

HOLINESS - THE HINGE OF A SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY

PURPOSE: To create in the students the desire to live holy lives.

OBJECTIVES: By the end of the lesson the students will:

1. Be able to explain how to live holy lives.
2. Be willing to put into practice the principles for living holy lives.

KEY VERSES: I Peter 1:14-16

I. Introduction

A number of bridges and buildings have fallen over the years because of lack of structural integrity. A passenger train went off a bridge into a bayou when the bridge gave out. A boat had hit one of the supports and weakened it. Under pressure the bridge collapsed. The Space Shuttle Challenger blew up because an “O” ring lost integrity; and because of foam insulation hitting a wing at high speed during liftoff, the Space Shuttle Columbia burned up during re-entry. There was a nuclear disaster at Chernobyl. As a result, many local residents have had to battle disastrous health problems because of exposure to unsafe levels of radiation. *(At this time you can ask the students what do all these have in common? Their answers should be something like this: They appeared fine, but under pressure it was discovered that they lacked structural integrity and collapsed. Many were injured or killed as a result. Lives were forever changed. Structural integrity is absolutely critical for mechanical things to work well.)*

Personal integrity is absolutely critical as well. It’s the hinge on which ministry swings. Integrity means: sound, whole, complete, without flaw or defect, perfect. Jesus said, "Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." He was loosely quoting Leviticus 11:44: "Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy." What does holiness mean? Holiness means pure, undefiled, consistent through and through, sound, whole. In simple terms it is much the same as personal integrity. As such it stands in direct contrast to a world that seeks for all to blend into it. People typically characterize a person as holy when he is separate from the common order of things. A holy man or woman is one who stands above the regular habits and beliefs of society. We are called to be such a people. Peter writes, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior, because it is written, ‘You shall be holy for I am holy.’" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

With this understanding of holiness in mind, let’s reflect for a few minutes on how we become holy and its relationship to ministry.

II. How do we become holy?

A. We don’t. We already are! We are declared to be saints, or holy ones the moment we place

our faith in Christ. That is our position as believers. We are called saints which comes from the same root word as holy and therefore means that we are set apart for a holy God. From Romans to Colossians (except Galatians), Paul addressed the believers he wrote to as “saints” (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2).

- B. With this as the foundation Peter states simply in verse 14 how we live out who we are. It comes in two parts.
 - 1. First, obey God. God commanded us to be holy. If he gives us a command, he gives us the capacity to fulfill the command. The Bible shows us what His commands are. We then obey them by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. Second, we actively pursue non-conformity to our former lusts. We renew our minds. We say no to sin within us by not feeding its desires. We make sure we are not being taken captive by the world’s philosophies.
- C. How does holy living affect our lives? It has an effect on every part of our lives. It affects our relationships with our friends and families. It influences how we schedule our time. It impacts how we work. It influences all the decisions we make. This is true since a holy person is concentrating on God and doing His will.

III. Minimizing holiness has dire consequences.

- A. Many men who had been in Christian leadership have forfeited the right to be in leadership because of a lack of personal holiness in their lives. Their ministries and the people they shepherded were shipwrecked because they did not live holy lives.
- B. Most of the time the damage does not happen in an instance. It can be something like what happens when termites begin destroying a home. At first you cannot see any damage. But then you begin to see some problems. If nothing is done the house will be completely destroyed. It works the same way in our lives. We begin to tolerate a little sin in our lives. Then we begin to rationalize and tolerate a little more. As this happens we begin to lose track of what is really sin and what is not. The Scriptures tell us that a little leaven, leavens the whole lump. We must always be on guard. Satan is looking for someone to devour.
- C. Holiness takes time and concentration on the Lord. There is an old song that reads: “Take time to be holy, speak oft with the Lord; abide in Him always and feed on His Word...Take time to be holy, the world rushes on...” Erosion of morals takes place because we do not take time to be holy. We need to spend time with the Lord and develop His perspective and thoughts into our lives.

IV. CONCLUSION

Use an Illustration similar to this to summarize the issue of living holy lives as a daily practice.

A pastor once said, “We usually have the idea in our heads that if we sin less than the other guy we will be fine. Our goal becomes to sin less than the average Christian. But is that really the correct solution? Sin, but only a little. No, our goal should be to not sin at all. There is no acceptable level of sinning.” We are admonished in the Bible to be holy as the Lord is holy. Will you commit yourself to holiness? Or will you have the goal of sinning just a little less than the average Christian? The decision is yours. What will it be? I hope that you choose to live holy lives and not just sin a little less than the other person.

(Close in prayer)