

**Holiness –  
House of Christ's Love  
Pastor Rob Smith – Guest Speaker  
November 9, 2014**

Turn with me if you would to I Peter 1:13-16. If you don't have a Bible with you, you can turn to page \_\_\_\_\_ in the bible that is in your row.

**Read 1 Peter 1:13-16**

**Pray**

Peter instructs us in this passage to be "holy in all we do" because God himself is Holy. In it's simplicity, holiness is the pursuit of becoming like Christ. And becoming like Christ is all about being restored back into God's image.

And today I want us to take a very practical look at what it means to be holy and to live a holy lifestyle. I want to share with you 4 steps toward holiness that author Jim Spruce has outlined in an article out of the Standard publication from 1999.

**4 Biblical Steps toward Holiness.** (Jim Spruce, Standard, February 1999)

**The first step for us in living a holy lifestyle is to**

**1. Hunger** – Jesus said in Matthew 5:6 – "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness". When we begin the process of being renewed in the image of God, and we enter into a relationship with him.....having accepted Christ as both our Savior and Lord, there has to be a continual desire for growth. There has to be a hunger and thirst for more! Jim Spruce says that, "A holy walk does not just happen, it is born of a profound hunger for a deeper relationship." We don't become holy by chance. We become holy by choice. Our passage clarifies that for us today when it says in verse 15 – "Be holy in all that you do" The "all that we do" in life is talking about the choices and decisions that we make. And every choice, and every decision that we make either makes us more like Christ or less like Christ.

There has to be a hunger and thirst for the things of God if we are growing in our spiritual walk and becoming more like Christ!! If we don't eat or drink, our physical bodies will waste away and we'll die! The same is true for our spiritual life! If we don't eat and drink of the things of God, we will waste away and die spiritually!!!! To hunger and Thirst for righteousness is the place of beginning for us in the pursuit of holiness!

And we have to ask ourselves 3 questions on a regular basis. 1. Have the decisions and choices that I have made this week made me more like Christ or less like Christ? 2. What am I hungry for today? 3. What do I thirst after today?

**The second step in our pursuit of holiness is to ..**

**2. Not let Go** – We find in Genesis chapter 32 the story of Jacob when he was wrestling with God and this is what it says, <sup>24</sup> So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. <sup>25</sup> When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. <sup>26</sup> Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Jacob so desperately wanted to know God that he would not let go!! He wrestled with God and hung on until God gave up!!!!!! And friends there has to come a time in our lives when we want nothing more and nothing less than God Himself in our lives!!! And I'm speaking about the difference between those who know about God and those who know God!!!! Why do I feel that at times in my life and at times in our church, and at times when I think about the church universal that we have millions of people who know about God, but they really don't know God!???

Ill. Some years ago at a drawing-room function, one of England's leading actors was asked to recite for the pleasure of his fellow guests. He consented and asked if there was anything special that his audience would like to hear. After a moment's pause, an old clergyman present said: "Could you, sir, recite to us the Twenty-third Psalm?" A strange look

passed over the actor's face; he paused for a moment, and then said: "I can, and I will, upon one condition; and that is that after I have recited it, you, my friend, will do the same." "I," said the clergyman, in surprise. "I am not an elocutionist. However, you wish it, I will do so." Impressively, the great actor began the psalm. His voice and his intonation were perfect. He held his audience spellbound; and as he finished, a great burst of applause broke from the guests. Then, as it died away, the old clergyman arose and began the psalm. His voice was not remarkable; his intonation was not faultless. When he had finished, no sound of applause broke the silence, but there was not a dry eye in the room, and many heads were bowed. Then the actor rose to his feet again. His voice shook as he laid his hand upon the shoulder of the old clergyman and said: "I reached your eyes and ears, my friends; he reached your hearts. The difference is just this: I know the Twenty-third Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd." --The War Cry

Ill. J. I. Packer's wrote a book a number of years ago titled, "Knowing God" and in it he says the following." A little knowledge **of God** is worth more than a great deal of knowledge **about him.**"

He goes on to write about the evidence of Knowing God. And he uses the story of Daniel to make his observations and we don't have time to cover that story in depth today, but I want to encourage you to read through the story of Daniel on your own time to discover what Packer is talking about. And so in his book, Packer says that

**a. Those who know God have great energy for God.** – Daniel 11:32, says, "the people who know their God shall **stand firm and take action.**' We can't be spiritual slugs!! We have to have great energy for God!

**b. Those who know God have great thoughts of God.** – He says that in the book of Daniel, we will find a no more vivid or sustained presentation of the many-sided reality of God's sovereignty in the whole Bible. This is where I want to challenge us to read this story to discover that.

**c. Those who know God show great boldness for God.** - Daniel and his friends were men who stuck their necks out. This was not stupidity. They knew what they were doing. They had counted the cost. They had measured the risk. They were well aware what the outcome of their actions would be unless God miraculously intervened. Of which He did.

**d. Those who know God have great contentment in God.** There is no peace like the peace of those whose minds are possessed with full assurance that they have known God, and God has known them.

**Can I ask you a question today? Do you know about God or do you KNOW God??? Are you hanging on tightly....not letting go?**

**The third step for us in our pursuit of holiness is to**

**3. Ask God** – In Luke 11, one of Jesus' disciples had come to him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray" And so Jesus taught them to pray the prayer as we know it to be the Lord's Prayer, and then he went on to say in verse 9 that when we have a need, we are to ask and it will be given to us. And then in verses 11-13 Jesus says, "<sup>11</sup>Which of you fathers, if your son asks for<sup>a</sup> a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

I'm wondering today if we simply spend too much time asking God for our "needs" and not enough time asking Him for more of the Holy Spirit!!!!??? Do we have a responsibility to ask God for those needs in our life? Absolutely!!!!!! But if you are anything like me, if you give an honest reflection of the things you pray for on a daily basis, I bet most of us typically ask God for our needs and our wants, and for things that would make our lives a whole lot easier. And not often enough do we ask God for more of the Holy Spirit!!

But here's the thing about asking.....in our pursuit of holiness. "Prayer is not asking for what we think we need but asking to be changed in ways we can't imagine." (Kevin Ruffcorn) Pursuing holiness will include transformation in our lives!! And the only way that we will be transformed is by the work of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives!!!!!! And so doesn't it make sense then to ask for the Holy Spirit!!!!!!???? I think so!!

The holy spirit is a GIFT to you and !!!!! God is the only one who holds that gift and it is reserved for those of us who seek and ask!!

In Acts 2, we find that the holy spirit had come upon the people and some of the people in the crowd began making fun of those who were filled with the spirit and Peter got up to explain what was taking place. And we know that after Peter addressed the crowd, some of the people were convicted by his message and asked, "What shall we do?" and Peter replied in [Acts 2:38](#) - "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the **gift** of the **Holy Spirit**." They had to repent of their ways and ask God do something miraculous in their life, and when they ASKED God for forgiveness of their sins, he sent his Holy Spirit to them!!

**The 4<sup>th</sup> step in our pursuit of holiness is to...**

**4. Experience Abundant Life** – Jesus said in John 10:10 "the thief comes only to kill, and steal, and destroy, BUT I have come so that you might have life and have it abundantly!!"

Can I ask a question? What does the abundant life look like for you? It has to mean more than having a lot of toys and material things. It has to mean more than climbing the corporate ladder. IT has to mean more than just having a bunch of money in the bank. Friends, there has to be more than this in order for us to experience the abundant life that Christ is talking about!!!!

Living a holy lifestyle empowers us to live beyond the ordinary!! It means that we can live an EXTRA – ORDINARY LIFE!!

But how does that happen for us??? I think the answer is simple, the practice is more difficult. Living the abundant life that Christ offers to us is all about living with humility. And friends, we need to pause right here today and we need to address this critical issue of living with humility if we are going to pursue a lifestyle of holy living!!

In James 4, James writes about submitting ourselves to God. And in the middle of this chapter, he references an old proverb and writes, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves to God then. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, purify your hearts, and humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up!"

Let me connect the dots for us today. When you and I humble ourselves, God allows us to live in the realm of abundance!! Here's why....the GRACE that God gives to us is the abundance that Jesus was speaking about!!

Spruce says that "when we seek in faith, we receive in grace!" And so when you and I are in a pursuit of living a holy lifestyle, and when we are seeking more of God, in faith, God will bless us by sharing His Grace.....His abundance with us!!! Now remember, **Grace is receiving what we don't deserve**. And it's because of this grace that is given to us, when we live in a state of humility that we can experience freedom from sin, we can be assured of a new life in Christ, and we can have the hope of spending eternity with God!!!!

I wonder if a lot of people who are in churches today need a Lazarus experience! You remember the story?? Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha, he became sick and eventually died. They placed him in a tomb and Jesus came to console Mary and Martha and in John 11 we pick up part of the story when – <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." "I am the resurrection and the life." And so Jesus went to the tomb and said, "Take away the stone!" And then he prayed to God and thanked God for hearing his prayer to bring Lazarus back to life. And then he called into the tomb and with a loud voice he said, "Lazarus! Come out!!!!!! You are No longer dead!!!! And the dead man came to life and came out of the tomb.

Friends, there are simply too many dead people in churches today. God doesn't want that for any of us!!! And he's coming to our spiritual tombs calling us to come out because we are NO LONGER DEAD!!!!

And one of the best things about this story of Lazarus is that Jesus instructed Lazarus and others to "Take off the grave clothes!!!" The grave clothes represented death and decay!! And I am sure of this today.....God is instructing us to take off the grave clothes because we are no longer dead!!!! We are alive!!!!!!!!!!

**Paul writes in Romans 6:11** – “<sup>11</sup>In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive in Christ Jesus.”

Do you want to live an abundant life? .....come out of the spiritual tomb and remove the grave clothes and live in God's grace!!

**Pray**