

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**. In being holy, He has the highest, most pleasurable and exhilarating quality of life in existence. He wants to share this life with us. Therefore, He called us to enjoy the liberty of holiness. Many see holiness only as the drudgery of self-denial.
¹⁵ "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:15-16)
- C. God created every human being with a longing for pleasure and fascination. It is His design. Understanding these two longings is foundational to pursuing holiness in a biblical way. The call to holiness is a call to the **superior pleasures of being fascinated** by the revelation of Jesus.
- D. Holiness equips us to enjoy life together with God forever. We must not approach holiness in a negative way with dread. It does not keep us from pleasure, but equips us to experience it. The power of holiness frees us from the vain imaginations of lust, pride and bitterness.

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. Our longing for pleasure is part of our created design, therefore it must be satisfied. It will not go away. The Devil tempts us with “counterfeit” pleasures that are outside of God’s will.
- B. The greatest pleasures available to the human spirit are spiritual pleasures that come to us when God reveals God to our spirit. This exhilarates our spirit at the deepest levels. We are liberated from the **inferior pleasures** of sin by experiencing the **superior pleasures** of the beauty of Jesus.
- C. The Spirit discerns the deep things of the Father’s heart and mind including the delight He feels for Jesus, the saints and His kingdom. The Spirit helps us feel some of what the Father feels.
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)
- D. The Spirit escorts us on a divine treasure hunt into the beauty of Jesus. He takes the things that Jesus is thinking and feeling and reveals 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)
- E. God releases small “measures” of insight and inspiration from the Word which tenderize our spirit for a few moments. These subtle “flashes” of glory are to be a regular part of our relationship with God. Over time, this holy influence changes us emotionally.

- F. The best way to overcome darkness is to turn on the light. No one seeks to remove the darkness in a room by opening a window to throw out buckets of darkness. They simply turn on the light. The way for darkness to decrease in us is to focus on increasing the amount of light we enjoy.
⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (Jn. 1:5, RSV)*
- G. We will not overcome the darkness of immorality, bitterness, and pride by focusing on it. We do not decrease the darkness in us by focusing on darkness. We change our focus to become preoccupied with gaining more of the *“light of the superior pleasure of revelation”* of God.
- H. David had revelation of God’s personality and leadership as being full of joy and pleasure. Those nearest God’s throne have the most joy. The throne is the epicenter of joy in the universe. Our God is a happy God with happy holiness. God’s holiness is filled with joy and pleasure.
¹¹ *In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:11)*
- I. The “river of pleasures” describes the Spirit revealing the beauty of God to the human spirit. The Holy Spirit causes rivers of living water to flow in the heart of a believer (Jn. 7:37-39)
⁸ *You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. (Ps. 36:8)*
- J. One of King David's lifelong goals was to encounter the beauty of God on a regular basis. David as king was head of the government and the army. His *hands were occupied* with his occupation or ministry assignment to be king, while his *heart was preoccupied* with the beauty of God.
⁴ *One thing I have desired...all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord. (Ps. 27:4)*
- K. In the end times, God will fascinate His people with Jesus’ beauty beyond anytime in history.
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. God created us with a longing for the pleasure of being fascinated or awestruck and filled with marvel and wonder. We are fascinated most when we are fascinated by revelation of Jesus. Paul was preoccupied with being fascinated by the knowledge of Jesus. It was key to his life vision.
⁸ *I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ... (Phil. 3:8)*
- B. We cannot repent of our longing for fascination. It is a significant part of our creative design. We will either satisfy it in God or in darkness. It is not neutral and will not be silenced or go away.
- C. The secular entertainment industry has identified and targeted this human longing. They have exploited this God-ordained craving to their profit and our ruin. Entertainment is the desire to feel a “wow” in our hearts. It is one of the primary felt needs in human life.
- D. Without having a sense of awe in our relationship with God, we will live spiritually bored, and will more vulnerable to Satan’s tactics. A spiritually bored believer is weak. A fascinated believer is strong. For example, a fascinated believer has no need for pornography.

- E. We must be preoccupied with a superior fascination. We will not successfully resist temptation if we live in a “*fascination vacuum*”. Everyone seeks to be satisfied, either by God or by the flesh.
- 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).
²⁵ *Choosing to suffer affliction...than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. (Heb. 11:25)*
- 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”.
- H. The call to holiness is the call to enjoy God by living fascinated. The battle for holiness is the battle to be preoccupied with the right thing and is won in the pursuit of enjoying God. The way forward in holiness is to embrace a new preoccupation to the pleasure of living fascinated.

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

- A. It is empowering and satisfying to seek to love God with all our heart. Powerful dynamics occur in our emotions as we pursue 100-fold obedience. We must take new ground to keep our ground.
- B. Empowering: The 98% pursuit of obedience has a limited blessing. The last 2% positions us to live with a vibrant heart. There is a “spark” of the Spirit in our heart as we “reach” to live this way. We soar to the heights of our potential relationship in God only seeking to fully obey Him.
- C. Satisfying: God created us with a longing to be wholehearted in our love for Him. It is necessary for our emotional health. The human heart does not function properly without wholeheartedness. People in love are untouchable. True freedom is found in the yoke of Christ of full abandonment.
- D. 100-fold obedience: It includes bridling our speech (Jas 3:2), making a covenant with our eyes that refuses to look on anything that stirs up lust (Job 31:1), disciplining our physical appetites, managing our time (for service and prayer) and our money to increase the kingdom.
- E. A deliberate vision: It must be so deliberate that it gets into our daily dialogue with God in our prayer times. It is more than a commitment to obey God in a general way. To contend for 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. We are equally yoked to Jesus not by the size of our love, but by the “all” of our love. Though our “all” is small the point is that it is our “all”.
- F. God is self-sufficient: He desires us, but does not need us. His insistence on our full obedience is not because He is an insecure narcissist looking for human affirmation. He knows that only in fully loving Him are we able to experience the fullness of what it means to be human. By requiring our full dedication and in helping us to sustain it, He equips us to experience great joy.

V. THREE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

- A. **Cooperation in grace:** God requires us to cooperate with Him in His grace. There is a division of labor. He will not do our part and we cannot do His part. **Our part** includes making quality decisions to deny ourselves, to feed our spirit on the Word, to ask for help through prayer, etc. **God's part** includes releasing supernatural influences on our heart (new desires), on our body (healing), on our circumstances (provision, protection), relationships (favor), and in our ministry.
- B. Paul outlined three practical principles necessary in cooperating with the grace of God.
¹¹ **Reckon** (see) *yourselves 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 yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness...* (Rom. 6:11-13)
- C. **Knowing Principle** (Rom. 6:11): We must know who we are in Christ and what we receive in Him (gift of righteousness) as well as the truth about God's heart as a Father and Bridegroom. We are to reckon or see ourselves as dead to sin (to sin's penalty, shame and mandatory control over us) and alive to God (fully accepted and indwelt by God) because of Jesus' work on the cross. There are truths that we must know or reckon to be effective in our faith and repentance.
⁶ *Your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. (Philem. 6; NAS)*
- D. **Resisting Principle** (Rom. 6:12-13a): We resist sin, Satan and sin provoking circumstances. We must not let sin reign in us nor present ourselves to sin as an instrument of unrighteousness. One way we resist presenting our body to sin is by avoiding circumstances that inflame sin in us. We do not go to places, buy items or look at or talk about that which stirs up sinful passions. Another way we resist the reign of sin is our body is by denying fleshly lusts that war against us.
¹¹ **Abstain from fleshly lusts** which war against the soul... (1 Pet. 2:11)
- E. **Pursuing Principle** (Rom. 6:13b): We pursue serving and relating to God and people, in love. We present ourselves to God and our bodies as instruments that He may use to bless others. We pursue loving God as we offer our bodies as vessels for the Holy Spirit to use to bless others.
- F. **Summary:** We must know truth, resist darkness, and pursue God. We pursue serving and relating to God and people as we resist sin, Satan and sin provoking circumstances, in context to knowing who we are in Christ and the truth about God's heart as a Father and Bridegroom.
- G. None of these principles can be substituted for the other two. Some resist sin and pursue God without knowing who they are in Christ. Others pursue God at prayer meetings without resisting sin. It does not work to only know truth and to resist sin without actively pursuing God and people. If we embrace all three of these principles, in context to the two foundational truths of being preoccupied with the superior pleasures of God and seeking 100-fold obedience, then the Holy Spirit will dynamically work in our life