walk with him, our trust in him grows deeper.

Walking with God is an Exclusive Relationship

The image of walking is common in scripture. Sadly, Israel often walked with sin instead of walking with God. Many of Israel's kings walked in sin. They built a relationship with sin. Abijah walked in all the sins that his father did before him (1 Kings 15:3). Other kings walked in the ways of their fathers rather than with God. They built a relationship with sin; they did not walk with God.

**"If I walk with the world,
I can't walk with God."**

Dwight L. Moody

Walking with God is an exclusive relationship. God is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; Joshua 24:19). You cannot walk at the same time with God and with sin. The Psalmist asked about the requirements for living in God's presence (Psalm 15:1). What are the requirements for living in God's presence?

He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend (Psalm 15:2-3).

Malachi said, “You have wearied the Lord with your words.” Israel asked, “How have we wearied Him?” Malachi responded, “By saying, ‘Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them’” (Malachi 2:17). Israel wanted to be a friend of God while continuing in willful sin. Instead, Malachi warned that a day of judgment was coming like a hot fire. In that day, those who do evil will be like dry grass (Malachi 4:1). A holy God cannot overlook sin.

God condemned Israel for committing the sins of the other nations instead of living in obedience to God’s law. “For you have not walked in my statutes, nor obeyed my rules, but have acted according to the rules of the nations that are around you” (Ezekiel 11:12). Israel could not walk with God while they were walking with sin. Israel could not walk in God’s way and in sin’s way at the same time. Even though they were God’s chosen people, God punished them for their sin. They could not walk with God while walking with sin.

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: WALKING WITH GOD IS AN ONGOING RELATIONSHIP

As we walk with God, we grow in our relationship with him. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses gave a picture of what it means to walk with God. He said that the people of Israel should teach God’s law to their children. When? At all times:

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (Deuteronomy 6:7).

A person who walks with God maintains a consistent relationship with him. There is no distinction between “normal life” and “church life.” Holy people are not “Sunday Christians” who serve God only at church. Holy people desire a consistent, growing relationship with God.

When Israel failed to nurture a daily, growing relationship with God, they were soon drawn to other gods. When Solomon grew careless about his relationship with God, he was soon drawn to the false gods of his wives.

Even the early church faced this danger. The church at Ephesus was started by Paul in a dramatic revival. The apostle John served as their pastor for a while. Mary, the mother of Jesus, lived in Ephesus. They had a wonderful firsthand knowledge of the reality of the gospel. But within one generation, John would bring this warning:

I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first (Revelation 2:4-5).

What happened? Because they failed to maintain the passion of their early love and because they failed to continue growing in their relationship with God, their love grew cold.

We see this in human relationships. Can you imagine a man who marries a beautiful wife, hangs a marriage certificate on the wall, but never spends time with her? Is their marriage healthy? No! It takes more than a marriage certificate to build a healthy marriage. A healthy marriage grows through the years as two people continue to grow in their love for each other.

In the same way, we are called to continue growing in our love for God. Walking with God means continuing to spend time with him. Walking with God means continuing to grow in our relationship with him. This is what it means to be holy.

Walking is a continuing action. It implies a continuing, ongoing relationship. A holy person continues to grow in his relationship with God. A moment of surrender to God is not the end of the process. A holy life involves an ongoing walk with God. Our walk with God begins at the new birth and continues until we see God face to face. The life of holiness is an ongoing relationship.

Jesus taught his disciples that spiritual life depends *entirely* on maintaining relationship with himself.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:4-5).

Some Christians think of their relationship with God as a “Sinner’s Prayer” followed by a life that is little changed. The biblical picture of a relationship with God is much different. The Christian life is connected to the Vine (John 15:1-17). Our spiritual life is maintained through daily relationship with the Vine. A branch that is disconnected from the vine soon dies; a Christian who is disconnected from the Vine soon dies.

Walking with God requires that we spend time with him. You cannot walk with someone without spending time with them! Holy people spend time with God. They sometimes sacrifice business opportunities and entertainment so that they can spend time with God. They understand that nothing is more important than their relationship with God. Like Mary sitting at Jesus’ feet, holy people know that the one thing necessary is time with God (Luke 10:41-42).

Holy people make time with God a priority. They know that prayer and scripture are more important than other activities—even ministry activities. They remember that Jesus often got up early to pray to his Father, so they make a habit of spending time in prayer.

Holy people understand that walking with God means following his direction. They are sensitive to his leadership. They do not ask only, “Is this activity sinful?” They ask, “Will this draw me closer to God?” They want to please God in every decision. Because holy people have holy hearts, they are careful to keep their hands from sin. They understand that relationship with God requires that we be separated from anything that displeases him.

- » What are some practical ways to develop a deeper relationship with the Vine?
- » What are three challenges that hinder our relationship with God?

SHE FOUND THE SECRET - FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL

Frances Havergal's⁷ father was a minister in the Church of England. At the age of 14, Frances testified to faith in Christ.⁸ For the rest of her life, Havergal (1836-1879) longed to walk close to God. She wrote, “Oh, that He may make me a vessel sanctified and (ready) for the Master's use! There are times when I feel such love for Him that I have not words to describe it... but I want to come nearer still. It is not knowing doctrine, but being with Him, which will give this.” As she walked with God, she drew closer to Him.



In 1873, Havergal testified that she was “cleansed from all sin and made holy by the continual sanctifying power of God's Spirit.” There was nothing to hinder her walk with God. Her prayer of surrender to God became a famous hymn, “Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”

Havergal surrendered everything to God. This is what it means to walk with God. It is to be so close to him that everything belongs to him. After a lifetime of walking with God, Havergal's last words were, “Beautiful! Splendid to be so near the gates of heaven! Blessed rest!” Her brother wrote that her face “was so glad, as if she were already talking to Him.”

Ms. Havergal walked with God; she was a holy person. Walking with God is not just for people who lived in Bible times. You can walk with God today; you can be holy.

7 Image: “Frances Ridley Havergal”, *Christmas Sunshine with Love and Light for the New Year* (1886), retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Frances_Ridley_Havergal.jpg, public domain.

8 The story of Frances Havergal is adapted from Wesley L. Duewel, *Heroes of the Holy Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 80-89.

TAKE MY LIFE AND LET IT BE – FRANCES HAVERGAL

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days—let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing, always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold—not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine—it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own—it shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.

LESSON 2 IN REVIEW

1. To be holy means to maintain relationship with God. Holiness is walking with God.
2. Walking with God requires the self-discipline to say “no” to wrong desires.
3. Self-discipline does not deny the power of grace. We are saved by grace; we are made holy by grace.
4. Walking with God requires complete obedience to God’s commands. We cannot walk with God and walk with sin at the same time.
5. Walking with God requires complete trust in God’s promises.
6. Walking with God means building a consistent, daily relationship with God.
7. A holy life requires a daily relationship with the Vine. Our spiritual life depends entirely on our relationship with God.

LESSON 2 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Imagine that a new Christian said to you, “I want to have a deeper relationship with God. I love God, but it is hard to know how to grow in my relationship with him. I can’t see God, so he seems far away. What can I do?” Write a one-page letter in which you help this believer understand how to grow in his relationship with God. At your next class meeting, each student should read their answer and have time to discuss the answers.
2. Begin the next class session by quoting 1 John 1:6-7.

LESSON 3

HOLINESS IS THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Appreciate God's plan to restore his image in man.
2. Recognize the process through which God restores his image in us.
3. Allow God to work his plan for daily transformation into his image.
4. Memorize 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

MOSES: A MAN WITH A SHINING FACE

It was the greatest day in Moses' life (Exodus 33:17-23). He had grown up in Pharaoh's palace. He had met some of the most powerful men in the world. But today, Moses would meet one greater than Pharaoh. He would meet Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Moses had spoken with God at the burning bush. He had watched God destroy Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. But today, Moses would see God more closely than at the burning bush or at the Red Sea.

Today, Moses was in the presence of Jehovah. Moses had only one request, "Show me your glory." God told Moses that this was impossible. "You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." But God gave Moses a special favor:

Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen (Exodus 33:21-23).

Moses saw only a small portion of God's glory, but when he returned to the camp, his face was shining. Each time Moses was in God's presence, "the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him" (Exodus 34:35). The face of Moses reflected the glory of God. Moses was the man with a shining face.

We were created in the image of God; we were created to show God's glory. Although sin damaged God's image in man, God seeks to restore his image in every believer. To be holy is to look like our heavenly Father. God's purpose is to restore his image in his people.

HOLINESS IS THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN

- » Think of a Christian who models holiness. What characteristics of our heavenly Father do you see in this person's life?

The Pentateuch shows that God is a holy God. Because God is holy, he calls his people to be holy. We were made to look like our heavenly Father; we were created to be holy. God's goal is to make his children in his own image.

To have someone's image means to look like that person. We were created in God's image. This does not mean that God has a face like ours; it means that our souls were made to reflect the nature of God. We were created to be mirrors of God's image. Just as a mirror reflects the face of a person, we were made to reflect God's image.

We were made to be pure and holy just as God is pure and holy. **To be holy means to reflect the image of God.** God commands his children, "Be holy." Why? Because God is holy. We are to be like him (Leviticus 11:45; 1 Peter 1:16). We were created to be a holy people; we were created to look like our heavenly Father.

A Prayer for Holiness

**"Lord, make my soul
to mirror You;
You alone to shine in
me, that men may see
Your love, Your grace..."**

Blanche Mary Kelly

We Were Created in the Image of God

The climax of the creation story is the creation of humankind in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). All that God created was good, but only man was made in the image of God. God made man to be like himself. God crowned him with glory and honor (Psalm 8:5).

Man has infinite worth because we were made in God's image. Paul writes that man is the image and glory of God (1 Corinthians 11:7). We were created to reflect God's glory.

The Image of God in Man Was Damaged in the Fall

Sin corrupted the image of God in man. In Genesis 1, man was made in the image of God; by Genesis 6, “all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (Genesis 6:12). Man moved so far from God’s plan that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).

The glory man was given at creation was turned to shame. Paul graphically portrays what man lost by turning from God to false gods. Because of the fall, man exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images. As a result, Romans 1:23-28 says God:

- “Gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity.”
- “Gave them up to dishonorable passions.”
- “Gave them up to a debased mind.”

All this is the result of the fall. Because of sin, man’s glory was changed to shame. The image of God was corrupted; man no longer looked like his Creator.

The Image of God Is Being Restored in His People

However, God did not leave man alone. The sacrifices were a means of satisfying the penalty for sin and restoring the relationship between God and man. But God’s purpose goes deeper than paying the penalty for our sin. God seeks to make man holy as he is holy.

God’s purpose is to shape us in his image (Romans 8:29). As his image is restored in us, the shame of sin is erased and we again show God’s glory. This is one of the central themes of the Bible:

- We were made in the image of God (Genesis 1-2).
- Through sin, the image of God in man was damaged (Genesis 3).
- Beginning with the promise of Messiah in Genesis 3:15 and culminating in heaven, God is restoring his image in man.

John promised that if we abide in Christ, we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming (1 John 2:28). As we are transformed into his image, we regain the glory that was lost in the fall. Our shame is erased, and we face his coming with confidence. As we grow in God’s image, we are made holy. Just as God is holy, his people are made holy.

Israel Was Called to Show the Image of God

God called Israel to be a holy people. His purpose was to restore his image in Israel. God chose Israel as his special representative to other nations. He set Israel apart as his chosen people who would show his holy nature to other nations.

God called Israel to be a kingdom of priests. “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). The job of a priest was to represent God to the people. Israel’s mission was to represent God to all nations. God called Israel to demonstrate his holy nature to other nations. To accomplish this mission, Israel had to be holy.

When Israel was faithful to God, she reflected the holy nature of God; she became a mirror of God’s holiness. When Israel turned to idols, she reflected the sinful nature of the idols; she became a mirror of the idols’ sinfulness. When Israel failed to look like God, she failed her mission to the world.

The Church Is Called to Show the Image of God

In the New Testament, the church is called to be God’s holy people. The church is called to be a priesthood that represents God to the world.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Just as God chose Israel to show his image to the nations, he chose the church to tell the world how God has called us out of darkness into his great light. God chose the church to represent his nature to those who do not know him. To do this, the church must reflect the image of God. To accomplish her mission, the church must be holy.

When the church is faithful to God, she looks like God; she reflects the holy nature of God. When the church turns to the idols of popularity, wealth, and power, she looks like her idols; she reflects the sinful nature of her false gods. When the church fails to look like God, she fails her mission to the world.

The Image of God Is Being Restored in Every Believer

We were created to look like our heavenly Father. We were made in the image of God, but this image was damaged in the fall. God’s image is still there (Genesis 9:6), but it is hidden by sin.

Imagine that a person digging in China finds a beautiful antique vase. At first, it would not look beautiful; it would be covered with dirt and mud. An onlooker might say, “Throw it away. It is worthless!” But an expert knows that under the dirt is a beautiful treasure.

The image of God in man was damaged in the fall. God’s image was covered by the dirt and mud of sin, but God is restoring his image in us. “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). Just as Jesus looks like his Father, we are to look like our Father. Holiness is “God-likeness”; holiness is the restoration of God’s image in man.

Michelangelo's *Pieta*⁹ is one of the most famous sculptures in Italy. In 1972, a mentally ill man took a hammer and smashed the sculpture. Artists worked for months to repair the damage. Because this sculpture is so valuable, they worked carefully to restore the original image. Today, you cannot see where the sculpture was damaged. The artists restored the *Pieta* to its original beauty.

In the fall, sin corrupted God's greatest creation. Sin damaged the image of God in man. Because man is valuable to God, he began to restore his image in us. From the fall until now, God has been working through grace to restore mankind to our original beauty. God's goal is to restore in us his beautiful image.

Many people have an incomplete understanding of the gospel. Their concept of the gospel is:

1. I was a sinner.
2. God saved me.
3. I can now go to heaven.

This is good news—but it is not the entire gospel! The good news of the gospel recognizes God's eternal purpose:

1. I was a sinner.
2. God saved me.
3. God is now restoring his image in me.
4. In heaven, I will be like him, because I will see him as he is (1 John 3:2). God's purpose for his people will be accomplished.

Isn't this amazing? God saved you *in order to make you like himself*. This is the beauty of a holy life. As a holy people, we are being restored into the image of God.

God delivered the Israelites from Egypt so that he could live among them in a loving relationship. God did not free Israel to live like the Canaanites. He freed them so that they could be made like himself.



“The resounding evidence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life is the unmistakable family likeness to Jesus Christ, and the freedom from everything which is not like Him.”

Oswald Chambers

⁹ Image: "Michelangelo's Pieta 5450 cut out black" taken by Stanislav Traykov on December 4, 2005, edited by Niabot, retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelo%27s_Pieta_5450_cut_out_black.jpg, licensed under CC BY 2.5, desaturated from the original.

In the same way, we are saved to live in intimate relationship with God and to be transformed into his image. God saved us from our sin so that we could be made holy as he is holy. We were made to reflect his glory.

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: HOLINESS AND PERSONALITY

Some people believe that a holy person will have a certain type of personality. Think back to your answer to the question at the beginning of this lesson: “Think of a Christian who models holiness. What characteristics of our heavenly Father do you see in this person’s life?” Did you describe them primarily in terms of personality traits? We often do!

However, when we read the New Testament, we see that all types of personalities were represented at Pentecost. All types of people were filled with the Spirit. After Pentecost, the disciples were not suddenly changed into a different type of person. Instead, God worked *through* their natural personalities to accomplish his purposes in a new way.

Thomas did not suddenly become a bright, optimistic person. To his death, Thomas was probably quiet and introspective. Simon Peter did not suddenly become a quiet person sitting unnoticed in the corner. Even after Pentecost, Peter was one who would say confidently, “By no means, Lord!” (Acts 11:8).

God created each of us with a unique personality. Sanctification does not destroy these characteristics. Instead, as we surrender ourselves to God, his image shines *through* our personality.

Is It Possible for God’s Image to Shine Through Our Personalities?

How will this look in daily life? A competitive, outgoing person who has surrendered fully to God will still have the same personality. A shy person who avoids crowds will continue to be shy. However, in both cases, sanctified people allow God to refine their personalities when they see areas that do not reflect God’s image.

Let me give an example. Pastor Gideon and Pastor Mark were strong personalities. Both had strong convictions. Both were good talkers who could argue well. Both were in positions of leadership. Because of their strong convictions, both men could sometimes offend others with their words.

Near the end of his life, Pastor Gideon said, “I never apologize. It doesn’t matter what people think about what I say. It is their fault if they misunderstand me. I know that my heart is right!” Although Gideon’s heart may have been sincere, people in churches he pastored were often hurt by his words. He had never fully learned to let God’s image shine through his personality.

Pastor Mark was also a strong leader. However, Pastor Mark learned what it means to reflect the image of God. He learned to say, “I’m sorry. I said that too strongly.” He learned to show mercy along with justice. Pastor Mark’s members said, “Our pastor treated us like Jesus.”

Holiness does not change your personality type; holiness *does* make you sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit when the Spirit says, “You need to apologize. You were too strong.”

If you have a personality that avoids the public eye, holiness does not make you into an outgoing person who loves the limelight. However, holiness *does* make you willing to put aside your hesitation when God says, “I want you to step out and lead in this situation.”

Everett Cattell gives three examples that illustrate how Satan likes to twist our natural inclinations into something that mars the image of God in our life.¹⁰

Example 1: Eating

Hunger is a natural appetite. It is possible to eat to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). No one should seek for a spiritual experience that destroys hunger.

In many people, however, Satan has corrupted this natural appetite into gluttony. Instead of eating to satisfy a natural and normal need, eating becomes a way of pleasing selfish appetites.

The solution to gluttony is not to eliminate the joy of eating. The solution is self-control that prevents a natural appetite from being twisted into something dangerous and even sinful.

Example 2: Sensitivity

Everett Cattell then gives a more difficult example. Any person with normal emotions has some degree of sensitivity to hurts and suffering. This is normal and is not sinful. However, if we allow this sensitivity to grow into self-pity, it becomes a self-centered attitude that limits our ability to serve God effectively and to reflect his image to others.

Again, the solution is not to eliminate all emotional sensitivity and to become calloused towards the words and actions of other people. Instead, we must learn to surrender this sensitivity to God and allow him to guide and control our response to hurts.

Example 3: The Tongue

Perhaps this is the most difficult example. All of us must use the tongue. We cannot pray, “God, please eradicate my tongue.” However, the tongue must not be allowed to run out of control.

10 Everett L. Cattell, *The Spirit of Holiness* (Newberg: Barclay Press, 2015), 30-35

Cattell gives the example of a missionary who was often right in his opinions, but who hurt others with his strong words. At a spiritual life convention, he said something that hurt many of the people who attended. That night, God convicted the missionary that his tongue had hurt others.

The missionary prayed and then went to the morning meeting. He said to the people at the meeting, “If my problem were liquor, it would be easy. I would throw the liquor away and be done. But my problem is my tongue. I cannot cut it out to the glory of God. But I have committed my tongue to God, and I am trusting that the Holy Spirit will help me use it to his glory.”

Rev. Cattell points to two mistakes with problems such as the tongue:

1. Saying, “I am sinful and cannot control my tongue. I must continue to sin with my tongue because God’s grace is not powerful enough to remedy my problem.”
2. Saying, “I have prayed that God will make me holy. So, he will control my tongue. I do not need to do anything to discipline myself. I will just trust God.”

The correct attitude says, “I have surrendered my heart—and my tongue—to God. My heart is pure, but I know I must still discipline my use of my tongue. I must take time to think before I speak. I must take time to pray before I speak. And, if I speak too quickly, I must humble myself and repent.” A holy person will be quick to go to an offended brother in humble repentance (Matthew 5:23-24).

- » What is a danger area for you? Think of natural appetites that can lead to sinful attitudes or behaviors. Give an example of how this appetite has sometimes caused you trouble. Then give an example of how God has helped you discipline this appetite.

How Does God Shape the Personality of a Holy Person?

As we seek to reflect the image of God in our life, God works in many ways to shape us into the person he wants us to be. Like the archaeologist who finds a rare vase in China and carefully polishes it until it shines, God carefully polishes his children until we shine and mirror his image.

What are some of the ways God shapes his people into his image? At the beginning of this lesson, we saw how Moses reflected the image of God. Looking at the life of Moses gives us some illustrations of how God shapes us in his image.

Early in life, Moses did not always reflect the image of God. His temper caused him to kill a man and threatened to keep him from any usefulness in God’s kingdom (Exodus 2:11-15). However, God shaped Moses into a man who was more meek than all people who were

on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3). Moses was quick to become discouraged (Exodus 5:22-23), but God shaped him into a man who was faithful to lead his people through 40 years in the desert. How did God transform the character of Moses?

1. God uses his Word to shape his children in his image.

One of the most effective tools God uses is his Word. As we store up God's Word in our heart, he uses it to guide us (Psalm 119:9-11). As Moses received God's law directly from the hand of God, it shaped his understanding and his character.

Holy people are people of the Word. They know that in God's Word they will see the nature of God. They know that in God's Word they will learn how their character should reflect God's character. Every great Christian in history was a student of the Word.

2. God uses difficult circumstances to shape his children in his image.

Because of his murder of the Egyptian, Moses spent 40 years in the desert. Many times, he must have thought, "I have wasted my opportunity. I can never do more than care for sheep." But God used those 40 years to shape Moses into a leader.

One of the most encouraging verses from the life of Peter is when Jesus predicted his failure at the trial. Jesus warned Peter, "Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat..." He encouraged Peter, "but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." And then, he promised that out of Peter's (temporary) failure, God would bring good: "And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32). God used even the devastating circumstance of Peter's failure to make Peter more effective.

Holy people trust God's providence in difficult circumstances. They believe Romans 8:28 *because* they are seeking to live out Romans 8:29. Paul writes, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Then, he tells us the purpose that God is bringing in the life of his child: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son."

Not everything that happens to a holy person is good! But all that happens works together to accomplish God's good purpose—shaping us in the image of his Son.

3. God uses people to shape his children in his image.

This may be the hardest of the three. God uses people—often difficult people—to shape us in his image. When Moses was about to tire out through the heavy responsibilities of leadership, God used his father-in-law Jethro (who was not even an Israelite) to give Moses advice that made him more effective (Exodus 18:1-27).

We can look again at Simon Peter. Through his interaction with John and later through confrontations with Paul, Peter was shaped more and more into the image of God. Paul opposed him to his face when Peter failed to live up to the lessons the Spirit had taught him about eating with Gentiles (Galatians 2:11). As the senior apostle, this must have been embarrassing to Peter. He had been following Christ while Paul was still murdering Christians! But Peter allowed God to work through Paul to bring him closer to what God wanted Peter to be.

Holy people allow God to work through other people to shape their character into his image. Proverbs says, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17). The sharp edge of an axe is honed by rubbing the axe against steel. In the same way, as people interact with each other, their skills are sharpened.

The life of holiness is more than a one-time moment of crisis. It is a daily transformation into the image of God. As we submit to God’s work in our lives, he shapes us progressively into his image. This is the practical life of holiness.

HE FOUND THE SECRET - FRANK CROSSLEY

A holy heart is not reserved for pastors or missionaries. God wants to change *every* Christian into his image. Frank Crossley showed the image of God in ordinary life. Frank Crossley was not a preacher; he was the owner of Crossley Engines. He did not live in a cave hidden from temptation; he lived in Manchester, a large industrial city.

Frank Crossley was a wealthy businessman in 19th century England. Soon after his conversion, Crossley heard a young girl from the Salvation Army testify about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Crossley said to his wife, “I want to know God like that girl knows God.” He returned the next night and began seeking a pure heart.

After God purified his heart through faith, Crossley wanted to do more than make money. He decided to become a preacher. He contacted General William Booth of the Salvation Army, but Booth wisely advised Mr. Crossley to continue his work as a businessman. General Booth believed that Frank Crossley would be more effective serving God through his business.

Mr. Crossley asked, “How can I show God’s image in my daily life? How would Jesus treat my employees?” He moved his factory to the poorest section of the city to help the needy. He treated his workers like Christian brothers.

Frank Crossley demonstrated a holy heart through a Christlike attitude. Day after day, Mr. Crossley reflected the image of God in his treatment of other people. A rival businessman once met with Mr. Crossley about a difficult contract. He later said, “Mr. Crossley treated me just as Jesus Christ would have done.” This business colleague saw the image of God in Frank Crossley.

For Frank Crossley, the most important question was not, “How can I make more money?” The most important question was, “Do I look like my heavenly Father?” Because of this, Mr. Crossley showed the image of God to those around him. This is holiness.

O FOR A HEART TO PRAISE MY GOD - CHARLES WESLEY

O for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free,
A heart that always feels Thy blood
So freely shed for me.

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.

A humble, lowly, contrite, heart,
Believing, true and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From Christ who dwells within.

A heart in every thought renewed
And full of love divine,
Perfect and right and pure and good—
A copy, Lord, of Thine.

LESSON 3 IN REVIEW

1. To be holy means to reflect the image of God.
2. The image of God in mankind was damaged by the fall.
3. One of the central themes of the Bible is the restoration of God's image in man.
4. God's eternal purpose is to restore us to his image.
5. When Israel was faithful to God, she showed his image to the nations.
6. When the church is faithful to God, we show his image to the world around us.
7. The image of God in us has been damaged by sin. However, God works in the life of every believer to make us more and more like himself.
8. The good news of the gospel is:
 - I was a sinner.
 - God saved me.
 - God is now restoring his image in me.
 - In heaven, I will be like him because I will see him as he is.
9. God is working to shape his children into his image. Regardless of our personality, he wants to show himself through us. God uses his Word, the circumstances of life, and other people to shape us in his image.

LESSON 3 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write a 2-3 page essay on the topic: “The Image of God in Me.” Answer four questions:
 - If my family members look at me, will they see God’s image in me?
 - What will my family member see that does not look like God’s image in me?
 - What are three practical steps I can take to reflect the image of God in my life?
 - What circumstances or people is God using to shape me in his image right now?
2. Begin the next class session by quoting 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

LESSON 4

HOLINESS IS SEPARATION

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the importance of separation from sin for every Christian.
2. Appreciate the privilege of being separated to God.
3. Develop practical principles for a biblical understanding of separation.
4. Memorize 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.

MOSES: A MAN WHO STOOD ON HOLY GROUND

As he was caring for sheep in the desert, Moses saw a bush that was on fire but was not consumed. As Moses walked closer to this strange sight, he heard God calling, “Moses, Moses!” Moses answered, “Here I am.” God warned, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5).

In the ancient world, going barefoot represented humility and reverence. No one could wear sandals in the presence of Pharaoh. Moses was in the presence of one greater than Pharaoh. He was in the presence of the Almighty God. Moses was on holy ground.

What was special about the place where Moses stood? What made it holy? Was there a fence with a sign marked “Holy Ground”? No. Did someone hold a religious ceremony to mark the ground as holy? No.

This ground was holy **only** because it belonged to God. God separated this piece of land from the rest of the desert and declared it holy; God “sanctified” the ground. This illustrates an important lesson about holiness. This land was holy because God had set it apart. That which is holy has been set apart, separated, by God.

Years later, God met Moses on Mount Sinai. Again, God set apart a piece of land as holy. Moses told the people to stay away from the mountain. They could not go up on the mountain or touch any place around it because it was holy. The presence of God on the mountain was so powerful that Moses warned the people that anyone who touched the mountain should be put to death (Exodus 19:12). The mountain belonged to God. Moses stood on holy ground.

HOLINESS IS SEPARATION

Holiness is an attribute of God. In scripture, the word *holy* refers to God or something that belongs to God. In the story of Moses and the burning bush, the ground was holy only because it belonged to God. **To be holy means to be separated to God.** Many examples from the Pentateuch show that holy things are set apart from the common or ordinary.

A Holy Day

The first time the word *holy* appears in the Bible, it refers not to a person, but to a day. At the end of six days of creation, God set the seventh day apart from the other six days.

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation (Genesis 2:3).

The seventh day was holy because it was set apart for God; it was no longer common. Isaiah said the Sabbath was set apart from all other days. This day was not for people to follow their own ways or do their own pleasure; it belonged to God (Isaiah 58:13). The Sabbath was set apart by God for worship.

Israel's faithfulness to the Sabbath showed her faithfulness to God. The God who set the Sabbath apart set Israel apart.

And the LORD said to Moses, "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you'" (Exodus 31:12-13).

To be holy is to be separated **by** God and **for** God. God sanctified the Sabbath; God sanctifies his people.

A Prayer for Holiness

**"Almighty God,
You have made us
for yourself, and our
hearts are restless till
they find rest in you.
Grant us purity of
heart and strength of
purpose, that no selfish
passion may hinder
us from knowing your
will, and no weakness
hinder us from doing it."**

Augustine of Hippo

Holy Objects

A piece of ground that was set apart from other land was holy; it belonged to God. A day that was separated from other days was holy; it belonged to God. Anything set apart to God was holy.

The **clothes** that the priests wore were holy (Exodus 28:2). They were made by special instructions from God and belonged to him. The **offerings** that the people brought to the Tabernacle were holy; they were set apart for God (Exodus 28:38). The priests used a special oil in worship. God commanded, “This shall be my holy **anointing oil** throughout your generations” (Exodus 30:31). No one else could use this oil; it was set apart for God’s use.

To provide for the Tabernacle, God required every person of Israel to pay a tax called the **shekel of the sanctuary** (Exodus 30:13, 24; Exodus 38:24-26; Leviticus 5:15; Leviticus 27:3, 25; Numbers 3:47, 50; Numbers 7:13). This money was not used for common use. Many scholars believe this was an entirely different coin than the normal shekel. It was holy; it belonged to God.

The **furniture** in the Tabernacle was holy. God commanded Moses to separate this furniture from all other materials. “You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them will become holy” (Exodus 30:29).

Israel understood three possibilities for any object (Leviticus 10:10). Objects were:

1. **Unclean.** Unclean objects were banned for God’s people.
2. **Clean and common.**¹¹ Clean objects were permitted for common use.
3. **Holy.** Holy objects had been set apart for God’s use. They were used only in service to God.

Before Israel entered Canaan, God gave instructions for planting trees (Leviticus 19:23-25):

1. For the first three years, the fruit was forbidden to be eaten. For those years the fruit was ceremonially **unclean**.
2. The fruit of the fourth year was set apart for God’s use; an offering of praise to the Lord. It was **holy**, the people could not have it for themselves.
3. Beginning in the fifth year, they were permitted to eat the fruit. The tree was now **clean** and available for **common** use.

11 Many English translations use the word “profane” for “common” objects. The KJV uses “unholy.” Neither word means “sinful.” These words simply mean that the object was not “set apart” for holy use.

Holy Places

The Tabernacle was holy because it was set apart for God. Everything in the Tabernacle was separated for God's use. The place where God met the high priest was called the Most Holy Place.

Later, the Temple in Jerusalem was holy because it was set apart for God's service. The Temple was holy *only* because it belonged to God. Because of Israel's sin, Ezekiel saw a vision of God's glory leaving the Temple (Ezekiel 10).

After God's glory left, the Temple was not holy. In 63 B.C., the Roman general Pompey entered the Most Holy Place and saw that it was empty. Because God no longer lived there, the Temple was no longer holy.

A Holy Tribe

The tribe of Levi was set apart to God. On the night before Israel left Egypt, the firstborn son of each Egyptian family was killed. Israel's firstborn sons were saved because they obeyed God's command to sprinkle the blood of a lamb above the door of each house.

Israel remembered the deliverance from Egypt in two ways. First, every Jewish family ate the Passover Supper each year. This meal celebrated Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

The second way Israel remembered the deliverance from Egypt was even more dramatic. To remind Israel that he had delivered their firstborn sons, God commanded:

Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine (Exodus 13:2).

The word *consecrate* is from the Hebrew word that is translated "sanctify" or "set apart." The firstborn son of every family belonged to God. God chose the tribe of Levi to represent the firstborn sons of all Israel. This tribe served in the place of the entire nation.

Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine, for all the firstborn are mine. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the firstborn in Israel, both of man and of beast. They shall be mine: I am the LORD (Numbers 3:12-13).

In Exodus 29, God prescribed the ceremony for consecrating the priests. The word *holy* is used nine times in this chapter. The Levites were consecrated in place of the firstborn; the tribe belonged entirely to God.

- » Why was it important for God to emphasize the message of separation for Israel? Why did Paul emphasize this message for the churches at Corinth (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1) and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 4-5)? Why is this message important today?

These examples show that to be holy is to be set apart to God. This helps us understand the meaning of a holy life today. A holy person belongs entirely to God. He is set apart for God's purposes. To be holy is to be separated *from sin* and to be separated *to God*.

TO BE HOLY IS TO BE SEPARATED FROM SIN

Because God is holy, his people must be holy. Sinful man cannot have relationship with a holy God. Holy people separate themselves from anything that displeases God.

A Holy God Hates Sin

1. God demonstrated his holiness in the Flood.

God's created world was very good, but sin corrupted this creation. When God looked at man, he saw the evil in man's heart.

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart (Genesis 6:5-6).

Noah and his family were saved because Noah lived a holy life. "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). He remained separated from sin.

2. God demonstrated his holiness in his judgment on Nadab and Abihu.

Aaron's oldest sons were set apart for service to God. When they violated the holiness of the Tabernacle, fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord (Leviticus 10:2). Leviticus does not record details of Nadab and Abihu's sin, but God said, "Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Leviticus 10:3). God's priests must treat his Tabernacle as holy. Nadab and Abihu thought they could treat the holy in the same way as the common.

3. God demonstrated his holiness in his judgment on Moses and Aaron.

Moses and Aaron were kept from the Promised Land because they did not uphold God as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel (Numbers 20:12). After God commanded Moses to speak to the rock to draw water, Moses struck the rock. God judged Moses because he did not honor God before the people.

Because God is holy, he cannot ignore sin. Ten times in the Pentateuch, a sin is called an “abomination to the Lord,” something that God hates. A holy God hates sin.

Holy People Hate Sin

God is a God of holiness and a God of love. Man’s sin created a problem. How could a holy God continue to build a relationship with sinful man? How could God show his love to man and be true to his holiness at the same time?

God gave his Law to help his people live as a holy people. The Law was not given to make life difficult for us; it was given to help us live in right relationship with God. The Law gave God’s people a model of separation from sin. Holy people will hate sin just as a holy God hates sin.

“Jesus died, not to reconcile men to sin, but to deliver them from sin.”

R.E. Howard

The New Testament writers taught that separation to God requires separation from sin. James asked, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). You cannot be a friend both of God and of sin. You cannot walk with God and sin at the same time. A holy life requires separation from sin.

Paul wrote to people who thought that God’s grace permitted them to continue in willful sin. They asked, “Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?” (Romans 6:15). Paul’s answer was emphatic. “No, by no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey?” There are only two choices (Romans 6:16):

1. If you give yourself to sin, the end is death.
2. If you give yourself to God, the end is righteousness.

You cannot give yourself to both sin and God. Christians have been set free from sin, and have become slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:18). As God’s children, we must be separate from sin.

Paul put this in practical terms that show our responsibility to avoid willful sin. “For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification” (Romans 6:19).

It is impossible to maintain a friendship with sin while living for God. Separation **to God** requires separation **from sin**. We cannot maintain relationship with both God and sin. After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:8). Union with sin caused separation from God.

Salvation does not free us to live in sin. Salvation frees us from sin so that we can be holy. The goal of salvation is to bring God's people to holiness. God's goal is to deliver us from sin and to set us apart for relationship with himself.¹²

Chih-ming was traveling on a mountain in Taiwan. Next to the road was a cliff that dropped to a river far below. Do you think Chih-ming asked his bus driver to show him how close to the cliff he could drive? No! Chih-ming wanted to stay as far as possible from the edge. In the same way, a holy person stays away from sin. In every area of life, a holy person avoids a sinful lifestyle. A holy person stays as far as possible from sin and as close as possible to God.

The apostle Peter put it like this: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession." How will we do this? By living a holy life. "Abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable" (1 Peter 2:9-12). The holy life of God's people is a mark of ownership. Holy people stay far from sin because they are a people for God's own possession, a people who belong to God. A holy person wants to belong completely to God.

Paul reminded the people of Corinth that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. He lists some of those who will be excluded: "Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Then he reminds them, "And such were some of you." The Corinthian Christians had grown up in a wicked environment and had practiced these sins.

But Paul refuses to leave Christians in that state. He doesn't say, "Now you are Christians—who practice immorality, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, thievery, greed, and drunkenness." Instead, Paul says, "**you were washed**, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Paul rejoices, "You are no longer what you were! You are no longer bound to those sins. You have been separated from sin and you now belong to God." To be holy is to be separated from sin *so that* we can be separated to God.

12 John N. Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1999), 33

TO BE HOLY IS TO BE SEPARATED TO GOD

Uzziah was a good king who did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. He set himself to seek God, and God helped him against the Philistines (2 Chronicles 26:4-7). Uzziah prospered politically. He expanded Judah's territory and regained land that had been lost during the rule of weak kings. "His fame spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong" (2 Chronicles 26:8).

Uzziah was a strong king, but his story has a sad ending. "But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God" (2 Chronicles 26:16).

What brought God's judgment on Uzziah? The king entered the Temple to offer incense on the altar. He violated the separation between the common and the holy. As a result, Uzziah became "a leper to the day of his death, and being a leper lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 26:21).

King Uzziah did not murder, steal, or commit adultery. He did not worship idols or consult witches. Uzziah sinned by violating God's laws of separation. In his pride, Uzziah touched the holy altar. He grew proud, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God.

In his pride, King Uzziah violated the holiness of the Temple. The Law taught God's people that they must be separated from sin, so that they could live in relationship with God. A holy life is **separated to God**.

The Historical Books give many examples of people and objects that were separated to God. Just as he did at the burning bush, God set apart a piece of **land** as holy. "The commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy'" (Joshua 5:15).

When Israel attacked Jericho, God commanded them to destroy everything that is "devoted to the Lord for destruction... But all silver and gold, and every **vessel** of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD" (Joshua 6:17, 19). In Jericho, these vessels were not holy; they became holy only when God claimed them for himself.

David commanded the **Levites**, "Consecrate yourselves, you and your brothers, so that you may bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it" (1 Chronicles 15:12). Before carrying the Ark back to Jerusalem, the Levites set themselves apart for God's purposes.

Separation from sin is not the final goal for holy people. Israel was separated **from** the sinful nations around her so that she could be separated **to God** as his treasured possession (Leviticus 20:26; Exodus 19:5). At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prayed, "For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth **to be your heritage**, as you declared through Moses your servant, when you brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord

God” (1 Kings 8:53). God separated Israel from all the other nations so that she could belong to him. Israel had the honor to be God’s heritage.

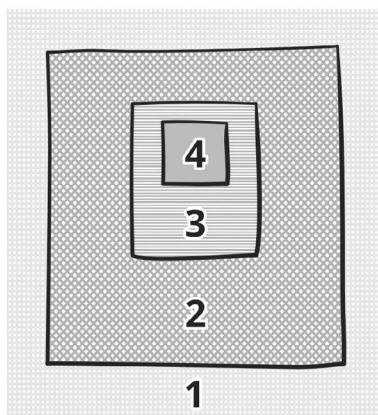
Warning the Corinthians against partnerships with unbelievers, Paul quoted Isaiah: “‘Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them,’ says the Lord, ‘and touch no unclean thing...’” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

The message of separation is negative. However, the verse continues with a beautiful promise! We are separated from sin so that we can be separated to God. Paul continues with a promise: “...I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

Separation from all that is unclean does not deprive us of joy. Instead, we are separated from sin **so that we can have the joy of walking with God**. Christians are to be separated from sin so that we can belong fully to God. Holy people joyfully stay far from sin because they know that separation from sin allows them to walk in an intimate relationship with their heavenly Father.

This principle can be seen in the laws about food and clothing. Why did God say, “Do not eat certain foods” or “Do not wear certain types of material”? These laws were object lessons to teach Israel that she was to be separated to God. These laws marked Israel as a nation that belonged to God. God said to Israel, “You are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you” (Isaiah 43:4). What beautiful imagery! Israel was not set apart to God as punishment; she was set apart for honor and love. She was God’s treasured possession among all peoples (Exodus 19:5).

This idea is illustrated in the Tabernacle. Those who were ritually unclean remained outside the camp. Those who were ritually clean were inside the camp. In the middle of the camp, priests offered sacrifices in the Tabernacle. Only the high priest entered the Most Holy Place. This arrangement gave the people a visual reminder that separation **from sin** allows us to be separated **to God**. This showed the people what it meant to be close to God’s holy presence.



- 1 = Outside the Camp (Unclean)
- 2 = Inside the Camp (Clean)
- 3 = Tabernacle (Priests)
- 4 = Most Holy Place (High Priest)

As the people followed the laws of separation, they learned that we must be holy in every area of life. God has authority over all of life.

Leviticus 17-26 is called the “Holiness Code.” The Holiness Code taught Israel how to live as a holy nation. From the smallest detail to the largest principle, these laws were

inspired by God's holiness. They showed Israel how to be holy in a sinful world. They taught Israel how to be separated from sin. More importantly, they taught that Israel was to be separated to God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:36).

In Leviticus 20, God said, "You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine" (Leviticus 20:26). "I have separated you from the peoples." Why? "That you should be mine." This was separation **to God**.

**"Nothing in our lives
is an insignificant
detail to God."**

Oswald Chambers

The Hebrew word translated "separated" in Leviticus 20:26 is used in Genesis 1:4 when God divided or *separated* light from darkness. You cannot blend light and darkness; they are opposites. God required complete and total separation from the sinful nations around Israel.

God called his people to be completely separated from sin. Why? **So they could belong completely to him.** These laws show that all of life belongs to God. For a holy people, all of life is under God's authority. To be holy means to be separated to God in all areas. We are separated from sin so that we can belong to God.

- » Which seems more difficult—to be **separated from sin** or to be **separated to God**? Why?

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: "IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD"

Biblical Separation Provides a Witness to the World

Jesus prayed that his disciples would be in the world, but not of it. Daniel refused to defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank (Daniel 1:8). Throughout history, God's people have kept themselves separate from the sins of their society. This has allowed God's people to be a witness to their world.

Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation that led other nations to God (Exodus 19:6). When Israel was faithful to God, she accomplished this mission. Rahab said, "The fear of you has fallen upon us ... our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you." Why? Because Israel was a powerful nation with a great army? No! Because, "the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath" (Joshua 2:9-11). When Israel was separated to God, she was a testimony to all nations.

We see this principle in the life of Joseph. Because Joseph kept himself separate from the sins of Egypt, he became a witness to Pharaoh. “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?” (Genesis 41:38). If Joseph had lived like the Egyptians, he would never have been given the opportunity to be a witness before Pharaoh.

Jesus prayed that his followers would be in, but not of, this world. This phrase has sometimes been misunderstood by Christians who want to live careful, godly lives. They mistakenly think that being in the world is a necessary evil that God’s people must endure on the way to heaven.

However, after rejoicing that his followers are not of the world, Jesus prayed, “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (John 17:16-18). Jesus prayed that his followers would serve effectively **in the world**. Jesus prayed that we would not be of the world while we are being sent into the world. By staying separated from sin, we can fulfill our call to transform the world. As God’s children, we can be salt and light to a sinful world.

The apostles knew that a holy life is a testimony to the world. Peter called believers to live godly lives as a witness to unbelievers:

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:12).

Paul wrote to Titus, the leader of the church on the island of Crete. These believers were surrounded by pagans. Paul told Titus that the Christians must live “so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2:10). As Christians lived holy lives, their behavior would adorn the gospel. The behavior of holy people will make the gospel attractive in our world.

Paul called the Christians at Philippi to a godly life. They were to remain separated from sin. They were to be “blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish **in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world**” (Philippians 2:15).

As God’s people live holy lives, we shine as lights in the world. The lives of God’s children should provide a bright testimony in a dark world. Separation from sin is not a legalistic attempt to earn salvation. Separation from sin enables us to fulfill Jesus’ call to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-14). Holy hands are a powerful witness to our world.

Principles of Biblical Separation

For many people separation from the world is a list of do's and don'ts. Often separation is defined by a list of rules. Many people define separation by a list of clothes they do not wear, places they do not go, and entertainments in which they do not participate.

It is certainly true that holy people will not wear certain things or go certain places. A holy person wants to please God in every area of life. However, being separated from sin and separated to God is more than a list of rules.

One problem with defining separation only by a list of rules is that the rules change over time, often with little explanation. One church marks its separation by one set of rules; another church marks its separation by another set of rules. A better approach is to define biblical principles that are true **at all times** and **in all cultures**.

As Christians, our lifestyle should reflect our submission to God's Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If we seek to be people who are separated to God as a people for his own possession (1 Peter 2:9), we will willingly obey the teaching of his Word.

While the Bible does not directly address many aspects of modern life, it establishes principles that will guide us. What are principles that should guide a holy person's lifestyle?

1. The Principle of Modesty

The principle of modesty affirms that our dress and behavior must honor God and must avoid all that is shameful in his eyes. Our dress and behavior are guided by our desire to glorify God.

Throughout the Bible, **nakedness** was shameful. After they sinned, Adam and Eve were ashamed because they knew that they were naked (Genesis 3:7). So they made themselves loincloths. When God met them in the garden, he made more complete garments of skins and clothed them (Genesis 3:21).

Throughout the rest of scripture, nakedness is a sign of shame. The prophets used nakedness as a symbol of God's judgment (Isaiah 20:1-4; Hosea 2:3; Ezekiel 23:29). As God's people, our clothing should show that we honor God's standard of modesty. We should be shamed by the nakedness that was a symbol of shame to God's prophets. Our clothing should be clothing that represents a holy and pure people of God.

Modesty in the Bible included a **distinction between the sexes**. While the Bible does not define specific items of dress worn by the Israelites, God commanded his people to maintain gender distinctions between their clothing (Deuteronomy 22:5).

The New Testament teaches that our **adornment** must show that we are God's people. Paul contrasted two types of adornment:

Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair¹³ and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

Paul teaches that what we wear outwardly should show the simplicity and modesty that we should have inwardly. This is the adornment of good works.

Paul's teaching shows the relationship between outward adornment and the inner spirit. In this section of Paul's letter to Timothy, he is addressing prayer in the church. He tells Timothy how Christians should pray. He addresses concerns for each gender.

Paul writes that men should pray without anger or quarrelling (1 Timothy 2:8). We must not enter God's presence in a spirit of anger. Paul writes that women should pray with a spirit of modesty and submission; this is reflected even in clothing and adornment. We must not enter God's presence with pride and self-glory. Holy people have a modesty that is reflected in all areas of life.

Peter gave the same relationship between external appearance and the inner spirit.

Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands... (1 Peter 3:3-5).

Peter teaches that holy people should care more about the internal adornment of a gentle and quiet spirit than about external adornment. Holy people care more about being approved by God rather than by the world.

As Christians, our **entertainment** should show that we are separated to God. Paul tells us that Christians should fill our minds with things that will make us more like Christ.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Philippians 4:8).

As holy people, every area of life is controlled by God. As you read Leviticus, you see that there is nothing too small to merit God's attention. Everything matters to him! This is **not**

13 The word "braided" sometimes confuses readers. The showy hairstyles of Paul's day included ornate braids. His principle is "Women should be adorned by modesty, not by elaborate showiness."

because God is a tyrant who wants to control every area of life. It is because God is a loving Father who cares about every aspect of his children's lives. Our heavenly Father does not want his children to wear clothing that dishonors the body he lovingly created. Our heavenly Father does not want his children to fill their minds with entertainment that inspires sinful and shameful thoughts. We are a people for his own possession, and he cares for every aspect of our lives.

- » Apply the principle of modesty in your culture. What areas (both of dress and lifestyle) are a challenge for maintaining modesty in your world?

2. The Principle of Stewardship

The principle of stewardship affirms that everything we have belongs to God. As God's children, we will use our money and resources in a way that honors him.

In the 18th century, some Christians followed a strict dress code. They rejected any decoration on clothing. They did not wear shiny buttons on clothes; men did not wear neckties; they wore clothes made only of gray cloth. It appeared that they were very modest.

However, John Wesley preached a sermon about dress in which he complained that this appearance of modesty was only external. While the clothes looked simple, some Christians ignored the principle of stewardship. They would travel from London to Paris to buy the most expensive materials for their clothing. Yes, they bought only gray cloth—but they bought expensive cloth to show off their wealth. They were modest, but they were not good stewards of God's money.¹⁴

Wesley insisted that to be separate from the world meant being a good steward of the money that God gives us. He preached that a holy person should not waste money on extravagant clothing. It is possible to wear modest clothing but to be wasteful in our choices. Paul said that our adornment must not be costly attire (1 Timothy 2:9).

The principle of stewardship does not mean always buying the cheapest item. Sometimes good quality clothing that costs more will last much longer. Some churches save money by installing cheap plumbing—and then spend many times as much money to fix leaks! That is poor stewardship.

The principle of stewardship says, “We are stewards of the money that God has entrusted to us. We must use it wisely. We are stewards of the talent that God has given us. We must use it for his glory. Everything we do must honor him.”

- » Apply the principle of stewardship in your culture. How can your churches be good stewards of God's resources?

14 John Wesley, “On Dress” from *The Works of John Wesley*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996)

3. The Principle of Temperance

The principle of temperance affirms that we will not allow “things” (even good things) to control our lives. One of the challenges for living “in” but not “of” the world is that we are in the world! There are many things in our world that we can and should enjoy. A holy life requires temperance or moderation even in good things.

Food is an example. Hunger is a natural appetite; it is not sinful. Paul wrote that we should eat to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Eating is not sinful. However, if I am a glutton who has no self-control, I am not eating to the glory of God. The world eats for self-gratification; if I am intemperate in my eating habits, I am of the world. Instead, I am to eat for the glory of God. This means that I will exercise self-control while enjoying the good food that God provides for me.

The Corinthians insisted that they could commit sexual immorality because they were God’s spiritual children and the body no longer mattered. They said, “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.” They had the idea from their culture that the body is permitted to have anything it wants.

Paul responded by quoting the Corinthians’ teachings and then rejecting the false ideas behind their teaching. “‘All things are lawful for me,’ **but I will not be dominated by anything**. ‘Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food’—**and God will destroy both one and the other**” (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). He continued, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?” Paul concludes, “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

Paul’s principle is this—even things that are lawful must not control us. God has authority over all aspects of the Christian’s life, even our bodies. **Everything** we do must bring honor to God. This requires that we live with temperance and self-control.

How will this look in daily life? It means self-control in what we eat and drink. It means self-control in our entertainment. As a holy person, I will not be dominated by anything. Even a perfectly innocent entertainment is wrong (for me) if it dominates me. The principle of temperance teaches self-control in all areas.

Here is an example that shows how these principles may relate to personal weaknesses and personality. Understand, this is only an example, it is not a rule for you!

A young man named James bought a new computer that had a game called “Tetris.” There was nothing wrong with the game. It was not violent or sensual. It was a simple puzzle. However, James soon realized that he was dominated by this game! He would sit down to work—and soon start playing the game. He would say, “I will take a break from working and play Tetris.” Thirty minutes later, he would say, “I want to finish one more game.” But an hour

later, he would still be playing. Finally, God reminded him of the principle of temperance. “All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be dominated by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Because of this, James decided that he needed to delete Tetris from his computer. Is this a biblical rule for everyone? No! The Bible does not include the word *Tetris* anywhere! But for James, the principle of temperance meant avoiding a game that could control him.

Principles are broader than rules. There is no Bible teaching against Tetris. If Tetris is your favorite game, you do not need to quit because James had to. But **for James**, because of his weakness, Tetris was a snare. If we want to live holy lives, we will ask God, “How do I live in a way that pleases you?”

- » Apply the principle of temperance in your culture. What areas are a challenge for maintaining biblical balance in your life?

4. The Principle of Propriety

When Timothy, the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, joined Paul and Silas on their missionary journey, Paul required Timothy to be circumcised for the sake of effective ministry (Acts 16:3). Earlier, Paul had refused to circumcise Titus, a Greek convert (Galatians 2:3). Paul’s differing responses in these situations teaches an important principle for ministry.

In the case of Titus, Paul stood for the truth that we are saved by grace through faith. To require a Gentile convert to follow the Jewish law would undermine the message of Christian liberty. Paul stood firm against those who wanted to require Titus to be circumcised (Galatians 2:1-6). In Acts 15, the Jerusalem church recognized that circumcision was not required for Gentile converts.

In Acts 16, Paul asked Timothy to undergo circumcision. Why? Not for the sake of salvation, but for the sake of effective ministry in the synagogues.

- » Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

Paul illustrated this same principle in Corinthians. For the sake of the gospel, Paul was willing to make sacrifices in areas that did not involve biblical principle. He did not compromise biblical convictions, but he did sacrifice his freedoms for the sake of ministry.

This suggests an important principle for Christians. Some things may be appropriate in one situation and not in another. For the sake of effective ministry, a leader may surrender some freedoms in areas that do not offend his or her own convictions. These are not areas of biblical teaching, but areas of personal convictions and cultural practice.

Gary is a missionary in Africa. Gary grows a full beard. In his country, a beard is a symbol of age and authority. The chief of a tribe always wears a long beard. Gary’s beard gains

respect among those he is trying to reach with the gospel. He wears a beard because of the principle of propriety.

Rick is a missionary in Asia. In Rick's country, a beard is associated with sloppiness and careless personal appearance. Soon after moving to this country, Rick saw that his beard would limit his effectiveness. He shaved his beard because of the principle of propriety.

Is a beard right or wrong? Neither! Both men learned to follow the principle of propriety—what is best for the situation in which God puts me?

- » Have you found areas where the principle of propriety requires you to sacrifice your personal freedoms to reach the people around you for Christ?

5. The Principle of Responsibility: To Whom Do I Answer?

A teacher asked some college students, “Do you prefer rules or principles for your dormitory handbook?” They said, “We prefer principles!”

Then the teacher asked, “Which is easier to obey: a rule that says, ‘Lights must be out at midnight’ or a principle that says, ‘You are preparing for ministry. Go to bed early enough that you can be well-rested and are ready to focus on classwork for your first class each morning’? The students soon realized that a principle requires us to think much more than a simple rule!

Principles can be hard. One of the keys is realizing that we answer to God in the matter of separation. You cannot have a rule that says, “_____ grams of food per day is temperate. More than that is gluttony.” That is impossible! Instead, I must remember that I am responsible to God for self-control.

One person will be in an office job that requires nice suits; another person would be a poor steward if he bought a nice suit to wear on the farm!

God may give different convictions to different people based on their ministry setting, their background, and even the sins to which they are prone. We are not all alike; we will not all look alike. Our brothers and sisters may have different lifestyle convictions. As long as the differences do not contradict the teachings of scripture, these differences may be a sign of biblical freedom.

Because of this, I must remember two things:

1. I must not judge another person's heart. They answer to God for their separation from the world (Romans 14:4).
2. I must carefully judge my own heart. I answer to God for my separation from the world (2 Corinthians 5:9-10).

THEY FOUND THE SECRET - COUNT ZINZENDORF AND THE MORAVIANS

In the 18th century, a group of Christians fled to Germany to escape persecution in Moravia. They settled on the estate of Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf,¹⁵ who became their leader. Within a few years, more than 300 Moravians lived on this estate in Herrnhut.

The Moravians were committed to true holiness. They lived plain lives guided by the principles of scripture. They were known for their careful study of the Bible and commitment to prayer. In 1727, the Moravians began a prayer meeting that continued 24 hours a day for more than 100 years.



The Moravians sought to belong entirely to God. What was the result of this commitment to a separated life? God used them in a powerful way.

The Moravians had a great influence on other Christians. A Moravian missionary, Peter Boehler, was important in the conversion of John and Charles Wesley. A few weeks after John Wesley's assurance of salvation at a Moravian chapel on Aldersgate Street, he traveled to Herrnhut to learn more about the spiritual experience of these devoted believers. From the Wesleys to William Carey, committed Christians were influenced by the Moravians' pursuit of holiness.

The Moravians carried a powerful evangelistic witness around the world. Within six months of the start of the 1727 prayer meeting, 26 young Moravians had volunteered for missionary service—in a time when foreign missions were almost unknown among Protestant churches. During the 18th century, more than 300 missionaries were sent from this small band of separated Christians. Some of the earliest Protestant missionaries were sent by the Moravians. Christians who are separated to God can be used by God to transform their world.

15 Image: "Portrait of Count Zinzendorf" by J. Archer, *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf* (1838), retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_of_Count_Zinzendorf.jpg, public domain.

The hymn “I Want a Principle Within” summarizes the principles of separation taught by the Moravians. A holy person maintains a conscience that is sensitive to God’s warnings.

I WANT A PRINCIPLE WITHIN - CHARLES WESLEY

I want a principle within of watchful, godly fear,
A sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near.
I want the first approach to feel of pride or wrong desire,
To catch the wandering of my will, and quench the kindling fire.

From Thee that I no more may stray, no more Thy goodness grieve,
Grant me the filial awe, I pray, the tender conscience give.
Quick as the apple of an eye, O God, my conscience make;
Awake my soul when sin is nigh, and keep it still awake.

LESSON 4 IN REVIEW

1. To be holy means to be separated or to belong to God. Examples include:
 - A holy day
 - Holy objects
 - Holy places
 - A holy tribe
2. To be holy means to be **separated from sin**. Because God hates sin, God's people hate sin.
3. To be holy means to be **separated to God**. The goal of separation from sin is separation to God.
4. Holy people stay far from sin. To live close to God means that we will live far from sin.
5. Holy lives equipped Israel as a witness to the world. Holy lives equip Christians to witness to the world.
6. Biblical separation begins in the heart.
7. Principles of separation from the world include:
 - The principle of modesty
 - The principle of stewardship
 - The principle of temperance
 - The principle of propriety
 - The principle of responsibility

LESSON 4 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Choose one issue in which separation is difficult for Christians in your society. Using the principles in this chapter, write a 1-2 page essay suggesting how Christians can be separated from sin and separated to God on the issue you have chosen.
2. Begin the next class session by quoting 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.

LESSON 5

HOLINESS IS AN UNDIVIDED HEART

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand that the Old Testament term *perfect* refers to an undivided heart.
2. Recognize the spiritual danger of a divided heart.
3. Surrender with an unquestioned “Yes” to God.
4. Memorize Psalm 86:11-12.

CALEB: A MAN WITH AN UNDIVIDED HEART

The people of Israel were ready to enter Canaan. God had brought them through the desert, and they were only a short journey from the Promised Land. Moses sent 12 spies to study the land. After 40 days, the spies returned with beautiful grapes and reports of the wonders of Canaan. But, they said, the Canaanites are strong and live in great cities. We seemed like grasshoppers next to them!

Only two spies, Joshua and Caleb, believed God’s promise of victory. Caleb said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it” (Numbers 13:30). Joshua and Caleb saw the same land as the other spies. They saw cities with huge walls. They saw great warriors.

But Joshua and Caleb saw something that the other spies did not see—they saw that the God who brought Israel out of Egypt would bring Israel into Canaan. They saw that the God who destroyed Pharaoh’s army would destroy Jericho’s walls. They saw that the God of

Abraham was the God of Moses. God said that Caleb “has a different spirit and has followed me fully” (Numbers 14:24).

Because they did not believe him, God condemned the adult generation to die in the wilderness. Forty years later, Israel entered Canaan, and it was time to divide the land. Caleb was more than 80 years old. He said to Joshua, “I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me.... So now give me this hill country.” Yes, there were strong cities and powerful warriors. But Caleb had confidence in God’s promises. “I shall drive them out just as the Lord said” (Joshua 14:11-12).

What gave Caleb such confidence? An undivided heart. Caleb said, “I wholly followed the Lord my God” (Joshua 14:8). Caleb trusted God with his whole heart. Caleb was a man with an undivided heart.

A PERFECT HEART IS AN UNDIVIDED HEART

The Historical Books of the Bible¹⁶ tell of Israel’s tragic failure to be what God called his people to be. The Historical Books show how Israel wandered from God’s plan. Israel was called to represent God to other nations. Instead, she turned to false gods. Because of her failure, Israel was defeated and carried into exile. Her glory was turned to shame.

Alongside tragic pictures of unfaithfulness, the same Historical Books show holy people who faithfully served God. While many in Israel were unfaithful to God (Judges), a young Moabite widow was faithful (Ruth). Even in exile (2 Kings), a young Jewish girl obeyed God’s call and saved her people (Esther). These people obeyed God with their whole heart. They were holy in the sense of being fully devoted to God.

The Historical Books teach that to be holy means to serve God with complete loyalty. Holiness does not mean perfect performance. Holiness means to serve God with an undivided heart.

Older English translations of the Old Testament used the word *perfect* to translate the Hebrew word *shalem*. *Shalem* has the idea “to be complete.” To be perfect is to be complete. To be holy means to belong completely to God.

Shalem is related to the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*. To be perfect before God means to be at peace with him (“wholly true to the LORD,” 1 Kings 8:61). To have a perfect heart is to have a heart that is complete or undivided, a heart that has only one loyalty. Let’s look at some examples of the word *perfect* or *undivided* in the Historical Books.

16 The books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are the twelve Historical Books of the Bible.

An Army with an Undivided Purpose

After Saul's death, the northern tribes crowned Ishbosheth as king while Judah followed David. There were two years of civil war in which David led Judah against the northern tribes. After two years, Ishbosheth was murdered by his own captains. The army united to crown David as king over all Israel. The nation was now united under one king.

All these, men of war, arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with a whole heart to make David king over all Israel. Likewise, all the rest of Israel were of a single mind to make David king (1 Chronicles 12:38).

The army came to Hebron **with a whole heart** (*shalem*) to make David king. Older translations use the phrase “with a perfect heart” (KJV). “Perfect” does not mean that no one in the army had sinned. It means that the nation was completely loyal to David. They were united under one king. In this verse, *shalem* is not a religious term; it is a political term. *Shalem* means to have undivided loyalty to the king.

An Altar with Uncut Stones

When Israel arrived in the Promised Land, Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal. Joshua built the altar “of uncut (*shalem*) stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool” (Joshua 8:31). “Uncut” is the same word as *whole* or *perfect*. To be *shalem* is to be undivided.

An Undivided Heart

At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon called the people of Israel to serve God with undivided hearts.

Let your heart therefore be wholly true (*shalem*) to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day (1 Kings 8:61).

This is the same word used to describe the united army under David. It is the same word used to describe uncut stones. Solomon called Israel to undivided faithfulness to God. If the people of Israel had this undivided heart, they would walk in his statutes and keep his commandments. A person with an undivided heart willingly obeys God.

DIVIDED HEARTS AND UNDIVIDED HEARTS

The history of Israel's kings shows that God calls his people to serve him with undivided hearts. God is looking for holy people. God is looking for undivided hearts.

King Solomon: A Divided Heart

At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon called Israel to serve God with undivided hearts. Sadly, Solomon did not follow his own advice. “For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true (*shalem*) to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father” (1 Kings 11:4).

Solomon’s heart was divided. He wanted to worship Israel’s God while worshipping other gods. You cannot be loyal both to Jehovah and to other gods. The author of 1 Kings does not say that Solomon abandoned the worship of Jehovah. Solomon continued to offer sacrifices in the Temple, but his heart was divided. He tried to serve God with a divided heart.

King David: An Undivided Heart

In 1 Kings 11:4, we read God’s perspective on the hearts of David and Solomon. David’s heart was undivided; Solomon’s heart was divided. From a human perspective, we might consider David’s adultery and murder far worse than Solomon’s backsliding. Why does the writer of Kings say that David’s heart was wholly true to the Lord?

The difference is David’s response to sin. When the prophet confronted David, David immediately repented. David did not defend himself. Instead, he confessed to God, “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (Psalm 51:4). David served God with an undivided heart. His heart was *shalem*. His heart was undivided.

Psalm 86 illustrates David’s hunger for an undivided heart. In Psalm 86, David prays for deliverance from enemies who are trying to kill him. In the middle of this prayer, David cries, “Unite my heart to fear your name” (Psalm 86:11). David is praying for an undivided heart. David sought to serve God with a perfect heart.

King Asa: A Divided Heart

Asa came to the throne of Judah in 910 B.C. He was committed to Jehovah; he destroyed the altars to false gods; he broke down the high places that were used for idol worship. When the Ethiopian general Zerah attacked Judah with a huge army, Asa cried to God for deliverance:

A Prayer for Holiness

**“May I die to myself
that I may live in you;
May I be emptied
of myself that I may
abound in you;
May I be nothing to myself
that I may be all to you.”**

Erasmus

O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you (2 Chronicles 14:11).

God answered Asa's prayer. "So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah" (2 Chronicles 14:12). Asa put complete trust in God, and God gave him a great victory.

Twenty years passed, and Asa faced a new test. This time, Baasha, the king of the northern tribes, threatened Judah. In his fear, Asa decided to build a military alliance with another nation. He signed a treaty with Ben-Hadad, the ruler of Syria. Instead of trusting God alone, Asa put his trust in a pagan ruler.

In response, the prophet Hanani reminded Asa of his past victory over the huge army of the Ethiopians. He reminded Asa that when "you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand." Why did God do this? Because "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless (*shalem*) toward him" (2 Chronicles 16:8-9).

When Asa trusted God fully, God gave him a great victory. But now Asa was relying on a Syrian ruler. Because Asa no longer trusted God alone, God would no longer deliver him from danger. Hanani warned that Asa would have wars through the rest of his reign.

The final years of Asa's reign are a mere shadow of the bright promise of his early years. Late in life, Asa became ill, but even in his disease he did not seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 16:12).

Asa's reign was better than many other kings. Asa never abandoned the worship of Jehovah, but his heart was not undivided towards God. He failed to trust God completely. Because of this, Asa did not achieve God's best.

The life of Asa is a powerful illustration of the danger of a divided heart. In the first story, Asa trusted God completely. In the second story, he continued to serve as the leader of God's people, but his heart was not perfect. Instead of fully trusting God, he signed a treaty with the enemy of God. Asa had a divided heart.

King Amaziah: A Divided Heart

Amaziah shows the danger of a divided heart. Amaziah's reign began with great promise: He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kings 14:3; 2 Chronicles 25:2). Like Asa, Amaziah started well.

However, both Kings and Chronicles warn of danger. The author of Kings says Amaziah did what was right, yet not like David his father. The author of Chronicles says that Amaziah did what was right, yet not with a whole heart. He did not remove the high places. Because

of this, the people continued to sacrifice to false gods. A leader with a divided heart led the nation into trouble.

Like Asa, Amaziah found that serving God with a divided heart brings trouble. Although Amaziah's reign began well, he later worshipped the gods of Edom. In judgment, God allowed the northern kingdom to defeat Amaziah. The promise of Amaziah's early reign was never fulfilled because he had a divided heart. Amaziah's heart was not perfect.

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: HOLINESS BEGINS IN THE HEART

Jesus spoke to religious leaders who were very careful about outward appearance, but careless about the heart.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! (Matthew 23:23-24).

These religious leaders carefully followed the ritual laws, but they did not follow the more important inner law. Jesus condemned their false religion. "You strain out a gnat (you are careful about small things), but you swallow a camel (you ignore big problems)." Holiness begins in the heart.

If we think only of outward appearance, we may say:

- "I am holy *because* I don't wear _____."
- "I am holy *because* I don't go _____."
- "I am holy *because* I don't watch _____."

When we claim to be holy because of what we do or do not do, we may become like the Pharisees. Jesus told of a Pharisee who prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get" (Luke 18:11-12). This Pharisee defined holiness by his actions: "I do not cheat; I am not unjust; I fast; I tithe." He claimed to be holy, but his heart was not holy.

The Pharisees were proud of their separation from the world, but their hearts were not holy. Jesus said, "For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27). Outwardly, the Pharisees were separate; inwardly, they were sinful.

- » Which seems easier to measure—outward appearance or inward holiness? Which is easier to fake—outward appearance or inward holiness? Which do we tend to emphasize more—outward appearance or inward holiness?

An Example from Hezekiah

The laws of separation were important for teaching that God requires a holy people. But God was always more concerned about the hearts of his people than about the rituals.

A story from Hezekiah's revival illustrates this principle. After the Temple was cleansed, Hezekiah reinstituted the Passover. He invited the nation to "come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel." Messengers from Hezekiah traveled through Israel inviting the nation to this ceremony. In many places, the people "laughed them to scorn and mocked them. However, some men of Asher, of Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 30:1, 10-11).

As they began to kill the Passover lambs, there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves (2 Chronicles 30:17). Because the nation had gone so long without Temple worship, the people were unclean and not ready to observe Passover. What were the priests to do? God allowed the people to observe Passover because their hearts sought God, *even though they were not yet ritually clean*.

A majority of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than as prescribed. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, "May the good Lord pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord, the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanness." And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people (2 Chronicles 30:18-20).

God was looking for undivided hearts. Even when the people could not follow the rituals of separation, God looked for hearts that were set apart to seek God.

Holy People Consecrate Their Hearts to God

Holiness **always** begins with God. Anything holy belongs to him. God sanctified the Sabbath, the ground at the burning bush, the firstborn of Israel, the Tabernacle, the altar, and the Levites. God claimed these for himself. They were made holy by the presence of God.

Holiness begins with God, but God calls us to consecrate ourselves to him. If we read only the verses in which God says "I will sanctify you," we might decide that sanctification is **only** an act of God. However, the Bible shows that holiness requires a response from man.

Exodus 19 gives an example. God commanded Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them." "So, **Moses... consecrated the people**." Moses set the people apart for God's purposes. Later, God said, "Let the priests who come near to the Lord **consecrate themselves**" (Exodus 19:10-22). The priests were commanded to set themselves apart for God's purposes. They were to be holy; they were to separate themselves to God.

An undivided heart involves two aspects:

1. God promises to set his people apart: “I, the Lord, sanctify you” (Exodus 31:13). God makes his people holy.
2. God commands his people to set themselves apart: “Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44; Leviticus 20:7).

We consecrate ourselves **in response to God’s grace**. Holy people willingly consecrate themselves to God. They give themselves **without reservation to God**.

In Leviticus 20, the **command** “Consecrate yourselves” is followed by the **promise**, “I am the Lord who sanctifies you.” It is the same Hebrew word in both verses. It can be translated like this: “Set yourselves apart.... I am the Lord who sets you apart” (Leviticus 20:7-8).

Sanctification involves **both** God’s work and our response. We do not become holy by our own efforts, but neither do we say, “If God wants me to be holy, he will make me holy without my response.” We respond to God’s grace by consecrating ourselves to him. An undivided heart requires full consecration.

Holiness originates only with God. However, God calls us to yield ourselves to him. We are made holy as we yield to God’s call. Paul wrote, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1). Paul called us to surrender ourselves fully to God’s purposes. Because God promises that he will make us holy, we must surrender ourselves. Holiness is both a command (“consecrate yourselves”) and a promise (“I will sanctify you”).

“We can be used by God only after we allow Him to show us the deep, hidden areas of our character. We don’t even recognize the envy, laziness, or pride within us when we see it. But Jesus will reveal to us everything we have held within ourselves before His grace began to work.”

Oswald Chambers

Holy People Say a Complete “Yes” to God

The lives of Solomon, Asa, and Amaziah show the dangers of a divided heart. A divided heart is not God’s purpose for his people. A holy heart is an undivided heart. So, what does it mean to have an undivided heart? What does it mean to have a heart that is *shalem* or perfect?

Christians are called to be servants of God. The job of a servant is to do whatever his master asks him to do. A good servant does not ask, “Is this what I choose?” A good servant willingly does what his master commands. The job of a servant is to say a complete and unreserved “Yes.”

In the same way, a person who serves God with an undivided heart willingly responds “Yes” to God’s call. This is an undivided heart. Moses called Israel to serve God with undivided hearts:

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, **to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul**, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

As a college student, Elisabeth Elliot wrote in her diary, “**Lord, I have said the eternal ‘Yes.’ Let me never, having put my hand to the plow, look back.** Make straight the way of the cross before me. Give me love, that there may be no room for a wayward thought or step.”¹⁷ Elliot had an undivided heart; she was perfect in God’s eyes.

In the years following this prayer, Elisabeth Elliot faced many challenges. Her husband, Jim Elliot, was killed in 1956 while trying to evangelize the Huaorani tribe in Ecuador. Elisabeth later became a missionary to the people who killed her husband. Only a person who has said the “eternal Yes” could go as a missionary to the killers of her husband.

A holy person serves God with an undivided heart. A holy person says the “eternal Yes” to God. This means a complete surrender to God. When a holy person knows God’s will, he willingly obeys. His heart is not divided; he belongs entirely to God. A holy person says “Yes” to God in a moment of full surrender.

A holy person **continues** to say “Yes” daily. After Elisabeth Elliot “said the eternal Yes,” she continued to face decisions. There were many times when she once again said, “Yes, Lord.” Some Christians believe that a “once for all yes” will remove all future tests of your commitment. A once for all surrender is important, but Satan will continue to test your commitment. Over and over again, you will continue to say, “Yes, Lord. My life belongs to You.” This is the ongoing “Yes” of the holy life.

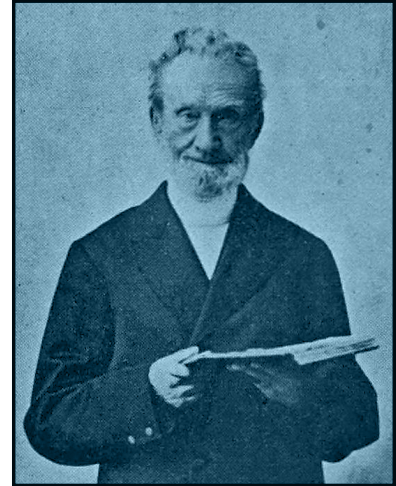
17 Elisabeth Elliot, *Passion and Purity* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1984), 25

HE FOUND THE SECRET - GEORGE MULLER

George Muller¹⁸ was a great Christian in the 19th century.¹⁹ He built five large orphanages and cared for more than 10,000 orphans. Muller raised millions of dollars to support his orphanages and to give to other missionaries. By his death, Muller had provided education for 122,000 children, distributed nearly 2 million Bibles, and more than 100 million books and pamphlets. He did this without ever asking a single person for money. He determined to ask only God for help.

When God called Muller to build his orphanages, Muller had 50 cents in his pocket! Muller answered God's call in complete dependence on God's provision. Muller had only 50 cents—but he gave it to God and trusted God for all the rest. Muller later testified that the orphans never missed a meal; God provided every need.

Muller lived a wicked life as a young man, even spending time in prison at the age of 16. However, at the age of 20, George Muller gave his life to Christ. For the next several years, Muller experienced periods of spiritual victory but also recognized areas of struggle. Finally, at the age of 24, Muller came to “an entire and full surrender of heart. I gave myself fully to the Lord.”



At 70 years of age, Muller began traveling overseas to preach. Between the ages of 70 and 87, he traveled to 42 countries and preached to more than 3 million people.

Late in life, George Muller was asked the secret to his life of service. He replied, “There was a day when I died to myself (my opinions and desires), to the world's approval or disapproval, and even to the approval or blame of my friends. Since then, I have cared only for the approval of God.” George Muller had an undivided heart. He was perfect in God's eyes.

18 Image: “Mr George Muller” by Frank Holmes, *George Müller, The Modern Apostle of Faith* (1898), retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mr_George_Muller.jpg, public domain.

19 Adapted from Roger Steer, *Spiritual Secrets of George Muller* (PA: OMF Books, 1985) and J. Gilchrist Lawson, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians* (Anderson: Warner Press, 1911).

LESSON 5 IN REVIEW

1. To be holy means to have an undivided heart.
2. The Hebrew word *shalem* means “undivided.” This word is related to *shalom*, which means “peace.” To have a “perfect” or “undivided” heart is to have a heart with a single loyalty.
3. Solomon, Asa, and Amaziah show the danger of a divided heart. Each of them failed to please God fully because their hearts were divided.
4. Holiness begins in the heart. Jesus condemned those who care for outward ritual without a pure heart.
5. We must consecrate ourselves fully to God. God sanctifies his people. God calls his people to consecrate themselves in response to his grace.
6. Holy people say a complete “Yes” to God. Like a devoted servant, they willingly say yes to their master.
7. After we have said the “eternal Yes,” we must continue to say “Yes” daily.

LESSON 5 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Prepare a sermon on “Living with an Undivided Heart.” You may develop your own outline, or you may use the following outline:
 - A. A biblical example of a divided heart
 - B. The dangers of living with a divided heart
 - C. The cure for a divided heart
2. Begin the next class session by quoting Psalm 86:11-12.

LESSON 6

HOLINESS IS RIGHTEOUSNESS

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize that inner righteousness must be reflected in outward behavior.
2. Apply principles of holiness to practical ethical decisions.
3. Evaluate his personal ethics.
4. Memorize Micah 6:8.

EZEKIEL: A MAN WHO SAW GOD'S PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Israel was no longer a holy nation. She worshipped idols; she oppressed the poor; she dishonored the Sabbath. In judgment, God sent his people into exile. He allowed the Babylonian army to conquer Jerusalem and destroy the Temple. Since God's people were no longer holy, he no longer accepted their worship. Since God's people were no longer separated from sin, he no longer accepted their worship.

However, God still had a purpose for his people. Ten years after the destruction of the Temple, God gave a vision to Ezekiel, a prophet living in captivity near Babylon. Ezekiel saw God's plan for the future.

In Ezekiel's vision, the exile is over; judgment is ended; God's presence has returned. The Temple is filled with God's glory. God has washed his people with water and cleansed them from outward unrighteousness. He has removed the heart of stone and given them a new heart and a new spirit. He has fulfilled his promise: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules" (Ezekiel 36:25-27). Israel is holy, inwardly and outwardly.

Ezekiel saw a temple that blessed all nations. Fresh water flowed from a restored temple to the Dead Sea. Trees provided fruit for food and leaves for healing. The beauty of Eden was restored.

The most glorious part of the vision is the last sentence: “And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There” (Ezekiel 48:35). God’s purpose for his people is fulfilled: a holy people live in the presence of a holy God!

- » Discuss the external evidences that a person is holy. What outward actions should we expect from a person whose heart is holy?

THE PROBLEM OF THE PROPHETS: ISRAEL WAS NOT RIGHTEOUS

The prophets brought God’s charges against a nation that had broken the covenant. In the Prophetic Books, as in the Pentateuch, the word *holy* refers to something that belongs to God and is set apart to him. Jerusalem and the Temple were holy because they belonged to God.

God is Holy

Twenty-one times, Isaiah spoke of the “Holy One of Israel.” The seraphim sang: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isaiah 6:3).

God is the God who shows himself holy in righteousness (Isaiah 5:16). Ezekiel saw a day when God will reveal his holiness to all nations. “I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 38:23).

God’s **judgments** show his holy nature. Micah warned that because of Israel’s sin, “the Lord is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth” (Micah 1:2-3). God judged Israel because a holy God cannot allow sin to go unpunished.

God’s **redemption** of Israel shows that he is holy. God redeemed Israel not because she deserved rescue, but for the sake of his holy name among the nations.

Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them (Ezekiel 36:22-23).

God would not allow his holy name to be shamed by Israel’s sin. He promised to return Israel to the land to show his holiness before other nations.

Thus says the Lord God: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall dwell in their own land that I gave to my servant Jacob (Ezekiel 28:25).

This is a remarkable promise. God promised to show his holiness by redeeming Israel and bringing her home. God promised to manifest his holiness in the very people he had sent into exile. Holiness belongs to God.

Israel Was Not Holy

Since holiness belongs to God, we are holy only when we live in relationship with a holy God. The prophets announced that Israel was no longer holy because she lived according to her sinful desires rather than living in an obedient and loving relationship with God.

In **Isaiah**, God said that he was separated from Judah because of her sin. God rejected Israel because she refused to live righteously.

Their works are works of iniquity, and deeds of violence are in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their highways (Isaiah 59:6-7).

God commanded **Jeremiah** to bury a linen loincloth. White linen was a symbol of purity. Jeremiah buried the loincloth until mud and dirt had ruined the cloth. This symbolized Judah's impurity. God chose Judah to be a righteous people. Instead, God's people lived sinful lives (Jeremiah 13:1-11).

In **Ezekiel**, God condemned Israel as a nation of stubborn rebels who had rebelled against him (Ezekiel 2:3). Rather than obeying a holy God, Israel lived like the pagan nations. "For you have not walked in my statutes, nor obeyed my rules, but have acted according to the rules of the nations that are around you" (Ezekiel 11:12). Israel was no longer righteous.

During the Exile, **Daniel** confessed that the people who had been chosen to honor God before the nations were worthy of open shame (Daniel 9:7). Why?

All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him (Daniel 9:11).

The minor prophets condemned Israel for her sin. **Hosea** accused Israel of swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery (Hosea 4:2). **Micah** preached to people who hated good and loved evil (Micah 3:2).

Zephaniah was a descendant of Hezekiah. He belonged to one of the most powerful families in Judah, but he did not hesitate to blame the leaders of Judah for her sin.

Her officials within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning. Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men; her priests profane what is holy; they do violence to the law (Zephaniah 3:3-4).

From her political officials to her religious leaders, Israel sinned against God's law. What was the problem? Israel forgot that holiness is much deeper than religious rituals. Israel replaced true righteousness with empty ceremonies.

HOLINESS IS MORE THAN RITUALS AND PROFESSION

One purpose of the Law was to teach Israel that she belonged to God. Unfortunately, Israel soon forgot the true meaning of the Law. The people followed the proper rituals, but their hearts were not holy. This nation that had been set apart by God to reflect His image was now impure. The Prophetic Books teach that to be holy means to be righteous both inwardly and outwardly.

Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in 597 B.C. When Ezekiel was 30 years old, God began to speak to the prophet through a series of visions. Ezekiel saw the elders of Judah worshipping idols in the Holy Place (Ezekiel 8). God commanded angels to bring judgment until the Temple courts were filled with dead bodies. God's glory left the Temple (Ezekiel 10). The Temple and its rituals were meaningless because the people were not holy.

A Holy Life Is More Than Rituals

Israel claimed to be holy, but she was sinful and impure. The people followed the rituals of holiness, but they did not live righteous lives. "They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged" (Isaiah 1:4). The people followed the proper rituals, but they lived sinful lives. The prophets preached that rituals were meaningless if the people of Israel lived sinful lives. Holiness is more than festivals and sacrifices.

Isaiah said that God rejected Judah's sacrifices because she did not live righteously.

Bring no more vain offerings.... I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them (Isaiah 1:13-14).

Standing in front of the Temple, **Jeremiah** announced, "Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD'" (Jeremiah 7:4). The Temple was no longer holy. Why? Because the worshippers did not live righteous lives. God warned, "Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them" (Jeremiah 14:12). God requires more than empty rituals.

God said to **Hosea**, “I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). Israel offered sacrifices but broke her covenant with God. A burnt offering without a righteous life is meaningless. Despite Israel’s sacrifices, God will remember their iniquity and punish their sins (Hosea 8:13). Why?

There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed (Hosea 4:1-2).

Amos preached to the northern kingdom shortly before she was conquered by Assyria. Amos offered a last chance for repentance. Amos confronted Israel with her sin. The professed “people of God” were guilty of every sin from terrible social injustices to shameful sexual practices. Rich Israelites charged unjust fines and used the money to buy wine for religious celebrations (Exodus 22:26; Amos 2:8). Because their lives were sinful, their worship was empty. God said:

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen (Amos 5:21-23).

Even after the exile, Judah tried to substitute ritual for full obedience. In 516 B.C., the people began to rebuild the Temple. Although they were doing religious work, their lives were not pure. **Haggai** reminded the people that a priest who touches a dead body is made unclean. In the same way, the uncleanness caused by the people’s sin made their work on the Temple unclean (Haggai 2:10-14). Rituals without righteousness are empty gestures; holiness is more than rituals.

Malachi warned that God rejected Judah’s worship. “I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand” (Malachi 1:10). God refused to accept Judah’s offerings because of the people’s sin.

The Prophetic Books speak clearly: Holiness is more than ritual. A person who does not live a righteous life is not holy. We cannot worship God with unclean hands.

A Holy Life Is More Than the Profession of God’s Name

God rejected the people who claimed his name because they refused to abandon their sins. In the New Testament, Jesus warned:

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say

to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?” And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Holiness is more than professing God’s name. Holiness is inward righteousness seen in outward behavior. God requires a holy heart and holy hands.

Today, as in the day of Jeremiah, God speaks to pastors who build elaborate mansions from the offerings of the poor. “Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice” (Jeremiah 22:13).

Today, as in the day of Amos, God speaks to church musicians who live sinful lives. “Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen” (Amos 5:23).

Today, as in the day of Micah, God speaks to businessmen who claim the name of Jesus while cheating customers. “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Holiness is more than ritual or profession. Today, as in the day of the prophets, God looks for righteous behavior.

HOLINESS IS RIGHTEOUSNESS

A holy heart is seen in righteous behavior. A holy heart will be seen in holy hands. Israel could not claim to be a holy people while living unrighteous lives.

Because God is a righteous God, his people must be righteous. God’s people must have the character of their God. Those who worship idols take on the moral nature of their idols; those who worship Jehovah must take on the moral nature of Jehovah. God’s purpose is to create a righteous and holy people.

A Prayer for Holiness

**“Most loving Lord,
Give me a steadfast heart;
Give me an unconquered heart;
Give me an upright heart.
Give me understanding to know you,
diligence to seek you,
and faithfulness to embrace you.”**

Adapted from Thomas Aquinas

Isaiah described God's nature. "The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with **justice** and **righteousness**" (Isaiah 33:5). In the same message, Isaiah described the righteous person who can live in God's presence.

...Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? He who **walks righteously** and **speaks uprightly**, who **despises the gain of oppressions**, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil (Isaiah 33:14-15).

Only a person who has the righteous and just character of God can live in God's presence. Holy people act as God acts; they reflect the nature of a holy God.

Holiness Is Inward Righteousness: The Heart

True righteousness begins in the heart. The prophets knew well that the rituals of the Law were not enough in themselves. Outward obedience without inner righteousness is hypocrisy. Righteousness begins in the heart.

Israel rejected the Law because she rejected God who gave the Law. Disobedience begins in the heart. Israel broke God's commands because their heart went after their idols (Ezekiel 20:16). God saw that their heart was false (Hosea 10:2).

Disobedience begins in the heart; righteousness begins in the heart. God spoke through Isaiah, "Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law" (Isaiah 51:7). Those who know righteousness are those who have God's law in their heart.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel looked to a day when God's law would be planted in the hearts of God's people.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

Righteousness begins in the heart. Joel called on the people to repent not with outward displays alone. Fasting and weeping must come from a repentant heart.

"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments."

Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster (Joel 2:12-13).

Outward displays are not enough. Righteousness must begin in the heart.

Holiness Is Outward Righteousness: The Hands

In the Prophetic Books, moral behavior is the measuring stick for holiness. Holiness requires righteous character and conduct. One of the simplest Old Testament descriptions of a righteous life comes from Micah. Micah defined God's expectations for his people.

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness (mercy), and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

This is what it means to live a righteous life: **justice** and **mercy** towards other people, and **humility** towards God. In the Prophetic Books, justice, mercy, and humility define a righteous life.

Righteousness Is Justice and Mercy Toward Other People

Some people want to separate the heart and the hands. They say, "My heart is holy, but my hands are sinful. I love God in my heart, but I do not live a righteous life." The Prophetic Books do not allow this separation. A holy heart will be seen in outward righteousness. A pure heart will result in right behavior. Holy people have holy hands.

Zechariah defined righteousness as right behavior towards others.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart" (Zechariah 7:9-10).

Amos preached to a nation that had forgotten righteousness. Israel turned "justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth." What was the solution to Israel's apostasy? "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:7, 24).

Isaiah shared Amos' passion for righteousness. Isaiah's first message called Judah to a righteous life:

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause (Isaiah 1:16-17).

God spoke through **Jeremiah** to call Judah to justice and righteousness.

Thus says the LORD: “Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place” (Jeremiah 22:3).

God’s standard for his people was justice, righteousness, and mercy. God required his people to live righteously, to act as God acts.

Righteousness Is Humility Towards God

God looks for people who treat others with justice and mercy; this must be our attitude towards our neighbor. God looks for people who walk before him in humility; this must be our attitude towards God.

Judah worshipped idols on a high and lofty mountain. God responded by reminding Judah that he is the only One who truly dwells in a high place.

For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite” (Isaiah 57:7, 15).

We reach the high and lofty God through a contrite and humble spirit. Righteousness includes humility towards God. This is true holiness.

Hosea preached to an apostate nation. The prophet knew that the nation would reject his message. But even though the nation refused to repent, Hosea ended with an invitation to individual Israelites who sought God. Though the nation may reject God, the righteous person can still walk in the ways of God. God will honor the person who honors him. God blesses the person who walks in righteousness.

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them (Hosea 14:9).

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: THE ETHICS OF A HOLY LIFE

Holiness begins in the heart, but it is seen in outward behavior. At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon challenged the people, “Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, **walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments**, as at this day” (1 Kings 8:61). Inward holiness results in outward holiness; if you are holy on the inside, you will live righteously on the outside.

The prophets opposed those in ancient Israel who taught that God's people did not have to obey God's law. The prophets oppose those in today's church who teach that the Christian cannot meet God's demands for holy living.

Many preachers today teach, "God's law says to live righteously, but he knows that you cannot fulfill his law." That is not the message of the prophets. The prophets said, "God's law says to live righteously; this is what God requires. God's people will obey God's law."

An example from the Law of Moses will show how a holy heart affects our daily actions. God said, "You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning" (Leviticus 19:13). In the ancient world, a worker was paid at the end of each day. There were no checking accounts or credit cards. Monday's pay bought food for Tuesday's meals. Refusing to pay a worker each day made it difficult for them to buy food. The Law said, "Pay your workers at the end of each day. A righteous businessman will treat his workers with justice."

We have seen the emphasis on righteousness, justice, and mercy in the Prophets. The New Testament General Epistles share this same message. This is seen most clearly in the epistle of James. James wrote to those who claimed to be God's people, but who did not live righteous lives. He shows that true holiness is seen in righteous living.

- Holy people do more than profess godliness; they live godly lives. "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).
- Holy people show compassion to orphans and widows. "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27).
- Holy people are impartial towards both the rich and the poor. "But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:9).
- Holy people control their speech. "And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body" (James 3:2).
- Holy businessmen treat their workers with justice. "Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts" (James 5:4).

"Holiness means unsullied walking with the feet, unsullied talking with the tongue, unsullied thinking with the mind—every detail of life under the scrutiny of God."

Oswald Chambers

Holiness changes how we live in every area of our life, including our business and career. A holy person lives righteously. If we are holy before God, we will act properly towards others. The message of the prophets and the apostles is clear: a holy heart changes our actions. Holy people will live righteously in all areas of life. God's purpose is to form a people who are righteous both in their hearts and in their daily lives.

How will righteousness look in daily life? What does holiness look like in our day to day interactions with the world around us? Let's look at some real-life examples. All these come from people who claim to be holy. The names have been changed. Sadly, the stories are true.

Pastor Thomas is a builder. His work as a builder supports his ministry as a pastor of an evangelical church. Thomas bought a tool for \$100. He used it for building a house and then did not need the tool any longer. When he was ready to sell the tool, he told the buyer, "When it was new, I paid \$200 for this tool. I will sell it to you for \$150."

Pastor Thomas says, "That is good business. I made a profit by exaggerating the original price I paid. No one needs to know. Anyway, I will use the money for God's work." God says, "Holy people are honest in their business dealing." Paul wrote:

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self (Colossians 3:9-10).

Elizabeth is the secretary for a business. When her pastor visited her home, she said, "If you need any office supplies, I can give them to you. I bring pencils, stationery, and office items home from work. No one ever notices."

Elizabeth says, "It's just a little thing." God says, "Holy people are honest even in the small things." Paul wrote that those who have been "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" will live in a new way:

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need (Ephesians 4:24, 28).

Joshua runs a business. He must keep records and pay taxes at the end of the year. Last year, Joshua made a profit of \$50,000 on his business, but when he filled out his taxes, he reported a profit of only \$40,000. Sometimes he pays a bribe to a government official to get a good contract.

Joshua says, "I know how business works in my country. I have to 'grease the wheels' for my company. Besides, I pay tithe and use my money for good purposes." God says, "Holy people are honest in their dealing with the government." Paul wrote to citizens of the Roman Empire: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1).

Abigail doesn't enjoy her job. She wants to spend her time working for the church. Instead, she has a job cleaning houses for rich people. She is paid to work from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., but she often comes late and leaves early. Abigail told her pastor, "I would rather spend time praying in the morning and go to work late. I would rather leave work early and come to church at night. I don't care about working the full time I am paid to work."

Abigail says, "My boss will never know if I don't work the full time." God says, "Holy people are honest in their work ethic. They give their best in every place where God puts them." Paul wrote:

Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ (Colossians 3:22-24).

John is a missionary. He loves God and works hard, but his tongue is sharp! Many times, the people around him have been hurt by his harsh words.

John says, "I just say what I think! You need to accept me the way I am." God says, "Holy people control their tongue." James wrote:

And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness....With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so (James 3:6-10).

- » In your culture, what are the areas of ethical temptation for Christians? Where are Christians most tempted to show dishonesty in their daily life? How does the message of a holy life address this area of temptation?

HE FOUND THE SECRET - CHIUNE SUGIHARA

Chiune Sugihara was a Japanese Christian who worked for the Foreign Ministry in Manchuria. In 1939, he was sent to Lithuania to serve as the Japanese consul. There he met a Jewish lady and heard how the German Nazi government was treating the Jewish people.

Sugihara contacted his government asking for permission to give visas to Jewish refugees fleeing Germany and Poland. The Japanese government refused Sugihara's request.

By the summer of 1940, Sugihara knew that he must show justice and mercy. He told his wife, "I do not want to disobey my government. But I *cannot* disobey God. I must follow my conscience."

Sugihara began handwriting exit visas for refugees. It is estimated that he saved the lives of nearly 10,000 Jews who would have been killed by Hitler. Later, Sugihara was captured by the Russian army and spent 18 months in a Russian prison. When he was released from prison and sent back to Japan, the Foreign Ministry fired him because he had disobeyed their orders.

After he was fired, Sugihara had no way to make a living. He struggled even to buy food for his family. When descendants of the Jews he saved later looked for him, the Japanese government denied that he had ever worked for them. Finally, in 1968, a Jewish survivor found Sugihara and brought him to Israel.

Sugihara received little earthly recognition for his sacrifices, but he obeyed God because he was righteous. Sugihara knew that a child of God must live righteously. He could not ignore the suffering of those around him. He knew that to be righteous is to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. Chiune Sugihara lived a holy life.

“All of God’s people are ordinary people who are made extraordinary by the purpose he has given them.”

Oswald Chambers

A CHARGE TO KEEP I HAVE - CHARLES WESLEY

A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill:
O may it all my powers engage to do my Master’s will!

Arm me with jealous care, as in Thy sight to live;
And O Thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give!

Help me to watch and pray, and on Thyself rely,
Assured, if I my trust betray, I shall forever die.

LESSON 6 IN REVIEW

1. To be holy means to be righteous, both inwardly and outwardly.
2. Israel allowed outward ritual and profession to replace true righteousness.
3. Without righteous lives, religious rituals and profession are meaningless.
4. Righteousness must be inward—it must be obedience from the heart.
5. Righteousness must be outward—it must affect how we treat those around us.
6. The prophets taught that God requires three things of a righteous person:
 - Justice towards other people
 - Mercy towards other people
 - Humility towards God
7. The New Testament epistles repeat the message of righteous living. A holy person must live an ethical and righteous life.

LESSON 6 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write a 2-3 page essay on “Righteousness in Today’s World.” Take one area in which ethical sin is commonly accepted and show what the Bible teaches about this area of sin. Give practical instruction for the people to whom you minister.
2. Begin the next class session by quoting Micah 6:8.

LESSON 7

HOLINESS IS LOVING GOD

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Appreciate the beauty of a loving relationship with God.
2. Follow the model of Jesus as one who loved the Father perfectly.
3. Recognize that worldliness and legalism are both symptoms of the same root cause.
4. Memorize Mark 12:29-31.

JOB: A MAN WHO LOVED GOD

Job had lost everything. His wealth was gone. His children were killed in a storm. His health was destroyed. He was sitting on an ash heap scraping open sores with a piece of broken pottery. His wife told him to curse God and die. His friends accused him of terrible sins. Those who had honored him in the past now mocked him.

In his suffering, Job does not pray, “God, return my wealth” or even “God, heal my body.” Instead, he cries, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!” (Job 23:3). Job weeps because he cannot find the God he had known so intimately. “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him” (Job 23:8-9).

Job remembers the days when the friendship of God was upon his tent (Job 29:4). But now:

God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes. I cry to you for help and you do not answer me; I stand, and you only look at me. You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me (Job 30:19-21).

This is the cry of a man who feels betrayed by his closest friend. It is the cry of a man who loved God.

Job's story does not end in despair. After God spoke from the whirlwind, Job responded, "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you" (Job 42:5). Job was comforted not by the return of his possessions, health, or even family, but by the return of God's presence. Job was comforted when he saw God. Job was a holy man; Job loved God.

HOLINESS IN THE POETIC BOOKS: LOVING GOD

- » What does it mean to love God? How will truly loving God affect your priorities for your time and money? How will loving God affect your view of his commands?

The book of Job and the Psalms repeat a message that we saw in the Pentateuch: holiness is relationship with God. We are holy **only** as we live in relationship with God. To be holy means to love God fully.

Enoch, Noah, and Abraham were holy because they walked with God. In the same way, Job and David were holy because they walked with God. The Book of Job tells the story of a man who loved God supremely. The Book of Psalms contains the prayers and songs of a man whose greatest joy was intimate fellowship with God.

Holy People Delight in God

Holy people delight in God; they find their deepest joy in him. The controlling desire of a holy person is to please God.

To those who measure holiness by a list of "do's and don'ts," this seems simplistic. Many people think of holiness only as duty, rather than enjoyment. Scripture shows that holy people delight in God. Job desired nothing more than restoration of his relationship with God. David testified to the joy of an intimate relationship with God. He found his deepest joy in God.

A Prayer for Holiness

**"My God,
I pray that I may so know
you and love you that
I may rejoice in you.
Let my mind meditate
on your goodness.
Let my tongue speak of it.
Let my heart live for it.
Let my soul hunger for it.
Let my whole being desire it,
until I enter in your joy."**

Anselm of Canterbury

A teacher was teaching in a city where the drinking water was unsafe. One hot day, he forgot to bring his water filter. By the time he finished class, he had only one thought, “I need water!” If you had given him a choice of \$100 or a cup of clean water, he would have chosen the water. When he was truly thirsty, water was more important than anything else.

That night, he asked himself, “Do I thirst for God as much as I thirsted today for water? Does he matter more to me than anything in this world?”

David thirsted for God. “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1-2). David compared his desire for God to the thirst of a running deer. A thirsty deer’s greatest desire is water; the holy person’s greatest desire is intimacy with God. A holy person hungers and thirsts for righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

The Psalms contrast the delights of sinners with the delights of a holy person. Sinners delight in war; they take pleasure in lies; they love cursing (Psalm 62:4; Psalm 68:30; Psalm 109:17). By contrast, holy people find fullness of joy in God’s presence; they love God’s house and the place where his glory dwells (Psalm 16:11; Psalm 26:8). The psalmist determined, “There is nothing on earth that I desire besides you” (Psalm 73:25). Holy people find their deepest delight in God.

Psalm 63 shows the beauty of meditating on God. David was fleeing from Saul. His life was in danger. In that situation, what would you think about? Most people would be tempted to meditate on the danger. David says, “I remember you upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night.” Even in danger, David’s thoughts were on God. He found this meditation as satisfying as rich food (Psalm 63:5-6).

The singer of Psalms delighted in God; he was in love with God. Holy people delight in God. Consider for a moment: What makes you thirsty? Do you delight in God?

Holy People Delight in God’s Law

A holy person delights in God’s law. The Psalms show that God’s law is not a threat to his people; holy people love God’s law. David said, “I delight to do your will, O my God” (Psalm 40:8). He did not struggle to obey God; he found delight in obedience to God.

Delight in God’s law runs all through the Psalms. The theme of Psalm 119 is God’s Word. Listen to David’s joy:

- Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law (Psalm 119:18).
- The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces (Psalm 119:72).

- Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight (Psalm 119:77).
- Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day (Psalm 119:97).
- I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight (Psalm 119:174).

God's Law Reveals God's Love

"The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes" (Psalm 119:64). God shows his love through his law: "Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes" (Psalm 119:124). Holy people delight in God's law because they know that God's law reveals God's love.

Moses said that Israel's obedience to God's law would make other nations jealous of their wisdom!

Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deuteronomy 4:6).

Moses asked, "And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:8). God's law did not enslave Israel; God's law blessed Israel.

Today, it is common to hear preachers teach that God's law was a heavy burden that could not be obeyed. Some Christians say that God's law is a target that no one can reach. However, Moses, David and other Old Testament saints rejoiced in God's law. They believed that it was a joy to honor God's name and God's Sabbath. They did not want to bow down to false idols.

"We imagine that whatever is unpleasant is our duty! Is that anything like the spirit of our Lord? 'I *delight* to do Thy will, O My God.'"

Oswald Chambers

They did not believe they would be happier if they dishonored their parents, committed murder and adultery, or stole and lied. They knew it is better to be content than to covet what our neighbor owns. God's law was not a burden. God gave his law out of a heart of love. The law guided holy people in their relationship with a holy God. God's law was a delight to his people.²⁰

20 Adapted from Dennis F. Kinlaw, *This Day with the Master* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

God's Law Reveals God's Character

If we love God, we will love his law. The psalmist declared, “Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them” (Psalm 119:129). David did not say, “Your law is hard, but I will try to obey.” No; David said, “God’s law is wonderful!”

Holy people delight in God’s law. The psalmist loved God’s law because he knew that the law is more than a list of rules; God’s law reveals God’s character.

» Read Psalms 111 and 112.

Psalms 111 and 112 are companion psalms. Together, they show the importance of God’s law for the holy person. Psalm 111 describes God’s character: God is righteous, gracious, and merciful.

Psalm 112 begins, “Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!” The person who delights in God’s commandments will be blessed. How? He will become like God. He will be gracious, merciful, and righteous. These are the same characteristics that describe God in Psalm 111. As we delight in God’s law, we become more and more like God.

The Pentateuch teaches that a holy person reflects the image of God. Psalms 111 and 112 show that a person who delights in God’s law is transformed into the image of God. The person who delights in God’s law becomes more like God.

If we truly love God, we will keep God’s law. David asked, “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?” Who can live in God’s presence? A person with clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4). To live in God’s presence requires obedience to God’s law. The Poetic Books show that God requires obedience of those who claim to love him.

The Poetic Books also show that God makes faithful obedience possible. This is God’s promise to those who love him.

The story of Job begins, “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (Job 1:1). When Eliphaz accused Job of sin, Job responded:

My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and have not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food (Job 23:11-12).

Someone might ask, “How can Job say that he has not broken God’s commandments? Everyone sins every day.” Job responds, “I love God and I rejoice in careful obedience to him.” Job

walked intimately with God. He kept the commandment of his lips. Is a holy life possible? Job answers, “Yes.” Job knew that God makes faithful obedience possible to those who love him.

A holy life is not based on our own strength; it comes from daily dependence on God. Job was blameless not because he was unusually self-disciplined. He was blameless because of his intimate walk with God. Job understood that God requires faithful obedience **and** that God makes faithful obedience possible.

This truth has a powerful impact in the daily life of the believer. God requires his people to be holy **and** God makes his people holy. It is through him that we are made holy and pure. God requires holiness and God provides holiness. God provides everything that his Word requires.

Those Who Delight in God Receive Their Heart’s Desire

Psalm 37 shows the result of delighting in God. “Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

Some readers think that Psalm 37:4 teaches, “If I serve God, he will give me anything I ask for. He will make me rich.” David is not preaching a gospel that says, “God wants his children to be rich.” David says something much more important: “If your deepest desire is God, God will give himself to you.” If you desire God, you will receive God.

If you follow God so that you can receive health, wealth, and fame, you will be disappointed by the message of Psalm 37:4. If you follow God for material blessings, you will be disappointed when you find that your reward is... God!

For a self-centered person, receiving God is not a great reward. The self-centered person does not desire God. But for a person who desires God, Psalm 37:4 is a great promise. To the holy person, God is the greatest gift possible.

To those who desire him, God gives an intimate relationship with himself. Delighting in God does not always bring financial blessing or freedom from suffering. People who delight in God may be hated by an enemy. Holy people often suffer. However, David and Job found that even in times of suffering, God honors those who delight in him.

Holiness is loving God. Holy people delight in God; in turn, God freely gives himself to those who hunger and thirst for him.

HOLINESS IN THE GOSPELS: LOVING GOD

A religious lawyer asked Jesus, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus pointed to the Law of Moses. “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”

The lawyer quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. These scriptures summarize the Law. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus responded, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live” (Luke 10:25-28). Holiness is perfect love.

A few months later, Jesus was in Jerusalem. A scribe asked, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” (Mark 12:28). The Pharisees had counted 613 laws from the Old Testament. They often argued about which law was most important. Jesus responded:

The most important is, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:29-31).

Jesus defined holiness as love for God and love for others. True holiness is expressed through love. We grow in holiness as we grow in Christlike love. To be holy is to love as Jesus loved; this is perfect love.

In Lesson 5, we saw that Old Testament writers used the word *perfect* to refer to a heart that is undivided. To be perfect is to be undivided in one’s commitment to God. New Testament writers use the word *perfect* in a similar way. Jesus commanded his followers to “be perfect” (Matthew 5:48). In the Gospels, we see that to be perfect is to have an undivided love for God and for our neighbor. To be perfect is to love without reservation. This is perfect love.

The message of perfect love was not new in the Gospels. Jesus reminded Israel that God had always required love for God and love for our neighbor. Deuteronomy 6 shows that love is the foundation of the Law. Obedience without love leads to legalism. Jesus taught that to be holy is to love God. If we love God, we will obey him. Holiness is loving God with all your heart.

Love for God is more than emotion. John Wesley defined love for God this way:

....to delight in him, to rejoice in his will, to desire continually to please him, to seek and find our happiness in him, and to thirst day and night for a fuller enjoyment of him.²¹

Love for God changes the entire direction of our life. Pleasing God becomes our highest ambition and our greatest joy. Jesus showed what it means to love God perfectly. In Jesus, we see the holy love that God desires for every Christian.

²¹ John Wesley, “On Love.” Retrieved from <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-139-on-love/> December 21, 2019.

Jesus Demonstrated Perfect Love for God in His Life

Jesus demonstrated perfect love for his Father. Jesus lived in joyful submission to his Father's will. This was not the enforced submission of a slave; it was the loving submission of a son.

The Temptation Shows Jesus' Love for the Father

Before beginning his public ministry, Jesus faced the temptation in the wilderness. Each temptation was directed at destroying the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Satan tempted Jesus to bypass the Father and provide bread for himself. Satan tempted Jesus to abandon worship of the Father to gain authority over the kingdoms of the world. Satan tempted Jesus to test the Father by jumping from the pinnacle of the Temple (Luke 4:1-12). Each temptation was a test of Jesus' love for the Father. Jesus responded by showing his complete trust in his heavenly Father.

Instead of turning stone to bread, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3: "It is written, 'man shall not live by bread alone.'" Moses reminded Israel that God had provided manna in the desert; Israel could trust their Father's loving provision. In the same way, Jesus trusted his Father's loving provision.

Instead of bowing to Satan, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13; "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." Because he loved God perfectly, Jesus refused the temptation to bow to Satan.

Instead of testing his Father by jumping from the Temple pinnacle, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16: "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Because he loved God perfectly, Jesus refused to test the Father's promise of protection.

The Cleansing of the Temple Shows Jesus' Love for the Father

Even as a child, Jesus loved his Father's house (Luke 2:49). He loved his Father, so he loved his Father's house.

When Jesus found dishonest tradesmen in the Temple, he responded with righteous anger.

And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the Temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables (John 2:15).

Why was Jesus angry? Because these tradesmen were dishonoring his Father's house: "Do not make my Father's house a house of trade" (John 2:16). Jesus loved his Father and responded in fury to disrespect for his Father's house.

Jesus had normal human emotions. In the face of evil, he felt anger—but he did not sin (Mark 3:5; Ephesians 4:26). Holiness did not eliminate Jesus’ emotions. Instead, because he was holy, Jesus’ emotions reflected the emotions of his Father. Jesus was angry at the things that angered his Father.

Jesus’ Submission Shows His Love for the Father

In his farewell message, Jesus pointed to his obedience as a testimony to his love for the Father. “I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father” (John 14:31). Jesus demonstrated his love for the Father through willing submission to the Father’s will. This is perfect love.

Even in the ultimate test, Jesus was submissive to the Father’s will. Jesus knew he would endure a shameful trial followed by the unimaginable pain of the cross. He would be separated from the Father because of man’s sin. Jesus prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me...” (Luke 22:42). Jesus of Nazareth faced the ultimate test of submission to the Father.

In his humanity, Jesus pleaded for deliverance. But in his humanity, Jesus showed his willing submission to the Father. “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” Jesus demonstrated perfect love for the Father through his submission to the Father’s will.

The life of Jesus provides a model of perfect love. To be holy is to love God as Jesus loved his Father.

Jesus Taught His Followers to Love God Perfectly

Loving God is more than emotion. It is a long-term commitment that changes the ultimate priorities of our lives. Jesus defined love this way:

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26-27).

For Jewish teachers, the word *hate* meant “to love less than something else.” The follower of Jesus must love Jesus above everyone else, even his own self. That is what it means to love God—to love God above all else.

Jesus said, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Luke 16:13). Love is exclusive. If you love God, he takes first place over everything in life.

Jesus taught that faithful and willing obedience demonstrates love. “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.” The reward for this loving obedience is an intimate relationship with God. “And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

Many years later, John remembered Jesus’ words in the upper room. John wrote, “Whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected” (1 John 2:5). Holiness is perfect love for God. Holy people willingly submit to the Father’s will. Holy people follow Jesus’ model of obedience.

When we love God perfectly, we delight to obey his will. When we love God perfectly, we willingly submit our will to the will of our Father. When we love God perfectly, we pray with David:

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139:23-24).

Perfect love gives us an intense desire to please our heavenly Father. We reject anything that would disrupt our relationship with him. Holiness is perfect love for God.

The Relationship between Jesus and the Father is a Model for the Christian

» Read John 17.

Jesus gave a picture of holiness in his High Priestly Prayer. In John 17, Jesus prayed for himself, for his disciples, and then for all believers. Jesus showed that his intimate relationship with the Father is the pattern for the relationship between Christians and our Father.

Jesus Prayed for Himself (John 17:1-5)

Facing death, Jesus rejoiced that he had accomplished the work the Father gave him to do: “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”

Later in this prayer, Jesus said,

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I **consecrate** myself, that they also may be **sanctified** in truth (John 17:17-19).

The Greek word used three times in this passage can mean either “to make holy” or “to consecrate and set apart.” Because Jesus had no sin, he did not need to be made holy. In this

prayer, “sanctify” means to “consecrate or set apart.” Jesus set himself apart to accomplish the work that the Father gave him to do. Jesus consecrated himself to the task that the Father gave him.

Jesus Prayed for His Disciples (John 17:6-19)

Jesus prayed that the disciples would be sanctified in truth. “And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.” Just as Jesus was set apart for service on earth, he prayed that the disciples would be set apart for service. The relationship between the Son and Father was a model for the relationship between the disciples and the Father. As the disciples followed the pattern of Jesus, they were set apart to share his truth with the world.

Jesus Prayed for All Believers (John 17:20-26)

Jesus then prayed for all those who would believe in him. He prayed that all Christians will share the unity that he and the Father enjoyed. Jesus prayed that we will become perfectly one. This is the same word that is used in Matthew 5:48: “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” This word suggests the accomplishment of a goal. The goal is perfect love, the love that is seen within the Trinity.

We as believers are invited to share in the divine love of the Father and the Son. Jesus prayed “that the love with which you (the Father) have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” The love between Jesus and the Father is the pattern for every believer. This is what it means to be holy: to have the perfect love modeled by Jesus.

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: DO I LOVE GOD?

Simon had a question for his pastor. “Pastor, I want to be holy. Like Abraham, I want to be a friend of God. But there is a problem. I do some things that I know are wrong. I love God, but I do not want to obey him. Can I be a friend of God if I do not obey him?”

Jesus answered Simon’s question more than 2,000 years ago. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Nowhere does God say, “If you love me, you can continue to live in willful sin.” Instead, Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Jesus continued, “Whoever does not love me does not keep my words” (John 14:24).

Some professed Christians talk about their love for God while they continue to live in willful sin. To these people, loving God is simply an emotion. They claim to love God, but it has not changed their life. However, loving God is more than an emotion or feeling. Loving God requires willing obedience to his commands.

Sarah had a question for her pastor. “Pastor, I want to be holy. Like Job, I want to be blameless and upright. I am careful about keeping every command. But there is a problem. I don’t really love God. I obey him out of fear that he will be angry if I disobey. I obey God, but I do not love him. Can I be holy if I do not love God?”

Jesus answered Sarah’s question more than 2,000 years ago. Jesus gave a message to the church at Ephesus. He commended their good works and right doctrine. He praised them for their faithfulness in the face of persecution. But, he said, “I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.” Jesus took the lack of love so seriously that he threatened to remove their lampstand from its place if they did not repent and regain their first love (Revelation 2:2-5).

Some Christians believe they can earn God’s favor through obedience, but their obedience is not accompanied by love. They believe that holiness is a matter of obedience to a list of rules. They have forgotten that the root of holiness is love for God.

At heart, both Simon and Sarah have the same root problem; neither of them truly love God. Simon’s lack of love for God is seen in worldliness. Worldliness says, “I love this world more than I love God.”

Sarah’s lack of love for God is seen in legalism. Legalism says, “I obey God not out of love but out of a desire to earn God’s favor.” Neither of these are motivated by love for God. The answer both to worldliness and to legalism is the same—love for God.

The Answer to Worldliness: Loving God

What does it mean to be worldly? Many times, we define worldliness by a style of dress, a type of entertainment, a desire for public approval, showiness, or some other outward sign. These may be **symptoms** of worldliness, but worldliness is much deeper. This is the question to ask to define worldliness: “What brings me true delight?”

To be worldly is to delight in this world. A worldly person seeks ultimate fulfillment from this world. To be worldly is to value the things of this world above the things of God.

Lot saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered. He chose the valley that appealed to his eyes (Genesis 13:10-11). Lot was worldly; he delighted in the pleasures of this world.

Demas abandoned his ministry because he found delight in this world. Paul wrote, “For Demas, **in love with this present world**, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica,” a prosperous city (2 Timothy 4:10). Demas was worldly; he loved this world.

A godly person finds their deepest delight in God. The psalmist wrote, “And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you” (Psalm 73:25). The Psalmist was godly; he loved God.

The answer to worldliness is not a set of rules. The answer to worldliness is a love for God. A 19th century Scottish pastor, Thomas Chalmers, preached a sermon on “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.” Rev. Chalmers said there are two things we must do if we want to stop loving the world.

1. We must put something off. We must recognize the emptiness of this world. As we see the vanity of the things of this world, our love for this world weakens. But that in itself is not enough.
2. We must put something on. We must replace the love of this world with something far more lovely. When we fall in love with God, our new love expels the old love for the world.

The cure for loving this world is to fall in love with God. Jesus told a parable about a merchant who sold everything he owned to buy one valuable pearl.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matthew 13:45-46).

Imagine if you said to this merchant, “I feel so sorry for you! It is sad that you had to sell so many possessions.” The merchant would laugh at you! He would say, “A sacrifice? I am not making a sacrifice; I am buying a pearl of great price. The things I sold are **nothing** in comparison to this beautiful pearl.” The merchant has found a new affection. He has fallen in love with something that has expelled his old love.

The answer to worldliness is to fall in love with God. Love for God will expel our love for money, for applause, for show, and for all the things that the world uses to entice God’s people. Holy people love God—and that love drives out a love for this world.

The Answer to Legalism: Loving God²²

When we sincerely desire to live a holy life, we can be tempted to go beyond the biblical principle of Christian perfection to a legalistic “perfectionism.”

Biblical Christian perfection is a heart of undivided love for God. Christian perfection shows a heart that seeks to please God in every area. It recognizes that even the sincere heart of love cannot bring us to a level of perfect performance. We are limited by our human weakness. A holy person will not willingly break God’s law, but the holiest person continues to rely on God’s grace in those areas where we unintentionally fall short of God’s absolute standards of right and wrong.

22 Adapted from John Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1999), 186-188

“Perfectionism,” on the other hand, leads me to expect perfect performance in every area of life. Perfectionism focuses on me and my performance as a holy person instead of focusing on Jesus and his power in my life.

Perfectionism often leads to a legalistic effort to earn God’s favor through separation. It often measures holiness by a list of things that I do not do (I don’t smoke, I don’t drink alcoholic beverages, I don’t wear immodest clothes) or things that I do (I fast, I pray, I give to church.)

As we saw in Lesson 4, a holy person will **want** to stay separate from anything that displeases God. To say, “I love God with my whole heart” and then to live a life that seeks to satisfy worldly desires is wrong.

However, we must never allow our desire for a separated heart and separated life to lead us to a point of believing we can measure our relationship with God by a list of “do’s and do not’s.” Holiness is first a matter of the heart and a love relationship with God. That relationship inspires our desire to live holy, separated lives. The reverse will never work: A separated life in itself never inspires a relationship of love for God.

We must seek to be perfect as God commands. We must not seek to earn God’s favor through perfectionism. A perfect heart is a heart that loves God completely.

- » Which is a greater temptation in your church, worldliness or legalism? Discuss how a deepening love for God can provide a right response to either of these problems. Discuss practical steps for inspiring love for God among the people to whom you minister.

The Key to a Holy Life: Loving God

We love God only if we obey him fully. We obey God fully only if we truly love him. As God’s children, we can move beyond serving God as duty. We can reach the point where we delight in serving him. This delight will come only through love. A child who obeys his parents only out of fear or duty never finds joy in obedience. A child who obeys out of love finds obedience to be a joy.

When a young child studies the violin, she must practice daily. At first practice may be a duty rather than a joy. But if the child will ever become an excellent violinist, she must reach the point where playing the violin is more than a duty. It must be a delight. Duty is when a child practices because her mother says, “You must practice.” Delight is when a child plays because she enjoys playing. The true violinist finds delight in the duty of practice.

The same is true for our spiritual life. A holy person reads God’s Word as a spiritual discipline, but he also delights in God’s Word. Obedience to God becomes both a duty **and** a delight.

Think of the difference when we serve God out of delight, rather than duty. Obedience becomes a joy, not a burden. Prayer, God's Word, and the disciplines of the Christian life become a joy. This is what it means to love God. Holy people obey with joy because they love God.

George Croly, a 19th century Anglican priest, prayed that God would wean him from earthly loves and fill him with a pure holy passion for God. This hymn remains a powerful prayer for every Christian who seeks to love God with a perfect, undivided, love.

SPIRIT OF GOD, DESCEND UPON MY HEART - GEORGE CROLY

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.

Teach me to love Thee as thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The baptism of the heaven-descended Dove,
My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.

HE FOUND THE SECRET - JOHN SUNG

John Sung was one of the greatest evangelists of the twentieth century. He was the son of a Methodist pastor in Fujian Province, China, and became a Christian at the age of nine.

Sung came to the United States to study at the age of 19. A brilliant student, John Sung completed his bachelor's, master's, and PhD degrees in chemistry in only six years. Unfortunately, during this period, Sung had begun to doubt the biblical teachings he had learned from his father.

Sung decided to spend a year at Union Theological Seminary seeking answers to his questions. Instead of providing answers, the liberal professors at Union undermined Sung's faith even further.

In 1926, John Sung attended a service in Harlem. That night, a 15-year-old girl testified of the transformation that God had made in her life. Sung began seeking a renewed relationship with God. The seminary professors became convinced that John Sung was mentally ill and the president, Henry Sloan Coffin, had Sung committed to an insane asylum. During his 193 days in the asylum, John Sung read through the entire Bible 40 times.

Following his release, John Sung returned to China. Dr. Sung knew that he could take a teaching position at any prestigious Chinese university. However, onboard the ship, God was calling Sung to a deeper surrender of his life. One day, as a symbol of his surrender

and as a way to break any ties to a teaching career, Dr. Sung gathered his diplomas and academic awards and threw them overboard.

John Sung arrived in China not as “Dr. John Sung, Professor of Chemistry” but as “John Sung, Servant of God.” Sung began to preach and had a powerful evangelistic ministry. Historians estimate that more than 100,000 people were converted under John Sung’s ministry between his return to China in 1927 and his death in 1944 at the age of 41.

The life of John Sung shows that loving God is more than emotion. Because of his love for God, Dr. Sung gave up his ambition for a prestigious teaching job in a Chinese university and answered God’s call to preach. Because of his love for God, John Sung gave up the comforts of a well-paid position and lived a simple life, eating the diet of a peasant. Because of his love for God, John Sung spent hours each day in prayer and Bible study. His life was consumed by his love for God, and because of that love, God used John Sung to lead thousands to Christ.

LESSON 7 IN REVIEW

1. To be holy is to love God.
2. Holy people find their greatest delight in God.
3. Because they know that God's law reflects his love, holy people delight in God's law.
4. Those who delight in God find that God gives himself to them.
5. Jesus provided the perfect model for what it means to love God.
6. The answer to worldliness is a deep love for God.
7. The answer to legalism is a deep love for God.

LESSON 7 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Imagine that a new Christian said to you, "I want to have a deeper relationship with God. I love God, but it is hard to know how to grow in my relationship with him. I can't see God and so he seems far away. What can I do?" Write a 1-2 page letter in which you help this believer understand how to grow in his relationship with God. Include practical steps to reading scripture, developing a prayer life, and sharing your faith. At your next class meeting, each student should read their answer and have a time to discuss the answers.
2. Begin the next class session by quoting Mark 12:29-31.

LESSON 8

HOLINESS IS LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize Jesus as the model of holiness.
2. Appreciate the meaning of perfection in the Bible.
3. Commit to continuing growth in perfect love.
4. Take practical steps to show love both to Christians and non-Christians.
5. Memorize Matthew 5:43-48.

JESUS: THE MODEL OF PERFECT LOVE

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he passed a tax collector. Because he worked for the Romans, Levi was avoided by Jewish rabbis. To Levi's surprise, Jesus said, "Follow me" (Mark 2:14). Other rabbis saw only a tax collector; Jesus saw a person to love.

Later, Jesus ate a meal with a group of tax collectors and sinners at the home of Levi. The Pharisees were shocked. Jesus was supposed to be holy; why was he spending time with sinners? Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

Jesus' example shocked his contemporaries. The Pharisees were considered the holiest people of Jesus' day. They said, "We are holy, so we stay away from sinners." Jesus said, "I am holy, so I spend time with sinners."

Jesus delighted in spending time with sinners. As they followed Jesus, sinful people became holy people. Jesus provided a model of holy love that transforms the world. Holiness is perfect love for God and perfect love for people. True holiness transforms our world.

HOLINESS IN JESUS' WORLD

- » How do people in your world measure holiness? How does this standard compare with how Jesus lived?

What did the people who lived in Jesus' world believe about holiness? How did they expect a holy person to live? As we see the answer to these questions, we will understand why people were so shocked by Jesus' life and teaching.²³

What the People of Jesus' World Believed

The people of Jesus' day knew that **God is a holy God**. They knew that **God's people must be holy**. A holy God requires his people to be holy. God sent Israel into exile because his people were not holy.

The people of Jesus' day knew that **holiness requires separation from all that is impure**. The Old Testament call to be holy required God's people to stay away from everything sinful.

The people of Jesus' day knew **God's promise to write a new covenant on the heart of his people**. God promised to give his people a new heart and a new spirit that would enable them to keep the covenant (Ezekiel 36:26). The people of Jesus' day were waiting for this promise to be fulfilled.

A Prayer for Holiness

“Lord,
Make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born
to eternal life.”

St. Francis of Assisi

23 Much of this material is based on Kent Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2005).

The people of Jesus' day knew that a **holy God keeps his promises**. God is faithful to his covenant. Even though Israel had broken the covenant, God remained faithful. The Jewish people believed that God's glory would return to Israel if his people were holy.

What the People of Jesus' World Practiced

The religious people of Jesus' day believed these principles, but they failed to live according to God's pattern for true holiness. They did not have holy hearts.

The **priestly leaders** put their faith in the Temple. They believed that if the sacrifices were performed properly, God's glory would return. Jesus responded, "Go and learn what this means, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13). Jesus showed that rituals alone are not enough.

The **Essenes** believed that they could be holy by living apart from other people. They moved into communities by the Dead Sea. Jesus responded, "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:13). Jesus touched lepers; he ate with sinners. He showed that we can be holy in a sinful world.

The **Pharisees** obeyed outward details of the Law, but they ignored inward impurity. Jesus compared the Pharisees to graves that "outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:27-28). Jesus showed that holiness must begin in the heart. You cannot have holy hands if your heart is not holy.

These people of Jesus' world settled for rituals instead of true holiness. Instead of loving God, they measured holiness by regulations. Instead of loving their world, Israel built walls to shut out a needy world. Jesus showed that a holy person loves God and loves his neighbor.

JESUS'S LIFE WAS A MODEL OF HOLINESS

When we read about holiness in the Old Testament, we might be tempted to say, "That makes a nice theory, but what will it look like in real life?" Jesus came to show us what holiness looks like in daily life. Luke's genealogy showed that Jesus was "the son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38). When we look at Jesus, the son of Adam, we see the perfect model of a holy person. The Gospels show holiness in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Holiness Is Walking with God

In Jesus, we see the model of man's relationship with God. Jesus' prayer life demonstrated his intimate relationship with his Father. Jesus regularly withdrew from the crowds to be

alone with his Father. In his humanity, Jesus sought a close relationship with his heavenly Father. He walked with God.

Perhaps the greatest picture of Jesus' relationship with the Father is seen in his cry from the cross. As he bore our sins on the cross, "Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying... 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (Matthew 27:46). Dying in our place and bearing the rightful punishment for our sin, Jesus felt abandoned by his Father.

Jesus showed the intimacy of relationship with God. The holiness suggested by Abraham and David was fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Holiness Is Separation

To be holy means to be set apart from sin and set apart to God. In his humanity, Jesus modeled separation from sin. He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). The disciple who was closest to Jesus during his earthly ministry testified, "In him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

In his humanity, Jesus modeled separation to God. He lived in willing submission to the Father. Jesus testified, "He who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8:29). Jesus was set apart to His Father.

Holiness Is the Image of God

To be holy is to reflect the image of God. When we look at Jesus, we see the perfect image of the Father. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). When Philip asked Jesus to "show us the Father," Jesus responded, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:8-9). In Jesus, we see the perfect image of God.

Holiness Is an Undivided Heart

A holy person has an undivided heart; he is devoted completely to God. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus' heart was surrendered fully to the will of the Father. Jesus shows what it means to have an undivided heart.

Holiness Is Righteousness

True holiness requires righteous behavior. A holy person is marked by justice, mercy, and humility. In the life of Jesus, we see the perfect example of righteousness.

The ultimate picture of **justice** is seen when Jesus bore the just wrath of God on the cross. Jesus did not deny the justice of sin's penalty; instead, he paid the penalty on our behalf.

Jesus demonstrated **mercy** in his treatment of lepers, women, children, and the poor. He showed mercy to the woman taken in adultery, to Zacchaeus, and to the thief on the cross. Repeatedly, Jesus responded with mercy towards those who had been rejected by others.

More than 700 years before Jesus's birth, Isaiah described Messiah's **humility**. "He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). Isaiah prophesied, "He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench" (Isaiah 42:2-3).

Jesus showed his mission of justice, mercy, and humility in his first public sermon. At the synagogue in Nazareth, he read Isaiah's prophecy of a coming Servant:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19, from Isaiah 61:1-2).

Isaiah foresaw the year of the Lord's favor, a time of justice for all people. Jesus announced that he had come to fulfill this promise: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Jesus' earthly ministry provided a model of righteousness.

HOLINESS IN THE GOSPELS: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR

In Lesson 7, we saw that to be holy is to love God with an undivided love. To be holy is also to love our neighbor. Jesus gave these two commands, "Love God" and "Love your neighbor" as the summary of all the law (Mark 12:29-31).

True love for God will always bring love for other people. If we love God, we will love the people God loves. Holiness is never solitary; a holy life is lived in relationship with our neighbor. Holiness is perfect love for God **and** perfect love for others. Perfect love for God cannot be separated from love for our neighbor.

Jesus put it this way: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). John linked our love for God with love for our neighbor:

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother (1 John 4:20-21).

At its root, sin is self-centeredness. In the garden, Satan promised Eve that she could be like God (Genesis 3:5). At Babel, people were determined to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). Against God's wishes, Israel asked for a king so that she could be like all the other nations (1 Samuel 8:5). In each case, sin is self-centeredness.

If sin is self-centeredness, then holiness (the opposite of sin) will include other-centeredness. If sin causes us to seek our own good, then holiness will cause us to seek the good of others. If sin is self-love, then holiness is love for others. To be holy is to love others. The commandment that is most frequently repeated in the New Testament is the command to love. It is repeated at least 55 times.

Jesus taught that holiness is loving compassion for others. Jesus showed that a holy person will draw sinners to a holy God through a life of holy love.

Obedience to God's command to "be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" requires us to love our neighbor. Jesus demonstrated perfect love for others and he taught his followers to love others perfectly.

Jesus Demonstrated Perfect Love for Others

Early in Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist sent followers to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Luke 7:19). A Pharisee would have expected Jesus to respond by pointing to his separated life and wise teaching. Instead, Jesus pointed to his loving service to others:

Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them (Luke 7:22).

A survey of Jesus' miracles demonstrates his perfect love for others. A Roman centurion asked Jesus to heal his servant. Most Jewish rabbis would have denied his request. Jesus not only healed the servant, he praised the faith of this Gentile (Matthew 8:5-13).

Even when his miracles brought opposition, Jesus acted out of love. When a crippled woman came to him, he healed her on the Sabbath day. Though nothing in the Law prevented this healing, the Pharisees did not allow healing on the Sabbath. Because of love, Jesus risked the anger of the religious leaders (Luke 13:10-21).

Jesus showed love even to those who were suffering as the result of their own sinful actions. Jesus showed love to a Samaritan woman who lived an immoral lifestyle (John 4). He protected a woman who was caught in adultery. Jesus did not deny her sin; he commanded her to "go, and from now on sin no more" (John 8:11). Jesus knew that holiness requires separation from sin, but he also knew that perfect love is stronger than the power of sin.

Just hours before his death, Jesus demonstrated love towards others. Malchus, the servant of the high priest, accompanied his master to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. When Simon Peter cut off Malchus' ear, Jesus rebuked Peter and healed Malchus (Matthew 26:50-52). Jesus showed what it means to love your enemy.

As Jesus hung on the cross, a robber appealed for mercy. This robber deserved death; he was a violent criminal. Jesus, who was suffering not for his own sins but for the sins of others, promised mercy to a dying thief (Luke 23:39-43). Despite his own agony, Jesus loved a man who seemed unlovable.

Jesus Taught His Followers to Love Others Perfectly

Jesus taught his followers what it means to love perfectly. Jesus showed that perfect love is the standard for life in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus Taught Perfect Love in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

The command “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” is the center of the Sermon on the Mount. This command follows a series of examples of love towards others. To be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect is to live a life of undivided love towards others.

If holiness meant no more than separation from external sin, the Pharisees were the holiest of people. They were called the “Separated Ones.” Jesus required more than the separation of the Pharisees. “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

In contrast to the false righteousness of the Pharisees, Jesus showed that citizens of his kingdom are people of love. External behavior that is not matched by internal holiness is hypocrisy, not holiness. We must have holy hearts and holy hands.

A person of perfect love goes beyond obedience to the command, “You shall not murder.” Love seeks reconciliation with an offended brother. A man of perfect love goes beyond obedience to the command, “You shall not commit adultery.” Love refuses even to look at a woman to gratify selfish desires.

A man of perfect love does not seek an excuse for divorce. He loves his wife enough to seek her best interests. A person of perfect love speaks the truth without loopholes. A person of perfect love does not seek revenge.

Jesus concluded:

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:44-45).

To love as God loves is to love your enemy. Jesus did not lower the demands of holiness; he **raised** the demands of holiness. Your righteousness must exceed the external righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). Instead of settling for external behavior alone, God transforms the heart. When you love as God loves, you are perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus Taught Perfect Love in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

A religious lawyer asked Jesus, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responded by asking, “What is written in the Law?” The lawyer knew the correct answer: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

The lawyer did not want to face the demands of love. He looked for an excuse to avoid having to put his doctrine into action. “But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” Jesus answered with the parable of the good Samaritan.

Jesus taught that we are responsible to love our neighbor not just in words, but in actions. Like the good Samaritan, the Christian who loves perfectly seeks opportunity to serve others—even an enemy. If we love our neighbor, we will seek opportunities to serve. James asked:

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (James 2:15-16).

Perfect love is seen in actions, not in words alone. Holy people love as Jesus loved. To love perfectly is to love sacrificially.

Jesus Taught Perfect Love by Washing the Feet of His Disciples (John 13:1-20)

On the night of his arrest, Jesus taught one of his greatest lessons about perfect love. As they ate the Passover meal, the disciples began to argue about which of them was the greatest.

Jesus responded, “For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves” (Luke 22:27).

He then took a towel and began to wash the disciples' feet, the job of a servant. Jesus knelt and washed the feet of each man in the room—even the feet of Judas.

When he was done, Jesus asked, “Do you understand what I have done to you?” He wanted to teach these position-seeking disciples an important lesson:

You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you (John 13:13-15).

In the final hours with his disciples, Jesus taught that perfect love is humble. Perfect love does not seek position; perfect love seeks opportunities for service. Holiness is perfect love.

A LIFE OF PERFECT LOVE

Jesus said, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Many people react, “No one is perfect!” However, we cannot ignore Jesus' command, “Be perfect.” What did he mean? Is it possible for ordinary Christians to obey Jesus' command?

What Does It Mean to “Be Perfect”?

Two things help us understand Jesus' meaning. First, look at the **definition** of the Greek word translated “perfect” in Matthew 5:48. **Teleios** means “to be complete.” *Teleios* comes from a noun that means “goal” or “purpose.” To be perfect means to reach a goal.

The Old Testament shows that a perfect person has an undivided heart towards God. This idea continues in the New Testament. God's goal for his people is complete love, love from an undivided heart. Is perfect performance possible in our own strength? No. Is perfect, undivided love for God possible? Jesus says, “Yes.”

Second, look at the **context** of Matthew 5:48. The verses before and after Matthew 5:48 show that to be perfect is to love God and our neighbor with a perfect love. Jesus' command summarizes a life of love towards God and our neighbor.

The command “You therefore must be perfect” follows examples of love towards our neighbor in Matthew 5:21-47. Instead of murder, adultery, divorce, broken vows and revenge, holy people live in love. The last of these commands is “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Holy people love those who seek to do them harm. To be perfect means to love as God loves.

Immediately after this command, Jesus gave examples of what it means to truly love God in Matthew 6:1-18. Hypocrites give to the poor to receive honor from people; those who love God perfectly give to be seen by their Father who sees in secret.

Hypocrites “love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.” Those who love God perfectly go into their room and shut the door and pray to their Father who is in secret. Hypocrites fast to impress other people; they disfigure their faces so that their fasting may be seen by others. Those who love God perfectly want to be seen only by their Father who is in secret.

Paul commanded believers at Colossae to live a holy life. He described a life of love and forgiveness:

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other... (Colossians 3:12-13).

The climax of this list is love. “**Above all** these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Colossians 3:14). To be perfect is to put on love. When Jesus said “Be perfect,” he commanded us to put on love for God and for our neighbors. Perfect love is love from an undivided heart.

How Perfect is Perfect Love?

In common use, we sometimes use the word *perfect* in an absolute sense. We use *perfect* to mean something that cannot be improved or increased. If we think of *perfect* as an absolute level of achievement, we will measure holiness by our works. Like the Pharisees, we will view holiness as a measuring stick.

Many people take this approach to the holy life. Like the Pharisees, they have a list of boxes to check. If all the boxes are marked, then they think that they are perfect.

- “Do I keep the commandments?”
- “Do I wear the right clothes?”
- “Do I say the right words?”

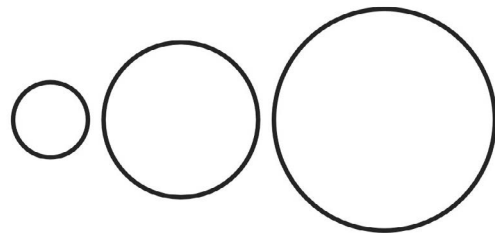
In the Bible, the word *perfect* is not absolute. It does not deny further growth. Job was perfect (Job 1:1), but he grew in his relationship with God through the experiences he endured.

In the Bible, to be perfect means to be complete at each stage of growth. The writer of Hebrews wrote to Christians who were not perfect for their stage of growth. They had failed to grow into spiritual maturity.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature (*teleios*), for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5:12-14).

The writer of Hebrews is not suggesting that mature (or perfect) believers no longer need spiritual food! He is pushing them towards maturity, **so they can eat the spiritual food appropriate for their spiritual age**. To be perfect is to be properly mature for our stage of Christian experience. To be perfect means that we are complete and whole; we are what God intends us to be.

Instead of a measuring stick, the biblical picture of perfection is a circle. A circle is perfect; it cannot be made any more circular. However, a perfect circle **can** be made bigger; a perfect circle can grow and expand. It is perfect, but it is still growing.



A holy person is filled with perfect love for God and for their neighbor. As we mature, our capacity for love increases. The circle expands. As we mature, our love abounds “more and more, with knowledge and all discernment” (Philippians 1:9). At every stage of growth, God says, “This person loves me with a perfect love. They are holy.”

A person who has walked with God 40 years will better understand how to show love to their neighbor than a person who has walked with God one year. But both can love their neighbor from an undivided heart. Both can show perfect love.

When a five-year-old child draws a picture for her father, he says, “Thank you! It is perfect!” He does not mean that her artwork could be no better. At 15, this same child will draw a much better picture.

“It is perfect!” means, “This picture came from a heart of love. It is right for her stage of maturity.”

Perfect love is not a standard of performance. Perfect love is undivided love for God and for other people. Perfect love is following the example of Jesus, the one who came to reveal perfect love in daily life.

Is Perfect Love Possible for Ordinary Believers?

The 17th century Puritans stated an important principle of Bible interpretation. They said that biblical commands are “covered promises.” The Puritans meant that a biblical command is a *promise in disguise*. A biblical command implies a biblical promise. If God commands something, he will make obedience possible. What God requires of his people, he will do in his people.

Imagine an earthly father who gives his son an impossible command. “Son, if you want to please me, you must run a mile in two minutes.” For a while, the son might try to achieve this goal, but his father’s expectations are impossible. Eventually the son would become discouraged or even become bitter. Is this a good father? No.

God is a good Father. He does not frustrate his children with impossible commands. When Jesus commands us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, he empowers us to obey his command.

The Sermon on the Mount shows life in God’s kingdom. This is not a new law that brings greater bondage than the old law. It is not a set of unreachable ideals to show us how far we are from meeting God’s demands. It is a picture of daily life in the kingdom of God. Nowhere does Jesus say, “This is my command, but you cannot obey!” Instead, Jesus says, “This is who you are to be.”

If we look at Jesus’ command through the eyes of human ability, it is impossible. In human strength, we cannot fulfill God’s command to be perfect. In human strength, we cannot love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind. However, in God’s strength, we can obey God’s commands. Perfect love is possible through God’s grace.

A rich young man asked, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). Jesus responded by listing the commandments:

...You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 19:18-19).

When the young man said, “All these I have kept,” Jesus added one more command. “... If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Matthew 19:20-21). To be perfect means to love Jesus more than possessions.

The young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. The rich young man did not love his neighbor perfectly; he would not sell his possessions and give to the poor. He did not love God perfectly; he would not leave home to follow Jesus. This young man had a divided heart. He wanted God, but he also wanted his great possessions.

When they saw the demands of discipleship, the disciples were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus’ response answers the question, “Is perfection possible to ordinary believers?” Jesus said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:25-26).

In human strength, perfect love for God and our neighbor is impossible. But with God all things are possible. A loving Father does not frustrate his children with commands that cannot be fulfilled. The commands of scripture are accompanied by the grace to obey the commands. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” is not a legalistic club to drive Christians to despair. It is a gracious promise that God can do in us what we could never do in ourselves.

Is it possible to obey Jesus’ command to be perfect? According to the Sermon on the Mount, the answer is a joyous “Yes!” To be perfect in God’s kingdom is to have a heart of perfect love. To be perfect in God’s kingdom is to have single-minded love for God and for our neighbor. Is this possible? According to Jesus, perfect love is both possible and necessary. Perfect love is God’s purpose for his people.

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: HOW DOES LOVE FULFILL THE LAW?

Jason says, “I love God with all my heart. And I love *most* other people. But I can’t love black people. I think all black people are lazy.”

Jason’s friend responded, “But Christians are to love everyone! Christians cannot judge other people unfairly.” Jason answered, “I don’t think God is interested in little things like this. Isn’t it normal to avoid people who are different than us?”

God says, “Holy people treat all people—including those who are different than us—with compassion and mercy.”

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors (James 2:8-9).

One measure of your character is how you treat those who can do nothing for you. It is easy to show deference and honor to people in a position to reward us with money, jobs, or authority. Love honors those who can do nothing for us: the poor, old people, children, and others with no position. The royal law of love affects how we treat everyone. Love fulfills the law.

Love Fulfills the Law

The theme of perfect love is central to the message of a holy life. In Lesson 7, we saw that love for God is more than an emotion. Love for God changes the entire focus of our life. We now want to please God more than we want to please self. In the same way, love for our neighbor moves our focus from self to others.

Paul wrote to the church at Rome:

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:8-10).

Every Christian owes the debt of love. Paul assures us that if we meet the obligation of love, we will have met all the other obligations of the law. If we love others, we will not commit adultery, murder, steal, or covet. The obligations of the law will be fulfilled when I love my neighbor as myself.

In the closing chapters of Romans, Paul shows how love fulfills the law. Those who are filled with God’s love:

- Serve the body of Christ rather than themselves (Romans 12:3-5)
- Abhor evil and hold to the good (Romans 12:9)
- Compete in showing honor to others (Romans 12:10)
- Care for each others’ needs (Romans 12:13)
- Live at peace with others, even their enemies (Romans 12:14-21)
- Submit to governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7)
- Respect the convictions of other believers (Romans 14:1-23)
- Serve the needs of their neighbors as Christ did (Romans 15:1-3)

Love for God changes the orientation of our heart from self to God. Love for our neighbor changes the orientation of our heart from self to others. Both are part of what it means to be a holy person.

John Wesley summed up the meaning of Christian perfection:

Love is the highest gift of God; humble, gentle, patient love. All visions, revelations, or gifts are little things compared to love. There is nothing higher in religion; if you look for anything but more love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way.

And when you are asking others, “Have you received this or that blessing?” if you mean anything but more love, you mean wrong; you are leading them out of the way, and putting them upon a false scent. Settle it then in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at nothing more, but more of that love described in 1 Corinthians 13. You can go no higher than this.²⁴

Loving Our Christian Neighbor

Two areas will demonstrate how perfect love looks in relation to other Christians.

Love Respects the Convictions of Other Christians

Writing to the Christians at Corinth, Paul addressed the issue of Christian liberty. How should I respond to another believer who may be spiritually hurt by my freedom? Paul wrote to strong Christians who said, “We know that idols are nothing. Eating food that has been offered to idols means nothing to us.” Paul responded:

Take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble (1 Corinthians 8:9-13).

Paul will give up eating meat for the rest of his life rather than cause a weaker Christian brother to fall. Perfect love means that he cares more for the salvation of another Christian brother than for his own rights. Later, Paul says, “we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:12).

The Corinthians said, “We are free to do whatever we want to do. We don’t have to consider the needs of another believer.” Paul said, “I am free to serve the needs of other believers. I am not in bondage to my own desires and rights. I am free to love others.” This is the perfect love that God wants to give every Christian.

» Read Romans 14.

In the church at Rome, there were weak Christians who ate only vegetables. These may have been Jewish Christians who continued to follow the Jewish food laws and did not want to risk eating unclean foods. There were also strong Christians who had more knowledge and knew that the food laws are no longer binding on the Christian.

24 Adapted from John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1966), 99.

Paul showed each group what it means to love as Christ loved. The weak Christian must not judge the one who eats meat. Love does not judge.

However, the strong Christian must not despise the weak Christian and must not exercise his freedom in a way that will undermine the faith of the weak. Instead, the strong Christian will give up his rights in order to avoid destroying the faith of a weaker believer. Why? For the sake of love:

For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died (Romans 14:15).

This is what it means to love your Christian neighbor. We are to love as Christ loved. He gave his life for this weaker brother; surely, Paul says, we can give up our right to eat meat.

- » Discuss an area on which sincere and godly believers differ. These are not areas of clear biblical teaching; these are areas of different convictions. Apply Paul's principles from Romans 14 to this issue. How should each group—weak and strong Christians—address this area?

Love Cares for a Christian Who Falls into Sin

Rachel is a Christian who was cheated in a business transaction by a fellow church member. Isaac sold Rachel a used car, knowing that the car had serious mechanical problems. Isaac lied to Rachel, "I have had this car checked by a mechanic. It is in wonderful condition. You can trust me. I'm a Christian."

Two days after buying the car, Rachel learned that the transmission in the car was bad—and that Isaac knew about this problem.

- » What should Rachel do?

Did you answer, "Rachel should warn everyone that Isaac is dishonest"? Did you answer, "Rachel should say nothing to upset a fellow Christian"? Let's look at Jesus' answer.

- » Read Matthew 18:15-17.

Jesus gave four steps that show how perfect love treats a fellow Christian who falls into sin. Please understand that this example is about sinful behavior. Jesus is not addressing personal differences of opinion. Jesus is not saying, "Go, get involved in everyone else's problems." Jesus is addressing a situation in which a Christian brother sins against another Christian. Look at the steps:

1. **I must go to that brother alone.** Perfect love does not rejoice at wrongdoing (1 Corinthians 13:6). It does not look for an opportunity to publicize wrong. Instead, a person of love tries to address the problem quietly and personally. A person of love addresses a brother caught in transgression in a spirit of gentleness (Galatians 6:1). The goal is restoration of a brother, not revenge. If there is no repentance...
2. **I must take one or two spiritual leaders as witnesses.** Again, the goal is restoration. These witnesses should be spiritual church leaders who can give good counsel and bring restoration (Galatians 6:1). If there is no repentance...
3. **I must bring the sin to the church fellowship.** The goal is still restoration. The goal is not revenge or public humiliation. The goal of church discipline must be to bring repentance and to restore a brother. If this person rebels and refuses to repent...
4. **The church must discipline the offending member.** The church at Corinth had a member who was guilty of appalling sexual sin. Paul commanded the church to discipline this man. "Purge the evil person from among you" (1 Corinthians 5:13). We cannot ignore sin in the body of Christ.

However, please note Jesus' words. Treat him as a Gentile and a tax collector (Matthew 18:17). How are Christians supposed to treat Gentiles and tax collectors? With love. Even here, the goal is restoration. In 2 Corinthians, Paul addressed the situation of a believer who had been disciplined by the church and had repented. Paul said,

For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

In 1 Corinthians, the church tolerated open sin and did not want to discipline the sinner. Paul reminded them that **love for God** requires that we discipline those who sin against the body of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians, the church disciplined a person who had sinned, but when this person repented, the church did not want to forgive him! Paul reminded them that **love for our neighbor** requires that we forgive those who repent (2 Corinthians 2:7).

The goal of church discipline must always be repentance and restoration. Perfect love does not seek revenge.

Loving Our Unbelieving Neighbor

How do we show perfect love towards unbelievers, especially those who hate us because we are Christians? Jesus said:

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:43-45).

When you love those who persecute you, you are perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. Holy people love like our heavenly Father loves. This is what it means to be perfect.

Holy people “demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward both those who are not believers, those who oppose us, and those who engage in sinful actions. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or the use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such behavior.”²⁵

Christians have always lived in a world that opposes the gospel. Paul called Christians at Rome to respect the authorities and to pay their taxes—to a government that was killing Christians and would soon kill Paul.

Peter commanded Christians to “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Peter 2:17). Again, this was a wicked emperor who would soon execute Peter. But Peter was determined that Christians must love our enemy. By loving even our enemies, we witness to the truth of the gospel. “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people” (1 Peter 2:15).

Joshua is a Nigerian pastor in an area of northern Nigeria where Christians have been viciously attacked by Islamic militants. Islamic soldiers have burned churches, killed Christians, and kidnapped young girls to sell into slavery. The last time I visited Nigeria, Joshua showed me pictures of the bodies of members of his church who had been killed by Islamic attackers.

Then Joshua showed me pictures of his church’s response to these attacks. His church built a school in a Muslim village; they dug a well to provide safe drinking water for the village; they have provided wheelchairs for Muslim polio victims; they are building a medical clinic for this village. They are showing love to their enemy.

25 From Discipline of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches, 2014.

Pastor Joshua said, “Many Muslims are coming to Christ because they see the love of God through Christians. We are winning them not through guns and revenge; we are winning them by living out Matthew 5:43-48.” This is the product of perfect love lived in our world today.

- » What are the biggest challenges to loving unbelieving neighbors in your world? List some practical steps to show love towards unbelievers in your community.

The Russian author Leo Tolstoy wrote a short story that shows what it means to live a life of perfect love. Martin was a poor shoemaker who loved God deeply.²⁶ One night, Martin fell asleep as he was reading from the Bible. He dreamed that Jesus said, “Tomorrow, I will visit your shop.”

The next day, Martin watched for Jesus. Other people came to Martin’s shop, but Jesus did not visit. An old soldier stood shivering in the cold. Martin invited the soldier into his shop for hot tea. A poor woman walked past the shop, trying to keep her baby warm. Martin brought her soup and a blanket for the baby. Later, Martin bought food for a hungry teenager.

Martin was disappointed that Jesus had not come, but he said, “It was just a dream. It was silly for me to think that Jesus would come to a shoe shop.”

That night, as Martin read his Bible, he again fell asleep. He dreamed that he saw people standing in his shop. The soldier said, “Martin, do you recognize me? I am Jesus!” The woman with a baby said, “Martin, I am Jesus.” The hungry teenager said, “I am Jesus.” Martin awoke and began to read:

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me (Matthew 25:35-40).

In the second century, a group of Christians were called “the Gamblers” because they risked their lives to care for those who were dying from contagious diseases. The Gamblers visited prisoners, cared for the sick, and rescued abandoned babies. The Gamblers showed perfect love.

In A.D. 252, a plague broke out in Carthage. Doctors refused to visit patients; families threw the bodies of the dead into the street; the city was in chaos. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, called his congregation together. He reminded them that Christians are called to be people of perfect love. The Christians of Carthage buried the dead, nursed the sick, and saved the city from destruction. They were people of perfect love; they were perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect.

26 Leo Tolstoy, “Where Love Is, There God is Also.”

SHE FOUND THE SECRET - ESTHER AHN KIM

Esther Ahn Kim was a music teacher who lived in Korea during the years of the Japanese occupation beginning in 1937.²⁷ The Japanese required every citizen to bow at the shrine of the sun goddess at Namsan Mountain. In 1939, Esther was ordered to bow to the shrine. The penalty for refusing to bow was prison and torture.

Some Christians had decided, “We will bow outwardly, but we will worship Christ in our hearts.” Esther determined that she could not bow to a false God. **She loved God** with an undivided heart. That day, she refused to bow.

Late in 1939, after several months in hiding, Esther Ahn Kim was arrested. She had spent those months preparing for prison. She fasted and prayed, she memorized scripture, she prepared her mind and body to endure suffering.

Kim spent six years in prison. She was tortured many times but she remained faithful because she loved God. But Kim knew that she was also called to **love her neighbor**. In prison, Esther began to pray each morning, “God, who do you want to love through me today?” Once she gave her food ration for several days to a woman who had been sentenced to death for murdering her husband. Through the love of Esther Kim, this lady was brought to Christ before she died.

Esther Ahn Kim experienced what Thomas Chisholm sought in his hymn, “Oh! to be like Thee... Meekly enduring cruel reproaches, willing to suffer, others to save.”

OH! TO BE LIKE THEE - THOMAS CHISHOLM

Oh! to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer, this is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures, Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.

Oh! to be like Thee, full of compassion, loving, forgiving, tender and kind,
Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting, seeking the wandering sinner to find.

Oh! to be like Thee, lowly in spirit, holy and harmless, patient and brave;
Meekly enduring cruel reproaches, willing to suffer, others to save.

Oh! to be like Thee, Oh! to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

27 Adapted from Esther Ahn Kim, *If I Perish* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977).

LESSON 8 IN REVIEW

1. The people in Jesus' world believed what the Old Testament taught about holiness. However, they failed to live according to God's pattern for a holy people.
2. The perfect model of holiness is seen in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. He followed every principle of holiness from the Old Testament.
3. To love our neighbor perfectly is to love as Jesus loved—sacrificially and humbly.
4. To be perfect means to be complete. To be perfect does not mean that there is no further growth.
5. A biblical command is a “promise in disguise.” What God commands, he makes possible. Holiness is accomplished not by human strength but by God's grace.
6. Love fulfills the law. When we love as God calls us to love, we will meet the demands of the law.

LESSON 8 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Prepare a sermon on “Loving Your 21st Century Enemy.” Use Matthew 5:43-48 as the text. Show what it means to love your enemy in our world. Make sure that you include the gospel (the good news) of what God has done through Christ to make loving your enemy possible.
2. Begin the next class session by quoting Matthew 5:43-48.

LESSON 9

A HOLY LIFE IS LIVED IN THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the transformation that Pentecost brought to the early church.
2. Recognize the power of the Holy Spirit to transform believers today.
3. See the fruit of the Spirit in daily life as a characteristic of the Spirit-filled life.
4. Memorize Galatians 5:22-25.

PETER: THE STUMBLING STONE WHO BECAME A ROCK

Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus responded, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:15-18). This was one of the brightest days of Peter’s life.

A short time later, Jesus told his disciples that he would die in Jerusalem. When Peter rebuked him, Jesus responded, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me (Matthew 16:23). The word *hindrance* means “stumbling stone.” Jesus first called Peter a rock; now he called him a stumbling stone. This was a dark day in Peter’s life.

Peter's story grows even darker on the night of Jesus' arrest. After promising that he would never forsake his Master, Peter denied Jesus and ran in fear. The "rock" failed in the hour of testing.

After such a failure, a person reading the Gospels might assume that Peter would never have a role in the church. To our surprise, Peter becomes a leader in the early church. What brought such a dramatic change? The answer is Pentecost.

After his resurrection, Jesus promised the disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This promise is fulfilled in Acts 2. The disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to preach. Through the power of the Spirit, 3,000 people are converted on the first Pentecost.

Peter was transformed by Pentecost. The stumbling stone became a rock who led the church in its crucial first days. Simon Peter evangelized throughout the Roman Empire, wrote two letters of the New Testament, and was eventually crucified for the faith.

What brought this change? Through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, a Galilean fisherman became a leader in the first century church. Peter learned that to be holy means to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

- » Ask members of your class to testify to the transformation that the Holy Spirit has made in their life. How is the Spirit giving you power for ministry, victory over sin, and joy in the Christian life?

A Prayer for Holiness

**"Breathe in me, Holy Spirit,
that I may think what is holy.
Move me, Holy Spirit,
that I may do what is holy.
Attract me, Holy Spirit,
that I may love what is holy.
Strengthen me, Holy Spirit,
that I may guard what is holy.
Guard me, Holy Spirit,
that I may keep what is holy."**

Augustine of Hippo

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PENTECOST

Peter was not the only disciple changed at Pentecost. Every disciple was transformed by the Holy Spirit. Doubting Thomas became a faithful missionary. A "Son of Thunder" became the "Apostle of Love." Jesus' followers were transformed from fearful disciples into a mighty force for the gospel. Acts shows the impact of the Holy Spirit on these first believers. The early church was effective not because of the extraordinary gifts of the apostles, but because

of the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples learned that a holy life is lived in the fullness of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Promised

Surely, this was one of the most surprising things the disciples ever heard Jesus say: “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away” (John 16:7). These disciples had left everything to follow Jesus. Imagine their shock when Jesus said, “If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”

At the Last Supper, Jesus explained how the Spirit will minister to believers. The Holy Spirit will:

- Be a Helper (John 14:16-17)
- Be a Teacher (John 14:26)
- Witness to the Son (John 15:26)
- Convict the world (John 16:7-11)
- Reveal all truth (John 16:13-15)

After the Resurrection, Jesus repeated his promise to send the Holy Spirit:

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.... But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:4-8).

Jesus’ earthly ministry did not end at the cross, at the empty tomb, or even at the ascension. Jesus’ ministry was fulfilled at Pentecost. An identifying mark of Jesus’ ministry was that he would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16). The gift of the Holy Spirit was the culmination of Jesus’ earthly ministry.

The Holy Spirit Received

In Acts, the Holy Spirit empowered the church for ministry. At Pentecost, the promise of a Helper was fulfilled. After Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was continually present in the church. The signs that accompanied the coming of the Spirit demonstrated his ministry to believers.

First, “there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind” (Acts 2:2). This indicates the power of the Spirit’s coming. In Acts, we see the power of the Holy Spirit working through believers. After Pentecost, the church served with new power and effectiveness.

The Holy Spirit had been active in the world prior to Pentecost.²⁸ But after Pentecost, the Spirit's power was present constantly in the ministry of the church.

Second, “divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them” (Acts 2:3). In scripture, fire often represents purity. A mark of the Holy Spirit was a pure heart. Peter testified to the Jerusalem Council about God's work among the Gentiles:

God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, **having cleansed their hearts by faith** (Acts 15:8-9).

Third, those in the upper room “began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). This equipped the disciples to witness to all nations. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples would fulfill Christ's Great Commission. At Babel, God judged sin by confusing the languages of the people. At Pentecost, God allowed each listener to hear the gospel in his own language. At Pentecost, God began to reverse the divisive effects of sin. The languages at Pentecost represent God's promise that the gospel will reach all nations and all peoples through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the church.

At Pentecost, the disciples finally understood what Jesus meant when he said, “It is to your advantage that I go away.” The Holy Spirit was not a “second best” substitute for Jesus Christ. While the incarnate Jesus could be present only in one place, the Holy Spirit could be present everywhere. The Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission. The Holy Spirit empowered Christians to live holy lives that would testify to all the world.

HOLINESS IN THE EARLY CHURCH: LIFE IN THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT

Acts shows the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of each believer. Because of the Holy Spirit, Christians had power for witness (Acts 1:8), courage in the face of opposition (Acts 4:31), victory over willful sin (Romans 8:2), and spiritual gifts for ministry (Acts 2:17-18; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11). The early believers were holy because they lived in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Acts shows the early church fulfilling Jesus' call to make disciples of all nations, his call to “be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect,” and his promise that “greater works than these will [you] do” (John 14:12). This was done in the power of the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts shows the results of the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of these early believers.

²⁸ Examples of the Holy Spirit's work in the Old Testament include: Genesis 1:2; Genesis 6:3; Exodus 31:3; Numbers 11:25-29; Judges 3:10; Judges 6:34; Judges 13:25; 1 Samuel 10:6-10; 2 Chronicles 28:12; Nehemiah 9:20; Isaiah 63:10-14; Zechariah 4:6-9.

Power for Ministry

Just as Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit when he faced Satan (Luke 4:1), Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit when he faced the Jewish authorities (Acts 4:8). Luke describes Peter's life with the same phrase he used to describe Jesus' life. The work of the Spirit seen in the earthly life of Jesus Christ was now the privilege of all believers.

On the day of Pentecost, more believers were added to the church than during the entire earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, the disciples ministered with power and authority. Miraculous healings demonstrated God's power to an unbelieving world. The people were filled with wonder and amazement and were utterly astounded (Acts 3:10-11). As the apostles ministered in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, their ministry was marked by divine power. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles could fulfill Jesus' commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Spiritual Boldness

The Apostles Were Bold in Proclaiming the Gospel

The transforming power of the Holy Spirit is clear to see throughout Acts. Disciples who only a few months earlier had fled the scene of Jesus' arrest now preached with boldness.

Shortly after Pentecost, the religious leaders arrested Peter and John. Only a few weeks earlier, Peter had denied Christ. Now, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit preached boldly. The religious leaders were astonished at the words of these uneducated, common men (Acts 4:2-13).

Through the Holy Spirit's filling, the apostles were bold to preach with power and anointing. From a group of fearful fishermen, tax collectors, and ordinary laborers, the disciples had become men who turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

“We are not filled with the Holy Spirit to do any special work, but simply to let God work through us.”

Oswald Chambers

The Apostles Were Bold in the Face of Persecution

When facing opposition, the apostles prayed not for release from persecution, but for boldness to proclaim Christ despite persecution. “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness....” God answered their prayer. “And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together

was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:29-31).

An unmistakable mark of the Holy Spirit’s work in the church was boldness to proclaim the gospel in the face of opposition. By the end of the first century, the gospel had spread from 120 people in the upper room to cities in every corner of the Roman Empire.

Victorious Lives

In every generation, Christians face the temptation to be “Sunday Christians”—people who attend church but whose lives do not show deep and lasting change. The early church was transformed in **all** areas of life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament, we see the struggles of people who wanted to keep the covenant, but who found they were unable to do so because their hearts were divided. The psalmist described the people of Israel: “Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant” (Psalm 78:37).

Through Ezekiel, God promised a day when his people would be transformed.

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Before Pentecost, the disciples followed the same pattern as the children of Israel. They wanted to follow Christ, but they failed constantly. They doubted; they competed for position; they fled in fear. At Pentecost, the promise of Ezekiel was fulfilled. The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to live victorious lives. Rather than half-hearted obedience, they walked in joyful obedience to God’s law. Through the Holy Spirit, a victorious life became the norm for God’s people.

Guidance for Ministry

Before Pentecost, ambition and fear controlled the disciples. Their attempts to serve Jesus were limited by their personal failings. After Pentecost, the Holy Spirit guided the apostles to effective ministry.

The Holy Spirit guided the church in difficult decisions that affected relationships between Jewish and Gentile Christians (Acts 10-11; 15). The Holy Spirit led in the selection of church leaders (Acts 13:2-3). The Holy Spirit led Paul into Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). The Holy Spirit led Paul to return to Jerusalem despite the danger of arrest (Acts 19:21; Acts 20:22-23). The ministry of the early church was led by the Holy Spirit.

Unity

Perhaps the most remarkable evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church is the unity among believers. In his High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prayed for the unity of the church. He prayed:

...that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me (John 17:22-23).

Jesus' prayer was answered at Pentecost. Acts 2:42 shows this unity in the life of the church: a commitment to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, celebration of the Lord's Supper, and prayer. This unity was seen in the church's care for one another. Luke testified that there was not a needy person among them because Christians cared for one another's material needs (Acts 4:34).

Six times, Luke refers to the unity of the church in Acts.²⁹ This does not mean that the Christians agreed on everything. Serious issues threatened to divide the church. Jewish and Gentile believers disagreed about the laws of Moses (Acts 15:1-29). Paul and Barnabas disagreed about John Mark (Acts 15:39-40). But regardless of differences, the church was unified through the power of the Holy Spirit. As believers followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church was bound together in one accord.

If you and I had seen the disciples in the days just before Jesus' arrest, we could not have imagined that these men would ever be effective in ministry. They were fearful, jealous of each other, and full of doubt. A few months later, these men had been completely transformed. What had happened?

Before Pentecost, the disciples tried to live Christlike lives in their own power—and they failed repeatedly. After Pentecost, the disciples lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the secret of a holy life and effective ministry.

HOLINESS TODAY: WE ARE HOLY ONLY AS WE ARE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Many Christians have tried to live a holy life through their own efforts—and they have failed. Through our own self-discipline, it may be possible to maintain victory over outward sin for a while. In our own strength, it may be possible to love our neighbor for a time. However, we will soon fail despite our best efforts.

Why do we struggle? Because we are attempting to live a holy life in our own power. It is exhausting to attempt the Christian life in our own power. We struggle with sinful attitudes;

29 Acts 1:14, Acts 2:1, Acts 2:46, Acts 4:24, Acts 5:12, Acts 15:25

we struggle with a lack of perfect love; we struggle with a divided heart. By contrast, life in the Spirit is an abundant life of victory.

God never intended us to live a holy life through our own efforts. He made us to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the early church, a holy life was possible only in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the church today, a holy life is possible only in the power of the Holy Spirit. The characteristics that marked the early church will mark the church today if we live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can have a holy heart and holy hands.

Power in ministry, spiritual boldness, victory over sin, and unity between believers—all come from the presence of the Holy Spirit. As we are filled with the Spirit, we are empowered to live the abundant Christian life God intends for his people.

Paul's epistles show that to be holy is to be Christlike. To be holy is to think, speak, and act as Christ would do. This is a beautiful ideal, but we quickly find that in our own power we are incapable of thinking, speaking, or acting like Christ.

Some Christians wear a WWJD symbol on their clothing. WWJD stands for "What would Jesus do?" It reminds us that we are called to live as Jesus lived; we are imitators of Christ. However, it is much easier to wear the WWJD symbol than to live by Jesus' example. Apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, we have no ability to do consistently what Jesus would do.

Imagine that you said to someone who was not athletic, "To be a better basketball player, you must play like Michael Jordan. Before every shot, ask yourself, 'What would Michael Jordan do?'" This advice would not help, because this person does not have Michael Jordan's abilities.

However, imagine that the person was given the gifts that Michael Jordan possesses. Imagine that he could—through the spirit of Michael Jordan—do everything that Michael Jordan does. Now it would be possible for him to imitate that great basketball player!

WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) is not enough. In ourselves, we do not have the power to imitate Jesus. However, the Holy Spirit that empowered Jesus' ministry is available to us. Through the fullness of the Spirit, you and I can be Christlike. This is the impact of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

The Prayer of a Young Christian

**"Holy Spirit, please fill me
till I overflow. I cannot
hold very much, but I can
overflow a great deal."**

Quoted by Dr. David Bubb

The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus for a victorious life and fruitful ministry; the fullness of the Holy Spirit was the secret of victorious lives and fruitful ministries for the apostles; the fullness of the Holy Spirit is the secret for a victorious life and fruitful ministry today.

Paul wrote, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). There are only two options: walking by the Spirit or gratifying the desires of the flesh. We *cannot* in our own power conquer the desires of the flesh. Yes, we may be victorious for a day or a week, but the only way to gain long-term victory over fleshly desires is to yield to the Holy Spirit.

» Read Romans 8:1-17.

In his great summary of the Spirit-filled life in Romans 8, Paul contrasted two ways of living—life according to the flesh and life by the Spirit.

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:13-14).

In Romans 7, Paul shows his past efforts to fulfill God’s law in his own strength. Those efforts failed. Why? Because with his flesh he served the law of sin (Romans 7:25).

In Romans 8, Paul rejoices that, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” We are free from condemnation not because God has decided to ignore our sin; we are free from condemnation **because the law of the Spirit of life has set us free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.** We are free from condemnation because we are now living in the Spirit.

Paul shows that there are two ways to live. The first way to live is in the flesh. This is the carnal mind. This carnal mind is hostile to God. It is impossible for the person who lives in the flesh to please God. This fleshly way of life leads only to death: “For to set the mind on the flesh is death” (Romans 8:6).

The second way to live is with a mind that is set on the Spirit. A person who lives according to the Spirit fulfills the righteous requirement of the law. We have life and peace because the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16).

In Romans 6, Paul taught that we must live above willful sin. “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:2). In our own strength, it is impossible to live a life above willful sin. We are born leaning towards sin and away from God. How can we fulfill the demands of Romans 6? The answer is found in Romans 8. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can put to death the deeds of the body. We can live holy lives because of God’s Spirit working in us.

Robert Coleman wrote:

Living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit is as much the privilege of Christ's followers today as of those first disciples who tarried in the upper room.... The reality of the all-encompassing, Christ-possessing holiness of the Spirit is basic New Testament Christianity.³⁰

The power of the Holy Spirit in a person who has yielded fully their will to God makes a holy life possible. Without the Holy Spirit, Christlikeness is impossible. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to live a holy life.

The prophet Zechariah saw a vision of a golden lampstand with two olive trees. A bowl provided a constant supply of oil for the seven lamps. An angel explained the meaning of the vision. Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, was assigned to rebuild the Temple. This enormous task looked like a mountain. God promised that the task would be accomplished "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit." Through the Spirit, the mountain would become a plain (Zechariah 4:6-7).

In the same way, the Christian today must have the ongoing filling of the Holy Spirit. Paul commanded the Ephesian Christians to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The command is present tense; this is to be our regular pattern of life. Our daily life must be controlled by him. We experience the joy of a holy life as we live in the fullness of the Spirit.

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOLY LIFE

Imagine that you were able to get rid of every sin in your life. Imagine that you were free of all sinful actions *and* sinful attitudes. No one could point to anything wrong. Would this fulfill God's goal of a holy life?

No! Holiness is more than avoiding sin. Holiness is producing fruit. Holiness is not a legalistic, negative approach to life. Holiness is a joyful relationship with God. Holiness is seen when the Holy Spirit produces his fruit in our life.

The Fruit of the Spirit

» Read Galatians 5:13-26.

In Galatians 5, Paul contrasts life in the Spirit with life in the flesh. Up to this point in Galatians, Paul has been warning the Galatian believers about the danger of abandoning their Christian liberty and returning to the bondage of Judaic rituals and law. They have

30 Robert E. Coleman, *The Mind of the Master* (CO: Waterbrook Press, 1977), 35-36

been freed from their efforts to earn salvation through good works and they must not return to bondage.

However, Paul recognizes another danger. When a person is set free from bondage, he may be tempted to use his new-found freedom to indulge his own appetites. So Paul warns the Galatian believers, “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Paul contrasts two ways of living. One pattern of life is to gratify the desires of the flesh; the other is to walk by the Spirit. Paul contrasts these two patterns by showing the fruit of each pattern of life.

First, Paul shows the works of the flesh. This is the product of human nature that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit. The works of the flesh include:

- Sexual sins: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality
- Religious sins: idolatry, sorcery
- Social sins: enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy
- Sins of appetite: drunkenness, orgies.

He concludes, “I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Paul then shows the fruit of the Spirit. This is the product of life lived under the control and with the power of the Holy Spirit. This fruit is one fruit, not a group of fruits. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul lists a group of gifts and says that each believer will be given one of the gifts by the Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills (1 Corinthians 12:5-11). In Galatians, however, there is only one fruit, which grows naturally in the heart of everyone who is walking in the Spirit.

This fruit of the Spirit is not a list of qualities we can develop in our own power. This is fruit that grows naturally when we are filled with the Spirit. This is what a holy life looks like. It is the natural byproduct of a holy heart.

Paul listed 15 works of the flesh. He lists nine aspects of the fruit of the Spirit:

- Fruit related to God: love, joy, peace
- Fruit related to people: longsuffering, gentleness, goodness
- Fruit related to our inner character: faith, meekness, temperance

The root of all these qualities is love. Love binds everything together in perfect harmony (Colossians 3:14). Love fulfills the law and provides the ground in which this fruit grows and flourishes.

Keep in Step with the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit is the natural outgrowth of life when we are filled with the Spirit. This is Paul's primary emphasis in Galatians where he addresses people who may try to grow this fruit by their own careful obedience to the law. Paul wants them to understand that they cannot earn this fruit; it is the result of life in the Spirit.

This truth is always balanced in Paul by a reminder that the holy life is lived with intention. Holiness is not accidental; we must press toward the goal (Philippians 3:12-14). In Colossae, it appears that many new believers thought they could continue in their old lifestyle. There, Paul emphasizes the effort involved in living the holy life. In Colossians, Paul writes about putting on the qualities of the holy life. This suggests the ongoing discipline involved in holiness:

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these **put on** love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony (Colossians 3:12-14).

In the same way, Paul does not want the Galatian Christians to simply assume that the holy life can be lived without self-discipline and effort. In their reaction to legalism, they must not become careless. In Galatians 5:16-25, Paul says,

- “Walk by the Spirit” (verse 16). Walking is an action that requires effort.
- Be “led by the Spirit” (verse 18). To be led, I must follow. This requires effort.
- “Live by the Spirit” (verse 25). Living is a choice and action. This requires effort.
- “Keep in step with the Spirit” (verse 25). This is the strongest of the four verbs. It is a military term suggesting soldiers marching in a line. Marching in line with the Spirit requires effort and discipline.

As Christians who are filled with the Spirit, we must never think we are so spiritually mature that we can never fall to the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:17). However, we must never allow Satan to convince us that we cannot be free from the control of the desires of the flesh **through the power of the Spirit**. As we keep in step with the Spirit, we produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

- » After studying the impact of Pentecost on the early disciples and after reviewing the fruit of the Spirit, discuss what a Spirit-filled life will look like today. How should the filling of the Spirit affect our attitudes, daily Christian walk, and ministry efforts?

THEY FOUND THE SECRET - JONATHAN AND ROSALIND GOFORTH

Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth were Canadian Presbyterian missionaries to China from 1888-1933. Mrs. Goforth tried to follow the example of Jesus in her life, but she failed repeatedly. After 20 years of struggle, Rosalind Goforth learned that the secret to a victorious Christian life is the Holy Spirit living through us and producing the character of Christ in our life. Mrs. Goforth testified that her life after this time could be summed up in one word, “Resting.”

As they allowed the Holy Spirit to work through them, the Goforths saw God do wondrous things. Jonathan Goforth struggled for months to learn the Chinese language. When he tried to preach in Chinese, few listeners could understand him. As he was preaching one day, he suddenly began to communicate clearly, using phrases he had never mastered. He later learned that a group of students in Canada had spent that day praying for his ministry. From that day, Jonathan Goforth had fluent control of the Chinese language. What Goforth could not do, the Holy Spirit did through a surrendered servant.

God led the Goforths into areas of China that had never been touched by the gospel. Thousands were converted through the ministry of the Goforths. The key to their success was not great ability; the key was living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

At his funeral, the pastor of Knox Presbyterian Church gave the secret to Jonathan Goforth’s success. “He was a God-intoxicated man—fully surrendered and consecrated. He was baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He was filled with the Spirit because he was emptied of self.”³¹

Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth understood the importance of walking in the Spirit day by day. They understood the prayer of the hymn-writer Edwin Hatch: “Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure.” When our heart is pure, we want what God wants.

BREATHE ON ME, BREATH OF GOD - EDWIN HATCH

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what thou dost love,
And do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

31 Adapted from Wesley L. Duewel, *Heroes of the Holy Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 52-64.

LESSON 9 IN REVIEW

1. To be holy means to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
2. In his earthly life, Jesus ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised this same power to his followers. Because of that promise, he assured his disciples that “it is to your advantage that I go away.”
3. When the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, their lives were transformed. Three signs marked this new activity of the Holy Spirit:
 - The sound like a mighty rushing wind indicated the power of the Spirit’s coming.
 - The divided tongues of fire resting on each of them represented the purity associated with the Holy Spirit.
 - The ability to speak in other tongues equipped the disciples to witness to all nations.
4. As the early church lived in the power of the Holy Spirit, they experienced:
 - Increased power for ministry
 - Boldness to proclaim the gospel
 - Boldness in the face of persecution
 - Victorious lives
 - Guidance for ministry
 - Unity between believers
5. Just as the disciples were holy only through the Holy Spirit, we are holy only as we live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Without the filling of the Holy Spirit, we are incapable of following the example of Jesus Christ. It is only in the Spirit’s power that we can live Christlike lives.
6. As we live in the Spirit, our lives will show the fruit of the Spirit as the natural product of a holy life.

LESSON 9 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write a letter to a young Christian who says to you, “I know I am a Christian, but I continue to struggle with carnal attitudes and areas in which I am weak in the face of temptation.” Help this young Christian understand the importance of being filled with the Spirit.
2. Begin the next class session by quoting Galatians 5:22-25.

LESSON 10

HOLINESS IS CHRISTLIKENESS

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the centrality of holiness in the epistles.
2. Rejoice in God's provision to make his people Christlike.
3. Understand the balance between what God has already done to make us holy and what God is continuing to do as we grow in holiness.
4. Appreciate the possibility of a life of consistent victory over willful sin.
5. Memorize Philippians 2:1-5.

LIVING WITH THE MIND OF CHRIST

It is early Sunday morning about 30 years after Jesus' ascension. A group of Christians gather for worship in a private home in Philippi. They are excited because they have received a letter from Paul, their beloved pastor.

The leader begins to read Paul's letter. Paul writes from a heart overflowing with joy. Even though he is in a Roman prison, he rejoices in Christ. Paul does not know if he will be released or killed, but he has peace. Why? "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

As their spiritual father, Paul encourages the Philippian Christians to continue to grow in their Christian faith. He wants to see these believers mature as the holy people God has called them to be. Paul writes, "Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27). Live in a way that is worthy of the gospel? How is this possible?

Paul's answer is: Live with the mind of Christ. "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). If the Christians at Philippi have the mind of Christ, they will be like Christ. The secret to a holy life is to live with the mind of Christ. Holiness is Christlikeness.

THE MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLES: CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE HOLY

The Epistles Called Christians to Holiness

Every Christian is called to be holy. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him (Ephesians 1:4). God's eternal purpose in salvation was to make us a holy people. That is the goal for all followers of Jesus.

No first century Jewish Christian was surprised to read that Christians are called to be holy. God commanded holiness in Leviticus (Leviticus 19:2, Leviticus 20:7). Jewish Christians knew that God expects his people to be holy.

However, Gentiles grew up worshipping pagan gods who were not holy. The message of holiness was foreign to Gentiles. Peter wrote to Gentile Christians who had only recently been ransomed from the futile ways inherited from their forefathers (1 Peter 1:18). These people had been pagans with no concept of true righteousness, but Peter called them to a holy life.

The apostles taught Gentile converts how to live holy lives. They taught this message positively: "This is what you must do." They taught this message negatively: "This is what you must not do."

A Prayer for Holiness

**"I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will,
Rank me with whom you will.
Put me to doing,
Put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for you
Or laid aside for you,
Exalted for you
Or brought low for thee.
Let me be full,
Let me be empty.
Let me have all things,
Let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed
God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine, and I am yours."**

John Wesley

Forty times, the Epistles refer to believers as “saints” which literally means “holy ones.” A saint is anyone who is living as God called his people to live. Every Christian is called to be holy; every Christian is called to be a saint.

The Apostles Commanded Believers to Pursue Holiness

Paul reminded the Corinthian believers that they are the temple of the living God (2 Corinthians 6:16). The Temple was a holy place of worship. Because we are God’s temple, “let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

God calls his people to put off the old self, which belongs to their former manner of life and is corrupt and put on the new self (Ephesians 4:22-24). Paul wrote that Christ “gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people of his own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). The writer of Hebrews instructed his readers to strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). God’s people are called to be holy.

The Apostles Prayed That Christians Will Be Made Holy

Paul prayed that God’s people would be made holy.

- » Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10. Describe the Christians at Thessalonica at the beginning of Paul’s letter.

The people who received Paul’s letter to the church at Thessalonica were genuine Christians. They were known for their faith, their love, and the steadfastness of their hope. They were brothers loved by God. The gospel had come to them not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. They had received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit. They were an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. They had turned from idols to serve the living and true God.

At the new birth, God had begun to make them holy. However, Paul prayed:

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

This prayer was important to Paul. He had been praying most earnestly night and day that he might see them face to face and supply what was lacking in their faith (1 Thessalonians 3:10). These people were true Christians; but Paul knew that the holiness within them could be improved. This does not mean they were defective Christians; Paul had already commended them for their Christian experience.

There was nothing faulty about their Christian experience, but Paul knew that they needed further growth. They were sanctified, but he prayed that God would sanctify them **completely**. He prayed that God would make them holy through and through. He prayed that God would purify their spirit and soul and body.

The Epistles Promised that Christians Can Be Holy

When he prayed that the Ephesians would be filled with all the fullness of God, Paul had confidence that God would answer his prayer because he was praying “to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us...” (Ephesians 3:20). We often quote this scripture when praying for some physical or financial need, but the statement was actually given in association with the highest spiritual goal mentioned in the Bible: to be filled with all the fullness of God. God’s call to a holy heart is not an impossible command. God’s call is available to every believer.

When he prayed for the Thessalonian Christians, Paul had confidence that God would answer his prayer. Paul followed his prayer, “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely” with this promise, “He who calls you is faithful; **he will surely do it**” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). The epistles promise that we **can be holy**.

HOLINESS IS CHRISTLIKENESS

In the Old Testament, God revealed the message of a holy heart and holy hands through the Law and the prophets. In the life of Jesus Christ, God gave a model of perfect love. In Acts, the early Christians showed that it is possible for ordinary believers to live a holy life through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Epistles, the message of holiness is applied to the daily life of the believer.

Holiness is a Christlike Heart and Mind

The Epistles teach that holiness is Christlikeness. Believers are to be like Christ. To be holy is more than outward behavior; holiness begins in the heart. To be holy is to be like Christ in our hearts and minds.

Paul does not say, “You should *act* like Jesus Christ.” He insists, “You should *be* like Jesus Christ.” It is not enough to imitate Christ outwardly; we must be like him inwardly. God’s purpose is to transform his people into the image of Christ. “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). God’s eternal purpose is to make us into the image of Christ. This is what it means to be holy.

One of the most startling examples of this idea is found in Paul’s letter to Corinth. This church was full of problems, yet Paul addressed them as saints and called them to a holy

life. How could this group of immature believers, struggling to overcome their pagan past, hope to be holy? Paul answered, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Because Christ became sin for us, we can become the righteousness of God. In the Old Testament, the blood of the sin offerings covered the sins of those who came to God in faith. Today, the blood of Christ covers the sins of those who come to God in faith. But Paul promises more than covering. We are not only covered; we are transformed. Because we have been reconciled to God, we have become the righteousness of God. Paul writes:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

Christ did not die to cover our continuing rebellion against God. Through Christ, we are a new creation. We are no longer rebels; we are new creatures who have been reconciled to a holy God.

This transformation goes much deeper than outward behavior alone. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians:

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

“Completely” carries the idea of being made holy in all aspects of their nature. This verse can be translated “sanctify you through and through.” Paul prayed that these believers would be transformed in their whole spirit and soul and body. He promised, “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

This transformation affects all areas of life. In Philippians, Paul writes about a new way of thinking. He calls it the “mind of Christ.” Paul describes Jesus’ voluntary submission of himself to the will of the Father. Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).

Paul does not say, “The humility of Christ would be a good way to live, but of course it is impossible for you and me to have this attitude.” Instead he says, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). This mind is yours; you can be like Christ!

We can have the same spirit of loving submission that guided Jesus’ submission to the Father’s will. We can have the mind of Christ. We can look at life through the eyes of Jesus Christ. This happens not through good resolutions, but through transformed hearts. We

are called to be like Christ not in actions alone but from the heart. We are called to have the mind of Christ.

Holiness is Christlike Behavior

Some people may respond, “My heart is Christlike, but my actions are not. Inwardly, my motives are good but outwardly I do not live like Christ.” The apostles could not accept this division between our inner and outward natures. Our inward nature will be seen in our outward actions. To be holy means to be like Christ in our behavior.

This message is seen throughout the Epistles. Paul said that Christ gave himself for the church that he might sanctify her. Christ gave himself to make his bride holy. He is preparing a bride without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:26-27).

Can you imagine an earthly bride who says to her husband, “I will be unfaithful to you with my body; but my heart will be pure”? Of course not! Neither can Paul imagine the bride of Christ saying, “My heart is holy, but my actions will be unholy.” The church is called to be a bride without spot or wrinkle.

Paul wrote to Christians at Thessalonica. This church included both Jewish believers and converts from Thessalonica’s pagan cults. The Jewish believers knew the Old Testament commands to holy behavior, but the pagans had lived in an atmosphere where sexual immorality was normal.

Paul taught these new believers what it means to live a holy life. He prayed that God would establish their hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father (1 Thessalonians 3:13). These new believers were to be holy in their heart and they were to be holy in their behavior. “This is the will of God, your sanctification.” Sanctification affects not only their heart; it determines their behavior (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6):

- “That you abstain from sexual immorality”
- “That each of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God”
- “That no one transgress and wrong his brother”

To be holy is to have a Christlike heart which inspires Christlike behavior. To be holy is to be like Christ.

Holiness is Christlike Love

The Gospels show that holiness is love for God and love for our neighbor. Paul links Christlike behavior and Christlike love. He challenges the Ephesian Christians to be imitators of God, as beloved children. How will they imitate God? By living in Christlike love. “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2).

As they walk in self-sacrificing love, Christians show the image of God. To be holy is to love as Christ loved. In Romans 14, Paul gives a practical demonstration of this Christlike love. He calls believers to sacrifice their freedom of conscience for the sake of a weaker brother. Why? “For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love” (Romans 14:15). If my freedom causes a brother to stumble, I am not walking in love. Christ surrendered his rights because of his love for us; we are called to surrender our rights because of love for others. This is Christlike love.

Paul’s most famous exposition of what it means to love like Christ is 1 Corinthians 13. To a church marked by division, self-seeking behavior, jealousy, and pride, Paul wrote:

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:4-6).

In 1 John, the apostle emphasized practical aspects of Christlike love. 1 John shows what Christlike love looks like.

- Love requires obedience. If we love God, **we obey Him** (1 John 2:5; 1 John 5:3). We cannot separate love and obedience.
- Love requires single-mindedness. If we love God, **we will not love the world**. “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). We cannot love both God and a world that is opposed to God. A holy person loves God with an undivided heart.
- Love requires relationship. If we love God, **we will love other Christians**. “Whoever loves God must also love his brother.” Indeed, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20-21). John teaches that it is impossible to love God while hating your Christian brother.

What is the result of this Christlike love? Confidence before God. “If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). This perfect love gives us confidence for the day of judgment and casts out fear of punishment (1 John 4:17-18).

How will we live this perfect love? “For we know that our life in this world is His life lived in us” (1 John 4:17, NLV). We can model Christlike love only through Christ living in us.

THE LIFE OF HOLINESS: YOU ARE HOLY; PURSUE HOLINESS

Jonathan wanted to be a holy person. Unfortunately, Jonathan's understanding of holiness was based more on emotional feelings than on scripture. Because of this, Jonathan went from one extreme teaching to another.

For a while, Jonathan fasted frequently, prayed for hours, and tried to discipline himself into holiness. He was sure that we become holy through our self-discipline.

Jonathan soon became discouraged and gave up this effort. He grew careless in spiritual disciplines and began to yield to sin. When someone asked him about an area of sin, Jonathan answered, "I live by grace and do not need discipline. God will make me holy when he is ready."

At another time, Jonathan prayed earnestly for a dramatic spiritual gift. He decided holiness is about spiritual gifts and outward power.

Jonathan's search for holiness was based on emotion rather than on a careful reading of scripture. He did not study the Bible to understand how holiness is lived in daily life.

The Epistles teach important truths about the holy life. If we forget these principles, we will become unbalanced in our understanding of holiness. The apostles wrote to show us how to live the holy life to which God has called us.

You Have Been Made Holy; You Are Being Made Holy

When Paul wrote to saints, he was saying, "You are holy." A saint is already holy, but Paul wrote to these saints, "You must be holy." You are holy; you must continue to grow in holiness.

This balance is seen repeatedly in the Epistles. As believers, we are already holy, but we continue to grow in holiness as we walk in obedience to God.

The writer of Hebrews shows that we were made holy by Christ's death. "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). We are sanctified through Christ's death.

The writer continues, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). This sentence includes two words related to the theme of holiness. Through his death, Christ has perfected (*teleios*) those who are being sanctified (*hagiazō*). This verse tells us that:

We Have Been Made Holy: “He Has Perfected for All Time...”

Christ died so that we can be freed from the power of sin. Jesus suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood (Hebrews 13:12). God’s purpose to make his people holy was fulfilled through Jesus’ death. We have been made perfect.

We Are Being Made Holy: “Those Who Are Being Sanctified”

Christ’s death accomplished God’s purpose of sanctification for all time, but our growth in holiness continues throughout our entire life. It is a continuing process. Through Christ’s death, we are holy; through Christ’s death, we are being made holy.

Paul’s own testimony illustrates this principle. In Philippians 3, Paul writes that he is **not yet perfect**, but a few verses later, he refers to himself as one who is **already perfect** (“those of us who are mature”). The bolded words in the following excerpt both come from *teleios*. Both words can be translated “perfect.”

Not that I have already obtained this or am already **perfect** (*teleios*), but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.... Let those of us who are **mature** (*teleios*) think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you (Philippians 3:12-15).

Paul says, “I am not yet perfect.” He continues, “Those of us who are perfect.” Paul has not yet arrived at the goal; he is growing in holiness. In this sense, he is not yet perfect. But, Paul is straining every muscle towards the goal. He is committed to finishing the race. In this sense, Paul is already perfect. Paul can say “I am not yet perfect” and “I am perfect” in the same paragraph.

To be perfect does not mean that we have climbed a ladder of works that makes us perfect. Instead, it means that we have fully surrendered to God’s grace in our life. It is instantaneous in that there is a moment in time in which God reorients our hearts in his direction. It is a process in that our movement towards him will continue for the rest of our life.³²

Think of a football player³³ who kicks a ball into the goal; it is a perfect shot. The shot does not become perfect only when it lands in the goal. As it is moving through the air, the shot is already perfect; it is on the path to the goal. It is perfect from the moment the player kicks the ball.³⁴

32 Timothy C. Tennent. *The Call to Holiness* (Franklin: Seedbed Publishing), 2014), 54-55

33 In America, this sport is called “soccer.”

34 Illustration adapted from T.A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 23.

In the same way, Paul was headed for the final goal. He had set his course and was moving towards the goal with an undivided heart. He was not yet at the goal, but he was on the path to the goal. He was not yet perfect; he was already perfect.

As believers, we are holy saints who have been accepted by God through Christ, but we are called to yield ourselves as living sacrifices who continue to grow in daily obedience and surrender (Romans 12:1). We have already been made holy; we are being made holy.

You Are Saints; You Must Live as Saints

Paul wrote to saints who lived in Corinth. 1 Corinthians is addressed to holy people, “those sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:2). 2 Corinthians is addressed “To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia” (2 Corinthians 1:1). They were saints—but they had much to learn about living as saints.

There are two ways in which Christians misunderstand this truth. First, some Christians say, “I am called a saint because God sees Christ’s righteousness rather than my sin. My holiness is a ‘legal fiction.’ I will never be holy in this world, but God calls me holy anyway.” Romans 6 makes clear that this answer is not acceptable to Paul. Holy people must live holy lives.

Second, other Christians say, “I am a saint. I never fall short of God’s absolute standard of perfection. I never repent because I am never wrong. I am a saint!” Paul rejects this error as strongly as he rejects the first error. Paul wrote to teach saints in Corinth to live holy lives. They are lacking in knowledge and maturity, so Paul teaches these saints how to live as saints. Holy people must live holy lives.

The city of Corinth was infamous for the ungodly behavior of its citizens. Paul calls believers living in this wicked city to holy behavior. They are to avoid sexual immorality because their bodies are members of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15). Paul lists behaviors that are forbidden in the kingdom of God:

Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

After this list of sins, Paul observes, “And such were some of you.” Paul is writing to an audience that has practiced these sins. As believers, Paul expects them to abandon their former lifestyle. Given their sinful past, how can these people live pure lives? Paul gives the answer:

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

The sins of 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 have been erased by the transformation of 1 Corinthians 6:11. This transformation is not just a legal transaction; Paul nowhere suggests, “You will continue to commit these sins, but God will count you as righteous despite your wicked behavior.” No! He says, “Such were some of you, but you were washed.” The Corinthian Christians must never return to the sins of their past. Paul says, “You are saints; act like it!” They have been washed; they have been sanctified; they have been made holy. They are saints; they must live as saints.

When a young man joins the army, he is given a uniform that marks him as a soldier. At the same time, he is given a manual that gives the Army Code of Conduct. The uniform alone is not enough; he must live according to the Code of Conduct.

It takes longer to learn the Code of Conduct than to put on the uniform. The new soldier must learn to live in a manner that suits his uniform. He must mature as a soldier. Many times, this young soldier will have to be reminded of the rules of the military. Is his performance perfect? No. But, is his commitment to being a soldier complete? Yes. On the first day in the army, he is a soldier; but he will spend many days learning to live as a soldier.

Imagine a young man who says, “I want to be called a soldier, but I do not want to follow the Code of Conduct.” He buys an army uniform, but he does not live the Code of Conduct. Is he a true soldier? No. He only pretends to be a soldier.

The Epistles are written to believers who have put on Christ. Now they are learning to live holy lives. In Ephesians 4-6, we learn what a holy life looks like in family relationships, in relationships within the church, and in business ethics. In Galatians 5, we learn the fruit of a life lived in step with the Spirit. In 1 Peter, we learn how to live a holy life in the face of persecution. When we read James, we learn how a holy person controls his tongue.

Paul wrote to the believers at Colossae, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” These believers have died to sin; they are alive to Christ. They are no longer prisoners of sin; they are holy. But Paul continues, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you” (Colossians 3:3, 5). You are dead to sin; put sin to death. You are saints; you must live as saints.

“Paul said, ‘I have been crucified with Christ....’ He did not say, ‘I have made a determination to imitate Jesus Christ,’ or, ‘I will really make an effort to follow Him’— but ‘I have been identified with Him in His death.’”

Oswald Chambers

The principle is stated at the beginning of the chapter.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (Colossians 3:1-2).

Paul says, “Day after day, you are to keep seeking heavenly things. Day after day, you are to continue setting your mind on the things of God.” The key to a holy life is to set your mind on the things of God. You have been made holy (“you have been raised with Christ”), so be holy (“set your mind on things that are above”).

What is the result of this holy life? “When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4). A holy life prepares you to spend eternity with a holy God. Enoch walked with God, and he was not found, for God took him (Genesis 5:24). A holy walk with God in this world prepared Enoch for eternity with God. A holy walk with God in this world prepares us to appear with Christ in glory.

The Epistles were written to saints. We have been made saints through the blood of Jesus Christ. We have put off the old man and put on the new man. Now, we are learning day by day what it means to be holy. We are being transformed day by day into the image of God. Is our performance perfect? No. But is our commitment to being holy complete? Yes. We are saints; we are learning to live as saints.

God Makes You Holy; You Must Pursue Holiness

In Leviticus, God said, “Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy.” This was a command that the people must follow. In the next verse, God promised, “I am the Lord who sanctifies you” (Leviticus 20:7-8). This was a promise of what God would do. To understand holiness, we must balance two truths:

1. Holiness is a gift from God; God makes his people holy.
2. Holiness is a command from God; God commands his people to pursue holiness.

The Pharisees remembered only, “You must pursue holiness.” They believed they could become holy through their own efforts. The Epistles respond, “God makes you holy.”

Some Christians in the early church went to the opposite extreme. They believed, “If God wants to make us holy, he will do it. We do nothing.” The Epistles respond, “You must pursue holiness.”

Both surrender and pursuit are important in sanctification. God makes us holy; we must pursue holiness. We surrender to God and allow him to transform us, but we strain forward to the goal God has for us (Philippians 3:13). Paul understood that trusting God’s promises

does not mean that we no longer press towards the mark. We are empowered to pursue holiness *because* God makes us holy.

When Stephen's children were young, they would sometimes read scripture aloud in family devotions. One day, Stephen's young daughter came to Philippians 2:12 when it was her turn to read. With great fervor, Ruth shouted, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling!" She was quite impressed with this command to "work out your salvation." But the next verse says "for it is God who works in you." ***Our work*** is done because of ***God's work***.

Contrary to the belief of many Christians, God's work is accomplished as we work out our own salvation. Does this mean that we earn holiness by works? Absolutely not! Paul continues, "It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). It is God who gives the desire ("to will"); it is God who empowers the work. Without God who works in us, our work is fruitless. We cannot make ourselves holy, but God will not make us holy apart from our own pursuit of holiness.

Paul reminded the Corinthians of God's wonderful promise that "you shall be sons and daughters to me" (2 Corinthians 6:18). He then commands them to live holy lives. "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). Because of God's promises, we cleanse ourselves from every defilement. God's promise to make us holy gives us confidence to pursue holiness.

Writing to the Christians at Thessalonica, Paul prayed that God would establish their hearts blameless in holiness (1 Thessalonians 3:13). This is God's work. Then, Paul began to teach how they ought to walk and to please God. Why? "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:1, 3). God was making the Thessalonian Christians holy, so they must pursue a holy life.

Galatians is written to believers who are tempted to return to salvation by the works of the law. Paul reminds them that they were justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified (Galatians 2:16). If justification by faith is the end of the gospel, this would be the perfect letter for Paul to say, "You have been justified by faith. Now you can live as you wish and you will go to heaven. Your place in heaven is assured." But Paul does not say that! Instead, he says:

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:24-25).

To keep in step means to walk in line behind a leader. It suggests discipline and self-control. It suggests living by the Spirit's guidance, not our own desires. God has made the Galatians holy, but they must continue to pursue holiness.

The author of Hebrews wrote that God disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. What an amazing truth! Fallen man can share in the holiness of God. This is not some type of mystical union like the pagan cults. This is a very practical teaching about spiritual discipline. He is writing about the fruit of righteousness, about peace with others, and about sins such as bitterness and sexual immorality (Hebrews 12:10-16). This is not mysticism; this is normal Christianity. God calls his children to be holy; he expects his children to share in his holiness.

How can we share in God's holiness? We share in God's holiness when we become partakers of the divine nature.³⁵ Peter points both to God's power to make us like himself and to our effort to grow in his image.

First, Peter promises that we can be partakers of God's nature:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire (2 Peter 1:3-4).

God makes us holy. His divine power has granted to us all things necessary for spiritual life and godliness. Godliness is not an impossible dream; God has granted to us his precious and great promises. One of these promises is that we may become partakers of the divine nature. The promise that we can look like our heavenly Father is for every child of God. This is not accomplished through our efforts; godliness is the gift of God's grace. Through God's power, we can live in harmony with God's character. God makes us holy.

Then, Peter continues:

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5-8).

Because God's divine power has made us partakers of the divine nature, we must make every effort to grow in virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. Because of what God has done, we must pursue holiness.

35 Adapted from Dr. A. Philip Brown, "Divine Holiness and Sanctifying God: A Proposal," unpublished paper.

Peter never suggests that we make ourselves holy by our own effort. He is not teaching legalism. We do not earn God's favor through our efforts. However, Peter wants us to understand that we cannot live a holy life without self-discipline.

We pursue holiness because of God's grace. His grace empowers our pursuit of a holy life. Because of God's divine power (verses 3-4), we make every effort to grow (verses 5-8). Our pursuit of holiness is not legalism; it is the natural desire of a transformed heart. If we are truly God's children, we will want to grow in holiness. If we are truly God's children, we will want to see God's purpose fulfilled in our lives.

HOW DO I LIVE THE HOLY LIFE? "NOT I, BUT CHRIST"

Writing to the Philippian Christians, Paul pointed to Jesus as an example of the attitude they should demonstrate. Christ humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). Paul wanted these believers to understand that the path for God's children is the path of humility, not the path of self-promotion. We must have the mind of Christ.

We may be tempted to respond, "Of course, Jesus lived a perfect life. He was the Son of God. But that does not help me. I'm not Jesus!" How can we follow Christ's example? Paul taught that the Spirit of Christ lives in the believer.

Paul wrote to young Christians, "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Romans 8:9). We live a holy life not in our own strength but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's own testimony shows this transformation. Paul points to his life as a Pharisee attempting to fulfill the demands of the law in his own power. He remembers the time when he had the desire but not the ability to do right. He says, "It is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me" (Romans 7:17). Paul's efforts to be righteous in his own strength were doomed to failure.

After meeting Christ, Paul's testimony changed from "not I, but sin" to "not I, but Christ" (Galatians 2:20). Paul could live a victorious Christian life because Christ now lived in him.

Paul encouraged the Corinthians, "Do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" (2 Corinthians 13:5). We can be Christlike because Christ lives in us. The Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it like this: to be a Christian means that "the exact space once occupied by the old man is now occupied by Jesus Christ."³⁶

36 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 41

Christ lives in us, or to state the same principle in another way, “We live in Christ.” One of Paul’s most representative phrases is “in Christ.” Paul uses some version of “in Christ,” “in him,” “in whom,” or “in the Son” more than 150 times in his letters. Paul repeatedly points to our place in Christ as the secret to the Christian life. Daily victory comes because we are in Christ.

Our old life was lived “in Adam,” in our fallen sinful self. Our new life is lived “in Christ,” in the power of the risen Lord who gives us daily victory over sin.

- In Adam, we walked in darkness; in Christ, we walk in light.
- In Adam, we were slaves of sin; in Christ, we are slaves to righteousness.
- In Adam, we delighted in the sins of the flesh; in Christ, we “have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Colossians 3:10).

This understanding is crucial to the victorious life. When we see ourselves in Adam (“forgiven sinners” who live in bondage to sin), we will continually fall to temptation. When we see ourselves in Christ (“transformed saints” who have power through Christ), we will live in victory over sin. Paul told the Colossian Christians the secret to a holy life: “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him” (Colossians 2:6). As we walk in Christ, we are made holy.

Some people imagine sanctification like a flu shot that the doctor gives you to prevent sickness. They think that when we ask God to make us holy, he gives us a “holy shot” that prevents us from being sinful. They believe that after God sanctifies us, we live a holy life in our own power.

“The secret of a holy life lies not in imitating Jesus, but in letting the holiness of Jesus manifest itself in me.”

Oswald Chambers

The Bible nowhere gives that picture. Instead, we live in Christ. We are holy in Christ. We are set free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). We are sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:2). We are not made holy through our desperate attempts to imitate Jesus in our own strength. We are made holy by letting Jesus live in us. So let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Paul testified:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

Paul’s testimony can be translated like this: “The life I am living now in the body I live by faith in the Son of God.” Paul does not postpone the call to holiness until death. Paul testifies

that he is living the holy life now. How does he live a holy life? By faith in the Son of God. Paul lived a holy life only because “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

Paul’s language parallels Jesus’ teaching in John 15.

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

Holiness is not an object to be received apart from our life in Christ; holiness is a relationship to be maintained. We are alive as we remain connected to the vine. We live a holy life only through our life in Christ. A holy God dwells in us and we are holy as we walk with him.

“For you have died **and your life is hidden with Christ in God**” (Colossians 3:3). A holy life is not achieved in our power; a holy life is hidden with Christ in God. We live a holy life by living each day with the mind of Christ. As we walk in Christ, we have power to live a holy life in a sinful world. We have power to be holy in everyday life. This is what it means to be holy.

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: LIVING A LIFE OF VICTORY

A message of a holy life is a beautiful message. However, a doctrine that cannot be lived in daily life is of little practical value. Is it possible to live a life of victory over willful sin or is the message of a holy life simply a dream?

Is Victory Over Sin Possible?

Paul promised that we can be more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:37). Surely this promise of a victorious life in Christ includes victory over the power of sin. If it is possible to live in daily victory over willful sin, why do so many Christians fail to live victoriously? What are some causes of spiritual defeat?

We Will Be Defeated If We Do Not Believe a Life of Victory Is Possible

Some Christians do not live a victorious life because they have become convinced that a victorious life is impossible. They have heard sermons that teach that we must continually fall to willful sin—and they have despaired of any victory over sin. If we want to live a life of victory over sin, we must take seriously John’s call: “I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin” (1 John 2:1). John wrote to Christians in the confidence that it was possible for them to live a victorious life. We must claim this hope in faith to give us confidence in the face of temptation.

We Will Be Defeated If We Rest on Past Spiritual Experience or Church Status

Some people view the holy life as a one-time experience that requires no ongoing discipline or effort. They believe that once they testify, “God has cleansed my heart by faith and made me pure” there is nothing else to be done. However, as Paul showed, we must continue to press toward the mark. Victory over sin requires an ongoing life of discipline. I must continue to say “no” to sin so that I can say “yes” to God.

Some sermons on the temptation of Jesus end with Jesus’ victory over Satan’s temptation. However, Luke ends the story with an important concluding statement, “And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). This was not the last time Jesus would be tempted. Although the Gospels do not record details of later temptations, Luke makes clear that Satan planned to again tempt Jesus.

We must never assume that we have reached a point of spiritual maturity from which we can never fall. Instead, we must continue to keep watch over our bodies and minds. Satan loves to attack at a moment when we let down our guard. The holy life requires careful vigilance.

Pastors and church leaders can be tempted to rely on our public status for spiritual victory. We can assume that because we preach truth and feel God’s anointing that we cannot fall. However, it is possible to preach on Sunday and to fall to Satan’s temptation on Monday. We must never rest on our past experiences or our position in the church.

We Will Be Defeated If We Try to Live the Christian Life in Our Own Power

A life of victory comes not in our own power but in the power of the Holy Spirit. The holy life is lived **daily** in the ongoing power of the Spirit. We never reach the point at which we, in our own power, can defeat Satan’s temptations. Peter boasted, “Even though they all fall away, I will not... If I must die with you, I will not deny you” (Mark 14:29-31). He believed he could face Satan’s attacks in his own power. He soon failed.

However, as we live in the power of the Spirit, he gives us victory over temptation. In the same way that Jesus faced temptation in the power of the Spirit, we can face temptation in the power of the Spirit.

Again, pastors and church leaders can be tempted to rest on our own efforts. As we lead in public prayer, we can fail to spend time alone with God. As we study to proclaim God’s Word publicly, we can forget to spend time listening to God speak to us personally through his Word. We must not allow our ministry efforts to diminish our reliance on a personal walk with God and the power of his Spirit for spiritual victory.

If We Fall

John called believers to a life of victory over sin. “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin” (1 John 2:1). It is possible to live without spiritual failure. However, John gave provision for those who fall into sin, “But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). This balance is important—and often ignored.

On one side, there are those who emphasize only the first part of this verse: “I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.” They preach that we can and should live free of willful sin. However, they have no message for those who fail in a moment of weakness.

On the other side, there are many who emphasize only the latter part of this verse: “But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” They imply that a victorious life is impossible and so we must continually fall into sin.

John provides the proper balance. First, **a victorious life is possible**; I do not have to yield to Satan’s temptation. But second, if I fall in a moment of weakness, **I have an advocate**. I do not have to abandon my Christian walk. I do not need to despair. Yes, God will discipline me. But he disciplines me as a loving father disciplines a child—in order to “yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness (Hebrews 12:10, 11).

Satan wants to convince Christians to rely on our performance as the means of pleasing God. He wants us to forget that we have been reconciled to God and are now his children. When we were sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Consider then, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Romans 5:10).

As sinners, we did not earn God’s favor; he reconciled us to himself by the death of his Son. Now, Paul says, “how much more will we be saved by his life!” Some Christians seem to believe that “I am saved by grace through faith, but I **stay** saved by being good enough to deserve God’s love.”

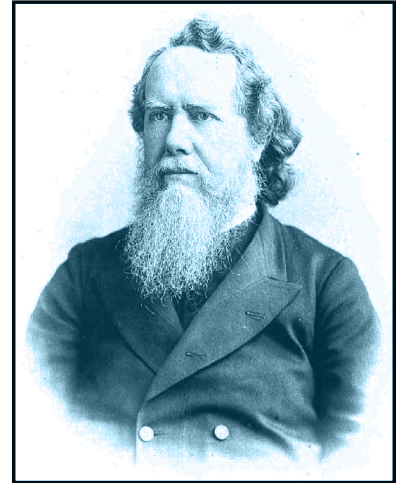
This is the same as a parent who says, “Yes, I loved you enough to bring you into the world—but now you have to earn my love through daily performance.” This is not a loving parent! And this is not our loving heavenly Father.

Instead, just as I relied on God’s grace to first bring me to spiritual life, I rely on grace to keep my spiritually alive. **And**, if I fall, I must again rely on God’s grace to restore me to spiritual health.

HE FOUND THE SECRET - HUDSON TAYLOR

One of the most influential missionaries of the modern era was Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission.³⁷ Taylor was converted at the age of 17 through the prayers of his mother. He studied medicine and sailed to China as a missionary at the age of 21.

When he was 28 years old, he returned to England because of hepatitis. During the next five years, he sought God's leadership and came to believe that God wanted him to recruit missionaries to go to the unevangelized China inland. At the age of 34, Hudson and Maria Taylor with their children sailed with a group of 16 other missionaries, the first group of missionaries from China Inland Mission.



One of Hudson Taylor's most famous sayings is, "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply." We often interpret this as a statement about money, but for Taylor it was much more. He believed that God would supply money, assurance, faith, peace, strength, and everything else needed to accomplish his will. During five decades as leader of China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor saw this promise fulfilled countless times.

In 1869, Taylor came to the great crisis of his spiritual life. He had struggled with temptations and failures. He wrote to his mother, "I never knew how bad a heart I have." But he also wrote, "I know that I love God and love His work, and desire to serve Him only and in all things. ***May God help me to love Him more and serve Him better.***"

On September 4, 1869, Hudson Taylor testified that God had poured out his Spirit in a new way in Taylor's life. Taylor wrote to a colleague, "God has made me a new man!" The key to Taylor's new assurance of God's presence in his life was a sentence in a letter from a fellow missionary, John McCarthy. Taylor had been seeking through his efforts to gain a deeper faith and assurance of God's presence. McCarthy wrote, "How do we get our faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One."

Taylor wrote to his sister,

As I read, I saw it all! "If we believe not, he abideth faithful." I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh, how joy flowed)! that He had said, "I will never leave thee."

37 Image: "Hudson Taylor in 1893", *The Story of The China Inland Mission* (1893), retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HudsonTaylorin1893.jpg>, public domain.

“Ah, there is rest!” I thought. “I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I’ll strive no more. For has not He promised to abide with me—never to leave me, never to fail me?” And, dearie, He never will.

I saw not only that Jesus will never leave me, but that I am a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The vine is not the root merely, but all—root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit. And Jesus is not that alone—He is soil and sunshine, air and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for or needed. Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! I do pray that the eyes of your understanding too may be enlightened, that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ.

In this moment, Taylor understood that Christlikeness comes not through effort but through union with the Vine that gives life. It comes through identification with Christ. His son later wrote, “He had long known surrender, but this was more; this was a new yieldedness, a glad, unreserved handing over of self and everything to Him.”

This was not a temporary emotional experience. Thirty years later, Taylor looked back and wrote, “We shall never forget the blessing we received through the words, in John 4:14, ‘Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.’ As we realized that Christ literally meant what He said—that ‘shall’ meant shall, and ‘never’ meant never, and ‘thirst’ meant thirst—our heart overflowed with joy *as we accepted the gift.*” Notice that phrase, “as we accepted the gift.” Taylor understood that God’s sanctifying grace is a gift to be received, not an achievement to be earned.

This experience of God’s grace did not make the rest of Taylor’s life easy. The next year was one of the most difficult years of his life. In that year, two of his children died and Maria died at the age of 33. Later, Taylor would lead China Inland Mission through the terrors of the Boxer Rebellion. Seventy-nine members of the Mission would be killed during those terrible days.

But through all of this, Taylor remained confident in his trust that God would supply all that was needed. An Episcopal priest who visited Taylor during a difficult time wrote, “Here was a man almost 60 years of age, bearing tremendous burdens, yet absolutely calm and untroubled.” Why? Because Taylor was one with the Vine and he was resting in Christ. He was “one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11).

This experience was not the end of spiritual growth for Taylor. Nor did his “resting in Christ” mean that there was no effort involved. Each morning, regardless of the pressures of ministry, Taylor spent two hours in prayer and Bible study before he began the work of the day. He understood, with Paul, that we must press on toward the goal. But this was effort that relied on God’s strength, not Hudson Taylor’s strength. Taylor now knew that even

the power to move from the bed to begin his Bible study was the gift of God's empowering grace. He could be Christlike ***because he was 'in Christ.'***

Taylor's son remembered his life of prayer and the Word. Resting in Christ did not mean that Taylor ignored the necessity of spiritual discipline.

To him, the secret of overcoming lay in daily, hourly fellowship with God; and this, he found, could only be maintained by secret prayer and feeding upon the Word through which He reveals Himself to the waiting soul. It was not easy for Mr. Taylor, in his changeful life, to make time for prayer and Bible study, but he knew that it was vital.

Often with only one large room, they would screen a corner for their father and another for themselves, with curtains of some sort; and then, after sleep at last had brought a measure of quiet, they would hear a match struck and see the flicker of candlelight which told that Mr. Taylor, however weary, was poring over the little Bible in two volumes always at hand. From two to four a.m. was the time he usually gave to prayer; the time when he could be most sure of being undisturbed to wait upon God.... The hardest part of a missionary career, Mr. Taylor found, is to maintain regular, prayerful Bible study. "Satan will always find you something to do," he would say, "when you ought to be occupied" in prayer and scripture.

Today 1,600 missionaries work for OMF International, the successor of China Inland Mission. Millions of Chinese believers have been led to Christ through the ministry of this Mission. This is the fruit of a man who lived in union with Christ.³⁸

LOVE DIVINE - CHARLES WESLEY

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down;
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling; all Thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation; enter every trembling heart.

Finish, then, Thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see Thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

38 Adapted from Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*

LESSON 10 IN REVIEW

1. The apostles called every Christian to be holy.
2. To be holy is to be like Christ.
 - To be holy is to have a holy heart: a Christlike heart and mind.
 - To be holy is to have holy hands: Christlike behavior.
 - To be holy is to have Christlike love.
3. The Epistles show what holiness will look like in daily life.
 - You have been made holy; you are being made holy.
 - You are saints; you must live as saints.
 - God makes you holy; you must pursue holiness.
4. We are empowered to live holy lives through the Spirit of Christ living in us.
5. We live a holy life “in Christ.” Our old life was lived “in Adam.” Our new life is lived “in Christ.”
6. A holy life is based on an ongoing relationship with the Vine.

LESSON 10 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Prepare a sermon on “A Christlike Life.” Contrast two ways to live: our old life in Adam and our new life in Christ. Show how being “in Christ” empowers us for victory over sin.
2. Begin the next class session by quoting Philippians 2:1-5.

LESSON 11

HOLINESS IS UNBROKEN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Rejoice in the fulfillment of God's prophetic promises.
2. Recognize that fellowship in the church is preparation for fellowship in heaven.
3. Commit to active participation in a local church that encourages growth in holiness.
4. Memorize Revelation 21:2-3.

JOHN: A MAN WHO SAW THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PLAN

Travel to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. This is not a beautiful Caribbean or South Pacific island. It is a prison island. Patmos is bare and lonely. There you will find John the Beloved Disciple living in exile.

John is an old man. He has served God faithfully and has been a model of the holy life. He has ministered at the church at Ephesus, cared for Jesus' widowed mother, and preached throughout Asia Minor.

At an age when he might enjoy honor as the last living disciple of Jesus, John has been banished to the Isle of Patmos. He is lonely and may feel that he is no longer useful in God's work. But on a Sunday morning almost 60 years after Jesus' ascension, John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, when he heard a voice like a trumpet (Revelation 1:10).

When John turned to the voice, he saw the Christ to whom he had given his life. Jesus' hair was white like wool, his eyes were like fire, his feet gleamed like bronze, and his voice was like the roar of a mighty waterfall. His face was shining (Revelation 1:12-16). John beheld the "glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

In Revelation, we travel with John into the heavens to see the fulfillment of God's plan. A holy people will dwell eternally in unbroken fellowship with a holy God.

A PERFECT WORLD

A Perfect World Lost

In the opening lesson of this course, you were asked to imagine the garden of Eden in the days after creation. It was a perfect world. Flowers, trees, and fruits were everywhere. It was a world without sin and its effects. It was a world without pain, tears, or death. Most importantly, it was a world of perfect relationship between God and mankind. Nothing separated man from his Creator.

Sadly, sin damaged this perfect world. Weeds grew among the flowers. Peaceful animals became dangerous predators. Man endured suffering, pain, and death. Most importantly, the perfect relationship between God and man was damaged. Because of sin, people were banished from the garden of Eden and barred from the Tree of Life. It appeared that Satan had defeated God's purpose for his people.

A Perfect World Promised

But this was not the end. Throughout scripture, God shows his plan to restore his people to be like himself; he desires to create a holy people. The Old Testament prophets promised that God will someday make his people holy and return them to a holy place. Repeatedly, John the Revelator points to the fulfillment of these promises.

Ezekiel saw a day when God will dwell among his holy people.

A Prayer for Holiness

"Bring us, O Lord, at our last awakening into the house and gate of heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house where there shall be no darkness, but one light; no noise, but one music; no end nor beginning, but one eternity in the habitation of your glory and dominion, world without end."

Adapted from John Donne

My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that **I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel**, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore (Ezekiel 37:27-28).

God will sanctify Israel; he will make his people holy. He will dwell among his people. The promise of Ezekiel 37:27 is fulfilled in Revelation 21:3:

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

God's ultimate purpose will be accomplished when he dwells among his holy people. Like Ezekiel, Zechariah foresaw a day when God's purpose for his people will be fulfilled. God promised, "I will dwell in your midst" (Zechariah 2:10-11).

Zechariah 3 portrays God's plan for his people. In Zechariah's vision, the high priest was clothed in filthy garments representing Israel's impurity. God will someday cleanse his people; Israel's filthy garments will be replaced by pure linen.

And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments" (Zechariah 3:4).

The last verses of Zechariah contain one of the most glorious pictures in the Old Testament.

And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the LORD." And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. (Zechariah 14:20-21).

The bells of the horses will be inscribed with words from the high priest's turban (Exodus 28:36-38). Ordinary pots will be as holy as the sacred bowls before the altar. Jerusalem will be what God intended it to be; the entire city will be God's dwelling place.

God will accomplish His purpose; he will have a holy people living in a holy city. Zechariah's vision is fulfilled in Revelation 21 and 22. God's people will live in his presence. "He will dwell with them, and they will be his people" (Revelation 21:3).

A Perfect World Restored

The Bible begins by describing a perfect world that was lost because of the fall. It ends by describing a perfect world that awaits those who allow God to fulfill his plan in their life. A Holy City is prepared for God's holy people.

Like the garden of Eden, the Holy City is a perfect world with flowers, trees, and delicious fruits everywhere. Everything is beautiful:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:1-2).

Because of sin, humanity was banished from the garden of Eden and the tree of life. In Revelation, the tree of life is again available to people.

This will be a world without sin. Readers are sometimes frightened by the middle chapters of Revelation. These chapters describe the judgments that will fall on the earth. Many readers want to skip to the final chapters that give a picture of the beauty of heaven. However, we cannot ignore the middle of the book. For a holy people to live in unbroken fellowship with a holy God, the power of sin must be broken.

Revelation shows Satan's hatred of God's people. John saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads (Revelation 13:1). The beast was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them (Revelation 13:7). For a time, it appears that evil defeats God's holy people. However, the beast will ultimately be defeated (Revelation 15:2). God's people will ultimately be victorious. God's purpose will be accomplished.

Throughout history, God's people have trusted that a holy God will do what is right. God's holiness gave the psalmist confidence when he cried out for justice. "For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you" (Psalm 5:4). In Revelation, John heard the cries of the martyrs, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10).

The holiness of God assures God's people that justice will prevail. John wrote to Christians suffering under the oppression of Rome. He promised that the holy and true judge of the earth would someday bring justice for his people. Revelation calls God's people to remain faithful, knowing that a holy God will avenge his holy people. Revelation looks to a time when Satan will be defeated, and God's holy people will live in peace.

Heaven is a holy city. It is a city without sin or sin's effects. It is a city without pain, without tears, without suffering, and without death. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

But there is something even more wonderful. The best part of the garden of Eden was the perfect fellowship between God and man. Adam and Eve walked in the garden with God.

They talked with him face to face. Nothing separated God and man. In heaven, we will live in perfect fellowship with God. Nothing will separate a holy people from a holy God.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (Revelation 21:3).

John describes heaven as a place without fear, pain, or death. Everything that caused fear in the ancient world (the unknown reaches of the sea, the danger of night, the threat of disease) will be gone. This everlasting peace will be based on the presence of God.

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:3-5).

Holy people have always desired to see God. Moses asked to see God but could not look on his face (Exodus 33:18-20). David prayed, “When shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalm 42:2).³⁹ Jesus promised that the pure in heart shall see God (Matthew 5:8). This promise is fulfilled in Revelation. “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads” (Revelation 22:4).

Dallas Willard told about a young child whose mother died. One night, afraid and alone, the boy asked to sleep in his father’s bedroom. In the middle of the night, the boy awoke and asked his father, “Is your face turned toward me?” The father replied, “Yes, my face is turned toward you.” This was enough; the child slept peacefully. In heaven, a holy people will see the face of God. His face will be eternally turned toward us; we will have peace.

God’s plan will be fulfilled! The garden of Eden will be restored. A people with holy hearts and holy hands will live forever with a holy God. This is God’s plan for his people.

HOLINESS IS UNBROKEN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

John saw a vision of God’s plan for his people. It is a vision of a holy people living in a holy city. Three times in Revelation, John describes the place of our eternal dwelling as the holy city (Revelation 21:2, 10; Revelation 22:19). This is the home of a holy God, holy angels, and holy people. This beautiful city is a place of perfect holiness. Only holy people can live there.

Revelation 21 gives a beautiful picture of heaven, but it also includes this warning:

39 An alternate translation of this prayer reads, “When shall I come and see the face of God?” (*English Standard Version* footnote).

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death (Revelation 21:8).

Heaven is a holy city. God will not allow sin to destroy the purity of that city. The old preachers said, “Heaven is a holy place prepared for a holy people.” Only a holy people would **enjoy** living in this holy city.

A self-centered person would not enjoy a city in which the Lamb of God is the central attraction. A person who lives for sinful pleasure would be unhappy in a city in which all is pure. A person who does not love God would be bored in a city where the worship of God is eternal. The Holy City is designed for a holy people. Because God’s people are holy and pure, they will live with him forever in the city.

The promise of Ezekiel 40-48 is fulfilled in the New Jerusalem. However, the reader soon sees a difference between Ezekiel’s vision and its fulfillment in Revelation. In Ezekiel’s vision, the Temple stands in the middle of the city. In the New Jerusalem, there is no temple, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb (Revelation 21:22). God himself is the temple! The entire city is now holy ground set apart for God and his people.

The unbroken fellowship that God and man shared in the garden is restored. The shame and fear that caused a sinful Adam and Eve to hide from God is gone. We will look on God’s face. Holy people will enjoy unbroken fellowship with a holy God.

In the Old Testament, God set Israel apart as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). In Revelation, the church is a kingdom and priests to our God (Revelation 5:10). Unlike the nation of Israel, this kingdom is a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages (Revelation 7:9). The promise of Genesis 12:3 is fulfilled in Revelation 7:9.

Just as Israel could fulfill its mission as a kingdom of priests only by remaining holy, the church can fulfill its mission only if it is holy. God’s people must be holy. In the Old Testament, the Levites were clothed in white linen symbolizing their purity. In the same way, John shows that saints are to be pure (Revelation 3:4-5; Revelation 6:11; Revelation 19:8). Only those who wash their robes may enter the city (Revelation 22:14). A holy people will dwell at peace with a holy God.

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE: WHEN I DON’T FEEL HOLY

Does this sound familiar? You hear a sermon that challenges you to deeper holiness. You pray and commit yourself to a holy life. For the next eight weeks, you grow in your spiritual life. You see the fruit of the Spirit increasing in your life. You find a deeper love for God and your neighbor.

Then suddenly, the progress and growth seem to stop. You are still walking with God; you are still living a victorious life; you love God and love your neighbor. But through physical illness, emotional stress, or even the pressures of ministry, you realize, “I don’t feel like I am growing in holiness. What is wrong?”

How do you continue in the holy life when you don’t feel holy? Do you give up and say, “Holiness is impossible”? How do you continue to walk in holiness?

» Have you experienced this challenge? How did you respond?

“When I Don’t Feel Holy, I Must Walk by Faith.”

In Lesson 2, we saw that holiness is walking with God. Abraham walked with God to a country he had never seen. He walked with God in obedience and faith. 4,000 years later, it sounds very exciting to read about Abraham’s faith. But put yourself in his sandals—walking day after day after day through rugged land. There is no end in sight, and you don’t even know where you are going. Do you think that Abraham woke up every morning feeling excitement about the day? Most likely not! There were probably days when he said, “I don’t feel like walking today.” But Abraham kept walking with God.

We read that Noah walked with God in a sinful world. Surrounded by idol worshippers and men who constantly devised new ways to do evil (Genesis 6:5), Noah walked with God. Do you think that he awoke every morning with excitement for the day? Sometimes he surely felt exhausted and discouraged. But Noah kept walking with God.

One key to the life of holiness is to remember that we were saved by grace through faith; we were sanctified by grace through faith; we continue to grow in holiness by grace through faith. Some people understand that they are saved by grace through faith. They even learn that they are sanctified by grace through faith. But then they fall into the trap of believing that continuing growth relies on their own efforts.

Is there discipline involved in the life of holiness? Absolutely! Must we continue to put to death what is earthly in us? (Colossians 3:5). Yes. Must we continue to strain forward to what lies ahead and press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus? (Philippians 3:13-14). Of course!

But you must never forget that your putting to death, straining forward, and pressing toward the goal is done in the power of God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). He is the one who gave the desire (will); he is the one who gives the power (work). He is working in us to accomplish his purpose of making us holy. When you don’t feel holy, you rest in the grace of the God who is daily transforming you into his image.

“When I Don’t Feel Holy, I Must Rest in His Holiness.”

In Lesson 5, we saw that perfection is not about flawless performance but about a heart that is undivided in our commitment to God. In Lesson 7, we learned that Jesus’ command, “Be perfect” is a command to undivided love for God. Christian perfection is not about performance; it is about love.

We are holy only because God is holy. Our identity is in Christ. He makes us holy. One of the great truths of the gospel is that we no longer struggle to achieve holiness in our own power. We can rest in Christ. Our identity as Christians, our identity as saints, our identity as holy people is in him.

Robert Coleman once told a story about what it means to love God perfectly when we cannot perform perfectly. Dr. Coleman was working in his garden on a hot summer day. When his little boy saw his daddy sweating in the sun, he decided to bring him a cup of water. The boy picked up a dirty cup, filled it with water from a puddle in the yard, and brought it to his father. Dr. Coleman said, “The glass was dirty and the water was muddy. But, the drink was perfect because it came from a heart of love.” That is a picture of our limited perfection. We bring our broken, imperfect service to a God who accepts it because it comes from a heart of love.

God accepts our broken efforts and transforms them into something beyond our imagination—because our holiness is a mere shadow of his unlimited holiness. Even our best love is affected by our human limitations. But when we rest in his holiness, we realize that obedience to his command to “Be holy” is accomplished perfectly only through himself. With hearts of undivided love, we bring him our muddy glass of water—and he transforms it into something pure and sparkling. Our holiness is perfected in his holiness.

“When I Don’t Feel Holy, I Must Remember That I Am Part of a Holy People.”

A major—but often overlooked—theme of Revelation is the church. Revelation begins with a series of messages to the seven churches. These messages show the importance of the local church community within the larger body of Christ. But this is not the end of Revelation’s emphasis on the church.

The community of 144,000 redeemed may be a figurative representation of the entire church, the body of Christ. Later in the book, the church is seen as the bride of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-8). The church is a focal point of Revelation.

If this is true, our worship and fellowship as a church on earth is preparation for our worship and fellowship as the church eternal. What does this mean for our life as a church today?

- » If Revelation is a picture of the bride of Christ, how should its portrayal of the church affect life in the church? Or to ask in another way—in what ways does your church look like the church in Revelation? In what ways does your church not look like the church in Revelation?

One practical result of this truth is that our holy life is lived in fellowship with the church. In the individualistic modern world, many Christians think of salvation *only* in terms of personal, private experience.

However, while there are examples of individuals like Enoch walking with God alone, there are many more biblical examples of God's children walking with God **as part of a body**. The laws of purity in Israel were for a people of God (Leviticus 20:26). Israel was more than a group of individuals; it was a corporate body growing together in the image of God.

The New Testament church was more than a group of individuals who happen to belong to the same club. The church was—and is—the body of Christ. The saints of Revelation face martyrdom as part of a body. Even when they die alone, they know that they are part of the universal church. The saints of Revelation live holy lives as part of a body. They are part of a pure bride. Even when John is isolated on the Island of Patmos, he knows that he is part of the universal church.

It has become common to hear people say, "I love Jesus, but I don't love the church." This is based on a tragic misunderstanding of the church! If the church is the bride of Christ and I love Christ, I **must** love the church. The church is a body of believers growing together in the image of God.

We were not created to live alone. John Wesley said, "All holiness is social holiness." He meant that we grow as part of a body. Wesley put believers into small groups for spiritual accountability, because people grow spiritually as they are in close relationship with others.

"When someone thinks that to develop a holy life he must always be alone with God, he is no longer of any use to others."

Oswald Chambers

What does this mean for us today? Holy people are part of a holy church. We grow in holiness as part of a holy body. When I struggle, God brings alongside a fellow seeker after holiness who can encourage me in my area of weakness. On the other hand, when God has given me victory in an area, I can encourage a brother who is weaker in that area. The holy life is intended to be lived out in a community of Spirit-filled believers who are making God's love manifest in our world.

The writer of Hebrews understood this well.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Encouraging persecuted Christians to persevere in the faith, he told them to stir each other up as they meet together and encourage one another. Part of the function of the church is to encourage each member to a deeper love and holiness.

When you don't feel holy, allow God to encourage you to further growth through the fellow Christians in the body where he has placed you. You are part of the universal church, but you are also part of a local body. God has put you there for a reason. Allow your fellow believers to stir you to greater growth in the holy life.

SHE FOUND THE SECRET – FANNY CROSBY

When Fanny Crosby⁴⁰ was two months old, a doctor's mistake left her permanently blind. A few months later, her father died. Her mother had to leave the family alone for long hours while she worked as a maid. Fanny knew the difficulties of life in a sin-cursed world.

Fanny Crosby's hymns testify to her commitment to Christ. She had fully surrendered her will to God's will. In a beautiful phrase, Ms. Crosby prayed that her will would be lost in God's perfect will.



Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord,
By the power of grace divine.
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
And my will be lost in Thine.

Fanny Crosby understood that holiness is perfect love for God and perfect love for our neighbor. She gave her time and money to missions that ministered to alcoholics and the homeless. She and her husband gave away everything that was not necessary for their survival. She loved God, and she loved her neighbor. Day by day, Fanny Crosby grew in Christlikeness and perfect love.

Fanny looked forward to the day when the promise, "They will see his face" will be fulfilled. When someone expressed pity for her condition, Fanny Crosby responded that she rejoiced in her blindness because, "When I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior. I will see Him face to face."

40 Image: "Francis Jane Crosby, 1820-1915" by W.J. Searle, retrieved from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b17084>, "no known restrictions."

MY SAVIOR FIRST OF ALL – FANNY CROSBY

When my life work is ended, and I cross the swelling tide,
When the bright and glorious morning I shall see;
I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side,
And His smile will be the first to welcome me.

Through the gates of the city in a robe of spotless white,
He will lead me where no tears will ever fall;
In the glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight;
But I long to meet my Savior first of all.

LESSON 11 IN REVIEW

1. Holiness is unbroken fellowship with God.
2. From Genesis 3 through the Epistles, God promises restoration of the intimate fellowship between God and man. This promise is fulfilled in Revelation.
3. Revelation shows a holy people in unbroken fellowship with a holy God.
4. The fellowship of the church is preparation for fellowship in heaven. The church on earth is a (fallible) model of the church eternal. Because of this, we should seek to pattern life in the church here on the unity of the church there.

LESSON 11 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Imagine that someone said to you, “I love Jesus, but not the church.” Write a 1-2 page letter in which you show this person that loving Jesus should lead to a love for Jesus’ bride, the church. Show how a holy heart will inspire a love for God’s church. Show how being part of a church will help us to grow in holiness.
2. Begin the next class session by quoting Revelation 21:2-3.

LESSON 12

IS A HOLY LIFE POSSIBLE?

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize that God's command to holiness is fulfilled in his promise to make us holy.
2. Surrender fully to God's call to holiness.
3. Commit to daily growth in holiness.
4. Memorize 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.

PAUL: A MAN WHO PURSUED HOLINESS

Imagine a conversation with Saul of Tarsus in A.D. 34. Ask, "Are you a holy person?" Saul would answer, "Yes, I am holy! I was circumcised according to the law. I am a Pharisee. I observe every detail of the law. I am righteous." Saul considered himself holy because of his careful obedience to the law. He tried to earn God's favor through good works (Philippians 3:4-6).

But on the road to Damascus, Saul came face to face with the risen Lord. He learned that his righteousness was as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). He had opposed not a false teacher, but the true Messiah. He had failed to obey the perfect law of love for God and love for his neighbor. On the road to Damascus, Saul found a new path to holiness: "...not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Philippians 3:9).

Imagine a conversation with Paul in A.D. 60. "Paul, you now know that the only way to true righteousness is by faith in Christ. Does this mean that you cannot be holy? Does this mean that Christ will count you holy even though you are full of sin?"

Paul would react with shock. “This is wrong! Righteousness comes only by faith in Christ—but God does not leave us in the sinful condition in which he found us. Read my testimony. My goal is ‘that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.’ My goal is to become like Christ. Salvation by faith does not give us permission to live a sinful life; salvation by faith gives us power to be Christlike. A loving God empowers his children to live holy lives through the indwelling Spirit!” (Philippians 3:10).

- » Review what you have learned about holiness. Do you have a picture of the beauty of holiness? Do you believe that this holy life is promised to God’s people?

IS A HOLY LIFE POSSIBLE?

In this course, we have seen that God commands his people to be holy. But many people read God’s command and respond, “That is impossible. I cannot be holy.” Must Christians settle for lives of daily defeat and frustrated hopes? Must we fail to enjoy God’s provision for a holy life? Or can we enjoy God’s great purpose for his people?

God’s Word Testifies That a Holy Life Is Possible

From Enoch to the Gentile converts in Thessalonica, the Bible teaches that a holy life is possible.

In Leviticus and again in 1 Peter, God commanded, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16). God nowhere gives a command without making provisions for obedience. God is a loving Father who does not frustrate his children with impossible commands. While we cannot obey his commands in our own power, God’s grace gives us power to obey God’s commands.

Professor Bill Ury says, “A commandment is a picture of who God is and a promise of what we can become.”⁴¹ The command, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” shows who God is; he is a holy God. This command also shows what we can become; we can be holy.

Christians throughout History Have Demonstrated That a Holy Life Is Possible

Christians in every generation have found that a holy life is the privilege of God’s children. People from every walk of life have found the joy of resting in the power of the Holy Spirit. They have found the peace that comes from loving God with an undivided heart and loving their neighbor as themselves.

41 Email correspondence, June 27, 2016

Our God-Given Hunger for Holiness Testifies That a Holy Life Is Possible

Every believer hungers for a closer relationship with God. True Christians want to be like Christ. God has planted in the heart of his children a hunger for a deepening relationship with himself. We can be sure that a loving heavenly Father will not give this hunger without providing a way to satisfy our hunger. Holiness is the joyous privilege of every believer.

IS A HOLY HEART FOR YOU?

Many years ago, there was a poor man who dreamed of crossing the ocean by ship. He saved his money for years until he could buy a ticket. After paying for the ticket, he had little money left. He had heard about the delicious meals served on ocean liners, but he knew those meals would be expensive. To save money, this man brought bread and cheese in his suitcase.

Each day when the passengers went to the dining room, this man went to his room and ate bread and cheese. He was happy to be on the ship, but he often wished he could enjoy the delicious meals in the dining room. On the last day of the voyage, the man decided to eat one meal in the dining room. He took every penny he had with him, hoping it would be enough to buy one meal. To his astonishment, the steward asked, “Where have you been? We have kept your table ready all week! The price of the meals is included in the price of your ticket. The price is already paid.”⁴²

Many Christians are like this poor man. The joy of a holy life, the peace of living in full surrender to God, and the victory of living in the power of the Holy Spirit—all has been provided by Christ’s death on the cross. Christ paid the full price, but we live below our privileges.

If a holy heart is available to every believer, why should any Christian fail to enjoy this privilege? We often allow Satan to deceive us into misunderstanding the Bible’s teaching. Satan’s lies keep us from enjoying the privilege God intends for his children.

“A Holy Heart is Impossible”

Many Christians think that a holy heart is impossible. They read the commands and promises of scripture, but they think, “That is okay for Abraham, but I could never be a ‘friend of God.’”

Some of those who say, “A holy heart is impossible” are speaking from painful experience. They have tried to live a holy life—and have failed. Perhaps they followed external rules

42 This story is adapted from John N. Oswalt, *Called to be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1999), 149-150

that they associated with holiness; perhaps they tried to control sinful attitudes and actions by rigid self-discipline; perhaps they even testified to a pure heart. Today, they have decided that it is impossible to be holy as the Lord our God is holy.

Imagine a man who learns to do bird calls. He practices until he can whistle the same notes as a robin. He is so good that a neighbor will think a robin is singing. But this man is not a bird! He can imitate the sounds, but he does not know what the sounds mean. He can imitate a bird, but he does not know what a bird feels when it is singing. He has the external actions; he does not have the internal reality.

Many Christians have learned the language and even the actions of a holy person. They say the words, but they do not have the experience in their heart. They have substituted external actions for inner reality. This soon leads to disappointment and frustration.

What is the answer to Satan's lie, "A holy heart is impossible"? We must have faith in God's promises. We must believe that our loving Father will empower us to obey his command.

Yes, you and I are fallible creatures who will never achieve the divine perfection of God. But God commanded us, "Be holy." Despite our fallen nature, we can trust a good God to provide the grace and power that enables us to obey his command.

"I'm Not Hungry for a Holy Heart"

Sadly, some professed Christians are not hungry for holiness. They profess to be Christians, but they have little or no desire to grow in the image of Christ.

Jesse professes to be a Christian, but he shows little interest in a holy life. He continues to practice willful sins; he lives just as he lived before he professed Christ. As we visited, Jesse mentioned some people who were much more careful about how they lived. Their attitudes were loving; their actions showed their desire to please God. They had holy hearts and holy hands.

Jesse commented about their hunger for holiness and then said, "I do not care about being holy. My pastor told me that if I have repented for my sins and believed on Jesus as my Savior, I will go to heaven. Going to heaven is all I care about. I do not need more than that!"

What is Jesse's problem? He does not have a hunger for holiness. It appears Jesse has little understanding of what it means to be a Christian. A person who is born again should want to be like Christ. A true Christian should be hungry for a holy heart.

What is the answer if you are not hungry for a holy heart? Perhaps you are truly born again, but you have been disappointed by past experiences, disillusioned by hypocrites

who claimed to be holy, or have never seen the message of a holy heart in scripture. If so, ask God to give you a hunger for a holy heart.

“I’m Holy Enough”

Perhaps the most dangerous lie we can tell ourselves is, “I am holy enough.” Some people believe they are holy because of the way they dress, their membership in a church, or a spiritual gift that they possess. Once we convince ourselves that “We are holy enough,” there will be no further growth in holiness.

An unmistakable sign of a holy person is a desire to grow in holiness. There are no examples in scripture or church history of a holy person who said, “I am holy enough.” The deeper a person grows in Christlikeness, the more he hungers for greater growth.

People who walk close to God say, “I am happy in my walk with God, but I want to walk even more closely with him!” Holy people rejoice in fellowship with God, but they seek more intimacy in their relationship with God. They rejoice as they grow in Christlikeness, but they also pray that God will make them even more like Christ.

What is the answer to a shallow profession of holiness? If you have deceived yourself into a false satisfaction, the answer is humility in the face of God’s perfect holiness. If you see his perfect holiness, you will never be satisfied with a shallow profession of holiness. When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up he recognized his own need for holiness:

Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! (Isaiah 6:1, 5).

When Isaiah saw the perfect holiness of God, he realized his own need for purity. The cure for a shallow profession of holiness is a deeper understanding of God. When we see God, we gain a greater hunger for a holy heart. The more we see God, the more we will desire to be like him.

THE PATH TO HOLINESS

How can we be made like Christ? How can you, a believer who desires to be filled with all the fullness of God, receive this wonderful gift? What is the path to a holy heart?

We do not have need to struggle to find the path to holiness. God’s Word shows the path to a holy life.

Initial Sanctification

From the moment of your new birth, the Holy Spirit has been living in you (Romans 8:1-2, 9-11). In an instant, you moved from darkness to light. From that point on, the New Testament describes you as a saint or a “holy one.”

Though you may still struggle with temptation, the Holy Spirit gives you victory over willful sin. People around you have seen the transformation as you live your new life in Christ. Rejoice in what God has done!

Growth in Sanctification

As you follow Christ, the Holy Spirit is transforming your inner spirit. As you walk by the Spirit, you no longer gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). Old temptations lose their hold on you. Obedience to God brings you lasting joy.

However, you see areas of struggle. You obey God, but there is sometimes a struggle between God’s commands and your inner desires. There is a struggle between what God commands and your selfish will. You find it difficult to love God completely and to love your neighbor. You begin to realize that you have a divided heart.

Heart Purity

As God reveals areas in which you need a deeper cleansing, you will begin to hunger for the promise of 1 Thessalonians 5:23. You will seek to know the reality of Paul’s prayer, “May the God of peace himself sanctify you **completely**.” You will begin to ask God, “Is there more that you want to do in my life? Can I be made pure? Can my inner desires be transformed to the place where I no longer struggle to obey you completely?”

Christians throughout history have prayed that God would give them a pure heart. Based on 1 Thessalonians 5:23, some have used the name “entire sanctification” for this experience.⁴³ Others have called it a “deeper life.” Some have identified this as the fullness of the Spirit. John Wesley used the term “perfect love.” Regardless of the terminology, this is the natural hunger of a child of God who wants to grow in the likeness of Christ.

As you pray for this deeper relationship, you may find three areas in which God will lead you. This is not the condemnation you felt as an unbeliever; you are now God’s child! Instead, these are areas in which God is calling you to a holy heart.

43 “Entire” is another term for “complete,” the word used in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. It does not mean “complete maturity;” it means complete purity and cleansing.

God Will Call You to Complete Obedience

Some believers struggle to find a holy heart because they are still struggling with some area of disobedience. We cannot walk in a close relationship with God unless we walk in obedience.

No true Christian lives in willful rebellion against God's commands. However, many Christians have found a way to excuse or deny (even to themselves) some area of carelessness. They would never say, "God, I will not obey you," but they say, "God, I don't think this is important enough to consider." They simply ignore some areas of disobedience. If we want to be the holy people that God calls his people to be, we must obey God in **every** area.

As fallen people, we deceive even ourselves about the depth of our sin. Because of this, the Psalmist prayed:

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139:23-24).

The Psalmist prayed that God would search and reveal his heart. He knew that we are incapable of knowing fully our own hearts. But as we seek to be filled with all the fullness of God, we will pray that God will reveal every aspect of our sinful nature.

David prayed, "Declare me innocent from hidden faults" (Psalm 19:12). He knew that we may hide the reality of our sin even from ourselves. Only God can shine a light into the secret corners of our heart.

As you seek a pure heart, you will find that God will reveal areas where your attitudes and actions do not reflect his image. Because you want to be Christlike, you will willingly confess these areas and obey God's call to full obedience.

God Will Call You to a Surrendered Heart

As you seek a pure heart, God will call you to surrender every aspect of your life. This is more than saying "No" to outward temptation. It is a full consecration of yourself to God. It is a full surrender of your will to God's will.

Paul called the Christians in Rome to yield themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1). These were Christians living in obedience to God, but Paul called them to a deeper surrender to God. Paul called them to say an eternal yes to God. He called them to full surrender.

Oswald Chambers showed the importance of surrendering fully to God's purpose.

To become one with Jesus Christ, a person must be willing not only to give up sin, but also to surrender his whole way of looking at things. Being born again by the Spirit of God means that we must first be willing to let go before we can grasp something else....

Along each step of this process, we will have to give up our claims to our rights to ourselves. Are we willing to surrender our grasp on all that we possess, our desires, and everything else in our lives? Are we ready to be identified with the death of Jesus Christ?

...Determine to go on through the crisis, surrendering all that you have and all that you are to him. And God will then equip you to do all that he requires of you.⁴⁴

George Matheson was a Scottish Presbyterian pastor who found in his heart a resistance to God's will. He was hungry for an undivided heart that submitted willingly to God. He prayed this prayer of surrender:

Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free. Force me to give up my sword, and I shall conqueror be. I sink in life's alarms when by myself I stand; Imprison me within thine arms, and strong shall be my hand.⁴⁵

Matheson understood that in full surrender, we find true victory. When we give ourselves as a captive to God, he frees us from bondage to sin. When we are weak, he makes us strong. We find our greatest victory when we reach the point of full surrender to God.

"The greatest crisis in the Christian's life is the full surrender of our will."

Oswald Chambers

God Will Call You to Trust Him in Faith

If you have surrendered fully to God, you can trust him to make you holy by grace through faith (Acts 15:9).

As a sinner, you came to Christ with nothing. You threw yourself on his mercy. By faith, you accepted his free offer of salvation, and he made you a new creature.

In the same way, as you hunger for a holy heart, you must come to Christ in faith. God who called you to holiness will make you holy. You can believe that his promise is for you. Paul's

44 Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (March 8 entry). Accessed from <https://utmost.org/the-surrendered-life/> on March 28, 2020.

45 George Matheson, "Make Me a Captive, Lord," accessed from https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Make_Me_a_Captive_Lord/ June 1, 2020.

prayer, “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely,” can be a reality in your life. You can believe God’s promises. “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

Isaiah 6 - A Story of Cleansing

“Holy, holy, holy” the angels cried, while Isaiah trembled! Isaiah needed to see himself as unclean before a holy God could trust him with the soul of the nation.

When Isaiah saw his own heart, he cried out, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips.” He saw the depth of his own sinful nature. But God did not leave him in this terrifying position.

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

Cleansing is often painful. Do you hear the burning flesh as the angel touches Isaiah’s lips with the burning coal? This was not cheap grace; cleansing is not pain-free.

However, this story teaches a wonderful and encouraging truth. If we let him, God will make us holy. God’s purpose was not to torment Isaiah; God’s purpose was to make Isaiah clean. God’s purpose for his people *can* be accomplished. We *can* be made clean.

Continued Growth in Holiness

Paul prayed, “Now may the God of peace sanctify you completely.” He continued, “And may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Your growth in Christlikeness will continue until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you walk with God, you will continue to be transformed into the image of God (2 Corinthians 3:18). You will mature in holiness. You will continue to surrender joyfully to God’s will. You will walk in continual and deliberate surrender to God.

Think of your wedding day. At your marriage, you made a lifelong commitment. You do not ask each morning, “Am I married today? Is the marriage covenant still in effect?” You made a once-and-for-all commitment. The only way you will break the covenant is by turning your back on the vows you made at your wedding.

Each day of your marriage, you live according to the commitment you made at your wedding. When faced with a decision, you choose to act in love towards your spouse. The once-and-for-all commitment is lived out in daily life.

In the same way, your surrender to God is a once-and-for-all commitment. You do not need to ask each day, “Am I still surrendered to God?” Instead, each day you live according to the commitment you made when you surrendered fully to God.

A great Scottish preacher, Horatius Bonar, wrote about the continuing growth of a holy person.

A holy life is made up of a multitude of small things. Little words, not eloquent speeches or sermons; little deeds, not miracles, nor battles, nor one great heroic act or mighty martyrdom, make up the true Christian life. It is of small things that a great life is made up.⁴⁶

This is the daily life of holiness. You live a holy life not in your own power, but in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. A holy life is about a relationship of undivided love for God. It is about a passion for him. It is desiring him above everything else. This passion will lead you into an ever-deepening relationship with God.

Throughout human history, man has tried to live independently of God. Satan tempted Eve with the promise, “You will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). At Babel, the people decided to build themselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). In his self-centeredness, man wants to live independently of God. By contrast, a holy life is lived in complete dependence on God.

Holiness belongs to God; you and I are holy **only** as we live in continuing relationship with him. You will never reach the point at which you say, “I am holy in my own strength.” Instead, you must say, “Today, the Holy Spirit is empowering me to live a holy life. Today, I am being transformed into his image. Today, I am obeying God with a heart that loves him completely. Today, I am loving my neighbor through God’s grace. Today, the Holy Spirit is making me what God has called me to be.” This is the life of holiness.

TEN PRACTICAL WAYS TO CULTIVATE A DAILY LIFE OF HOLINESS

A consistent, fruitful life of holiness requires a lifetime of cultivation and nurture.⁴⁷ The cleansing of the heart is not the end of our pursuit of holiness. We are like pilots who have aligned our plane with the runway, but who will need to make many corrections before the plane has landed.

The Christian’s spiritual death to self is a **living** death—a constant dying. Our sacrifice is a **living** sacrifice—a constant sacrifice. Word pictures like “death to self” are only meant to teach us spiritual realities but we must be careful not to stray from God’s Word. A pure heart is not the end of our quest for holiness. A pure heart and a surrendered will better equip us for the journey, but we have a lifetime of climbing to do!

46 Horatius Bonar, *God’s Way of Holiness* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970), 125-126

47 This section is adapted from a lesson by Rev. Timothy Keep.

The Spirit-filled life is a life of growth and **progressive sanctification**. By the Spirit of God we are being changed from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). Here is practical advice for those who desire a deepening life of holiness (1 Corinthians 6:11).

1. Remain spiritually broken.

A truly holy life will be one of **constant repentance** (Matthew 6:12) as God continues to heal our deformities and conform us to the perfect image of Christ. The way to keep God's smile on our lives is to quickly acknowledge our faults and walk in the light God shines on our pathway (1 John 1:7).

2. Receive God's chastening.

The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that **receiving**, rather than **despising**, the chastening of our heavenly Father will allow us to share in his holiness (Hebrews 12:10). No one enjoys divine rebuke, especially because it often comes through ordinary people who have their own faults to deal with. Every one of us has the tendency to dismiss painful correction, especially when it comes from a faulty spouse or faulty spiritual leaders God places in authority over us. But discipline is one of God's most powerful tools to knock off our rough places and shape us into the image of Christ.

If we ever get to the place where we can't receive correction, even from people who are less spiritually mature, we have left the upward path of holiness.

3. Present yourself as a daily sacrifice to God.

Paul reminds us that we must present our bodies, including all its appetites and desires, to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). Our bodies that had once been instruments for unrighteousness are transformed through God's grace into instruments for righteousness (Romans 6:13).

Paul showed this ongoing process of continual yielding to God in a graphic picture of the Christian life. He said, "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." He continued by commanding, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you" (Colossians 3:3, 5). Do this and you will experience greater and greater measures of grace.

4. Meditate on the scriptures daily.

Sanctified, Christlike character is not the result of a moment but a lifetime of meditation on and obedience to the Word of God. Jesus told his disciples that they were made clean through the Word. "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you" (John 15:3). Jesus then prayed that they would continue to be made holy through the Word. "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). God accomplishes his purifying and cleansing work through his Word consistently obeyed.

5. Clothe yourself daily with Jesus.

A holy life is received by consciously clothing ourselves in the attitudes and virtues of Christ. “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ...” (Romans 13:14). The phrase “put on” means to think like Jesus, to copy his spirit, and to behave like him. Believers must daily choose to become like Jesus in his holy love, joy, peace, forgiveness, gentleness, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control.

6. Make no provision for the flesh.

After putting on Jesus we must be careful to make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (Romans 13:14). Is it possible for self-interest to rise back up in a Spirit-filled heart? If it were not possible, Paul would not have given this admonition. As long as we are alive we must choose humility. Every Spirit-controlled man and woman has learned that godliness is maintained only through careful cultivation, constant attentiveness, and watchful prayer. If the flesh doesn’t remain crucified, it will rise up and cause spiritual defeat, like the African man who couldn’t keep the dogs from biting his legs because he walked around with meat in his pocket!

7. Renew your mind daily.

Your mind is the command center of your life and the secret of its transformation. Your mind has such authority over your life that you will be shaped by what you choose to set your mind upon. Paul taught, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

8. Put on the whole armor of God.

God’s perfect plan for every believer is that we stand against the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:11). We do this by daily putting on the armor of God—truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, assurance of salvation, and the Word of God. Keep your armor on because we are no match for the enemy alone!

9. Cultivate a continual awareness of the Holy Spirit.

If you want to be holy, you must invite the Holy Spirit to fill and clean up every room of your life: your living room (the room of your social life and entertainment), your bedroom (the room of your moral life and sexuality), your kitchen (the room of your appetites and desires), and your office (the room of your financial and business decisions). Too often, we struggle to become holy because we fail to cultivate a moment by moment awareness of the Holy Spirit and to sincerely ask for the promise of the Father, whom Jesus delights to give. Perhaps fear is part of our reluctance to ask. We need not be afraid. Jesus gave this wonderful promise: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your

children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13).

10. Live in grace.

Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). We are made holy because we belong to the vine. It is the vine that produces the fruit. We become more and more fruitful not by trying to be good but by clinging to Jesus.

Many Christians suffer tremendous anxiety regarding their walk with God. Some, who have been taught to do deep soul-searching, become too introspective. Regardless of their level of spiritual growth, they fear they are still failing to measure up to God’s demands.

Other Christians have been taught to expect a special emotional experience after God has cleansed their heart and made them holy. They focus on themselves and their own emotions rather than on God. However, the Bible teaches that holiness is the fruit of abiding in Christ. As we walk in the Spirit, pray, feed on the Word, participate in Christian worship and community, confess our faults, and walk in the light, God forms us into the image of Christ. We may not see as much progress as we’d like to see in a week or a month, but if we look back to where we were a year ago or five years ago, we’ll definitely see progress!

Paul encouraged every believer to know that the same God who begins the work of making us holy will complete the work: “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

Holiness of heart and life is a journey. These 10 biblical principles will preserve our soul through turbulent winds of adversity and temptation and keep us aligned to our heavenly home.

HAVE YOU FOUND THE SECRET?

In each lesson, we have read about someone from church history who models a holy heart. Some have been famous Christians. Some have been little-known people who quietly lived a holy life.

Now it is your turn. Do you hunger for a holy heart? Do you desire intimacy with God? Do you want to look like your heavenly Father? You can be holy.

Do you hunger for the fullness of the Spirit? Do you want to serve God with an undivided heart? You can be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. You can love God and your neighbor through the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

The choice is yours. Will you surrender yourself fully to God? If so, you will find rich fulfillment as you draw near to him. You will find joy as God forms you in his image. You will find the peace of a heart that belongs entirely to God. You will walk in daily victory through the fullness of the Holy Spirit. By God's grace, you can live a holy life.

LESSON 12 IN REVIEW

1. A holy life is possible for every true child of God.
 - God's Word shows us that a holy life is possible.
 - Christians throughout history have demonstrated that a holy life is possible.
 - Our God-given hunger for holiness testifies that a holy life is possible.
2. God's Word shows the path to a holy life.
 - At the moment of our new birth, God begins to make us holy. This is initial sanctification.
 - As we follow Christ, we grow in sanctification.
 - God wants to give us a pure heart. The call to heart purity includes:
 - A call to complete obedience
 - A call to a surrendered heart
 - A call to complete trust
 - After our heart is pure, we continue to grow in Christlikeness.
3. Some ways that we can continue to cultivate a daily life of holiness are:
 - Remain spiritually broken.
 - Receive God's chastening.
 - Present yourself as a daily sacrifice to God.
 - Meditate on the scriptures daily.
 - Clothe yourself daily with Jesus.
 - Make no provision for the flesh.
 - Renew your mind daily.
 - Put on the whole armor of God.
 - Cultivate a continual awareness of the Holy Spirit.
 - Live in grace.

LESSON 12 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Recite 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.
2. In each lesson, we have prayed a prayer for holiness. At the end of this lesson, write your own prayer for holiness. Write your prayer asking God to guide you to continuing growth in his image. Surrender yourself completely to his control and his will in your life. Pray in faith that the God who saved you will complete his purpose to transform you into his image.

FINAL PROJECT

You will preach three sermons or teach three Bible studies on the doctrine and practice of holiness. You should record these sermons to submit to the class leader for your final project. You will prepare one sermon or Bible study on each of the following topics:

1. A sermon or Bible study on one theological aspect of holiness. Choose one:
 - Holiness as Relationship
 - Holiness as the Image of God in His People
 - Holiness as a Separated Life
 - Holiness as an Undivided Heart
 - Holiness as a Righteous Life
 - Holiness as Perfect Love
 - Holiness as the Fullness of the Spirit
 - Holiness as Christlikeness
2. A sermon or Bible study on a practical aspect of holiness. You may choose a topic discussed in this course, or you may select your own topic. Possible topics include:
 - Spending Time with God
 - Holiness and Personality
 - What Does It Mean to be Separate from the World?
 - Holiness and Business
 - Holiness and Family Life
 - Maintaining Victory Over Willful Sin
 - Holiness and the Life of the Church
3. A sermon or Bible study on a biblical character who demonstrates holiness.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

These books are the primary sources for these lessons. They are used extensively throughout these lessons. Except for specific quotes, these books have not been cited in the footnotes.

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RECORD OF ASSIGNMENTS

STUDENT NAME _____

Initial when each assignment has been completed. All assignments must be successfully completed to receive a certificate from *Shepherds Global Classroom*.

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1		
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Final Project		

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SHEPHERDS GLOBAL CLASSROOM COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS COURSES

Christian Beliefs

This is a systematic theology course, describing the Christian doctrines about the Bible, God, man, sin, Christ, salvation, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and last things.

Romans

This course teaches the theology of salvation and missions as explained in the book of Romans, discussing several issues that have been controversial in the church.

Eschatology

This course teaches the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation along with other sections of prophetic scripture and emphasizes essential doctrines such as the return of Christ, the final judgment, and the eternal kingdom of God.

Doctrine and Practice of the Holy Life

This course gives a biblical description of the holy life that God expects and empowers for a Christian.

Doctrine and Practice of the Church

This course explains God's design and plan for the church and biblical subjects such as church membership, baptism, communion, tithe, and spiritual leadership.

BIBLE SURVEY COURSES

Exploring the Old Testament

This course teaches the essential content and teachings of the 39 books of the Old Testament.

Exploring the New Testament

This course teaches the essential content and teachings of the 27 books of the New Testament.

Principles of Biblical Interpretation

This course teaches the principles and methods of interpreting the Bible properly in order to guide our life and relationship with God.

EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP COURSES

Introduction to Apologetics

This course teaches the scientific, historical, and philosophical basis for a Christian worldview, and shows how the Christian faith is consistent with reason and reality.

Faith Traditions of the World

This course gives the evangelical believer an understanding of the teachings and proper responses to 17 religious groups.

Biblical Evangelism and Discipleship

This course presents the biblical principles that guide evangelism methods. It describes forms of evangelism and provides lessons to use in discipling new converts.

Spiritual Formation

In this course students learn to have the attitudes of Jesus, to relate to God the way Jesus related to his Father, to humble ourselves as Jesus did, to practice the spiritual and personal disciplines of Jesus, to endure suffering as Jesus did, and to engage in the Christian community (the Church) formed by Jesus.

Practical Christian Living

This course applies scriptural principles to the use of money, relationships, the environment, relations with the government, human rights, and other areas of practical living.

Christian Family

This course gives a Christian perspective on human development through the stages of life and applies scriptural principles to family roles and relationships.

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP COURSES

Ministry Leadership

This course emphasizes Christian character while teaching leaders to guide organizations through the process of discovering values, realizing purpose, sharing vision, setting goals, planning strategy, taking action, and experiencing achievement.

The Life and Ministry of Jesus

This course studies the life of Jesus as a model for ministry and leadership in the 21st century.

Principles of Communication

This course teaches the theology of communication, methods for effective speaking, and methods for preparing and presenting biblical sermons.

Introduction to Christian Worship

This course explains how worship impacts all aspects of the believer's life and gives principles that should guide individual and congregational practices of worship.

CHURCH HISTORY COURSES

Survey of Church History I

This course describes how the church fulfilled its mission and protected essential doctrine through the period from the early church to the Reformation.

Survey of Church History II

This course describes how the church expanded and faced challenges through the period from the Reformation to modern times.