

Live Holy: Living Fascinated in the Pleasure of Loving God

I. STARTING WITH THE RIGHT FOUNDATIONS

- A. I will present two foundational truths and three practical principles in our pursuit of holiness.
- B. God calls us to holiness because He is holy. He is saying, “I have the highest and most pleasurable quality of life that I want to share with you. I know what I am talking about. I want you to enjoy life abundantly as I do”. He did not call us to “endure” His standards of holiness.
¹⁵ Be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:15-16)
- C. God created every human being with a longing for pleasure and fascination. These longings are two sides of one coin. Understanding these two longings is foundational to pursuing holiness in a biblical way. Many believers approach holiness in negative way with dread.
- D. Holiness is not a call to a life of drudgery. Holiness is a call to superior pleasure so that we might be equipped to enjoy life together with Him forever. It is the way to our greatest spiritual liberty, pleasure and fascination by freeing us from the vain imaginations of lust, pride and bitterness that injure our heart and diminish our strength.
- E. Holiness does not keep us from pleasure, but equips us to experience it.

II. FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH #1: BEING PREOCCUPIED WITH SUPERIOR PLEASURES

- A. God is the author of pleasure. He created us to enjoy physical, mental, emotional and spiritual pleasures. These cravings in us long to be satisfied. The enemy has counterfeit pleasures.
- B. The greatest pleasures available to the human spirit are spiritual pleasures. They are superior to all other pleasures. They touch our spirit at the deepest levels of our being.
- C. God’s plan, to liberate us from the inferior pleasures of sin, is by allowing us to experience the superior pleasures of God, by revealing the beauty of Jesus. The revelation of Jesus has a powerful impact on our emotions. The best way to overcome darkness is to turn on the light.
⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (Jn. 1:5, RSV)
- D. Those nearest to God’s throne enjoy the greatest measure of joy. God’s throne is the epicenter of joy in the universe. He is a happy God with a happy heart. He is the very fountain of joy. The river of pleasures pictures the Holy Spirit revealing the beauty of God to the human spirit.
¹¹ In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:11)
⁸ You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. (Ps. 36:8)
- E. The Devil lies by convincing people that the God of holiness is joyless, angry and mean-spirited.

- F. We experience spiritual pleasure when God reveals God to our spirit.
¹⁰ The Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...¹² We have received...the Spirit...that we might know the things that have been freely given to us. (1 Cor. 2:10-12)
- G. The Holy Spirit will escort us on a divine treasure hunt into the beauty of Jesus. He will take the things that belong to Jesus and give them to us. This is divine entertainment at its highest.
¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. (Jn. 16:14)
- H. One of King David's lifelong goals was to encounter the beauty of God on a regular basis.
⁴ One thing I have desired...all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord. (Ps. 27:4)
- I. In the end times, God will fascinate His people beyond anytime in history with Jesus' beauty.
² In that day the Branch of the LORD (Jesus) shall be beautiful and glorious. (Isa. 4:2)

III. OUR LONGING TO BE FASCINATED

- A. Our fascinating God created us with a longing for the pleasure of being fascinated or awestruck and filled with wonder. The secular entertainment industry has identified and targeted this human longing. They have exploited this God-ordained craving to their own profit and to our ruin.
- B. We cannot “repent away” our longing for fascination but we can repent of seeking to fulfill it outside of God’s will. The battle for holiness is the battle to be preoccupied with the right thing.
- C. Without having a sense of awe, we live aimlessly and spiritually bored, and thus vulnerable to Satan’s tactics. A spiritually bored believer is weak. A fascinated believer is strong and thus equipped to resist temptation. For example, a fascinated believer has no need for pornography.
- D. We will not consistently resist temptation in a “*fascination vacuum*”, but only by preoccupation with a superior fascination can we succeed. There is no neutral zone.
- E. Holiness is often presented in a negative way as being primarily about keeping rules with the threat of shame and humiliation for failure. It has been shame-based. The fear of consequences is not enough to equip us to consistently resist the pleasure of sin. The Bible has many “dos and don’ts”, but they do not have the power to transform our heart.
- F. We sin because we believe that it will provide a pleasure that is superior to obeying God. The power of temptation rests on a deceptive promise that sin will bring more satisfaction than living for God. Scripture calls this the deceitfulness of sin or deceitful lusts (Eph. 4:22; Heb. 3:13).
- G. John Piper says, “Sin is what we do when our hearts are not satisfied with God. God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him”. The struggle for holiness is won in our pursuit to stay satisfied with God, as we experience the superior pleasure of being fascinated with Him. The only way forward is by establishing a new preoccupation.

IV. FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH #2: SETTING OUR HEART ON 100-FOLD OBEDIENCE

- A. There is a significant emotional impact in pursuing 100-fold obedience. Powerful dynamics occur in our heart as we seek to walk in this. The 98% pursuit of obedience has a limited blessing. The last 2% positions us to live with a vibrant heart. We must take ground to keep it.
- B. A sustained “reach” for 100% obedience is different than attaining to it in our life. When we sin, we repent and renew our resolve to “reach” to fully obey, with confidence that God enjoys us. The Lord values our journey to grow in love. The reach of our heart to love Him moves Him.
- C. God created us with the longing to be wholehearted in our love. The joy of loving God is exhilarating. We cannot function properly until we have passionately given our hearts to God. Half-heartedness diminishes our glory as human beings. We long to love God wholeheartedly.
- D. The passionate God created us with the need to be passionate. We were created for love. We soar to the heights of our human potential only when we set our heart to fully love God. There is nothing more satisfying than to know we are giving our all to God. We soar in the joy of love. Setting our heart to fully obey and love God allows us to function right.
- E. God’s insistence on wholeheartedness is not because He is an insecure narcissist looking to humans for affirmation. God knows that only in fully loving Him are we able to experience the fullness of what it means to be human. God is totally self-sufficient, yet He desires our love. He does not need us, yet He abounds in desire for us.
- F. Our desire for God is His gift to us. Some may consider wholeheartedness as their gift to the Lord, and in one sense it is. Our desire for God is His gift to us. In demanding our full dedication and in helping us to sustain it, God enables us to experience the fullness of joy.
- G. The human heart does not work properly in half heartedness. Wholeheartedness is necessary for emotional health. Many seek security and fulfillment in God without being abandoned to Him. Halfhearted followers have too much of God to enjoy sin and too much sin to enjoy God. They are usually the most miserable with a sense of emptiness, burn out, boredom and discontentment.
- H. Obedience and love start as a choice. In doing this, we put ourselves in the path of the Holy Spirit. Our decisions by themselves are not enough to change our emotions. Yet, they are an indispensable part of the process of emotional transformation.
- I. We must make a determined decision to set our heart to love God as we set our life vision to go deep in God. As we change our mind, the Spirit changes our heart (emotions). Setting our love on God includes removing all that diminishes our affections such as bitterness, lust and being over stimulated by entertainment.

¹⁴ *Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him... (Ps. 91:14)*

J. David chose to set his heart to love God. He determined to love God.

¹ **I will love You, O LORD, my strength. (Ps. 18:1)**

K. We can “set” our love or affections on anything that we choose. Our emotions eventually follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue. God has given the human race great dignity in giving us a free will with the ability to make choices to love that will last forever. The Spirit honors the power of our decisions. We must not underestimate the power of our choices.

V. THREE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

A. God requires us to cooperate with Him in the grace of God instead of receiving His grace in vain.

¹ **We then...plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. (2 Cor. 6:1)**

B. God will not do our part and we cannot do His part in this divine cooperation.

1. **Our part:** Includes making quality decisions to deny ourselves (saying no to sin and pride), to feed our spirit on the Word, to ask for divine help through prayer with fasting, to use our authority in Christ against Satan, and to embrace godly activities (serving) and relationships (fellowship and confession)

2. **God's part:** Includes releasing supernatural influences on our heart (power, wisdom, desires), on our body (healing), on our circumstances (provision, protection), on our relationships (favor), and in our ministry

C. Paul summarized three practical principles necessary in cooperating with the grace of God.

¹¹ **Reckon** (see) **yourself to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ...12 Do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourself to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness...** (Rom. 6:11-13)

D. **Knowing Principle (Rom. 6:11):** We are to reckon or see ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. In other words, we must understand who we are in Christ and who God really is, what He did for us and what we receive from Him.

E. **Resisting Principle (Rom. 6:12-13a):** We must not let sin reign in us and we must not present ourselves to sin as an instrument of unrighteousness. We must resist presenting our body to sin by avoiding situations that inflame sin. We must not go to places, buy items or look at or talk about that which stirs up our sinful passions. In other words, we must resist sin and Satan and circumstances that inspire sinful desires in us.

F. **Pursuing Principle (Rom. 6:13b, c):** We are to present ourselves actively to God and to present our bodies as instruments that He can use to bless others. In other words, we are to actively pursue serving and relating to God and people with love (Mt. 22:37-40).