

Holy Living

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE LIKE CHRIST



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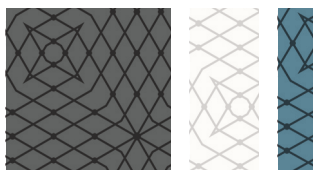


In Leviticus 11:44 God said to the people, “I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves to be holy, because I am holy.” Holy as God is holy? Is this really possible? Even though we have repented, been forgiven of our sin, we still need the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives—growing everyday toward Christlikeness. This does not happen by chance, but by allowing God’s Spirit to take full control of our lives and the willingness to let God move us from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness. This is what holy living is all about. It means daily surrendering our will to the Holy Spirit in order to mature in our faith and Christian character, becoming more like Christ.

Holy Living: What it Means to Be Like Christ explores what it truly means to live a life growing each day in Christlikeness. As you delve in to each chapter, you will discover that holiness is more about surrender than being perfect—it’s about obedience rather than religious performance.

Dr. Frank Moore was raised in Arkansas on the family farm. He earned a BA from MidAmerica Nazarene University (MNU), an MDiv. from Nazarene Theological Seminary, and an MA and PhD from Vanderbilt University. Prior to his election at General Editor and Holiness Today editor in chief in 2013, he was director of the Center for Faith and Culture through the School of Theology and Christian Ministry at Olivet. Formerly, he served as vice president of academic affairs and professor of theology at MNU.

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What is Holiness?

Friends often ask me, “What is holiness?” The first image that comes to mind when I think of holiness--Valentine’s Day. We love friends and family all year long. However, on Valentine’s Day we make an extra effort to express our love in tangible ways. We give cards, flowers, candy, and a variety of other tokens to our loved ones along with our heart-felt words, “I love you.” Why do we do this? Because a love unexpressed is a love unknown. Expressions of our love confirm to our loved ones and the world that these individuals occupy a special place in our hearts and lives.

I can’t explain it very well. When you fall in love with someone, you are changed at the core of your being. Your priorities, personal preferences, and lifestyle choices change to preference this special person. What’s more, the returned love of this special person changes you. Your life is enriched in a thousand different ways. This shared love causes you to flourish in life. My career as a university professor afforded me the opportunity to hear the testimonies of falling in love from countless university students. They said, “The grass looks greener; the sky looks bluer; the birds sing more sweetly.” “The air I breathe smells fresher and cleaner.” “My entire outlook in life has changed for the better.” I could give you a dozen more testimonies, but you know what my students are attempting to communicate.

That’s holiness--an outward expression of our love affair with the Lord. You see, Christian faith focuses more than anything else on our love for God and His love for us. 1 John 4:19 reminds us, “We love because he first loved us.” Ours is a returned love which reflects back to God His self-giving love.

God's Seeking Love

God's love for us fills the pages of Scripture. We see our God lovingly creating humanity and all of the good things of earth for their enjoyment. We see Him giving Adam and Eve to one another for a lifetime of loving companionship. We see Him placing the couple in the perfect environment of Eden's garden. We see God giving Adam and Eve free will so they could love Him and one another freely, not like programmed robots (Genesis 1--2).

We all know the story of the serpent's conversation with the couple, his temptation, and their response (Genesis 3:1-7). We see God's unfailing love for them before that day ended. He went looking for them. The invitation in Genesis 3:9 echoes not only through the garden but throughout the pages of the Bible and human history, "But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?'" Our God is a seeking God. He sought Adam and Eve; He has been searching for His lost children from that day until this one.

Everyone who listens to God's call and responds with repentance and faith in Christ receives salvation. The moment we become new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) He enters our hearts and lives and begins changing us from the inside out as a result of our new birth (John 3:1-21). But most of all, we fall deeply in love with the One who first loved us and sought us.

Holiness Is...

Most simply, holiness refers to everything God does to restore us to the way humanity was before the Garden fall so we can live in a vital relationship with Him from here to eternity. We cooperate with God's restoration process by making the changes in our lives that reflect our returned love to Him.

That's why holiness is a love affair--God's love reaching out to us and our love reaching back to Him.

The Bible uses the word *sanctification* to describe how God makes us holy. He declares us holy when He saves us and sends His Spirit to lead, guide, and teach us Christ's ways. The New Testament refers to Christian believers as saints or holy people sixty-five times. For example, Paul begins his first letter to the church at Corinth with, "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Some translations use the word saints for holy people.

God both declares us holy and makes us holy. He accomplishes this through the work of His Spirit who transforms us both in a moment in time and over a lifetime. The common experience of believers testifies to the reality that our love for God and our understanding of His love for us grows as our relationship develops. We realize that not only is our God a loving God, but also that He is a holy God. As Peter quoted Leviticus 11:44-45 and 19:2: "But 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).

Our growing love for God compels us to surrender ourselves fully to God and die out to self-control and self-centeredness. We offer ourselves completely to Him as Paul admonished in Romans 12:1-2, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what



God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” We consecrate ourselves; He transforms us as only divine power can do. As 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” We call this transformation Christlikeness. The more time we spend with Him, the more we love Him. As we do this, we become like Him.

We call the moment in time when we consecrate ourselves to God and He cleanses us from the hindrance that causes us to be self-controlling and self-centered *entire sanctification*. It takes our love relationship with God to a new level because Christ's rule completely embraces us. Our declaration “Jesus is Lord” symbolizes our commitment to Him in a new way. He is Lord over our lives more so than ever before. Entire sanctification is not an end in itself; it's only the beginning of an ever-deepening love relationship with God which changes us daily as we remain totally open to His work in our lives. We will focus attention in the remainder of this book on ways this ever-deepening love relationship unfolds in us and makes us more like Christ.

Our Heritage

Saints have been testifying to their love affair with God from the earliest days of His search for them until today. We now have 4,000 years of tradition that gives us our holiness heritage. God said to Abraham 4,000 years ago, “I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1). Blameless refers to a single eye focused on loving and serving the Lord exclusively. That describes a holy walk. The Bible has more than a 1,000 references to holiness and holy living.

Saints have been writing about God's transforming work of holiness in their lives through the last 2,000 years of church history. Every generation from the early church until today has testified to God's call to holy living and empowerment by His Spirit to transform their lives into the likeness of Christ. What a rich heritage we receive from them both in word and example. They compose the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us (Hebrews 12:1).

During the first 300 years of the church, we hear the call to holy living from Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and a host of other witnesses. See Al Truesdale's *The Book of Saints: The Early Era* for readings by these saints.¹ Athanasius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianze, Ambrose, Augustine, Anselm, Francis of Assisi, Meister Eckhart, Catherine of Siena, and Thomas á Kempis among others added their testimony in the following generations. See Dr. Truesdale's *The Book of Saints: The Middle Era* for readings by these saints.² The Reformation period in church history gave us Martin Luther, Thomas More, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer, Teresa of Avila, Francois Fenelon, Madame Jeanne Guyon, Johann Arndt, and Philip Jacob Spener as witnesses to holy living. See Dr. Truesdale's *The Book of Saints: The Reforming Era* for further readings.³

Witness to the holy life came into clearest focus in the development of Christian thought as Jacob Arminius, John Wesley, and those who followed them spoke of this love affair with God which transforms us into Christlike disciples. From these two men comes a system of thought known as the

1. Al Truesdale. *The Book of Saints: The Early Era* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2013)

2. Al Truesdale, *The Book of Saints: The Middle Era* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2014)

3. Al Truesdale, *The Book of Saints: The Reforming Era* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2015)

Wesleyan-Arminian tradition. Dozens of books have been written across the past 250+ years witnessing to a holy walk with God.

The purpose of this thumbnail sketch of the last 2,000 years of church history is to declare that the great cloud of saints who have gone before us have brought light to the holy path God desires each of us to walk with Him. The more we explore this heritage, the more deeply in love we grow with God. That's what holiness is all about: growth in our love affair with God. And in the process we become more like the One who has called us out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

Reflect on this...

In what ways is our love relationship with God like our love relationship with a best friend or family member?

Why must God deal with our need for self-control and our self-centeredness before He can transform us into Christ's image?

In what ways has God worked in your life to make you more like Christ?

Read Matthew 18:21-35. Secular culture tells us that betrayal calls for revenge. How does God call His people to respond when they have been wronged?