

Holy Living – How to Measure it

06/08/25

There are many confused Christians today. Everything around us is changing so quickly, we can't catch up to it. Now, we have AI (artificial Intelligence) which is driving this change to new levels and at a quicker speed. Maybe that is a good thing – brings us closer to Jesus' second coming. Everything is changing. I was thinking about all the changes going on just with me in the last month. My dentist changed (not happy about this), training new Rangers, getting a different kind of law enforcement vest after wearing the same type for about 20 years, doing new training online, talking about getting new guns with different kind of sights, change in Nazarene District office, different trash pickup next year for Penn Township, my phone changes after every update, and will be getting a new park director maybe in a few weeks. Some of these changes are good and some not so good. Some changes won't know if they're good or not until some time has gone by. Unfortunately, we must change as well to handle a lot of these changes like learning to operate a new sound system at church. We have to become more "techier" if we don't, we'll become totally lost in the fast-moving society we live in. The problem is we can become so caught up in trying to keep up with all the changes our society is throwing at us, we allow our society to change our spiritual condition without us really noticing it. We'll be starting a new sermon series today and we'll be spending many weeks on the topic "Holy Living". Holy Living needs to be talked about because many in the Church have pushed this term to the side because of fear. The fear of having to go against our today's society and culture. Many feel that Holy Living is going too far in their relationship with Jesus. Many want their cake and eat it too or in other words, they want to enjoy the fun of this world which could include sin. The other problem is when problems of life come our way and it starts to push against Holy Living. We may start to question our faith or we may just give in to the pressure and start to become more worldly hoping that the world can help us with the stress. The problem is and it's a good problem; you can't run away or ignore Holy Living. Why?

The main reason we can't run away from Holy Living is because it's a command from God. Let's turn to 1 Peter 1: 14 – 16 where we read this from Peter, "Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be His children is holy. For He Himself has said, 'You must be holy because I am holy' (NLT)". Peter is quoting from Leviticus when he tells us to be holy because God is holy. This is a command and the problem with many Christians is they are slipping back into their old ways and may not realize it because of how quickly our culture is changing. Plus, these same people won't spend the time to invest in Holiness because of the time issue. We don't have time. Peter is telling the Church we are God's children and we are to be Holy because our Lord is Holy. Some may look at this command as a threat from God, but it's not. It's God's invitation to live close to the heart of God (CHATGPT). Since Holy Living is a command and an invitation from our Lord, we must ask what the words mean. In how Peter makes the statement, "holy" means to set apart / consecrated to God (Strong's Concordance). In other words, when we allow Jesus into our hearts and ask forgiveness of our sins, we are washed clean from sin by the blood of Jesus and we are made right with God the Father. We now don't go back to living as the world does because we now have been set apart for God. Holy Living is living our whole life as being set apart for God. Holiness should not be a burden to us; it frees us from the sin that entangles us. Holy Living helps us to see a glimpse of how it was before Adam and Eve sinned. Holy Living frees us to enjoy this holy relationship with the Trinity – God, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now, we'll go more into the ingredients that makes Holy Living possible today as we go along in this series. We just did a crash lesson on the ground level of Holy Living. Before we start with the lesson series next week, I wanted to break ground today on Holy Living and to provide something that can help to grade our process during the next few months.

What do I mean about grading our process? I believe there is a way for us to be able to grade or check the level of Holy Living in our own lives. Just like checking the oil level in our vehicles, we can check the level of Holy Living. I had an office manager come to me one time when I worked at Weis Markets asking me about

my thoughts about her vehicle that was not running correctly. I asked her some questions and then I asked her if she had checked the oil level in her car's engine. She looked at me and asked what oil? She had 30,000 miles on the vehicle and had never changed the oil. I went out, opened the hood, and pulled the oil dip stick out. The oil had transformed into a black thick substance that I was afraid to touch. I then told her how she could check the oil level every few weeks since her vehicle was starting to burn oil. We can check our level by one simple method. We can see how healthy our Holy Living is by measuring how compassionate we are with the people around us. We usually think of love when we think of compassion and both do go together, but compassion is a branch off love and it has a different ingredient in it. Now, we know Jesus sets the example for us and He showed compassion in the New Testament. We read this in Matthew 9: 36,
³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)" Jesus was filled with compassion when He saw the large crowd because the people were so helpless and harassed. These people were harassed not just by diseases and affliction, but most of all they were harassed by sin. Jesus had compassion for them. We may think Jesus must have felt "sorry" for them. Our society has done great harm to this term. Jesus didn't just feel sorry from them. In Greek, the term that can be used for "compassion" means a deep, gut-wrenching emotion (CHATGPT). Another definition I found is "feeling another's pain" or "suffering together". So, having compassion for someone is more than just feeling sorry for someone out of love. You have this Christ love within you that the Holy Spirit starts to get flowing through your heart and mind to the point where you start to feel another's pain or you suffer with the person that is suffering. This is not something we can force ourselves to do. This has to come naturally through the Spirit of God that lives within us if we are living Holy Lives. Jesus felt the pain that crowd was going through. Jesus also felt compassion for individuals as well. We find evidence of this in Luke 7: 11 – 15 where we read this, ¹¹ Soon afterward Jesus went with his disciples to the village

of Nain, and a large crowd followed him. ¹² A funeral procession was coming out as he approached the village gate. The young man who had died was a widow's only son, and a large crowd from the village was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. "Don't cry!" he said. ¹⁴ Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. "Young man," he said, "I tell you, get up." ¹⁵ Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk! And Jesus gave him back to his mother. (NLT – Biblegateway.com)" Jesus overflowed with compassion for the widow who now had lost her only son. Jesus felt her pain and sadness. You see, Compassion is different than just feeling sorry for someone. When Jesus felt compassion for someone, He did something out of love for them because He felt such deep pain for them. Jesus feels pain for the crowd, so Jesus gives His disciples the ability to heal and cast out demons as well to help the people. Jesus feels the pain of this widow who has lost everything because she already lost a husband, now her son was gone. So, Jesus brings her son back to life. Jesus sets the example for us. You may say that Jesus was able to show compassion toward people, but we don't have to. Apostle Paul throws cold water on that in Colossians 3: 12 where he states this, "¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.(ESV – Biblegateway.com)." Paul puts it all in a nutshell here. We are to be holy because we are God's children and we are to clothe ourselves with compassion and the other four fruits of the Spirit that he talks about. You see, compassion needs the Holy Spirit as the driving force to be able to feel another's pain to the point where we no longer just feel sorry for them. This goes a step further, we start to feel the pain of those who live a life filled with sin. Here is an example of this. I had talked about Rev. Richard Wurmbbrand a few weeks ago who was in prison for preaching Jesus in Romania. The country at that time was under communist rule. He was put in solitary confinement, tortured, and beaten many times. At night, he would compose sermons in his head and he would tap them in morse code against the walls so the other prisoners could hear the Word of God. In one of his sermons entitled, "Visible Wounds", he states he hadn't been able to give sermons because he was in too great of pain after his last torture from the prison guards. He makes this

claim in his sermon about the guards, "But perhaps my scars also will be helpful. My prayers for my torturers will perhaps be more effective if I can show the Father the wounds I received from them. If I can continue to love them, if I can forgive, why should God exclude them from His love and not forgive them (Wurmbrand, 66)". He felt the pain of the guards who suffered from the bandage and slavery of sin. How can you show compassion to those who are torturing you? Only with the help of Jesus through His Spirit. There is no other way and yet we are called to this because Jesus lived compassion when He walked the earth. He could feel other's pain and suffering. Most people don't have this ability because they don't live holy lives that produces this fruit of holiness. We must have and show this compassion to others because this helps to build the Kingdom of God. When we show the compassion of Christ to others, we reveal the heart of God to those around us. Acts of mercy, kindness, and justice that comes from compassion opens door for the gospel through the Spirit. Jesus has set the bar high for us, but we can reach that bar by being a compassionate people. We need to ask Jesus to help us to be compassionate today. Our culture lacks this and the Church is starting to lack it as well. Always remember this: when one is showing compassion, one is showing Jesus. So, as we start with the meat of Holy Living next week, remember to check your dip stick to see where your level of holiness is. Are you really a compassionate person or are you just following the culture around you? Ask Jesus to help you to be a compassionate person by allowing His Spirit to soften your heart and mind with His love. Let's be different and be like Jesus.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996

Wurmbrand, Richard. *With God in Solitary Confinement*. Vombooks: Bartlesville, 2022.