

## Faith & Life – Holiness

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What is the difference between passing fads (trends) and life-long values? For one thing, fads and trends appease or satisfy our appetites for a season but they are often discarded or shelved at some point and perhaps only revived in humorous rhetoric as we share “remember when” stories among friends. (*Anything come to mind??*) Life-long values, on the other hand, remain with us and help shape the really important aspects of what makes us who we are.

There are likely few people who walk a spiritual journey without some exposure to the value of Christian holiness. Holiness, unlike perhaps some other ‘trendy’ aspects of the culture of Christianity (like ‘you must not play on Sunday’), is definitely not a passing fad or a trend to be followed for a period of time and then discarded or shelved. Holiness is a *lifestyle* designed by God for those who whom he has created.. It is a value to be both learned and lived. Holiness is a strong element of Biblical teaching throughout the entire Bible. The nature of God revealed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament is a *holy* God. His name is holy. His Word is holy and to ‘be holy’ is His desire for us as we seek to mimic His likeness.

Jesus records a prayer for his disciples in John 17. It was a prayer about the Lord’s deep desire for “the full measure of JOY” (or complete satisfaction) in our lives. To attain this Jesus intercedes to the Heavenly Father that we would be *sanctified* – holy. *“Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so **they can be made holy by your truth.**”* (John 17:17-18, New Living Translation)

Jesus knew that ‘in this world’ there would always be much to lure believers away from God’s will and plan. He knew that the enemy would be actively seeking to discredit the plans of God. We see and hear many such messages of this in our world today. While the first century disciples, who heard this prayer, knew nothing of 21<sup>st</sup> century internet and social media (which is now the ‘norm’ in our lives), Jesus knew there was a common thread woven through the centuries. Regardless of the *form* through which temptations or seductions from “the world” would come, the tendency for self-gratification would remain a constant. He knew that human beings who live in the flesh would always need the power of God to “*protect them from the evil one.*” And so He pleads to the Father - “*sanctify them*”.

What does it mean then to ‘be sanctified’ and live out holiness **today**? To answer this question in its completeness is beyond this writer’s ability. However, I do believe that holiness is possible when we follow a regular rhythm of **retreat** (unto God) and **advance** into the world with a reflection of what the **retreat** has revealed. Holiness is to learn from the nature and life of Jesus – God incarnate who came to show us the Father – and to put that learning into real life. Colonel Geanette Seymour from the ISJC in describing social justice puts a very good spin on our holiness today: “*practise love, grace and mercy, and respond to people in need – Christian elements that are lacking – in a world where greed supersedes and egocentric behaviour drives people. A social justice response is actually the practice of Salvationist holiness, living a life that is socially just and encouraging others to do likewise.*” (Salvationist, January edition).

Holiness is a ‘values’ based life – not a ‘fad’ based or a ‘self’ based life. Holiness is marked by Christian

values based on the known will of God found in His Word and the known image of God seen in His Son. Oh, by the way, not all trends are bad. One of the 'trendy' choruses I sang as a teenager is one I refuse to discard or leave to only 'remember when' conversations. I think I will own this one as one of my life-long values as I keep seeking personal holiness, especially the last line:

*To be like Jesus, this hope possesses me.*

*In every thought and deed, this is my aim, my creed.*

*To be like Jesus, this hope possesses me.*

*His Spirit helping me, like Him I'll be.*

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