

Called to be Holy: God Prepares a Bride

“Be Holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:16



“My dear children, for whom I suffer again the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...” Galatians 4:19

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24



Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Ephesians 5:25-27

Definition of Sanctification – The process of becoming more and more like Jesus in our thoughts, attitudes, actions, and words, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson #1 – The Call to Holiness

- ***Part #1: The Importance of Holiness: No Playing with God!*** That we would understand the gravity and urgency of the call of holiness to every believer. Using texts from Paul's letters to the churches, we show the mortal danger of hypocrisy and double-lives for the professing believer.
- ***Part #2: Called to shine! Holiness is Happiness!*** We balance this challenge with the Biblical view of holiness as a joyful state of life for the believer, making us more winsome, humble and tolerant of others. (vs. the legalistic, Pharisaical model).
- ***Part #3: What would Jesus do?*** Here we present Jesus as the ultimate model of holiness, in all the nitty gritty of daily life.

Part #1: The Importance of Holiness: No playing with God!

*“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy;
without holiness no one will see the Lord.”
Hebrews 12:14*

Our goal in this section is to illustrate the gravity and non-negotiable nature of the call to holiness for a true believer.

- *The final Judgment – Our lives will one day be evaluated!*
- *The Danger of a “double life” which provokes the anger of God*
- *“License” – abusing the grace of God*
- *The church as hospital – but not a hide-out!*

Final Judgment – Our lives will one day be evaluated!

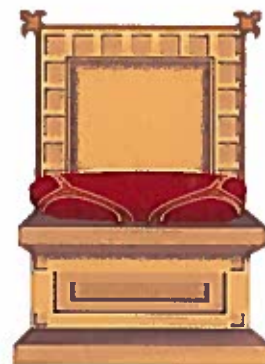
The Bible teaches that each of us will stand before the judgment seat of God. Thank God, we are under the blood of Jesus and thus forgiven, but there is a very stern warning to those who continue to “practice” such sins as a lifestyle.

Key Verses about God’s basis for evaluating our lives:

2 Corinthians 5:10

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Matthew 12:36-37



Based on these verses above, what are three specific ways in which our lives will one day be evaluated?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

No “Double Life”!

Here we reflect upon the concept of “hypocrisy” and consider examples. We also discuss the “cure” for our own areas of hypocrisy: Truth!



Key verses warning us against abusing God’s grace:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Galatians 5:19-21

1 Corinthians 6:18-20



Many sins are specified in these texts; some scandalous and others more commonplace. Mention some of the more “common” sins mentioned in these texts.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

According to these texts, why is it so dangerous to “*practice such things?*”

According to 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, why ought we to “*glorify God with our bodies?*”

Hypocrisy: Wearing a religious mask

The word “hypocrite” derives from the Greek word for stage-actor – literally: “behind a mask.” A hypocrite is a person who in some way hides behind a false appearance: A “religious actor or pretender.”



Gross examples of hypocrisy abound in our day

- Priests caught in pedophilia
- Televangelists guilty of fraud and immorality
- Etc.

Most hypocrisy is more subtle: Like leaven - imperceptible but ever present!

Hypocrisy is far more insidious and common than we might think, and not limited to the more obvious cases. Jesus compared hypocrisy to leaven which gradually works its way through a whole lump of dough. Who among us is entirely consistent and transparent?! We all wear masks before others, God, and even ourselves. God calls us to dare to lower these defensive layers of falsehood, one at a time!

Our goal is to be a “child of light,” like Nathaniel.

Jesus said the following about this disciple when he met him:

“Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile.” John 1:47

What a beautiful description of an honest, transparent believer!



Key verse: 1 John 1:5-10



According to this verse, what do you think it means to “walk in the light?”

What are some of the benefits mentioned of living in this fashion?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

“License” – Abusing the grace of God

Here we discuss the difference between “freedom” based on grace, and “license,” based on rebellion and rationalization of sin.

Key verse: Romans 6:1



“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?”

By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”



Illustration: Church is Hospital – not Hide-out!



- *The Church is like a Hospital – A safe place for recovering sinners to open themselves up to the Spirit’s healing and transformation, even when the process is lengthy and filled with setbacks. Jesus said that it is the sick, not the healthy, who need a doctor!*
- *The Church is **not** a “Hide-out” or a “den of thieves” – for us to use as a justification for ongoing hypocrisy and a double life.*

Key text: Jeremiah 7:1-11 – When Jesus cast out the money-changers from the Temple (Luke 19:45-46), he accused them of changing the temple from a “house of prayer” into a “den of thieves.” This phrase originally comes from Jeremiah 7:1-11.



According to Jeremiah 7:1-11, how were people misusing the temple?

Imagine a well intentioned believer who feels so guilty as he struggles with sin that he feels he should stop coming to church until he has achieved victory in a certain area of his life. Knowing that the church is a hospital, how could you counsel such a brother or sister?

Part #2: Holiness is Happiness! We can shine!



A saint? Me?!

The Apostle Paul begins his letter to the Corinthians in the following manner...

"... Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ..." 1 Corinthians 1:2 (KJV)

According to commonly held ideas, what is a "saint?" _____
_____.

How does this verse correct such misunderstandings? _____
_____.

If they are already "sanctified," then how can Paul also write that they are "called to be saints?" _____
_____.

"The Beauty of Holiness" – We are meant to be Works of art to reflect his glory!

"Holiness adorns your house for endless days..." Psalm 93:5

*Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand..."
Jeremiah 8:6*



God takes you as you are – but does not leave you that way!

God has a wonderful project for your life! He wants his love and character to shine through your personality and temperament. He passionately desires that we might become more loving, more honest, more patient, more strong, more gentle, more humble, more joyful, more courageous, more solid and trustworthy! He desires that we become more and more like Jesus; that people might say, *"There is something different about this person."* This has nothing to do with changing our personalities to conform to the style of other believers. Through your unique personality, gender, cultural identity, talents and interests – yes, even through your scars and wounds – The very character of God himself can shine! What a wonder! We are vessels of soft clay upon the potter's wheel, being molded into beautiful vessels to be used for sublime ends!

God uses anything – and everything – to make us holy!



Key verse: Rom 8:28-9 – *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers....”*

“All things work together for good”???

Have you ever heard this phrase, drawn from Romans 8:28? In its context, this verse does not guarantee that everything will work out “nicely” for a believer in life, but that everything serves to help us to *become more and more like Jesus!!* That we might be like brothers of Jesus – bearing an unmistakable family resemblance! *God is absolutely committed to this process in our lives, and will use everything to help get us there!*

Personal Reflection: Think about the experiences in your life which have helped you grow and change the most. Isn’t it usually the hard things that help us grow the most? Can you mention an example from your own life?

We can shine!

Our goal is not to be “holier than thou.” Pharisaical holiness is unattractive and even repulsive. Rather, we are transformed into the likeness of God’s glory, which makes us more winsome and beautiful. Holiness “adorns” God’s house... because *holiness is beautiful!*

Key verse: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

“Now the Lord is the spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”



According to this text (above), what happens when we “contemplate” the Lord’s glory?

Good news - It doesn't depend on you!!

Thankfully, the process of sanctification is *God's process*, and not ours! The Spirit is the one who transforms us, and not our own resolutions or will-power! God is committed to this process, and He can see it through!



"... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6



"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

According to these verses, when will this process be completed? _____

Part #3 – Be Holy – Walk as Jesus walked!

"The one who says he is in Christ must walk as Jesus walked." 1 Jn 4:2

Here we define our "walk" in the Lord

- *Our life-style*
- *Our daily behavior*
- *Our words*
- *Our actions*
- *Our attitudes*



Talk the talk – and walk the walk!

How many of us know that it is quite possible to "accept Jesus" and continue to be the same "jerk" we always were!! Our spirit is transformed the instant we receive salvation, but our *walk* – that is to say – *our lifestyle and daily behavior* – tend to lag behind. But according to 1 John, a genuine believer cannot help but to change. It is our part simply to keep in step with the Spirit as he teaches us to walk anew!



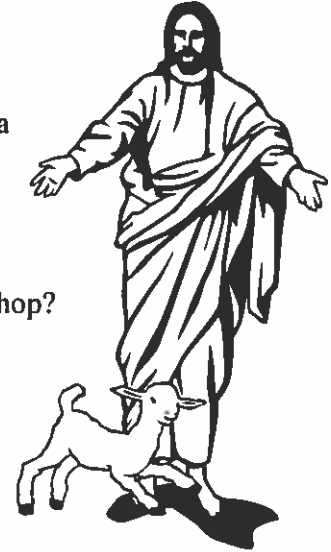
"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." 1 John 2:6

"I therefore, as a prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Ephesians 4:1 (KJV)

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as the other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind..." Ephesians 4:17 (KJV)

How did Jesus walk? - ¿WWJD? What would Jesus do?

We remember that Jesus was a son, a friend, and a carpenter. He lived a *completely human* life – though without sin. What would happen if we asked the famous question throughout the moments of our day: “*What would Jesus do?*” Let’s consider the following scenarios.



- How would Jesus treat a disgruntled customer in his carpentry shop?
- What was Jesus like when he woke up in the morning?
- What type of friends would Jesus have chosen?
- How would Jesus have driven the streets of Boston?
- How would Jesus have dealt with a difficult boss or an annoying assignment?
- What would Jesus say when a co-worker shared a juicy piece of gossip?
- How would Jesus paint a wall? Fix a car? Prepare a lesson? Care for a child in a daycare?
- What type of movies would Jesus watch? Which books would he read? What types of food would he eat? What music would he listen to? What jokes would he tell? How would he dress?
- If married, what type of husband would Jesus be? How would he treat his wife and kids after a long day in the shop?
- What would Jesus do, when coming home exhausted from work, when his wife wanted to discuss something? When the dirty dishes were piled up in the sink?
- What type of father would he be? How would he organize his time for family life? How would he implement discipline?

Jesus was human – just like we are!

As we try to visualize Christ-like behavior in the real-life situations we face daily, it helps to have Christian friends and role models. Thus, we invite you in the next section to think of certain individuals who model some aspect of Christ-like behavior.

Exercise: Think of “Models” - People as Examples

Question:

Is that Biblical? I thought we were only supposed to look to Jesus as an example?

Of course it can be dangerous to put any person on a pedestal, forgetting their natural and inevitable human imperfections. But the Apostle Paul said the following....

“Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” – 1 Corinthians 11:1

It is healthy and important to seek and observe positive examples as we evaluate and adjust our own “walk” with the Lord in daily life. So think of a person you know who lives the Christian life with sincerity and integrity. Of course the person is not perfect, but simply an example or model in some way of what it means to live out Christian beliefs with integrity. Describe this person. What are the qualities you admire in his or her behavior that reflect the character of Jesus? How would you like to imitate his example?

The name of someone you can see as an example (not a pastor).

Specific character or lifestyle qualities you would like to emulate:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Exercise: Self – Examination – We must look within!

Introspection can be counter-productive if we become self absorbed. However, some self examination is Biblical and important.

“A man ought to examine himself ... if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.” 1 Corinthians 11:28, 31-32

Some questions for self-examination

- *Do you behave differently when not in church?*
- *Can your family members see the change God has made in your life?*
- *Can your friends and co-workers tell you are a believer?*
- *What do you do with your free time?*
- *Are there difficult habits you can't seem to kick?*
- *Do you continue to struggle with destructive emotional patterns, such as depression or anxiety?*
- *How do you speak? Do you find yourself complaining often? Do you gossip? Criticize? Bend the truth?*
- *Are there family patterns which you can't seem to change in your life?*
- *Do you tend to hold a grudge or seek to "get even" with those who have done you wrong?*
- *Do you live in purity? Are you honoring God with your body?*

Personal Reflection Questions:



Briefly describe at least one way in which your character and lifestyle have changed since coming to know Christ.

Mention three areas of life in which you hope God will bring change. (Please be specific)

1.

2.

3.

A new way of life by the power of the Spirit Learning to walk all over again!



“As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you walk in a way worthy of the calling you have received.”

Ephesians 4:1

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

Galatians 5:16

“And we pray this in order that you may walk worthy of the Lord and may please him in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...”

Colossians 1:10

Our Walk = Our life-style in daily affairs.

In this lesson we learn about the dynamics of personal change by the power of the Spirit

- ***Part #1: True change is impossible by human effort***

Here we attempt to prevent a legalistic, will-power approach to personal change.

- ***Part #2: The Spirit – Flesh Struggle.***

We explain that sin stems from our essentially sinful human nature, and thus, change must come through the empowering work of the Spirit in the life of the believer.

- ***Part #3: Renouncing the old man and embracing the new.***

We close with a prophetic exercise in which we renounce the sinful qualities of our old way of life and prophetically visualize ourselves as controlled by the Spirit in these particular areas.

Basic Texts about Personal Change:

(Read through these chapters quickly as a basis for this lesson)

- **Romans 6,7 and 8**
- **Galatians 5**
- **Ephesians 4 and 5**
- **Colossians 2 and 3**



Part #1 – Change is not easy!
True sanctification does not happen through human efforts

Ever try to kick a tough habit?

- Quitting smoking
- Losing weight
- “Keeping your cool” and holding your tongue when frustrated or angry
- Resisting the blues during the winter months
- Stopping gossip and criticism
- Planning ahead rather than procrastinating
- Budgeting money



Exercise: Share an example in your own life of a futile attempt to change by your own will-power.

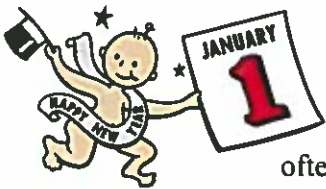
Growing in holiness - like learning to walk all over again!

Learning new habits is like being a child, learning to walk for the first time. How often does that determined toddler start out with cackles of excitement, only to fall flat on his or her little face! Likewise in the Christian life! We are called to “*Walk as Jesus did.*” (1 John 2:4). Our walk – that is to say, our lifestyle – ought to reflect the values and character of Jesus himself. But how difficult it is to learn to walk all over again!

Throughout a lifetime we have developed deeply ingrained sinful patterns of thought and behavior, and these habits do not die easily. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that we begin with the understanding and expectation *that it is impossible to walk like Jesus in our own strength!* We need “Daddy’s” help – (and lots of band-aids for when we scrape our knees!) We need the Spirit’s power within us to produce the change we desire.



New Years’ Resolutions



It’s January 1 – the beginning of the New Year - and resolutions abound: losing 10 pounds... eating more vegetables... calling Mom more often...etc. etc. We start strong of course, but after a month or so, we find ourselves back where we began; more lazy and fat than ever! Take heart, friend! You are not alone. None of us can change by his or her own efforts – by the force of our will – or by simply trying harder. We come up short every time.



Romans 7:14-25 -- Paul's struggle – all too familiar

The Apostle Paul shares his own flesh-and-blood struggle to break sinful patterns in his life. The more he tried, the more mired he became in sin. As we read these words, can we identify in any way?

What is Paul's conclusion? (v.21) Why is it impossible for him to "kick the habit" of sin?

Galatians 3:1-5 -- Galatians try to finish the work of the Spirit by their own efforts



After accepting Christ, the Christians in Galatia set about to implement and observe the Old Testament ceremonial law – circumcision, dietary rules...etc. They hoped to perfect personal holiness by observing these laws. Predictably, their experiment failed miserably! The Apostle Paul warns them in the strongest terms that this attempt at self-made righteousness can cost them their souls!

According to Paul (clearly angry), why are the Galatians behaving foolishly?

Legalism simply does not work!

How we love rules. They give us something to do which is specific and under our control. However, true Christian change must be *spiritual* in nature. Our little rules simply do not work because they leave the core illness of sin untouched – the fallen nature that controls us.

Imagine a child, hungry before dinner. Mother warns: "*Whatever you do, don't even think about opening up that cookie jar!*" Can we confidently predict the scene that follows? Likewise with our little rules – They have a way of backfiring.

Don't touch! – Colossians 2:20-23



"Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!?' These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."



According to this text, how does Paul describe the false wisdom in these rules?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Why do these rules not help in “restraining sensual indulgence?”

Part #2: The Flesh-Spirit struggle: Breaking the Slavery

“Flesh” = Sinful Human Nature (Not the human body)



The Monkey on Your Back – The Flesh

Imagine you had a little monkey as a pet. This little creature likes nothing more than to cuddle up on your shoulder and keep you company through the events of your day. Such a cute and playful monkey; how can you resist when he asks for a banana? He smiles sweetly. You feed him again. As the days go by, one banana becomes two, then three...etc. The little monkey begins to grow.



Eventually, after weeks of feeding, your little pet requests a banana once again, as he is now in the habit of doing. Yet the voice seems to have changed. No longer sweet and cute, a hoarse, rasping, demanding voice barks: “*Gimmie Banana!*” A bit unnerved, you try to put him off. “*I...I don't think we'll have any bananas today, myer... little monkey.*” The muscular arms tighten their grip around your neck with asphyxiating persuasion, and the now sinister voice demands: “*Gimmie banana – now!*” That panicky feeling of being unable to breathe begins to send a chill down your spine and you feel the oppressive weight of what was before such a cute little pet. The tables seem to have turned and you wonder “*now who is the pet, and who is the owner?*” Who is truly calling the shots? Through much feeding, you have now become a type of slave to the cravings of the “monkey.”

Such is the process of our sinful human nature – our flesh. We feed the many little pet sins, as if they were harmless. But as our flesh grows and grows, it demands more and more. We sin more frequently and intensely, and still feel a craving for more. Sin comes to control our lives and we are enslaved. Our flesh is the monkey on our back -- now grown into a gorilla.



Romans 6:1-14 – The Flesh must be crucified

According to the text, what does baptism symbolize? (v.3-5) _____.

What is our part? What must we do to keep sin from continuing to reign in our mortal bodies?

And what is the promise that inspires us to live “according to the Spirit?” (v.14)

Walking like Jesus means walking according to the Spirit and not the Flesh

Walking in the Spirit – Following the impulses and directives of the Spirit

After accepting Jesus as Lord, we have two forces dwelling within – *the Flesh and the Spirit*. If we follow the guidance of the Spirit, more and more we will deny the impulses of the flesh. In order to do this, however, we must *feed the Holy Spirit and starve the flesh* within us. As a spiritual baby, we learn to walk all over again, but now the Spirit teaches us! *Do we trust our “Daddy” enough to walk with him, rather than in our own way?*



***Saying “yes” to the Spirit trumps saying “no” to sin!
Which will it be – pop-corn now.... Or prime rib later?!***

It is much easier to say “no” to a temptation when we know that God offers something much better in its place. Satan tempts us to satisfy our hunger with pop-corn, while God offers the true “Prime Rib” of Spirit-birthed holiness! Satan tempted Jesus to change a stone to bread in order to satisfy his physical hunger. Jesus was able to resist, knowing that *“man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”*



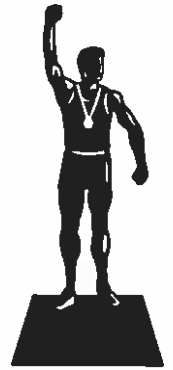
We can choose to follow the lead of the Spirit...

- Knowing that God loves us and desires our happiness...
- Knowing that blessing and joy comes with serving God
- Knowing God will help us in the process...



Romans 8:1-17 – Portrait of a Victorious Life!

What promise awaits us, if we walk according to the spirit and not according to the desires of the flesh? (v.1)



What are some consequences of following the lead of the flesh?
What are some of the results of following the Spirit? *Romans 8:5-8 y 8:12-17*

Consequences of following the flesh _____

Consequences of following the Spirit _____

Galatians 5:16-26 – Fruit of the Spirit v. Fruit of the Flesh

List some of the “Works of the flesh.”



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



List some of the “fruit of the Spirit.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____



Part #3: Renounce the Old; Embrace the new!

The Old "Man" (the flesh) and the New "Man" (The Spirit)

Inside each Christian has "two selves:" The old and the new.

The new "Greg" and the old "Greg"



Colossians 3:1-17 – Putting the Flesh to Death

List some of the manifestations of the flesh which we seek to "kill." (v.5-9)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

"... *and put on the new self...*" List some qualities of the "new you." (Col. 3:10-17)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Comparison: Changing our lifestyle = Changing our clothing



“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature..” Romans 13:14

Why, do you suppose, the Bible compares personal change to the daily activity of changing our clothing? Use your imagination a bit. What do the two processes have in common?



Ephesians 4:17 – 5:7 - Shedding the old ... putting on the new!

According to this text, what are some “corrupting” practices of our old self?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

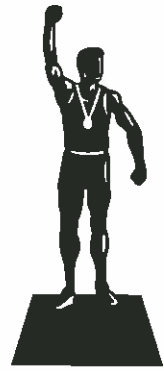
List some characteristics of the “new self.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



The “new you” – A prophetic declaration

As a prophetic exercise, jot down five negative qualities of the “old you,” and, by faith, note down the opposite of each. Then, prophetically, we renounce the old and embrace the new!



Example

The Old Greg – (Flesh)

- 1. Short Tempered
- 2. Blabbermouth
- 3. Depressed
- 4. Grumpy
- 5. Lazy

The New Greg (Spirit)

- 1. Patient
- 2. Discreet
- 3. Joyful
- 4. Cheerful
- 5. Diligent

..... Etc. etc.

The Old You

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

The New You

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Prayer of Faith

Lord, thank you that you have put a new spirit within me. I declare that I am a new creation in Christ. I declare by faith that I can live a new life. I receive your power to change, in the name of Jesus!