

Learning to live a holy life every day

Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16). Notice three words: in all you do. Peter does not say on Sundays, at Life Group or when the worship is good. Holiness is not a Sunday suit we hang back in the wardrobe at lunchtime. It is the clothing of the Monday commute, the Wednesday meeting and the Friday night in.

Many of us quietly treat holiness as something for the spiritual elite. I make no apology for saying it plainly: holiness is the normal Christian life. It is not about trying harder. It is about letting God in deeper.

Holiness begins with who God is. When Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, the seraphim cried, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6:3). Isaiah did not respond with a programme of self-improvement. He cried, “Woe to me! I am ruined!” (Isaiah 6:5). Then a live coal touched his lips, and his guilt was taken away. Holiness means set apart. God is utterly pure and good, and He invites us to share His own character. We are made holy by the blood of Jesus before we ever live holy (Hebrews 10:10). He chose us “to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4). We do not obey to be accepted; we obey because we are accepted. A.W. Tozer said that what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. A small view of God produces a casual view of sin. A great view of God produces a glad, reverent life.

Holiness is a daily surrender. Paul urges us to offer our bodies “as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1), and Jesus calls us to take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23). The trouble with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar. Yesterday’s surrender will not carry today’s pressures. So we renew our minds rather than conform to the pattern of this world (Romans 12:2). We keep short accounts with God, knowing that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us” (1 John 1:9). And we receive His compassions, which are “new every morning” (Lamentations 3:22-23). Holiness is not perfection overnight. It is direction over a lifetime, one yes after another.

Holiness is lived in the ordinary. Joseph refused Potiphar’s wife when nobody was watching, asking, “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). Daniel served in the corridors of Babylon’s government, yet he “resolved not to defile himself” (Daniel 1:8), and three times a day he prayed at his open window (Daniel 6:10). His holiness was not hidden away; it was visible at work, and it shaped a nation. Holiness is tested less in the prayer meeting than in the honest expense claim, the patient word at the end of a long day and what we scroll late at night. “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). Brother Lawrence, the monastery cook, found God as near among the pots and pans as on his knees. Your office, classroom, kitchen or lorry cab can be holy ground.

Holiness is Spirit-empowered, not self-powered. God never asks us to manufacture holiness in our own strength. “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are fruit, not factory output (Galatians 5:22-23), and fruit grows as we abide in the Vine (John 15:5). It is God who works in us “to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13). Look at the early church. Ordinary fishermen prayed, the place was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31). Holiness and power belong together, for a clean vessel is a useful vessel (2 Timothy 2:21).

Here is the promise: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through... The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). Notice who does the work. Our part is to stay close, stay surrendered and keep saying yes.

Holiness is also a team sport. “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24). We were never meant to walk this road alone. James tells us to confess our sins to each other and pray for each other (James 5:16). Our Life Groups are not optional extras; they are places where iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17) and the grace of God becomes visible to the world.

The world does not need louder Christians. It needs holier ones.

Questions

1. Where in my week is holiness easiest, and where is it hardest? **(1 Peter 1:15)**
2. Is there an area of my life I have kept “off the altar”? **(Romans 12:1)**
3. What would change on Monday morning if I treated my workplace as holy ground? **(Colossians 3:23)**
4. How can I make more room for the Holy Spirit’s daily help? **(Galatians 5:16)**
5. Who could I invite to pray with me and hold me accountable this week? **(James 5:16)**