

The Magnitude of Holiness

Theme: The importance of growing personal holiness in the life of both the discipler and the person being disciplined, and ways to encourage growth in holiness in ourselves and others.

Instructional Objective: Lord willing, students will obtain an increased understanding of the Biblical significance of personal holiness.

I. THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF DISCIPLING -- OBEDIENCE

- Above everything else, discipling finally comes down to obedience to Christ's commands. That is the great goal of discipling. A person can read all the Christian books in the world or pray with an older Christian every day, but if there is not a real change in their life marked by growing obedience to Christ, then that person is not a disciple.
- Read John 14:15. "If you love me," Jesus says, "you will obey my commandments." Why is obedience such an important part of love? Why would Jesus say something like that? The reason is that our love for Christ births in us a desire to please Him. If we are truly regenerate and have the Holy Spirit living in our lives, our greatest desire will be to do His will.
- Read I John 1:3-6. What does John say is that way that we know we are in Christ? It is by our obedience! What does he say about the person who says, "I know him," and yet does not obey His commands? John says that person is a liar! That may sound like a harsh statement, but it is important for us to know that the final test of Christianity is to have a changed life marked by increasing personal holiness!
- Regeneration is finally about glorifying God. Read Philippians 1:9-11. What do you see in this passage that may be talking about obedience? "Discerning what is best," "being pure and blameless," etc. And what is the goal of these things? "To the glory and praise of God!"

II. ENCOURAGING HOLINESS IN THE DISCIPLE

- Repentance is one of the steps that a person has to take to become a Christian. Mark 1:15 says that this was Jesus's message from the very beginning – "Repent and believe the good news!" So it is not enough simply to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. A Christian must repent of his sins and begin to walk in a way that is pleasing to God. Of course, the total change won't happen immediately. We've said over and over that discipling is a process. But there should be some immediate change in the person as they evidence a desire to please and obey Christ.
- What are some of the things that will change immediately in a person's life? The Bible talks about several things that change immediately upon a person's conversion.

(The verses in parentheses can be good conversation starters.)

- **John 5:24** Jesus says that the status of the person changes immediately. There is a change of outlook on life and a new hope in God's promise of salvation. That can make an enormous difference in the way a person handles hardship almost immediately. (Eph. 5:8; Rom. 6:18; Heb. 12:18-24)
 - **Mark 1:8** One of the things that happens immediately upon conversion is that the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us. As a result, we will be much more convicted about sin; our consciences will be more tender. (Rom. 8:13-14; I Cor. 3:16; Gal. 5:16-26)
 - **Mark 2:5** Our sins are immediately forgiven, which is another immediate effect of conversion. That truth can be the source of a new optimism about life, or gratitude toward God. (Rom. 8:1; I John 1:9; Heb. 10:12-14)
- When a person is converted, the first thing that changes should be his world-view. He is a newly justified, newly converted disciple of Christ. The realization of his new status before God will be a wonderful thing for him to think about. This does not mean, though, that all of his bad habits and cravings will magically vanish. Look closely sometime at Romans 6. It is a wonderful passage about the Christian's power over sin. It is interesting to see, though, that Paul never says a word about temptation being taken away. The same idea is spoken of in Galatians 5:16-17. Even after we are Christians, the sinful nature still wars against us. As Christians, though, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to defeat sin.
- Disciplers often go about things in a backwards way. We often want to see bad habits and cravings disappear immediately in those we are discipling. Don't expect that! Expect to see God's Spirit working slowly but effectively to take away those cravings and habits over a long period of time, but don't give up or be discouraged if it doesn't happen immediately.
- Finally, what you are looking for in a disciple of Christ is growing character, which can be defined as **moral strength or constitution**. Romans 5:3-4 tell us how character is developed. In our hardships and struggles even with sin, God is developing character in us. And why does character produce hope? Because as we see God's unfailing faithfulness in bringing us through hardship, we learn to rely on Him more and more.

III. HOLINESS IN THE DISCIPLER

- How does a disciple learn what it looks like to be holy? Look at John 13:15. Jesus modeled everything the disciples needed to know about holiness. He not only *told* them how to be holy, He *showed* them how.
- In the same way, we as disciplers must also be holy in order to set an example to those we are discipling. Look at these passages:
 - **I Corinthians 11:1**
 - **Philippians 3:17**
 - **I Thessalonians 1:6**
 - **II Timothy 1:13**

These passages all talk about Paul's example to the believers. Paul expected others to follow his example. Is that something that is unique to an apostle? No.

Read Titus 2:7 – Here Paul tells Timothy to set an example for the younger men. Now read I Timothy 4:12 – Again he tells Timothy, a young man, to set an example for the believers. Example is one of the most important ways that we learn about holiness.

- What are some ways to make sure that we remain holy in our own lives?
 - Regular attendance at church
 - Regular personal time with the Lord
 - Regular accountability to another Christian
 - Etc.

- Being an example does not mean that we will always do the right thing. After all, we all still sin. The process of being made holy is still happening even in the discipler! It means, though, that even when we sin, the younger Christian sees how we handle that sin. Do we laugh it off, or is it a serious matter? Do we make amends, or hope no one says anything? Sure, this makes us vulnerable, but there is no better way for a young Christian to learn than by watching us strive to be holy.