

Follow Me, Pt. 3

Holiness

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“Follow Me” definition: To be on the same road with Jesus, to learn from Him, imitate Him, and multiply Him in others.

Cost of Discipleship —

- **Matthew 16:24-25**

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

Desire, Denial, Death, Follow

“Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life... Our discipleship to Jesus Christ costs us nothing less than everything... When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”¹

~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Last week — Following Jesus into the Place of Prayer — He showed us that prayer and communion with God is the life-giving root of all spiritual disciplines.

Today — Holiness — following Jesus into the Place of Holiness

Holiness Is Important

- **1 Peter 1:15-16**

But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

- five times in Leviticus

- **Hebrews 12:14**

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

- Pursue it — to love and honor and perfect it

- **2 Corinthians 7:1**

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

- Execute — because we have a reverential fear of God

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (Simon and Schuster, Aug 7, 2012)

Question — What do you think about when you hear the word holy or holiness?

- pure, undefiled, godliness
- legalism, uptight, self-righteous
- in Jesus time — Pharisees were “holy;” they were “Separate Ones” in an unholy world

Holiness isn’t — *Holiness isn’t the mere separation and ceasing from unholy, external habits — otherwise Jesus would have applauded the Pharisees’ efforts instead of rebuking their rituals...*

- **Matthew 23:1-36...**

...Pharisees loved the praise of men, exalted selves, fake prayers; neglected justice, mercy, faith; strained gnat swallowed camel; cleaned outside of cup but inside filled with extortion and self-indulgence; whitewashed tombs appearing beautiful on outside but inside was dead men’s bones and all uncleanness; full of hypocrisy and lawlessness; brood of vipers unable to escape the condemnation of hell!

Clearly — holiness is more than not doing certain worldly, external things — while doing other religious external things.

Holiness is the life-long transformation of the heart into the likeness of Jesus

FOR SURE — Genuine holiness will result in *external changes*, but only because there has first been an *internal transformation* of the heart! **That transformation will be an on-going process throughout your life... growth process in holiness is called sanctification.** “That’s got to stop,” first *action* does, but sometimes *mind* doesn’t, then *mind does* to varying degrees over course of life time... all the time being transformed inwardly into the likeness of Jesus.

Question — How does the transformation of the heart happen?

- **Position yourself in prayer** before the Presence of God. (*it all starts there*)
- **Gain God’s perspective** on things, and *embrace those truths to the point of heart transformation.*
- **Be patient.** Don’t confuse the sinful desires of your flesh with the holy transformation of your heart.
- **Beauty of the sanctifying process; if you’re convicted, you’re on the right track**

Let’s follow Jesus’ example — right after His baptism, right before start of public ministry...

- **Matthew 4:1-11**

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "**It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.'**" Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER YOU,' and, IN THEIR HANDS THEY SHALL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU DASH YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" Jesus said to him, "**It is written again, 'YOU SHALL NOT TEMPT THE LORD YOUR GOD.'**" Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "**Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND HIM ONLY YOU SHALL SERVE.'**" Then the devil left Him, (until an opportune time) and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

- Jesus is praying, fasting, seeking God for 40 days
- positioning self in prayer/God's Presence, hearing, embracing, and speaking the truth
- Devil comes to tempt Jesus into unholy, sinful actions
 - stone to bread, throw self off temple, see and receive kingdoms/glory

Much said about three temptations and what they represent

- **1 John 2:16**
For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.
- Dallas Willard — economic (*bread*), religious (*temple*), and political temptation (*kingdoms*)
- Pastor Steve
 - Temptation to Feed Appetites — Fill Up with unholy things
 - Temptation to Display Abilities — Show Off our own abilities — who you are
 - Temptation to Relish Authority — Look Down on others

Regardless — Jesus prevailed in holiness by 1) positioning Himself in prayer, 2) embracing God's truth, and 3) being patient during the on-going, tempting attacks. We must follow Him in the place of holiness!

Temptation

When you know who you are, and Whose you are, and what's already yours — temptation will be defeated and holiness will prevail in your life!

- **Jesus knew He was God's Son**, was the Son of God, had bread to eat, had a calling He didn't have to prove, had a Kingdom and glory far beyond this cursed, broken world... why stoop to silly demonic temptation?

**You are God's child, a child of God,
you have God's Word, God's calling,
and God's promise of Kingdom power and glory —
you don't need to stoop to temptation that leads to sin!**

This thought has helped Pastor Steve throughout his life when faced with temptation:

"This is not the will of God in Christ Jesus for me." I know who I am, Whose I am, and what is already mine in Christ! — Start speaking to your temptations!

A Word on Temptation —

"No one is so holy that they don't have to deal with temptations."²
~ Thomas A' Kempis, 14th Century Scholar

² Thomas A' Kempis, *Imitation of Christ* (Ignatius Press, July 25, 2013)

- **James 1:12-16**

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

Application — *Temptation isn't sin, it can lead to sin, it depends what we do with it... temptation happens when we're drawn away from God's will by unholy desires, that are inflamed by enticement, and then they conceive and bring forth sin.*

- **Thomas A' Kempis**

...a thought is allowed into the mind, imagination is sparked by thought, feel a sense of pleasure at the fantasy and entertain it, engage in evil actions...

Point — *just because you're tempted doesn't mean you're sinning — shut the door on the temptation by living a life positioned in prayer, embracing God's truth, being patient while being tempted... who cares how many times you've been tempted, STAND!*

Ask God to give you grace every time temptation comes.

- **1 Corinthians 10:13**

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Application — *you're facing common temptations, God won't allow the temptation to be too much, He'll make a way of escape, so you can bear it. Position (prayer), Embrace (His truth), Patience (during the transforming process)!*

Questions —

- 1) What area of self-denial (*via negativa*) would help you pursue and perfect holiness?
- 2) What area of spiritual exercise (*via positiva*) would help you pursue and perfect holiness?

Let's follow Jesus into a life of holiness!

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think about when you hear the word *holy* or *holiness*?
2. How does the transformation of the heart happen?
3. Read 1 John 2:16. Do you struggle with one of these more than the others?
4. What things did Jesus do to position Himself in holiness?
How can you do these same things in your own life?
5. What is a major temptation in your life?
How will you shut the door on that temptation?