

The Holy Spirit and Spirituality

The Holy Spirit and Living a Holy Life

Lesson #6 for February 11, 2017

Scriptures: 1 Peter 1:14-16; Isaiah 6:3; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Timothy 1:8; Psalm 15:1-2.

1. In this lesson we will discuss the relationships among the work of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, holiness, and love.
2. Shouldn't it be the goal of every Christian to become more and more holy? How would that take place? What is the relationship between God's love and His holiness? Why is it that so many people want to focus on God's love and not many want to talk about holiness? Does God's holiness seem stern and unapproachable to you? How is the Holy Spirit related to our pursuit of holiness? He is called the "Spirit of holiness." (Romans 1:4, *NASB*)
3. Does God want us to be holy? What is implied by the words He spoke to the children of Israel in the desert: "Be holy, because I, the LORD your God, am holy"? (Leviticus 19:2, *GNB*) God was speaking to a group of ex-slaves who were wandering around in the desert. Did God's streams that flowed out of rocks provide adequate water even for baths? What do you think they thought when God asked them to be holy?
4. Before we set out on this challenging subject, we need to define what *holiness* is. *Holiness* means to be set apart for a special purpose, in this case to become more like God. It means to be pure, righteous, loving, and kind. Is that feasible?
5. Many Christians want to talk about God's love; however, when we turn to the Bible, we discover that the name of God is more often connected with *holiness* than it is with *love*. (Psalm 89:18; Isaiah 40:25; Jeremiah 51:5; Ezekiel 39:7; Revelation 4:8) Why does the Bible say that the angels around the throne of God repeat the words: "Holy, holy, holy"? Read Luke 15:7; notice why the angels are—and will be—rejoicing. Don't you think that in God's universe, news of events is constantly arriving that leads the angels to rejoice? Don't God and the angels rejoice as they see the great controversy coming to an end?
6. Would it be correct to say that real holiness is a definition of God's character? Is He perfectly good and completely free from evil?
7. Back in the beginning, Satan wanted to have several characteristics of God: His omniscience (all-knowing), His omnipresence (everywhere present), and especially His omnipotence (all-powerful); but, he did not want to have God's character. Would it be safe to have a ruler like that? The only safety in having a God with all those attributes is that He is also a God of love.
8. Do you have any questions about God's purity? Or, His holiness? Is there any evil in God? (James 1:13)
9. God is completely separated from evil. He is devoted completely to seeking the good of those He loves. Thus, in God's example, we see that to live a holy life means to be as far separated from sin as possible.
10. Read Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8. In these verses we see the expression: "Holy, holy, holy." When biblical writers repeated any expression, it was for emphasis. In Hebrew there are no superlatives; so, to emphasize something the author repeated it. When the Bible talks about God being "Holy, holy, holy," it is talking of something of highest importance.

11. So, how does that relate to us? Could we become holy?

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 64.2-65.0; *RH*, February 17, 1885, par. 17; *OFC* 90.3; *OHC* 27.2.

12. Read Ephesians 1:4; 5:25-27; and Hebrews 12:14. It is God's earnest desire that all His children become like Jesus, that is, holy. He wants us to be holy, pure, and without fault. What would happen if God had a significant group of people on this earth who were like that? (See *COL* 69.1-2.)
13. Would it be correct to say that holiness is both God's gift and His command? Could we say that holiness is Christ-likeness? Is it possible for people living in the 21st century to become slowly more and more conformed to His likeness?
14. God wants us to have perfect self-control (Galatians 5:23) because we have come to understand Him and His character so well that we would never want to do anything wrong. It is not so that we can do what we want to do; instead, it is so that He can safely admit us to heaven and not have to worry that we might disrupt His kingdom.
15. Read 1 Corinthians 1:2. What was Paul implying when he called the people of Corinth saints? Remember that the word *saint* is the Latin word for *holy*. What qualified them to be called saints? Are we better than the people who lived in Corinth in Paul's day?
16. Read Hebrews 12:14. Do we really believe that we must pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord? Is holiness a goal to be reached? Or, a growth toward God?
17. There seems to be a tension suggested in the Scriptures between being holy and yet having to constantly pursue holiness. Aren't we all God's children? Many of us seem to be denying that by our behavior.
18. Read 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5; and Hebrews 13:12. Can we really die to sin? These verses tell us that we have been purified from sin, dedicated to God, and put right with Him by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is not a result of anything that we have done; instead, it is because of His own mercy given to us through the Holy Spirit that we can be changed.
19. So, where does holiness or sanctification come from? It is accomplished by faith. (See Hebrews 11:6; compare 2 Thessalonians 2:13; and 1 Peter 1:2.)
20. Read Galatians 5:16-17; compare it with Galatians 5:23. In verses 16-17, he said that there is a natural war between what our human nature wants and what the Spirit wants. Therefore, because these two are enemies, we cannot do what we want to do. But, verse 23 says that a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control. How do these two ideas fit together?
21. Let us never forget that the great controversy is being fought right now; it is being fought between our ears. We are born sinners. Sin dwells in us. (Romans 7:20)
22. So, what is the secret to becoming more like Jesus? In Hebrews 11 we are given a gallery—a kind of hall of fame—of the saints of the Old Testament. Following the portrayal of their lives, it says in Hebrews 12:1-2 that if we are going to do as well as they did, we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. So, our battle is not to physically fight someone; our

battle is to find the time and the will to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. When we do that, the Holy Spirit will make the necessary changes in our minds, our thoughts, and in our characters to prepare us to become citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 555.1. [Bold type is added.]

1 John 3:1-3: ¹See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children—and so, in fact, we are. This is why the world does not know us: it has not known God. ²My dear friends, we are now God's children, but it is not yet clear what we shall become. **But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is.** ³Everyone who has this hope in Christ keeps himself pure, just as Christ is pure.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation* (2nd ed., 1 John 3:1-3). New York: American Bible Society. [Bold type is added.]

23. There is no other way. Jesus Himself very clearly stated: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6, *GNB*)
24. God calls on us to keep His law. But, if we cannot be saved by keeping the law, why do we need to keep it?
25. The law is a reflection of God's character; it is holy, righteous, and good. The only other thing or person described with those three attributes in Scripture is God Himself.

It is essential to our eternal well-being to know more of God; for love to God depends on a conception of His goodness. His excellence, and a knowledge of His will. It requires an appreciation of His character. **His law is the transcript of His character**, and this law He calls upon us to obey. God calls for an entire surrender of the entire being.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, August 2, 1899, par. 2. [Bold type is added.]

26. Is trying to keep the law legalism? Or, is it faithfulness? The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Wednesday, February 8, suggests: "The law is never our way to salvation. Rather, it is the path of the saved." How do you understand these words?
27. Matthew 24:12 (*ESV*) says: "And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold." Love diminishes when the law is not appreciated.
28. Read Romans 13:10 and Matthew 22:37-40. Could we unhesitatingly say that to love, is to obey the whole law? If we could truly love God and love our neighbor, would we be prepared to enter the kingdom of heaven? It may be possible to keep the letter of the law without love; but, it is not possible to exhibit true love without keeping the law. Is that true? The only way we can really love is by reflecting the love God shows us.
29. Read Psalm 15:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24; and 2 Timothy 2:21. These verses suggest that

only those who are obedient to God and who are true and sincere and do what is right will enter God's "temple."

30. Let us come back to look again at our own personal experiences. Is being holy a very strict and unhappy condition? Or, is holiness the precondition for enjoying the happiness which comes from fellowship with God?

A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly mansions. And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important, then, is the development of character in this life.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* 332.3; *Mar* 223.2; *MYP* 100.3; *ML* 267.5; *OFC* 309.1; *RC* 298.3. [Bold type is added.]

31. We must develop new habits, habits of righteousness and obedience. Developing new habits is not easy, and it may be particularly difficult when it directly contradicts one of our former sinful habits. But, we need to develop the habits of patience, love, faithfulness, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)
32. What might prevent us from getting ready for the second coming? Members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church know that the church has a lot of different programs. It is easy to become involved in many aspects of the church's activities. Could we become so involved in these programs that we take our eyes off Christ and the Holy Spirit? Can we accomplish anything at all without Them?
33. So, what is our great need? We are living 172 years after the Great Disappointment!

The Spirit of God, as it comes into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal. What promise is less fulfilled in the church than that of the endowment of the Holy Spirit? **Here is our greatest need.**—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, February 9, 1892, par. 21.

A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. We must have the holy unction from God, the baptism of his Spirit; for this is the only efficient agent in the promulgation of sacred truth. It is the Spirit of God that quickens the lifeless faculties of the soul to appreciate heavenly things, and attracts the affections toward God and the truth.—Ellen G. White, *The Home Missionary*, November 1, 1890, par. 26; *GW92* 370.1.

A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. **A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer. While the people are so destitute of God's Holy Spirit, they cannot appreciate the preaching of the Word; but when the Spirit's power touches their hearts, then the discourses given will not be without**

effect. Guided by the teachings of God’s Word, with the manifestation of His Spirit, in the exercise of sound discretion, those who attend our meetings will gain a precious experience, and returning home, will be prepared to exert a healthful influence.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887, par. 1; *1SM* 121.1; *LDE* 189.1; *Pr* 116.1; *YRP* 283.2. [Bold type is added.]

34. Is it even possible for us to grasp an understanding of the holiness of God which seems to be the absolute antithesis to our own sinfulness and depravity? God told the children of Israel that they were to: “Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2, *NKJV*) Would God have commanded them to do that without making it possible? There is a close connection between holiness, covenant or agreement, and law. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, we cannot develop a successful relationship with God which we call faith, and we certainly cannot obey His law.
35. So, what would it actually mean to have God’s law written on our hearts and minds?
36. What first comes to your mind when you think about God’s holiness?
37. Many Christians today love to dwell on God’s love and largely ignore His holiness. Why is that? Is it because His holiness is a goal that we have to co-operate with the Holy Spirit to attain? It is not something we just receive from God. Would you describe holiness as a destination? Or, a journey? The only way to walk straight ahead is to keep your eyes focused on what is ahead.
38. Faith is the only key to salvation. And it comes through prayer, Bible study, meditation, and witnessing. Through these avenues we follow in the footsteps of Jesus; obedience brings us closer and closer to the very essence of the character of God.
39. Read 1 Peter 1:15-16. Peter, remembering the Old Testament said:
- ¹⁵Instead, be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy. ¹⁶The scripture says, “Be holy because I am holy.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation* (2nd ed., 1 Peter 1:15-16). New York: American Bible Society.
40. And we are reminded:
- It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell.—*Patriarchs and Prophets* 596.2. Compare *5T* 24.3; *GC* 555.1 (quoted in Item #22 above); *1MCP* 91.2; *2MCP* 418.1; *RH*, July 11, 1882, par. 13.
41. It is by beholding His character and by focusing on how we can become more like Jesus Christ that faith grows and character is changed.
42. So, why is there so much emphasis on holiness and becoming more like God by keeping His law?

In the gift of God’s dear Son, a definite view of His character has been given to the race that is never absent from His mind. His very heart is laid open in the royal law. **That infinite standard is presented to all, that there may be no mistake in regard to that kind of people God would have compose His kingdom.** It is only those who are obedient to all His commandments who will become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. These will be honored with a citizenship above, a life that measures with the

life of God,—a life without sorrow, pain, or death throughout eternal ages.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, November 17, 1898, par. 8. [Bold type is added.]

43. By looking at, studying about, and focusing on the life of Christ, do you find Him attractive? Do you wish that you could become more like Him?
44. Read again Hebrews 12:1-2. We live in a feel-good, often self-centered society. Is it easy for those in that situation to practice self-denial, obedience, and holiness? To many so-called Christians, these ideas may seem to be unintelligible!
45. Can we really develop the new habits and practices that we need to help us become more and more like Jesus? What things in our lives detract us from living holy lives? Think of your own personal experience. Does living a life of holiness seem like an impossible challenge? How can we change that? Is it possible even in our day to focus on Jesus Christ and the way He lived?

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