

Week 39 – Holiness: Wholeness and Righteousness

Holiness: Wholeness and Righteousness

Please push aside Hollywood’s stereotypical negative or derogatory images of “righteousness” and “holiness.” Jesus came to give us life, abundant life, not to turn us into furrowed-brow, hypocritical, legalistic killjoys.

Unfortunately, we all know people who are crippled by legalism. In contrast, a truly holy and righteous person is full of joy, freedom, and kindness to others. God designed us for whole, wholesome, and holy living!

“...put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” (Ephesians 4:24)

True righteousness is not a straitjacket, but rather joyous obedience to a faithful and loving God. Living by God’s standards rewards us in this life and the next. The life well lived offers a powerful witness and blessing to the earth.

True holiness makes every area of our life an act of worship and obedience to God’s ways. We let Jesus reign in our hearts and embrace His morality. As a result, His blessings follow (Matthew 6:33). It is God’s will that we are righteous: “Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

True disciples pursue pure and holy lives, “living in holy conduct and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11). Holiness is not just external, not just a dress code or abstaining from movies or drinking vices, but a condition of the heart. When we learn to be holy, set apart from sin and for God, our external life reflects our Lord Jesus. This longing for holiness usually begins as we relish the joy of prayer, worship and the Word of God.

What does holiness look like? The Bible tells us, “But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). Like all fruit, these develop over time and manifested as we consistently obey and live in communion with the Lord. Consider the contrast between the fruit of the Spirit (the characteristics of a holy life) with the fruit of the flesh (the characteristics of a life lived apart from God) (Galatians 5:16-26).

Most people, Christian or not, will condemn hatred, discord, dissensions, and envy. Sexual immorality, though, is another story. Few non-religious people today judge premarital relations and cohabitation as evil. It is only when we view this the way God does that we rue the choices

we made in this area. Indeed, most of us have more experience in this area than we care to remember. Thank God for His grace!

Tremendous books have been written in recent years to combat this tide of immorality, bring healing to God's children and raise a standard for the church. For now, here are a few biblical truths to cling to regarding this issue:

· God has forgiven whatever you have done and you are a new creature in Him. Period. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

· God has the power to break the soul-ties that bind you to past sins and people (1 Corinthians 6:16-19).

· God has a new standard for you: absolute purity (1 Peter 1:15).

In Romans 12:2 Paul tells us “do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is acceptable and perfect.”

We need to renew our mind in the area of physical purity, putting on kingdom principles rather than the worlds.

Embracing God's plan for sexual morality doesn't rule out bumps on the road, but it does mean that we live by different standards and a mindset of glorifying God in whatever stage we are at, whether single or married: “whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

In our pursuit of righteousness and holiness, we need to be careful to walk in humility, along with the confidence that we are justified before God by Christ's blood, not our works. If we try to live right without this attitude, others see only pride, fruitless religiosity and legalism, as we preen ourselves on our own accomplishments rather than on God's grace.

Everything good in our lives comes through His grace – His saving us, His using us, His refining us so that we reflect His character. Consider the contrasts between the attitudes of humility and legalism:

Review

1. What is God's design for our lives? What does holiness look like?
2. Is our culture's view of human sexuality a reflection of God's best for us? Compare the world's principles with Kingdom principles.

I could never mix in the common murmur of that rising generation against monogamy because no restriction on sex seemed so odd and unexpected as sex itself. ... Keeping to one woman is a small price for so much as seeing one woman. To complain that I could only be married once was

like complaining that I had only been born once. It was incommensurate with the terrible excitement of which one was talking. It showed, not an exaggerated sensibility to sex, but a curious insensibility to it. A man is a fool who complains that he cannot enter Eden by five gates at once. Polygamy is a lack of the realization of sex; it is like a man plucking five pears in mere absence of mind. ... Surely one might pay for extraordinary joy in ordinary morals. Oscar Wilde said that sunsets were not valued because we could not pay for sunsets. But Oscar Wilde was wrong; we can pay for sunsets. We can pay for them by not being Oscar Wilde. Orthodoxy, G. K. Chesterton