



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2017-2018 Midweek/Sermon Starter

Unit 3: Dare to Be Different
Sermon Series Title: Holding Up Our Holiness
Sermon 1: A Call to Holiness
Bible Passage: 1 Peter 1:13-16

Introduction

Every four to eight years the incoming president of the United States appoints a new executive cabinet for his/her tenure. The cabinet includes the Vice President and the heads of the 15-executive departments. These significant individuals are called by the president for advisement on subjects related to the duties of each member's respective office. Very seldom do candidates decline this incredible opportunity to serve. Some even spend their entire lives preparing and positioning themselves to receive this call. When interviewed about their decision, many respond with, "It's an honor to be called to serve. When the president calls, you say yes."

Background/Context

The writer of 1 Peter 1 addressed persecuted believers scattered in Asia Minor to inform them that they were called by God to be holy. God saved them and called them to be holy—in action and in attitude. The apostle Peter wrote, "But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct" (v. 15). When God calls you to holiness, you say yes. In 1 Peter 1:13-16, we explore what it means to answer the call to holiness.

**A. Holiness is about Mirroring the Master
(1 Pet. 1:15-16)**

Peter opened this segment of his letter with a piercing command: *be holy!* Peter is clear: holiness is the standard and call for discipleship. Yes, all believers are called to be holy unto God. However, sometimes the word "holiness" is viewed subjectively. Therefore, Peter presented the prime model of holiness to remove all ambiguity and subsequent subjectivity from the conversation.

Peter offered the perfect prototype by which we are to measure and duplicate holiness. Peter wrote, "But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy" (v. 15). Here, "the One" that Peter referenced is Jesus Christ. Peter quickly reminded all believers that Jesus is the true standard of holiness. In a real sense, Jesus is what holiness looks like. Everything He did on earth was in sync with God in heaven: "The one who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). When we seek to answer the call to holiness we must examine and align ourselves with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. In fact, the Hebrew writer instructed us to keep "our eyes

on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). “For since he himself has suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted” (Heb. 2:18).

Holiness is obtained and maintained only when believers dedicate themselves to mirroring the teachings of the master of holiness—Jesus Christ.

Application Point: Which quality, characteristic or action do you most admire about Jesus in his earthly ministry? Remember, Jesus is our example of holiness. We become more holy as we align ourselves with Him. This week choose one holy quality that Jesus possessed and practice implementing it in your daily life.

B. Holiness Begins with the Mind (1 Pet. 1:13)

Up to this point in 1 Peter 1 all the verbs that the author used were used in the indicative mood—stating facts. However, in verse 13 Peter began speaking in the active imperative tense—offering military like commands. Here, Peter was not submitting suggestions; Peter was making direct commands to believers about holiness.

First, Peter commanded, “Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober minded” (v. 13). He was clear: holiness begins with our minds. Solomon reminded us that our actions are directly linked to our mentalities. Jesus warned that immoral thinking is just as wrong as debauched deeds. Peter invited believers to have their minds ready for action in order to walk in holiness. This charge to keep our minds “ready for action” was allegory derived from the practice of Orientals during ancient times, who, in order to be unimpeded in their movements, would bind their long free flowing robes with sashes and belts around their waists. With this charge, Peter commanded believers to bind their minds with holiness and to prevent their minds from flowing freely in carnality, so that they would be ready for action. The mind is a battleground and believers must guard their minds securely. This is why Paul charged believers to “Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph. 6:11).

Peter taught believers that holiness begins with their minds. Moreover, it’s important to know that holy believers are holy thinkers.

Application Point: How well do you guard your mind from carnal thoughts? What changes could you make to ensure you’re engaging in holy thinking? Remember, holy living begins with holy thinking. Focus on eliminating all the areas of your life that contribute to unholy thinking and choose instead to walk in holiness.

C. Holiness Must be Our Mission (1 Pet. 1:14)

Peter concluded this charge with one last command: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance” (v. 14). Peter admonished believers to remain obedient. The believers in Asia Minor knew the Word of God—they knew right from

wrong. However, they had to make holiness their daily mission—they had to choose to be obedient to God.

Scripture is clear: God demands and expects obedience from all believers. Samuel reminded Saul, “to obey is better than sacrifice.... For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry” (1 Sam. 15:22-23). In short, God detests disobedience. Practicing holiness is not an easy task and it demands a daily decision to obey God’s Word.

In verse 14, Peter recommended a prerequisite for maintaining obedience: “Do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance.” Peter encouraged believers to resist the influence of the world and the impact of their past ways. Paul echoed these sentiments to the Roman church when he commanded, “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

As believers we must remember that God’s grace has transformed us. As such, we must maintain that transformation through a daily denial of self and a daily renewal of our minds.

Application Point: How consistent are you in practicing daily discipline? In what areas of your life have you failed in your commitment to God? Going forward, repent and renew your commitment to walk in holiness daily. Set the standard and stick to it.