

Live Holy: Living Fascinated in the Pleasure of Loving God (1 Peter 1:15-16)

STARTING WITH THE RIGHT FOUNDATIONS

We are talking about pursuing holiness. We are not going to cover all the notes. I typically give more notes than we can cover, so you can read them on your own, and check out the verses. We are going to look at two foundational truths and three important, practical, principles in pursuing holiness.

Two foundational truths and three practical principles. Now here's the thing, so you are not worried as we are going through the notes: I am going to spend 90 percent of the time on the first point, and then I am going to rush through the other ones. The other points are quite straightforward, but the first one is the one about which most believers do not have understanding. Therefore, I will spend more time on foundational truth number one, and then I will get to foundational truth number two. I will just race through the three principles because they are quite straightforward. But take time to study the notes as you set your heart to be a person who is sincerely pursuing holiness.

GOD CALLS US TO HOLINESS BECAUSE HE IS HOLY

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.'" "Be holy because I am holy," is what the Lord is saying. Now God calls us to holiness because He is holy, and when He talks about Himself being holy, what God is saying is more than, "I am pure from defilement." God is certainly saying that. But His holiness means that He has the highest, most pleasurable and exhilarating quality of life in existence. That is what it means to be holy. It is more than to be pure. His life is transcendent. It is infinitely superior to everything that exists. That is one of the definitions of holiness. God wants to share this life with us. When He is calling us to be holy, He is calling us to enjoy the liberty of it.

Now, some people when they hear "holiness,"—they have a wrong view of holiness. They only think of the drudgery of self-denial, but God is calling us to the exhilaration of a superior experience in life. God has created every human being with longings; we were created with longings for pleasure. We were created with a longing for fascination. God built this into our design, as human beings made in the image of God. We need to understand these two longings, if we are going to pursue holiness in a biblical way: we must lay hold of the longing for pleasure and the longing for fascination, because holiness is a call to the superior pleasure of being fascinated by the revelation of God.

The call to holiness is a call to a superior pleasure because sin is an inferior pleasure, but there is a superior pleasure of fascination when our spirit is exhilarated. It is a superior way to live. It is called holiness. Holiness equips us to enjoy life together with God forever. I mean those are big concepts: to enjoy life together with God forever. We cannot approach holiness with the negative thinking, "Oh, holiness. Well let's grit our teeth and endure this boring God." We are not gritting our teeth to endure a boring God because we want to go to heaven. We are invited to encounter a life of superior pleasure and fascination by encountering the eternal, uncreated God. Holiness does not keep us from pleasure, but it actually equips us to experience it.

THE CALL TO HOLINESS IS THE SUPERIOR CALL TO BE FASCINATED BY GOD

God is the author of pleasure, and He created us to enjoy pleasure. He created us to enjoy physical pleasure.

Physical pleasure is not an accident. The Devil counterfeits physical pleasure with sin. The Devil creates physical pleasures outside the will of God, but physical pleasure was actually created by God. He likes it. We will have physical pleasures forever; we will have emotional pleasures as well. Mental pleasure is when our curiosity is stirred and then answered. Then, there are spiritual pleasures. Now, we long for pleasure because we were created with a desire for it. Now, that desire for pleasure must be satisfied. It will not go away. You are not going to wake up one day with no desire for pleasure. Some approaches to holiness throughout history have the emphasis of self-denial. We want self-denial of sinful lusts and sinful pleasures. We are not into self-denial for the sake of it, but we want to deny what is sinful and what gets in the way of our pursuit for God.

Some groups throughout history were into the self-denial of all pleasure because they thought all pleasure was evil. However, the truth is, God created pleasure and the Devil counterfeited it. Pleasure will exist forever. It is part of the craving of our spirit. If we do not answer pleasure in the right way, we will be vulnerable to the Devil—the counterfeit is the wrong way. That is how a lot of people are caught in sin because they have no superior pleasure to distract them in a holy way, to preoccupy them, or to distract them from the negative. I say that in a tongue-in-cheek way.

HOLINESS EQUIPS US TO ENJOY LIFE FOREVER WITH GOD

The greatest pleasure available to the human spirit is spiritual pleasure, when God reveals God to the human spirit. There is no pleasure in this age, or the age to come that equals that experience. When God reveals God through the Holy Spirit, or God reveals the Father, or the Son to our human spirit, it is the most exhilarating and deepest form of pleasure that the human spirit, or the human frame can experience in this age, or in the age to come. When God reveals God to the human spirit, there is a profound joy. It exhilarates our spirit at the deepest level. Now, many believers think about this. This is the key to holiness: to get a vision for this and touch it even a little bit. Even a little bit will profoundly change you. We are liberated from inferior pleasures of sin by experiencing the superior pleasures of the beauty of Jesus.

THE SPIRIT HELPS US TO FEEL WHAT THE FATHER FEELS

1 Corinthians 2:9-12: “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”

Paul said that the Holy Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God’s heart. This is what Paul is talking about when Paul refers to God’s mind. God, the Holy Spirit, is equal to God as Heavenly Father. I mean the Holy Spirit is as much God as the Father and the Son. So when it says that the Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God, the idea that I like to use is that He discerns the deep things in the Father’s mind and in the Father’s heart. Beloved, this is indescribably glorious—this concept. The Holy Spirit searches, discerns what the Father is feeling and what the Father is thinking. He makes it known to us, if we want it. It is as if the Holy Spirit says, “You cannot quench Me all day, and then go on a journey with Me. We are in agreement, and I will bring you into greater experience; if we are not into agreement, I still love you, but I am going to talk to you about you getting into agreement with Me—not about bringing you to the mountain top.”

THE POWER OF HOLINESS FREES US TO EXPERIENCE THE DEPTHS OF GOD

Many believers, because they live a lifestyle of quenching the Holy Spirit, never touch this issue of what the Holy Spirit really came to do. The Holy Spirit came to take the deep things that God feels and let us feel—and think a little bit of what God is feeling and what God is thinking.

DIVINE TREASURE HUNT INTO THE BEAUTY OF JESUS

John 16:14: “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” Jesus now is talking about the Holy Spirit. He said that He will take what belongs to Jesus, He will tell it to you. He will take what Jesus is thinking and what Jesus is feeling, and He will declare it, which means He will make it known to you. The Holy Spirit will connect us to the Father’s heart and to the Son’s heart. We will feel what they are feeling a little bit. I mean, our frame is really small, and God is really big, but a little bit goes a long way. I talk about the Holy Spirit being our escort on this life-long treasure hunt into the vast treasury of Jesus. We are on a treasure hunt in this age; beloved, that treasure hunt does not end at the resurrection. We will be on a billion-year treasure hunt only to discover that we are at the beginning of the beginning of the treasure hunt. The Holy Spirit will escort us each step of the way.

I call this divine entertainment at its highest when the human spirit is exhilarated with God. Beloved, I want to give you a vision for this: you can be exhilarated with God in this age. I do not like exaggeration about things like this, because exaggeration always hurts people. People get excited for a couple months, and then the next five years, it did not work out. They get cynical, so I do not like spiritual exaggeration at all. I like to be practical. I like to say it in a measured way that is truthful. When I say that the Holy Spirit gives us the things of the Father and the Son, it is in small measures. It is in small increments of inspiration and of insight. But they are just small portions of inspiration and insight, and they tenderize our spirit. They only last a few moments, but they add up over the months and years.

The accumulated impact over time is that it really changes our emotional chemistry. I say this strongly. Though they are small measures of impartation; the Lord gives these little installments of inspiration and insight, and they tenderize us. They excite us a little bit—just a little bit. But over time, there is a build-up effect of this; it shifts our emotional chemistry. It makes us feel different about God, about ourselves, and about people.

But, we have to be on this treasure hunt. We have to be touching this a little bit for its impact. I have been a pastor for over thirty years, and one thing that troubles me is how many sincere believers love Jesus, but they do not go in this direction at all. They want to do a little bit of ministry, have a little bit of fun, do a little this, and a little bit of that—whatever is cool. They have this attitude that they will just wait to go to heaven when they die to experience God.

OVER TIME, THIS HOLY INFLUENCE IMPACTS OUR EMOTIONS

Beloved, you want to get a vision to live fascinated. You want a vision to go as deep in God as God will let the human spirit in this age. You do not want to look at the guy over there and say, “Hey! I want to do a little bit better than him.” No. I want everything that God will give the human spirit in this age.

If you will get that vision, you will spend your time and your money differently. You will talk differently. You will be fanatical about the use of your time because time is an opportunity to be before Him alone or with others, to learn, to touch more, and to connect with Him. Beloved, whatever connects in your spirit; it will overflow in your ministry to others.

THE BEST WAY TO OVERCOME DARKNESS IS TO TURN ON THE LIGHT

John 1:5: “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” So the light is shining, and the light overpowers the darkness. Now, the best way to overcome darkness is to turn the light on. No one goes into a dark room, opens the window, and takes buckets full of darkness to empty out of a room. What do you do? You simply turn the light switch on. Well, it is the same in our approach to holiness. There are a lot of folks who are focused on the darkness of their emotions, so they kind of posture themselves—they grit their teeth and say, “I am not going to give into bitterness, immorality, pride, or covetousness.” They kind of get face to face with it, and they say, “No.” They stare at the darkness, and they are like somebody trying to take buckets of darkness and pour it out the window. The key is to turn the light on. The Holy Spirit comes, He taps us on the shoulder, and He says, “Turn around, get a different focus, instead of focusing on the darkness, focus on gaining the superior pleasure of new light.”

Here is what I have found, and many of you will find this as well: when I am wrapped up in preoccupation to get light, I can turn around and say no to the darkness. When I am focused on the light of the countenance of Jesus, I am far more effective than when I stare at the darkness and try to overcome the darkness just by sheer will power. A lot of folks love Jesus, but they are in a face off with dark desires. What they need to do is get preoccupied with gaining the fascination of light. Light always makes darkness go away. When the light increases, the darkness automatically decreases. We need to be preoccupied with getting light.

GOD’S PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP IS FULL OF JOY AND PRESENCE

Psalm 16:11: David said, “You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Now, David had a unique revelation of the personality of God and even the leadership of God. David understood how much joy and pleasure was in God’s personality and a part of His leadership. David was actually getting a revelation of the throne of God. He does not just mean, “When I worship, I am in Your presence, and I feel joy on the earth.” That is certainly true, but David is talking about the throne of God. Around the throne of God, there are four living creatures and twenty-four elders at the right hand of God. It is the epicenter of pleasure and joy. Those who are nearest the throne have the most pleasure and joy than the rest of creation. The nearer that somebody gets to God, the more full of joy they become, because God is the fullness of joy.

PSALM 36:8: “RIVER OF PLEASURE” DESCRIBES THE SPIRIT REVEALING GOD’S BEAUTY

Psalm 36:8: “They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.” This is one of my favorite psalms. David prayed that God would give His people drink from the river of His pleasures. What a statement. I want to drink; I want to experience the river of God’s pleasures. Now, there are several things that are included in this, but the highest is describing the Holy Spirit revealing the beauty of God to the human spirit. There is also the river of life that lives within us and living water that wells up that Jesus talked about in John 7:38. That river of the Holy Spirit is living water and is a river of delight. He is a river of pleasure, meaning that when we connect with Him, our spirit is exhilarated with Jesus.

ONE OF KING DAVID’S LIFE-LONG GOALS WAS TO ENCOUNTER THE BEAUTY OF GOD

Psalm 27:4: David’s life-long goal was to encounter the beauty of God on a regular basis. We all know Psalm 27:4, David said (paraphrased), “All the days of my life I have had this premier thing, to behold the beauty of God.”

Now, when you study David's life, you know he was king of the nation of Israel. As king, he was head of the government and the army. King David had a really big job description. His days were full. His assignment was to run the nation. Of course, he had a lot of people who he delegated authority to, but David had this massive assignment in the military and the government. He had an assignment in the marketplace, but he was preoccupied with the beauty of God.

In other words, you do not have to disconnect from everything in life to make this preoccupation real and to know the beauty of God. David's hands were occupied in running the government, but his heart was preoccupied in encountering God. It is possible to do it if we measure our time carefully; we can be preoccupied in a divine assignment with our hands, yet preoccupied with encountering God's beauty with our hearts.

IN THE END TIMES, GOD WILL FASCINATE HIS PEOPLE WITH JESUS' BEAUTY

Isaiah 4:2 is one of the most emphasized passages here at IHOP-KC. Isaiah 4:2: "In that day, the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious." You will hear that verse a lot. The branch of the Lord is a common term. It is mentioned six times in the Old Testament. It is a term for the Messiah. Everybody understood the branch of the Lord was the Messiah. Now, there is a very important reason that Jesus is called the branch of the Lord. I am not going there right now, but my point is this: this is describing the generation that the Lord returns. Isaiah 4:2 is specifically in the context of the generation that the Lord returns, and here is the point: in that generation, just before He returns and after He returns, the beauty and the glory of the Messiah will be emphasized by the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, we, as the Body of Christ worldwide, are approaching a time frame when we will experience an unusual going-after of the deep things of God's heart. There is accessibility to the beauty of Jesus like no other time in human history. You want to get a vision of this, because the Spirit is going to emphasize the beauty and the glory of the Messiah like at no other time in history.

OUR LONGING TO BE FASCINATED

Roman numeral III. God created us with a desire for pleasure. He also created us with a desire for fascination, and it is really two sides of one coin because one of the premier pleasures is being fascinated. That is not the only pleasure, but that is one of them—being fascinated. We love to be awestruck. We love to marvel and to be filled with wonder. We love the feeling of being awestruck by God.

Now, we were created with a longing for fascination. We are fascinated most by the revelation of God to our spirit. It is like pleasure: the greatest pleasure is when God reveals God to the human spirit, but it is the same with fascination. It is the same concept with different terminology. We are most fascinated when God reveals God to our spirit.

ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY HAS IDENTIFIED AND TARGETED THIS HUMAN LONGING

The common term is entertainment. Entertainment is the longing for fascination. Entertainment is one of the primary felt needs in the human experience. It is all over the world today. It is not a new thing. It has been a primary felt need of the human race. They experience it in different cultures and in different generations, but entertainment is an attempt to satisfy a craving in our spirit for fascination. We are either going to satisfy that craving by pursuing God, or we will end up satisfying it by darkness. That craving for fascination will not go away. You are not going to wake up one day, and suddenly it is gone. We were built with this longing because God can continue to fascinate us a billion years from now.

We will be overwhelmed, awestruck, and filled with marvel. That design is in our spirit, or that craving is in our spirit now. The problem is that a lot of believers say, “I do not really read the Bible. You know that I love Jesus. I do ministry. I do not really do the Bible. I do not really get quiet before God. I do not really do this.” Then, they are mystified while they are caught in sin and conflicting dark emotions.

WHEN WE ARE SPIRITUALLY BORED, WE ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO SATAN’S ATTACK

We all have dark emotions, but if we are feeding our spirit on fascination with God, we have a superior fascination that has more power over the inferior one. If we do not have any other fascination but the dark ones, we are going to be held captive by them. Secular entertainment targets this human longing. They are making billions because they understand that humans want entertainment more than anything besides food and water. They want entertainment more than anything. It is a primary felt need in the earth all throughout history, not just today. Entertainment is the desire to wow our spirits.

God created us with that desire. Again, that desire is not just going to go away one day. It has to be answered. This is why it is critical that we get a vision to be preoccupied with God. If we are not answering it in the right way, I assure you the enemy has plans to answer it in your life in the wrong way. That longing is not going to disappear. It is an eternal longing. Without a sense of marvel with God—awe, or a sense of excitement from our spirit touching God in new ways, we live spiritually bored. When we live spiritually bored, we are vulnerable to the enemy. Not only are we spiritually bored, but also we are spiritually boring to other people. It’s true.

When my spirit is captivated with Jesus, I have things to say. I do not mean just in my preaching. When I am fascinated with God, it is impacting every time I talk to somebody. When your spirit is bored with God and the Word of God, you are spiritually boring to other people. I mean they might like you. They might think your personality is charming, but it does not spark their spirit with revelation and insight. More importantly, when we are spiritually bored, we are far more vulnerable to darkness.

Spiritually bored believers are spiritually weak. Spiritually fascinated believers have a strong spirit. For instance, the exploding crisis of pornography in the last ten years is sweeping across the planet; it is a result of this need for fascination. In the next ten to twenty years, it will be far more serious than it is now.

Beloved, if your spirit is fascinated with God, you do not have any interest or need to go in that direction. The whole scheme of pornography is a ploy, or an evil attempt to touch the fascination of the human spirit in a dark way. If you are already fascinated with God, you will feel no lure in that direction. That whole industry of pornography is a tactic of darkness, which will double and triple in pervasiveness in the decades ahead.

IF WE LIVE IN A “FASCINATION VACUUM,” IT IS DIFFICULT TO RESIST TEMPTATION

There is one protection against temptation: that is a greater preoccupation with Jesus. We are successful in resisting temptation when we are on a treasure hunt with the beauty of the man Jesus, when we desire to experience the superior pleasures of connecting with Him. We must live setting our hearts to be alive and lovesick with God. That is not just rhetoric. This is real. This is within the reach of every single believer because everybody is weak and broken. This is the power of the Holy Spirit to touch us, but He only will do it, if we want it. You can set your heart to go in this direction if you want it.

WE SIN BECAUSE WE THINK IT WILL PROVIDE A PLEASURE THAT IS SUPERIOR TO GOD

Look at Hebrews 11:25: “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,” as Moses chose to suffer affliction rather than to enjoy the passing pleasure of sin. Moses chose to say no to the passing pleasure of sin, and what this passage is pointing out is that sin is pleasurable, but only for a minute. It is passing. It is momentary.

Now, the reason that we sin is that we believe that the pleasure of sin is superior to the pleasure of connecting with God. Nobody does the math and says, “Sin is more interesting than God,” but at the heart level, we sin because we believe a lie. Sin is deceitful, but we believe it. In that moment, it is more pleasurable to sin than connecting with God. The Holy Spirit is saying that it is a total lie, because sin appears like a bright shining star in the night—full of promise; but in a minute, it is a dark, lonely night of despair. It does not matter what the sin is, it appears very bright and dazzling like the fireworks; but a moment later, we are back in the dark, lonely despairing night. It is passing. Its pleasure is passing. I do not mean over years; the pleasure of sin is only a moment.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

But the pleasure of God is superior to the deceitfulness of sin. Temptation is a deceptive promise. The Devil tempts us with sin. He promises that there is more satisfaction in this than there is in connecting with God. So we say, “Maybe my heart is hungry to connect with God. Maybe I am longing for fascination. I want my heart hungry for pleasure.” That is right. It is. Your heart will be fascinated forever, and God will fulfill it in exceeding glorious ways forever. He even touches us now in this age. This is not just something we wait until the resurrection. We can enter into it now—the beginnings of it. The beginnings of it are just the beginnings, but they are real. They really do change our emotional chemistry over months and years of staying with it.

JOHN PIPER: “GOD IS MOST GLORIFIED IN US WHEN WE ARE MOST SATISFIED IN HIM”

John Piper, a very well known Bible teacher said, “Sin is what we do when our hearts are not satisfied with God.” I love that statement. Piper continued, “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.” When our spirit is exhilarated with God, the best things happen in our walk with God. The call to holiness is a call to enjoy God. The call to holiness is not a drudgery of self-denial—though there is self-denial. We deny the inferior pleasures that diminish our ability to experience the superior pleasures. Denying them in the presence of superior pleasure is a very different battle scene than trying to deny the inferior pleasure of sin when you have no other experience except for more sins.

THE BATTLE FOR HOLINESS IS TRULY A BATTLE TO BE PREOCCUPIED WITH GOD

The battle for holiness is the battle to be preoccupied with God. OK, that is our first point. We spent the majority of our time on that. So the first foundational truth in our quest and our pursuit for holiness is this: being preoccupied with the pleasure and fascination of connecting with God. Beloved, it’s critical that we set our hearts for this.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH TWO: SET OUR HEARTS ON ONE HUNDRED-FOLD OBEDIENCE

Roman numeral III. Foundational truth number two. We will only spend a minute on it, and we will give you three quick principles. Foundational truth number two: setting our heart on 100 percent obedience. It’s empowering and it’s satisfying to set our hearts to love God with our whole heart. There is a surprising dynamic that happens inside of the human heart in our emotional make up when we pursue 100-fold obedience. If we

pursue 98 percent obedience, and there is one area that we say, “Holy Spirit, You can have every area, but in this area, the spark and the dynamic of my life with God is absent.”

Beloved, the power is in the final two percent. Many believers get to the 90 percent level, and they never experience the spark. I will call it a “spark”—that extra dimension. There is more power in our walk with God when the final two percent is yielded to God. So people say, “I will obey God in my physical appetites, my sexuality, my money, my speech, but I want to do what I want to do with my time.”

The Holy Spirit says, “It doesn’t work that way.”

Another guy says, “I will give You my time, but I want to still be the main guy deciding what I do with my money.”

The Holy Spirit says, “No. It does not work that way. You can go to heaven. I will still bless you. I will even anoint you, but you will never know the dynamic of 100-percent obedience.” That unique dynamic that I call the spark of grace; it is only present when you are reaching for 100-percent obedience in a conscious and a deliberate way.

SETTING OUR HEARTS DOES NOT MEAN WE WILL ATTAIN 100 PERCENT OBEDIENCE

Now, I am not talking about attaining 100 percent obedience. I make a big distinction, because attaining and achieving—I believe the Bible makes this distinction between reaching for it, aiming for it, and attaining what we are called to do.

You can aim, fail, and still have the spark. I am not saying that when you attain perfect character, you get the spark. No. I say that when you sincerely aim for it, when you are so deliberate about this, it actually is in your prayer life—meaning, you are saying, “OK. God, my time, my money—help me to obey You.”

I have included a couple lists here, so that you can go through them with the notes on your own. My time, my money, covenant with my eyes, my speech, my physical appetites, and every single area—there is no exception. I really want it to totally be Yours. We are so deliberate about it. We are not casual. This is not a general, “Lord, I will obey You—whatever You say.” A lot of people have this general commitment to obey.

The Lord says, “I want your time in a different way than you are giving it to Me.”

We answer to God, “I say yes to whatever You say except for my free time.” No. There is no such thing as free time. There is time under the Holy Spirit’s leadership. Now, He may bless you to have free time; but there is no time that is God’s and then time that is ours. Everything belongs to God.

How many people live that way, but they will never know that spark, or that flash of the glory of God that touches their spirit on a regular basis? I do not mean all day, everyday. That is not what I mean, but I mean it is a new dynamic in our relationship. We are so deliberate about this vision of every area of our lives that it gets into our dialogue with God on a daily basis—every day. The point is not that everything has to be done perfectly; that’s not my point. Rather, we are saying, “God I am covenanting my eyes. I am not going to look at anything that stirs up my heart in a wrong way. My words—yes, I said wrong words, but I am going to repent

privately to You. When I do that sin, I am going to declare war on it. My time, my money, my appetites, and every single area—I am consciously trying to bring it under Your leadership.

GETTING A VISION FOR ONE HUNDRED-FOLD OBEDIENCE

You get a vision for 100-fold obedience, rather than 98 percent obedience. If you do this, there is a dynamic spark in your relationship, even for a one-week-old believer. I am not even talking about how well you attain it. I am talking about how well you aim for it. I am talking about the aim—not the attainment right now. We are focusing on the reach of your heart. If you do that, it will completely change your spiritual life.

The 98 percent rule: sometimes we say, “every area but my time, every area but my money. Well, I have given you mostly my money but not totally my money.”

The Holy Spirit says, “There is so much more that I will do with you if you surrender everything.” Most believers that I have run into over the years are content, seemingly, with that 90 percent level. I mean they love Jesus for real, but do not want to be inconvenienced—they do not want to be asked about that final area or two—those specific areas of struggle. I am not saying that they are involved in scandalous sin. That’s not what I am talking about. They do not want that really precise leadership of the Holy Spirit in their life. If you go there, you will have a dynamic in your life in God that you have never had before—if you have never gone there.

Now, in the last thirty plus years, I have lived at that place of obedience, but then, sometimes I lose sight of it. Then, I get it again. What I mean is: the lifestyle in which I’m daily seeking God with my words, my eyes, my money, my time, my appetite, the amount I fast, what I eat, etc. I don’t mean I pray over every item and say, “Do I have this french-fry—or not this french-fry?” I am not talking about a kind of distracting preoccupation with details like that. That is not what I am talking about; I am talking about, “Lord, I really want You to order my life.”

I have touched that for seasons at a time, for months at a time many times over the years, and I lose it. I lose it kind of accidentally. I get busy, and mostly it’s in the area of my speech. I will get sloppy, and the Lord will say, “No. I want your speech under My government.”

I say, “Yeah. I know. I preach about it all the time. I’ve got it. I know.”

God responds, “No. You have not done this.” But God wants it under every area, and when I am reaching for that—when I am aiming and not attaining yet, I have a spark in my spirit. Oh, I love it.

Then I say, “How could I ever not stay with this?” Then a few months go by, or a year, and I accidentally forget it. I say, “Yes. Lord, how could I?”

No. I am going to be specific. It needs to be in our dialogue with God on a daily basis. Again, I am not talking about a distracting preoccupation with whether you eat the french fry or not. That’s not it. Do I wear the blue shirt, or the red shirt? That is not what I am talking about. I am not talking about that kind of detail. I am talking about the Lord ordering the amount of time, or when we really fast.

He orders the amount of time we spend on entertainment and the amount of time that we spend with Him. He orders the way that we humble ourselves before people in reality and the way that we serve even with no recognition.

He really orders those broad issues in our life very specifically. When we get into that spirit, it satisfies our spirit, and it empowers us. Two things: it empowers and satisfies in a surprising way—because 100 percent obedience is much more powerful than 98 percent. That is the surprise. 100 percent is far more powerful than 98 percent obedience. I am talking about the aim to live holy.

THREE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES DISCERNING GOD’S PART AND OUR PART

Roman numeral V. So, I’m giving you two foundational truths and three principles. The Bible describes us cooperating with grace. A cooperation with grace means that there is division of labor. It means this: there is a part that you do, and there is a part that God does. There is a part that you are responsible for, and there is a part that God is responsible for. God will not do your part, and you cannot do His part.

I have heard people say this, and it is totally unbiblical—though they are well meaning. They say, “I am just going to let God do it.”

The Lord says, “So, you are waiting on Me, but I am waiting on you.” We have to make real decisions. We have to have these three principles that we are going to lay out in a moment; we have to know certain things. We have to resist certain things, and we have to pursue certain things. While we have these foundational truths in the context of being preoccupied with God’s pleasure, the pleasure of God, and aiming for 100-fold obedience, we are actually cooperating with the Lord.

I have heard some folks say, “Well, I will just let God take care of it. If He wants me free from that, He will make me free from it.”

The Lord says, “It does not work that way. I will not do your part: I will not repent for you. I will not resist sin for you, but I will help you if you will.”

It is the story I tell often about the farmer and the preacher. The farmer took the preacher home after church for a big dinner, and they are driving up the big driveway with hundreds of acres of this perfectly manicured farm. The preacher says, “Wow farmer! God surely blessed you with this farm!” And the farmer looked at him.

He says, “When God had this farm, it was a total mess.”

It is true. God says, “Farmer, I am not planting those seeds. I will shine light and rain on them, and I will create the miracle of life, but you have got to water and weed that garden, or it will be a mess.”

PAUL OUTLINED THREE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES TO COOPERATE WITH GOD’S GRACE

Paul outlined three of my favorite verses on holiness in Romans 6:11-13: “Reckon yourself to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ . . . Do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 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.” These are the most precise principles

on holiness that I know anywhere in the Bible. There is more in these three verses on practical points of holiness than anywhere else in the Bible.

For time's sake, study this on your own, as this passage is so important in my estimation. When I look over thirty years of preaching, I have preached more on this passage—there are maybe two or three other passages equal to it. I must have preached on this over fifty to 100 times over the years. There are only a couple passages I have talked about 100 times. If a preacher talks on one passage ten times, you know that is a real life passage.

My point is this—I am not trying to talk about me; that is not my point. My point is that in my years of seeking the Lord, Romans 6:11-13 is absolutely at the top of the list in terms of practically understanding holiness. I am just alerting you to this: go after this passage. There are three basic principles in this passage. It's what I call "the knowing principle," "the resisting principle," and "the pursuing principle." When you read Romans 6:11-13, you see those three principles. It is bigger than just this passage.

This is the only scripture I know where all three principles are put in a precise one-two-three order. So you really want to study this. We must know certain things. We have to have our faith instructed. We have to know who we are in Christ. We have to know what we have received in Him. We have to know the truth about God's heart as a Father and a Bridegroom. We have to know certain things in order to resist sin and pursue God in a right way.

KNOWING PRINCIPLES: WE MUST KNOW WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

Look at Philemon 6: "Your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake." Paul said that your faith would become effective through the knowledge of every good thing in you for Christ's sake. The knowledge of what is in you in Christ Jesus makes your faith effective. We must know that we have received the gift of righteousness. We must know that we have the indwelling Holy Spirit. We must know that there is no condemnation, so we can have confidence in love while we are seeking God and resisting sin. We have to know that we have the authority to use the name of Jesus.

We have to know God's heart as a Father and a Bridegroom, and the tenderness and the gladness of His heart as we approach Him. There are things we have to know or our resisting of sin is not nearly as affective. This is what I call "the knowing principle." Paul called it—"reckon yourself dead to sin," or "know yourself;" this means to see yourself as dead to sin, that the penalty of sin is not on you. There are a number of principles involved, but there are things we have to know. That's the point I am making.

RESISTING PRINCIPLE: WE RESIST SIN, SATAN, AND TEMPTATION

There are things we have to resist. We have to resist sin. We have to. God will not do it for us. We have to resist Satan. We have to say, "Satan, I rebuke you in the name of Jesus." Many people resist sin, but they never resist the Devil. The Devil comes, and they have heightened activity in fear touching them.

They have nightmares at night and they just endure it. They need to say, "In the name of Jesus, I take authority over you. Be gone." It is not like all the problems will go away, but that heightened awareness of the negative that comes from demonic activity will lift. We have to resist Satan. It is a biblical principle. Not only that, we have to resist sin-provoking circumstances.

Paul said it in Romans 6:12-13. Paul said that you cannot present your body as an instrument of sin. You cannot go places and offer yourself, being naïve and presumptuous. You cannot go to situations that stimulate sin in you. You are presenting yourself to sin if you do that. A guy goes to the party he should not be at, and then he starts seeking God there.

God says no. This is the resisting principle. You go into the middle of it, you know, start smoking, drinking—all the stuff that is being passed around—then say, “In the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus.” If you are there, you better claim the name of Jesus. But that is a little bit backwards. Still, go for it: “Jesus help me,” and the louder the better. You can get help from some others. But there is a resisting principle that is critical.

PURSUING PRINCIPLE: PURSUE SERVING AND RELATING TO GOD AND PEOPLE IN LOVE

God will not do this part for us. There is a pursuing principle. We pursue God. We pursue people. We pursue serving and relating to God. That’s called intimacy with God. That’s called serving people, or walking in love. There is a pursuing dimension that is very different from the resisting dimension, which is very different than the knowing dimension.

We must know truth, resist darkness, and pursue God. Pursuing God means serving His people, and being a vessel of righteousness that He uses to bless others and walk in love towards others. We have to know truth, resist darkness, and pursue God. Those three cannot be exchanged for one another. Some people pick two out of the three. None of these principles can be substituted for the other. Some people resist sin. I mean, they take a stand. They rebuke sin and all these lusts that are rising up in their being, and they are actually pursuing God. They are seeking the Word, and they are praying, but the problem is that they do not know who they are in Christ.

Every time they fail, they have so much shame that their spirit is closed, even while they are seeking the Lord. So they’re rebuking sin; they are seeking God, but they have such a wrong concept of God. They are so shame-filled that their spirit is closed. They are not receiving a connection with God that is exhilarating in their spirit because they have no confidence—because they do not know the right things.

Another might pursue. He’s at the prayer meeting, he’s serving people, he’s pursuing God and God’s people, but he’s not resisting sin. I mean he is praying and crying at the prayer meeting, and then he is just giving himself to all kinds of things outside of it. That does not work. We cannot pursue without resisting.

Well, another knows the truth, and he knows the bridal paradigm. He knows the Father’s heart. He knows who he is in Christ. He has Bible information. He has got a right paradigm of God. He even has a desire to resist the negative, but he does not actually pursue God and connect. So there is not an igniting in his spirit of that information that he knows.

We have to do all three of them—but not only that. If we embrace all three of these principles and the two foundational truths—being preoccupied with the superior pleasures and seeking 100-fold obedience—then there will be a dynamic work in your spirit over time.

MINISTRY TIME

Amen. Let's stand. I do not expect you to have all of this down. It is OK. Principle three: pursue something like this. "I cannot get it." No. You cannot get it just from a message. The point of this message is not for you to get it. The point is, I am advertising for you to take notes, and say, "I am going to learn this." You do not have to get the Romans 6 thing down immediately—that passage exactly—because those principles apply throughout the whole Old and the New Testament.

But you want to learn this stuff. You really want to get this down. I want to invite different ones to come down, who are saying, "I want to lock into this—being preoccupied with being fascinated." If you would like prayer, and you want to take a stand before the Lord, I want to invite you to come on up to these lines up here right now, if you will. The reason that you come up for prayer is because the Holy Spirit gives more when saints pray for saints. Just come and stand on these lines. You do not have to come up to get prayer.

Some people come up because they want prayer; other times, they come up because they want to make a stand before God; but other times, they want privacy with their friends next to them. They just want to get alone and come kneel. Some of you, you say, "Hey, I am on row ten. I can be touched by the Lord on row ten!" That's good too. I'm just saying this to all of our new students.

Beloved, I do not care how weak you are, because all of us are the same. We are all weak and broken. There are no super saints. They do not exist. They are weak and broken people like us. If we will say, "I want this. I really want this."

He'll say, "I will do it. I will give you a new beginning today. I will wipe the slate clean. You can stand before Me in confidence. I do not care what you did three hours ago—the slate is clean if you want this."

Some of you need to hear that. I do not care what happened three hours ago. It is over. If you repented of it, it is over. Stand in confidence before your Father now. Receive from Him.

Holy Spirit, I ask You—I ask You to come right now. Come and touch them. Jesus, come now. Come, release Your power. More Lord. You are gazing on the throne right now, Revelation 4. There is the Father. You are on that sea of glass before the throne right now. So you are gazing on the throne. That is what you are doing with your eyes closed. We are waiting on the Lord.

We are a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit this room is. We are in no hurry. Holy Spirit, here we are. Now, release Your tenderizing influence in this room. Lord, release Your glory. Release Your glory in this room. I want to be fascinated with You Jesus. Lord, increase Your manifest glory in this room. I ask You to increase the release of Your glory.

All over the room, Lord, I ask for oppression to be lifted off. I break the power of oppression. In the name of Jesus, I take authority over demonic oppression over minds. Now Lord, release Your glory. In the name of Jesus, release Your glory. Release Your glory. Shine the light of Your countenance. Lord, release Your glory.