

Becoming Holy

Introduction to a Life of Personal Holiness Invitation to a Love Relationship with God

Introduction

“Becoming Holy” is a study about relationship with God. Relationship requires time spent together. You can’t be in relationship with someone just by reading about them or listening to a lecture about them. I can read every book ever written by or about John Wesley, even receive an advanced degree in Wesleyan Theology, and I still wouldn’t be able to say I am in relationship with him. The same is true with God. Having knowledge about God is not the same as being in relationship with Him, and really knowing Him.

We don’t become holy by taking a course (like this one), by reading books, or attending seminars. Jesus tells us how it happens as he prays to God the Father. *“Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth”* (John 17:17). And Jesus identifies our teacher in this process—the Holy Spirit himself! *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth”* (John 16:13). This is emphasized in another passage: *“When the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you”* (John 14:26).

The most important aspect of these lessons is not the written material itself, but the structured time you will spend being aware of the presence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is very important that we develop patterns of inviting God to relationship with us, just as he invites us to relationship with him. And this takes time.

Richard Foster describes this process in his foreword to the 40th Anniversary Edition of *Celebration of Discipline*, his classic work on Spiritual Formation: “It is crucial here for us to respect the slow work of God upon the soul. Slowly, ever so slowly, over days and weeks and months and years, the soul is being carefully formed and conformed and transformed. Throughout this holy work we are learning patience, stillness, perseverance, time-fulness.” This is truly the formation of our souls in Christlikeness, as *“The Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image”* (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is **becoming holy**.

How do we start? A daily 30-minute period of practices that will make you aware of God’s presence is recommended. Activities such as prayer and silence, focusing on the primacy of scripture through reading, memorization, and meditation are incorporated. These **“Invitations to Relationship”** templates are guidelines to get started. You are encouraged to follow them for the first few weeks, but you will eventually develop your own patterns, as God leads you, and as you feel you are ready.

Our lives—our world—is busy! I would like to challenge you to carve out 30 minutes of your day to develop your relationship with God. Let me assure you, your time with God will be time well-spent. Make this a high priority, and make it happen.

Be creative. Write out the verses you want to memorize and carry them with you for review when you have a few minutes between other activities. Or download a free devotional app and listen day or night. They have done all the preparation for you; all you have to do is listen, pray, and enjoy

your time with God. When you are driving, consider turning off the sound system and spending the time in silent prayer. It may be uncomfortable at first, but after a while you will look forward to this “alone time” with God.

Most importantly, don't cut corners on time spent in God's word. Really push for at least 10 minutes each day quietly reading from scripture with no distractions or interruptions. God has a lot to share with you, and most of that comes from his written word.

Unless otherwise noted, the *New Living Translation* is used throughout the lessons, as it is written to incorporate plain, understandable, and commonly used English, without losing any meaning. If you don't have a paper copy, you can easily download it for free on your mobile device with a Bible app. (Avoid a paraphrase for now, although you could use that for enrichment later. Discuss this with your officer or pastor for more information.)

These lessons are not a formula for holiness. There is no formula for becoming holy, just as there is no formula for falling in love. Both involve relationship, and who can understand God—or the human heart, for that matter? But be assured that **God, who loves you with an everlasting love, wants relationship with you far more than you can ever imagine.** Practice activities that place you where relationship with God happens and be amazed at what God will do with you and in you!

About the Course and the Author

This is an introductory-level course to generate interest in holy living. I am a Salvation Army layperson, and I assembled these lessons as a beginner for other beginners. My interest in pursuing holy living was encouraged at the Salvation Army's first ever National Seminar on Holiness held in August 2021. Delegates were invited to disseminate what we had learned, and this material is a result of that challenge. It is not meant in any way to be a definitive discussion of holiness. Rather, it is an effort to understand how we can place ourselves where the Holy Spirit himself can be our teacher.

Submitted by:
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Lesson 1: Be Holy?

Start the Conversation:

How do you define holiness or holy living?
Is it possible to be holy?

God instructs us to be holy. We cannot escape this simple truth. Both the Old and New Testaments are clear concerning God's plans for us. His holiness requirements for his chosen people, the Israelites, are found in the book of Leviticus. *"For I am the LORD your God. You must consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy"* (Leviticus 11:44). This instruction is emphasized in Leviticus 20:26: *"You must be holy because I, the LORD, am holy. I have set you apart from all other people to be my very own."*

The apostle Peter repeats this instruction for those of us who have believed in the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and who have become adopted children into the family of God. *"But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, 'You must be holy because I am holy'"* (1 Peter 1:15-16). This instruction is not just for an ancient people but is also for us today who are disciples of Christ.

This is not just a suggestion or good idea. Note that the scriptures don't instruct, "Why don't you give some thought to being holy?" or "It might be helpful if you learn about holiness." There is no room for compromise in God's instruction to us, **"You must be holy."**

God wants us to be holy

This straightforward requirement to be holy raises valid questions:

- Am I holy?
- Do I know anyone who is holy?
- How do I become holy?
- Isn't holiness like salvation, just more of it? (That may be a trick question – see lesson 2.)
- We 'know' that only God is truly holy, so isn't this an impossible ideal anyway?
- Scripture can't be serious about this, right? Surely holiness was for another time, another people, or just for those giants of the faith, like Catherine Booth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, C.S. Lewis or... [name your "favorite saint"].

Perhaps first we should ask the question: **Why does God want me to be holy?** One answer is to consider what happened to those who came into God's presence who were not holy. The writer to the Hebrews tells the story of the Israelites when Moses led them to a close encounter with the Living God. Being in God's immediate presence was just too awesome, too devastating for them to withstand:

"You [Hebrews] have not come to a physical mountain, to a place of flaming fire, darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai. For they heard an awesome trumpet blast and a voice so terrible that they begged God to stop speaking. They staggered back under God's command: 'If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.' Moses himself was so frightened at the sight that he said, 'I am terrified and trembling'" (Hebrews 12:18-21). The people's response, as recorded in Exodus 20:19: *"And they said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen. But don't let God speak directly to us, or we will die.'" God was holy, and they knew they were not, and they feared for their lives.*

Or consider Isaiah, who had a vision of God, as recorded in Isaiah 6. He saw the Lord on His lofty throne. Angelic beings were calling out to each other, *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's*

Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!" (Isaiah 6:3). Isaiah's response could be summed up, 'That's it for me': *"It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven's Armies"* (Isaiah 6:5). In other words, he believed he would be consumed just being in God's presence. The Psalmist warns, *"Serve the LORD with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling"* (Psalm 2:11).

Strictly speaking, these Old Testament interactions with God reflect a correct understanding of God's holiness, and we must always keep that in mind for a proper balance. Just as the lifeguard would say, "You must learn how to swim before entering the deep end of the pool, or you will drown," God says, "You must be holy to enter my presence, or you will die." This instruction is as much a loving warning as it is a requirement.

And so, we resign ourselves to lives of spiritual inadequacy, as we somehow feel we cannot live up to God's plan for us. We decide that holiness is not really attainable (at least not for us, not here on earth). Maybe in heaven. The instruction, "Be holy, for I am holy," becomes more of a guideline or ideal and not a reality. Perhaps the best we can do is reflect some of God's holiness, as the moon reflects the intense light of the sun.

But we have another way. Jesus Christ has by his suffering and death made it possible for us to approach God's throne and enter relationship with the Holy God. Jesus told his disciples, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). Knowing Christ, believing that he has been sent by God the Father, that he died for our sins and was raised to life by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:4), allows us to enter the very presence of God. *"So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most"* (Hebrews 4:16). God the Father gave the sacrifice of his Son so we could be reconciled to Him.

*God provides a way
for us to be holy*

We may assume that becoming holy is extremely difficult, or even impossible. As G.K. Chesterton famously said, "The Christian ideal has not been found tried and wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried" (G.K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World*). But we should not be discouraged. Dallas Willard states, "It is very important that we not lose sight of the simplicity of spiritual formation in Christ" (*Renovation of the Heart*, p. 93). Simplicity and difficulty are not mutually exclusive. What is simple in concept can be difficult in implementation, but this must not dissuade us. The rewards are too great, and, after all, holiness is God's plan for us.

Have we given up too soon? Scripture tells us, *"For God's will was for us to be made holy"* (Hebrews 10:10). In another foundational verse for this study, Jesus himself claims that a reason he went to the cross was so we could be holy: *"I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth"* (John 17:19). This was not only for his disciples, since in the next verse Jesus claims this prayer is for us today: *"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message"* (John 17:20).

What are we missing? Can we really be holy as God instructs? **The great news is that the Bible teaches not only that we can become holy, but that God has given us specific instructions that lead to holy living.** That is the message of these lessons. We will define what it means to be holy, describe a broader understanding of salvation than we perhaps are accustomed to, and how holiness fits into this framework. We will discuss some possible misunderstandings of holy living, and then demonstrate what steps we can take on our journey of becoming holy. We will look at our Salvation Army doctrines to confirm our historical foundations and current theology of salvation and holiness.

Questions:

[Note: the questions here and in the following lessons are meant to stimulate discussion only. There are no right or wrong answers. Consider keeping a journal to record your thoughts.]

- 1) Do you consider yourself (or your body of believers) to be holy? Why or why not?**
- 2) What does it mean that we are set apart to be holy?**

Invitations to Relationship

Lesson 1: The Gospel of John

Take 30 minutes today and each day this week to read the Gospel of John over the course of the coming week. We will place particular emphasis on chapters 14-17 in these lessons but reading through the entire book will give you some needed context.

Start with chapter 1 and read through to the end. This is not speed reading, so don't be in a hurry to finish. Allow God to speak to you. The same Holy Spirit who inspired John to write these words will inspire you to understand them.

If you finish the entire book of John before the end of the week, go back to the beginning and start again. There is great value in repetition.

Before reading each day, **ask God the Holy Spirit to point out what he wants you to see.** We are in individual relationship with God, and he will emphasize different passages—even words—for each of us. Value your personal relationship with him.

Only 30 minutes a day—*you can do it!*

Lesson 2: A More Complete Understanding of Salvation

Start the Conversation:

When you hear the word “salvation,” what comes to mind?
What do you think the word “repent” means?

Before we can understand holiness, we must comprehend the full richness of salvation in all its aspects. Most of us seem to have a proper understanding of our conversion process, which is what we think of when we use the word ‘salvation’. We know there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, as explained in Ephesians 2:8-9: *“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift of God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.”* Our salvation is paid for by the blood of Christ on the cross, and all we must do to be saved is confess and repent of our sin and believe in Christ.

Sin is a condition of unbelief that separates us from God. Jesus teaches that, *“The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me”* (John 16:9). We must move past thinking of sin only as individual acts of rebellion against God’s law and see it as the unbelief of our hearts and souls that prohibits relationship with God. We ask God to restore us to a right relationship with him that was destroyed when our first parents disobeyed, and “lost their purity and happiness” (Salvation Army Doctrine #5).

Christ’s sacrifice on the cross paid for our salvation. *“There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom (salvation) for everyone”* (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Jesus is our way back to right relationship with God, our reconciliation to God.

Repentance is a crucial part of this, and we must be truly sorry, even horrified by our sinfulness. We must ask God to help us completely turn away from the unbelief of our old lives, and never return. *“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20). There is a crisis point of turning away from our former way of living, through the power of the Holy Spirit, with an abrupt change in our priorities for living.

The book of Romans emphasizes this. *“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood”* (Romans 3:23-25). We are reconciled to God, restored to right relationship with God when we believe, and this gift of God is free. *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

Everyone sins and falls short of God’s glorious standard

The theological term for our conversion event is **justification**. In other words, we have been saved. The Salvation Army’s 8th doctrine states, “We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ...” **Justification** is defined in The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine (HoD) as, “God’s act of declaring people to be righteous before him, accepting them despite their past sins” (HoD, p. 346). A very simple definition taken straight from the Biblical text above is that God *“makes us right in his sight.”*

Sadly, for many Christians, the process of reconciliation to God stops there. They have been saved; one day they will enter heaven to be with God forever, and until then they are content to live

lives of service to God, doing things for him, and telling others about him. A popular evangelism program taught years ago that after being saved, the rest of our life is just one big ‘thank-you’ to God for all he has done for us.

However, we suspect in the back of our minds that God has something more for us—we just don’t know what to do about it. Perhaps you have heard hints in scripture that life with God offers more. The Psalmist says,

*As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.*

- Psalm 42:1-2, 7 (NIV)

You may have heard that whisper in your heart and thought you just needed to pray more and read more scripture, then God would be pleased and you would be satisfied. No doubt it was true that you needed more prayer and scripture, but there was still a sense of something missing.

There are other scriptures that leave us with more questions than answers and seem to speak of a deeper walk with God after we have been justified with God. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Philippian believers, makes this puzzling command: *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose”* (Philippians 2:12-13, NIV). What does that even mean? They were saved, they were believers, they knew they could not earn their salvation. But Paul is commanding them to keep working on their salvation? They knew that salvation is by grace through faith alone. If God has done the work, why do believers have to keep working?

*Repentance is crucial
to salvation*

Another puzzling passage is Romans 5:10-11: *“For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our **wonderful new relationship with God** because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.”* So, which is it? Am I saved by the death of his Son, or the life of his Son? Or is it somehow both? And what is this “wonderful new relationship”?

Now that I have been saved, I thought I was supposed to settle into ‘Christian living’, the dutiful life of going to church, service to others, and telling others about God. That may be “comfortable,” but hardly “wonderful”—please don’t be offended by that sentiment. What does Paul mean by a “*wonderful new relationship with God*”? Could that somehow involve becoming holy?

The answer to that question is an emphatic **YES!**, and is the second phase of salvation, known by the theological term **sanctification**. Paul describes this ongoing aspect of salvation in 1 Corinthians 1:18: *“The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.”* Even after justification, we are being saved. **The power of the cross leads to the process of sanctification.** Remember the words of Jesus already quoted, *“I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth”* (John 17:19).

The Handbook of Doctrine (HoD) defines **sanctification** as: “The crisis and process by which the Christian’s life and character become Christlike, through the work of the Holy Spirit” (HoD, p. 348). The remainder of this curriculum will be spent exploring sanctification, or “becoming holy.”

There is another phase of the over-arching umbrella term **salvation**. In Matthew 24, Christ teaches on the end times and discusses wars, famines, earthquakes, and the persecution of believers. In the middle of this discourse, he makes an interesting declaration: “*But the one who endures to the end will be saved*” (Matthew 24:13). Along the same line, Paul gives instructions to the believers in Rome. “*...You know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here*” (Romans 13:11-12). The theological term for this final facet of salvation is **glorification**, the third phase of our reconciliation to God.

So, we have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. These may be new concepts for some of us, but scripture is clear. This understanding provides a framework of salvation that helps us as we read many passages in the New Testament. It also provides a broader perspective of God’s complete and incredible plan for the reconciliation of his children to himself. “*You must crave spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation*” (1 Peter 2:2).

This is a challenging discussion of theological terms. Hang in there! We will spend the next lesson exploring these concepts in more detail. We have help in all this. Romans 8:34 states, “*Christ Jesus...is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.*” And in Hebrews 7:25, “*Therefore [Jesus] is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.*”

God the Holy Spirit helps us as well. “*The Holy Spirit...will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you*” (John 14:26). Understanding how sanctification fits into the process of reconciliation to God helps to de-mystify the process of becoming holy.

Please continue with your daily **Invitations to Relationship**. This week you will be given a variety of activities for the 30-minute time period. Ask God to give you the desire to spend time with him. Look for times in your schedule to focus on God’s presence in your life. Thirty minutes may seem like a lot of time and it may feel uncomfortable, but it will feel more natural as you practice it every day.

Some would call this daily spiritual exercise “devotions” or “quiet time”—and that’s what it is—but here it will include some very specific elements. This will involve some repetition and some silence. We must learn to get comfortable with silence. Find a quiet place, turn off your mobile device or any music (even Christian music), and spend this time with God. You will need your Bible, a pen and notebook to record what God is saying to you.

Questions:

- 1) After looking at the passages from Romans 3 and Romans 5 above, how are we saved by both Christ’s death and his life? How were your conclusions confirmed?
- 2) Explain to a friend the three phases of salvation, and how sanctification or “becoming holy” fits into this framework, using the scriptures presented here, and others.

Invitations to Relationship

Lesson 2

5 minutes	Invitation to the presence of God	<i>Psalm 63:1-8</i>
10 minutes	Relationship with God through Scripture	<i>John 14</i>
5 minutes	Scripture memorization/meditation	<i>2 Corinthians 5:17</i>
5 minutes	Listening for God in silent prayer	
5 minutes	Learning from others	

Invitation to the presence of God – Read Psalm 63:1-8.

Read these verses slowly—at first out loud, then silently. Think about any word or phrase that speaks to you. Close your eyes and review what you have read. Invite God to speak to you. Incorporate praise, adoration, and thanksgiving in your thoughts about God during this time. After at least 5 minutes, move on to the next element. Later in the week, if you want to use another Psalm, that’s OK. Allow God to draw you into his presence.

Relationship with God through scripture – Read John 14.

Again, read this chapter slowly. “98% of what (God) will ever say to you is found in the scriptures” (Dr. Chris Lohrstorfer). It is certainly the most reliable source, even after we become more familiar with discerning God’s voice above all the other competing voices. If there are certain words or phrases that grab your attention, focus on those, and allow God to speak to you. After 10 minutes, move on to the next element.

Scripture memorization/meditation – Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:17.

This is a key verse for understanding our life in Christ. Write it out on an index card. Carry it with you throughout the day. You might believe that you cannot memorize anything, but think of all the names, phone numbers, addresses, words to songs, ad slogans, and other things you have memorized. You can do this! 5 minutes each day can make a big difference.

Listening for God in silent prayer

Spend the next 5 minutes listening for God in silent prayer. You will need to set a timer for this, and when you first start, 5 minutes will seem like a very long time. This is not a time to present your requests to God, or even for praise and adoration. Here we want to be quiet in God’s presence. Try to clear your mind, and just listen for God to speak to you. Give this serious effort (1 Peter 4:7b). If you just don’t get anything, go back to the memory verse you started, and work on that for the remainder of your 5 minutes. Then try again tomorrow.

Learning from others

John Wesley encourages us to fill our hearts and minds with good Christian literature. Take 5 minutes each day to read a good Christian book. (See list of recommended books at the end of this curriculum.) Read slowly. This is not a race to the end. Allow the words to soak into your being and think about what you have read throughout your day. The most important element in any of this is God’s word, so try to give at least 10 minutes each day to the book of John.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

- 2 Corinthians 5:17
(NLT)

Lesson 3: Exploring Aspects of Salvation

Start the Conversation:

Do you remember your salvation experience? Would you like to share it?
What do you understand about God's plan of salvation?

As described in Lesson 2, **Salvation in its fullest sense involves three phases**, theologically and doctrinally: **Justification** (we have been saved), **Sanctification** (we are being saved), and **Glorification** (we will be saved). This can be confusing because the Bible uses the word "salvation" to describe all three processes, and we must read in context to know which phase of salvation the Bible is referencing. We will now explore this in more detail. Consider this explanatory definition from the Discovery Bible:

"God's gift of salvation *at conversion* ('justification') *instantly* saves the believer out of the entire *penalty* of their sins. Moreover, the Lord *goes on rescuing* them from the *power* of sin during the life-long process of '*sanctification*'. At Christ's return, believers will be *glorified*, rescued (saved) from all the *previous* effects of sin at their resurrection ('*glorification*')."

(The Discovery Bible app)

Thankfully Paul outlines these **three facets of salvation** in a single verse: "*And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns*" (Philippians 1:6).

- "**God, who began the good work within you...**" **Justification** – we have been saved. (See also Ephesians 2:8 (NIV): "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith.*")
- "**...will continue his work...**" **Sanctification** – we are being saved. (See also 1 Corinthians 1:18b: "*But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.*")
- "**...until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.**" **Glorification** – we will be saved. (See also Matthew 10:22b: "*But everyone who endures to the end will be saved.*")

This is God's over-arching plan of salvation from beginning to end. Philippians 1:6 makes it clear that this is all part of one process. We are not justified by God only to have him "switch gears" and start the process of sanctification. He continues our on-going reconciliation to him as we are becoming more and more like Christ. Similarly, sanctification flows smoothly into glorification as God finishes his work of reconciliation with us.

God continues ongoing reconciliation to Him as we become like Christ

The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine (HoD) emphasizes how our doctrines support this continuum of the fuller understanding of salvation. Doctrines 6-11 "together convey the dynamic interaction of God's grace, our response and God's action in our lives as we trust in him. They explore a dynamic and interactive relationship that reflects the prevenient, justifying, sanctifying, and glorifying grace of God. In other words, they together reflect the *via salutis* ("the way of salvation"), the continuum of God's grace, the journey with Christ by those who come to faith in him" (HoD p. xix). Let's explore this in scripture.

1) **Justification** – **Initial Salvation** (Conversion)

We have been saved from the penalty of sin. This is what we envision when we think of Christ's work accomplished on the cross on Good Friday, and his resurrection on Easter morning.

- Ephesians 2:8: "*God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.*"

- Romans 3:22,24-25: *“We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.”*
- Romans 10:9-10: *“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.”*

Justification – The definition from The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine (HoD): “God’s act of declaring people to be righteous before him, accepting them despite their past sins” (HoD, p.346).

“This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Romans 3:22, NIV). This is affirmed by the Salvation Army’s Doctrine 8: **We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.**

We have been saved. When most people talk of salvation, this is what they are referencing. Justification is wonderful and reveals the awesome power of God. But we cannot stop there.

2) **Sanctification** – **Continuing Salvation** (Becoming Holy)

We are being saved from the power of sin. We place ourselves where God can do his work in us by being aware of his presence and power in us.

- Philippians 2:12b-13 (NIV): *“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”*
- Romans 5:10-11: *“For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.”*
- 1 Corinthians 1:18: *“The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.”*
- 2 Corinthians 2:15: *“Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing.”*
- Hebrews 10:14: *“...those who are being made holy.”*

You can’t read these verses without thinking that God has more in store for us, right?

Sanctification – The definition from The Salvation Army HoD: “The crisis and process by which the Christian’s life and character become Christlike, through the work of the Holy Spirit” (HoD p. 348). Some denominations understand salvation only as justification. However, The Salvation Army, as part of the Wesleyan tradition, continues on to the process of sanctification, the deeper experience of relationship with God, becoming ever more Christlike.

“And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image” 2 Corinthians 3:18b. Our 9th doctrine emphasizes this point: **We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.**

The HoD refers to the 10th doctrine as the “holiness doctrine.” However, the Apostle Paul makes it clear that obedient faith leads to righteous living which leads to holiness. *“You can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. Now you must give yourselves to righteous living so that you will become holy”* (Romans 6:16b,19b). Through continued obedient faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit is making us holy! Our 9th doctrine is also a holiness doctrine (more about this in lesson 7)! As our Handbook of Doctrine states, “Doctrines 9 and 10 are inextricably linked, as continuance in a state of salvation leads to holiness and Christlikeness” (HoD, p. xix).

Sanctification (becoming holy) is the second phase of overall salvation and is a life-long process in our reconciliation to God. That’s why it is so important to understand the full importance of salvation in all three phases.

3) **Glorification** – *Final Salvation*

We will be saved from the previous effect of sin at Christ’s return– this is when we are resurrected and will receive our new glorified bodies. Simply put, glorification is when we realize the full power and presence of almighty God. What caused the Israelites at Mount Sinai and Isaiah in his vision to shudder and tremble, will cause us to rejoice and shout in victory! We will see him up close! *“Because I am righteous, I will see you. When I awake, I will see you face to face and be satisfied”* (Psalm 17:15). Our “satisfaction” will stem from a full understanding of his glory, his power and presence. That will be full salvation indeed!

- Matthew 10:22b: *“But everyone who endures to the end will be saved.”* (See also Matthew 24:13.)
- Romans 13:11b-12a: *“Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here.”*
- 1 Peter 1:5, 9: *“And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.”*

Glorification – This is the day we look forward to, the day of our glorification, or our final salvation. Our 10th doctrine speaks to this glorification of the body: **We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Our Handbook of Doctrine describes this 10th doctrine with the chapter title of “Full Salvation,” with only a subtitle of “The doctrine of holiness.” This supports the overarching theme of salvation from Justification through Sanctification and then on to Glorification. This is the “Way of Salvation” described in the Handbook of Doctrine.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44: *“It is the same with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies.”*

Three phases of salvation:

- 1) **JUSTIFICATION**
 - 2) **SANCTIFICATION**
 - 3) **GLORIFICATION**
-

Salvation, in all three phases, is reconciliation to God. We are separated from God by our condition of sin, which was our refusal to believe in Jesus (John 16:9). Christ, the one mediator, is our way back to God (1 Timothy 2:5). Through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, we were justified when we confessed and repented of sin and believed that Christ was sent by God the Father and died to redeem us. God declared us righteous, our first step toward being made holy

by the Holy Spirit. We have been reconciled, we are being reconciled, and we will be completely reconciled. This is how we “grow into a full experience of salvation” that Peter references in 1 Peter 2:2.

Questions:

- 1) Do you remember when God first called you to a deeper life?**
- 2) When did you sense there was more than justification?**
- 3) Was the Holy Spirit pursuing you?**

Invitations to Relationship

Lesson 3

5 minutes	Invitation to the presence of God	<i>Psalm 23</i>
10 minutes	Relationship with God through Scripture	<i>John 15</i>
5 minutes	Scripture memorization/meditation	<i>Galatians 2:20</i>
5 minutes	Listening for God in silent prayer	
5 minutes	Learning from others	

Invitation to the presence of God – Read Psalm 23.

This is a well-known and beloved Psalm, and that is for good reason. Come into God's presence by immersing yourself in his love and care for you. Read slowly out loud, then silently, like before. Focus on any word or phrase that speaks to you, and sense God with you. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all have parts to play in your personal relationship with them. Take 5 minutes for this element.

Relationship with God through Scripture – Read John 15.

If you want to go back to John 14, and then go on to Chapter 15, that's OK. Listen for God's voice speaking to you through his words. The Holy Spirit inspired John to write these words, and the same Holy Spirit can help you understand these very words. Spend 10 minutes in John 15. If you finish before the end of the 10 minutes, go back and review. Take note of any verses that remind you of God's love for you, and his desire to enter into relationship with you. If you have more time, start with the first chapter of John and slowly proceed through the entire book.

Scripture memorization/meditation – Memorize Galatians 2:20.

Last week we focused on 2 Corinthians 5:17. If you need more time to memorize it, stay here until you know it word-for-word. Write it out, say it to a friend, keep it on a card with you. If you're ready to move on, memorize Galatians 2:20. God is speaking to you through his word.

Listening for God in silent prayer

How did this go last week? Did it get easier as the days went by? Again, don't be disappointed if there are no impressions in your mind that God is speaking. Don't expect an audible voice. If there's nothing, just review your memory verse. This takes time, but communication with God is well worth the effort! Don't ask him for anything, other than to share his thoughts with you. Learn to be comfortable in his presence.

Hearing from others

Many followers of Christ have gone this way before us. Spend time reading about the lessons they have learned, as well as the sweet blessings they can share. Take advantage of good Christian literature.

As many days as possible, try to devote 30 minutes to this time with God. Don't be too rigid with the time slots, as they are just suggestions, but try to give some time to every element of this exercise. Remember, there is no correct formula, and these are just guidelines to get started. God desires time with you. Give it to him in your love relationship. As previously mentioned, even 10 minutes spent reading God's word is a good start!

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

My old self has
been crucified
with Christ. It is
no longer I
who live, but
Christ lives in
me. So I live in
this earthly
body by
trusting in the
Son of God,
who loved me
and gave
himself for me.

- Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

Lesson 4: I am a Friend of God

Start the Conversation:

What are some important qualities you value in a loving relationship?
Can we be “a friend of God”?

Now that we have seen God’s “**full experience of salvation**” (1 Peter 2:2) in three phases, we can understand how sanctification—or becoming holy—fits into that framework. Our reconciliation to God started with **justification**, at the time of our conversion, when we placed our faith in Jesus Christ—we *have been* saved. Our reconciliation will culminate with **glorification**, when we *will be* saved on that glorious day when Christ returns, and when our bodies are resurrected in glory and strength as spiritual bodies (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). For believers pursuing a closer walk with God, we now live in that phase of salvation called **sanctification**—we *are being* saved (1 Corinthians 1:18), “being made holy,” (Hebrews 10:14) and “being transformed into the image of Christ” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

How do we define holiness? At a seminar on holiness there were as many definitions of holiness given as there were speakers. After all, God is holy, and to describe God’s holiness is to define his very essence, which is impossible. Romans 11:33 puts this bluntly, although with a clear sense of awe: “*Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!*” But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t explore God’s holiness and what that means for us individually.

These definitions of holiness are like looking at a precious diamond, examining all its facets from different directions. And they are all true. Keep in mind, this is personal holiness—not necessarily God’s holiness. Think about these definitions:

- Here is a Salvation Army definition from General Frederick Coutts: “Holiness is a relationship with God that increasingly expresses itself in Christlike living.” This is based on 2 Corinthians 3:18: “*And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*”
- “Holiness is when our very being, all we are, is filled with God.”
- “To be holy is to be set apart, to have a likeness of nature with God (2 Peter 1:4: ‘*You share his divine nature*’). This is transformative and deeply mystical.”
- “Holiness is when you give all of yourself to God and allow Him to give all of Himself to you.” This is a big challenge for most of us, but a great ideal. If we don’t aim high, we will fall short.
- “Holy living is a life defined through sacrifice, commitment and covenant. Others should be able to see that I am imitating Christ, and Christ is living in me.”
- “Holiness is being filled with God’s beauty and being made perfectly whole in Him. He can make me holy, and then his love flows out from me.”
- “Holiness is when we separate from the world and cling to God. In relationship with God, he is living in us and transforming us in every part of our being.”
- “Holiness is the physical embodiment of the presence of God. We move to ‘the deep end of the pool’ with the Holy Spirit. There is an empty part of us that only God can fill, so we can be complete and whole in him.”
- “Holiness is when we belong to Him completely. The Holy Spirit re-creates us into His image, and we are complete in Him.”

*There is an empty part of us
that only God can fill*

Frankly, this is all too wonderful, and too overwhelming. Just like God. However, as we review the definitions, they all seem to point to one common denominator, one central theme, refined to its simplest truth. Here it is: **Holiness begins and continues as an interactive love relationship with God.** This is life-changing! As we spend time in his presence, he is making us more and more like him, reforming us in Christlikeness.

As God the Holy Spirit is making us holy in relationship with him, we must be convinced of four essential truths, which we will explore in detail in the next two lessons. These truths are based on *God's initiative* and *our response*:

- 1) God loves you with an everlasting love.
- 2) God created you for the purpose of entering into relationship with him.
- 3) God requires us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.
- 4) God requires us to love each other.

The beauty and simplicity of these truths is breathtaking. The experiences of Moses and Isaiah have led us to believe that the God of all creation is awesome, terrible, and unapproachable, and that holiness is ethereal, other-worldly, and unattainable in our own power. All of that is true. However, God is now personally approachable through Christ, who initiates a love relationship with us, bringing us into the Father's presence. *"So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most"* (Hebrews 4:16).

Holiness is an active love relationship with God

The incredible reality is outlined for us in Romans 5:10-11, as we discussed in previous lessons: *"For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God."*

I am a friend of God! That certainly is cause for rejoicing! Christ has made the way for us to become holy. God's plan is for us to be made holy through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:4). *"For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy. And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so"* (Hebrews 10:10, 14-15).

That is amazing news! If that doesn't seem amazing to you, ask God to open the eyes of your heart so you can see Jesus, your friend and brother. *"We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith"* (Hebrews 12:2a). Being in his presence will make us more like him and increase our faith.

As you spend time in God's word this week, especially in the book of John, look for assurance of God's love for you, his plan for you to know him in relationship, and his desire to be loved in return. He wants you to know him intimately, not just to know things about him. His desire is for you to be in daily communication with him, the way you are with a spouse, or another family member or loved one. Meditate on the definitions of holiness to explore the different aspects of God's plan for us.

Questions:

- 1) **Do any of these definitions of holiness resonate with you? Why do you think that is the case?**
- 2) **How does it make you feel that God calls you his friend?**

Invitations to Relationship

Lesson 4

5 minutes	Invitation to the presence of God	<i>Psalm 36:5-10</i>
10 minutes	Relationship with God through Scripture	<i>John 16</i>
5 minutes	Scripture memorization/meditation	<i>2 Corinthians 5:17 & Galatians 2:20</i>
5 minutes	Listening for God in silent prayer	
5 minutes	Learning from others	

Invitation to the presence of God – Read Psalm 36:5-10.

As we start our quiet time with God each day this week, we have a reassurance of God’s great love for us. We are using the Psalms for this coming into God’s presence, for the Psalms say to God what we wish we could say in our own words. St. Athanasius, who wrote possibly as early as 330 AD, describes this for us:

“The reader [of the Psalms] takes all its words upon his lips as though they were his own, and each one sings the Psalms as though they had been written for his special benefit and takes them and recites them, not as though someone else were speaking or another person’s feelings being described, but as herself/himself speak as their own self, offering the words to God as their own heart’s utterances, just as though he himself had made them up.”

What a great way to read the Psalms! Make them your own!

Relationship with God through scripture – Read John 16.

Review John 14 and 15, then move on to John 16, again looking for evidence of God’s love for you and his desire to be with you in a love relationship. If you need more material, pick up where you left off earlier in John as you read the entire book.

Scripture memorization/meditation – Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:17 & Galatians 2:20.

Do you have the verses from 2 Corinthians and Galatians completely committed to memory? These verses solidify our understanding of what Christ has done for us. Our old life has been put to death, and “all things have become new.”

Listening for God in silent prayer

Spend time listening for God’s voice. Hopefully this will be getting a little easier for you. Don’t give up—the reward is too great to pass up. We learn this by doing it. Romans 8 reminds us that Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God pleading for us, and the Holy Spirit is praying for us (vv. 34, 26). Let’s listen in. Henri Nouwen reminds us that “God is with us even when we do not yet hear him” (from *Making All Things New*).

Learning from others

Continue reading your book, or if you have finished the first one, move on to another. Graciously accept the help of others who have recorded in their books their experiences of becoming holy.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

- 2 Corinthians 5:17
(NLT)

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

Lesson 5: God's Initiative

Start the Conversation:

How do you define the word "grace"?
Has anyone in your life shown you grace?

The good news of our last lesson is that when we come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, we become friends of God. Our friendship presupposes additional truths, as outlined in lesson 4. We need to be absolutely convinced of these. First, **God loves us with an everlasting love**. Second, **he has created us for the very purpose of entering relationship with him**.

Even though we will discuss his love for us and his desire for relationship with us as two distinct truths, in reality they are inseparable and often woven together in the same passage. It is important to keep that in mind throughout this discussion.

Come to me with your ears wide open.

Listen and you will find life.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you (relationship).

I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David" (love).

- Isaiah 55:3

1) God loves you with an everlasting love.

"God is love" (1 John 4:8). The bedrock of relationship with God is to know with certainty that we are loved by God. One evidence of his love is **prevenient grace**. This is defined in the Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine (HoD) as "literally 'grace' which 'comes before', the action by which God prepares and helps the hearer to seek him and find salvation" (HoD, p. 347). "God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8). Even when we didn't know or acknowledge him, he was calling us to himself.

*Before we loved God,
he first loved us*

Before we loved him, he first loved us. "See how much our Father loves us, for he calls us children, and that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1a). He has always loved us with an everlasting love, often referred to in scripture as his 'unfailing love'. We must be convinced of this if we are to learn to trust him.

We have been erroneously led to believe that the God of the Old Testament is primarily angry and judgmental. This is just not true. Because of his holiness, he cannot long tolerate sin and rebellion, and there are examples of righteous judgment. But the Old Testament is filled with evidence of God's deep love for us, and his own declarations telling us this is so.

God describes himself as: "The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations!" (Exodus 34:6-7a). God loves us eternally. In Psalm 23:6a the writer acknowledges, "Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life."

In Jeremiah 31:3 God professes his love, saying, "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself." And it gets even more intimate in verse 32b: "I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the Lord," the eternal lover of our souls.

In Isaiah 49 the people of Jerusalem say, *“The Lord has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us.”* And God gently but forcefully replies, *“Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands”* (vv. 14-16). Understand the depths of God’s love for you! He loves you with a tender mother’s love, he loves you with a faithful father’s love, and he loves you with the passionate love of a spouse.

Some of us grew up from our earliest years in church singing:

*Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so.*

- Anna Bartlett Warner (1827-1915)
(SBSA, Song #807)

That is not just a church nursery song, but is a profound theological truth, a proper understanding of God, and we need to be convinced of that. Perhaps the first verse most of us memorized, and one recognized even by those who don’t profess to be Christian, is the familiar John 3:16 (NIV): *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Jesus declares his love for us in John 15:9: *“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.”* And in verse 13 he shows us the extent of his love: *“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”* And that is exactly what Jesus did for each of us as he went to the cross.

The entire Bible is one great love story between God and his people—between God and you. Paul declares that, *“Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 8:39b). You must never, ever, doubt his great, unending, and everlasting love for you no matter what happens in this world. This is a foundational premise for becoming holy.

2) God created you for relationship with himself

*God created us for
relationship with himself*

A second truth we need to embrace as we become holy is to understand God’s plan and desire for relationship with us. He wants to know us, and for us to know him, more than we will ever understand. This is not knowing “about God,” but is a deep, loving relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that gets richer and deeper as time goes by. This has been known by believers down through the ages. The Westminster Shorter Catechism from the year 1648 asks the question, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” We glorify God through our loving obedience to him, and we will enjoy him forever in intimate relationship throughout eternity.

God walked in the Garden of Eden with our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the cool of the evening. We can only imagine to what degree they enjoyed each other’s company before their disobedience destroyed the relationship. Separation from this close communion with God was perhaps the most severe punishment for sin.

But even after the Fall, God remained faithful in his love for us. God promised covenant relationship with his people, to protect and care for them, but they would not even acknowledge him. In the book of Proverbs, we hear God calling out repeatedly, *“I called you so often, but you wouldn’t come. I reached out to you, but you paid no attention. You ignored my advice and rejected the*

correction I offered. Come and listen to my counsel. I'll share my heart with you and make you wise" (Proverbs 1:24-25, 23). Can you imagine a more intimate invitation to relationship? But his people continued to reject him. An older version of the NIV translation puts it this way: "If only you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you." What a great loss for those who refuse to believe!

Christ's sacrifice on the cross has made God even more accessible. We have already discussed Paul's words from Romans, which reveal God's plan for relationship with us. Once again, we see that his love for us and his desire for relationship with us cannot be separated. God, in great love, sent his Son to die for us so we could be forgiven. *"For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God" (Romans 5:10-11). Jesus gave his life to restore our relationship with God, allowing us to walk in his very presence.*

The essence of relationship is being together in communication, whether in person or apart. Jesus tells us in John 14:3, *"When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am."* Imagine that! The creator of the universe wants you to be together with him, in his presence, in personal relationship forever. Over and over Jesus encourages anyone who will listen to follow him so they can be together with him. *"Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me, because my servants must be where I am" (John 12:26a).*

And he will never leave us alone. Joshua reminds us of God's promises to him and to us. *"I will not fail you or abandon you. Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:5b,9b). "I have called you back from the ends of the earth. For I have chosen you and will not throw you away. Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you" (Isaiah 41:9-10).*

As Jesus is preparing for his death, he promises that we won't be left alone. *"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit" (John 14:16-17a). Paul, writing in Romans, reminds us of God's love with his gift of the Holy Spirit. "We know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love" (Romans 5:5b).*

God's love for us and desire for relationship with us are concepts that we sometimes take for granted, but they are precious promises that will sustain us through difficult storms in life that inevitably come. *"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).*

Questions:

- 1) Discuss the meaning of "prevenient grace" with a friend. Have you experienced this in your life?**
- 2) How does relationship with God impact your daily life? Does God talk to you? Are you comfortable in periods of silent prayer, not asking him for anything, but just listening for his voice?**

Invitations to Relationship

Lesson 5

5 minutes	Invitation to the presence of God	<i>Psalm 103:1-22</i>
10 minutes	Relationship with God through Scripture	<i>John 17</i>
5 minutes	Scripture memorization/meditation	<i>Romans 12:1-2</i>
5 minutes	Listening for God in silent prayer	
5 minutes	Learning from others	

Invitation to the presence of God – Read Psalm 103.

As you participate in your very personal relationship with God, remind yourself of all he has done for you in the words of Psalm 103. Imagine you wrote this Psalm, that these are your words, and you are singing back to God your love song to Him. Ponder the words from verse 11, “his unfailing love.”

Relationship with God through Scripture – Read John 17.

Jesus gets very personal in this chapter, which is so important to our understanding of the extent of his love for us. He knows he is on his way to a horrible death on the Cross: “*Father, the hour has come*” (v. 1). But instead of focusing on his suffering, he prays for you and me. And he asks that we would love each other as Christians. This is a key to holy living and shows that we cannot be “holy hermits.” We cannot live in isolation if the world is to believe that Christ loves them when they see the love that Christians have for each other.

Scripture memorization/meditation – Memorize Romans 12:1-2.

This passage may take you more time to memorize than other verses, but they are a key passage to our understanding of holiness, so try commit them to memory. Meditate on God’s truth through his word.

Listening for God in silent prayer

We are quite good at telling God what we want, then getting on with our daily activities. We aren’t so great at listening in silence, and even worse at taking his instruction to heart. Can you feel God’s pleasure that you have slowed down to listen for his voice? Keep it up! Don’t be discouraged if it doesn’t seem to be working. You are like an athlete in training, and it won’t happen overnight.

Learning from others

There are so many good and helpful books, and you are undoubtedly aware of some not already listed. Ask your officer/pastor or trusted Christian friends for suggestions. We are in this together, and it’s always good to ask for help.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

- Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

Lesson 6: Our Response

Start the Conversation:

What does it mean to love God with your whole self?
How easy—or difficult—is it to love others?

We have seen that God's initiative in reaching out to us incorporates two truths, namely, **his love for us** and **his desire for relationship with us**. In the same way, our response to his love is two-fold, and so evident that these responses hardly bear repeating. Yet they are so important we cannot say them enough. Because they are the "most important commands," we could awaken every morning asking God how we can fulfill them this day.

Jesus was interacting with religious leaders when one of them asked him a question of immense importance. Whether the question was sincere does not impact the life-defining answer. A teacher asked Jesus, "*Of all the commandments, which is the most important?*" Jesus replied, "*The most important is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these'" (Mark 12:28-31). Jesus makes it clear that our devotion to love him and each other should be the primary concerns of our earthly lives. We sometimes lose this perspective.*

1) We are to love God with everything we are.

The only way to have the richness of relationship that God desires for us is to return his love. Our love for him will never approximate his love for us, but we are commanded to love God with every part of our being.

Jesus makes it very clear that loving God should be the supreme concern of our lives. What could be more important than "the greatest commandment"? It is only reasonable that we should order the activities of our lives, our priorities, in a way that promotes our love for God, as this is his will for us—in reality, his commandment to us. Our love for him must involve all that we are, every part of our being: **our heart** (our emotions), **our soul** (our inner eternal spirit), **our mind** (our intellect and reasoning processes), and **our strength** (our bodies).

Later in John 14:21 he promises, "*Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.*" What does this mean? That because of our love relationship with Christ, he will show us more and more of who he is by revealing himself through relationship. We will become aware of his glory, which is his power and presence with us.

In a metaphor using botanical terms, Jesus says we are grafted to him like branches on a vine—that is how close our relationship will be. "*I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me and I in them, will produce much fruit. When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father*" (John 15:5,8). Our true fruit will be evident as we become like him. "*And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image*" (2 Corinthians 3:18b).

Jesus' life flows directly into us as his words remain in us. "*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!*" (John 15:7). This is a great reason for scripture memorization, by the way. His words bring spiritual life and Holy Spirit power. "*The*

very words *I have spoken to you are spirit and life*” (John 6:63b). His word makes us holy. “Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth” (John 17:17).

*God’s love for us
does not waver*

This love relationship with God has eternal consequences, as it is the very definition of eternal life: “*And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth*” (John 17:3). **Our love relationship with God gives us eternal life!** We respond to God’s love by loving him back. “*We love Him because he first loved us*” (1 John 4:19, NKJV). A footnote in the Life Application Study Bible states, “Those who realize how much they are loved are able to love much.”

Paul claims as the supreme goal of his life, “*I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death so that one way or another (whether through the power of his resurrection or through suffering with Christ) I will experience the resurrection from the dead!*” (Philippians 3:10-11).

On the other hand, some come to judgment day only to find out they have missed what is most important. “*Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws*” (Matthew 7:21-23). They will not enter heaven because they were not in relationship with Jesus Christ. How devastating that will be! Our gift of eternal life is based on our relationship status with God. Remember, this is not knowledge about God, it is knowing God through relationship.

That may sound discouraging but be reminded that when we are in relationship with God, we are assured of our eternal life. And we have eternal life now, not just when we get to heaven. He has given us the gift of eternal life, which is God himself, and this is secure **as you remain in continuous relationship with him**.

Perhaps the most stunning revelation of God’s love for us is contained in these verses: “*God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins*” (1 John 4:9-10). How do we reciprocate? Isaac Watts has summed up our proper response in his hymn, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”:

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

- Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
(SBSA, Song #208)

2) We are to love each other.

The second part of the “greatest commandments,” equally important, is to **love each other**. Here is where we often stumble, and here is where it is most obvious to the world that we do not “practice what we preach.” Just a cursory glance at Christian social media will convince us that there is not a lot of love between those who call themselves followers of Christ. There are thousands of denominations, in part because we cannot live in agreement with one another, much less love each other.

This is a tragedy. Why? Jesus makes it very clear that the world will see very clearly the hypocrisy in our words and actions. His words: “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:34-35).

With a story about a practitioner of another religion, Dallas Willard reminds us how important it is for Christians to love each other: “Mahatma Gandhi, who had looked closely at Christianity as practiced around him in Great Britain, remarked that if only Christians would live according to their belief in the teachings of Jesus, ‘we all would become Christians’” (*Renovation of the Heart*, p. 86). The dismaying truth is that this is evidence that we don’t really believe what Jesus commanded, much less obey the command.

On the one hand, this was not a “new command,” just one that was being ignored. The third book of the Bible outlines this command: “*Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD*” (Leviticus 19:18).

On the other hand, it is a new command, in that Jesus broadens the understanding of whom we should love. He tells his disciples they should love not only fellow Israelites, but now their fellow believers, no matter their nationality. “*This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Anyone who does not love other believers does not belong to God. If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead*” (1 John 3:11, 10, 14).

Almost the entire book of 1 John—especially the fourth chapter—is based on convincing believers to love each other. “*Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us*” (1 John 4:7-8, 12).

We are to love each other

John also reminds us that we show our love for God by being obedient to him. “*Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning*” (2 John 6).

Other epistles are filled with reminders that God wants us to love each other. Romans reminds us that many of the 10 commandments are really instructions as to how we demonstrate our love for each other. “*Owe nothing to anyone—except your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law. Love does no wrong to others*” (Romans 13:8, 10). “*We don’t need to write to you about the importance of loving each other, for God himself has taught you to love one another*” (1 Thessalonians 4:9).

Let’s finish this lesson with a question: **Can God really “command” us to love him and each other?** Isn’t love a feeling that you either have or don’t have, and one that you cannot easily manufacture? Do we demand that our “loved ones” love us?

We will not explore this in detail here, but this entire concept hinges on our definition of love. If love is a tenuous, fleeting emotion that shifts with circumstances, then a command to love is ridiculous. This can explain, in part, the horrendous rate of divorce in our society, even among followers of Christ. Love as “an emotional feeling only” is doomed to vacillate over time, and this topic makes up the lyrics of much of our pop music. You know the songs I’m talking about.

Biblical love, God's love, is based on commitment and covenant, and does not waver, even when we completely refuse to even acknowledge that God exists. He still loves us. We love him partly as a response to what he has done for us but underlying that is our part of the covenant and commitment we pledge to him. I dare say that as we grow in relationship with God, our love for him increases in emotion and on the solid foundation of committed experience. As already quoted, but bears repeating, *"This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins"* (1 John 4:10). He has given us the gift of himself, which is eternal life. Do we need any more reason to love?

Our benediction of love and relationship needs no further explanation:

Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Ephesians 3:17-19

Questions:

- 1) Do you feel loved by God?**
- 2) How do you love God in return?**
- 3) How do you talk to God? How does he talk to you?**

Invitations to Relationship

Lesson 6

5 minutes	Invitation to the presence of God	<i>Psalm 139:1-12</i>
10 minutes	Relationship with God through Scripture	<i>John 14</i>
5 minutes	Scripture memorization/meditation	<i>Romans 12:1-2</i>
5 minutes	Listening for God in silent prayer	
5 minutes	Learning from others	

Invitation to the presence of God – Read Psalm 139:1-12.

As we ask God this week to make us aware of him, enjoy the first 12 verses of Psalm 139. God knows me and wants me to know him. I rejoice that I have nothing to hide from him, and I couldn't if I wanted to. I desire God with all my heart, and the Holy Spirit pursues me wherever I am, and whatever I am doing. He is always there; I am always in his presence. God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us, and so he will always be with us. Ask him to make you aware of his presence.

Relationship with God through Scripture – Read John 14.

John 14 is so important in our understanding of our relationship with God. It is formational; it is transforming! Take it in slowly and allow God to speak to you as your relationship with him deepens, as well as your understanding of how much he loves you, and how much he desires you to be in his presence.

Scripture memorization/meditation – Memorize Romans 12:1-2.

Keep working on memorizing these verses. They are crucial verses in our theology of holiness. We need another week to solidify them in our understanding.

Listening for God in silent prayer

Learn to be silent. Relish the time alone with God. Protect this time. Listen for God's voice as he speaks to you. In Mark 6:31, Jesus speaks to you directly and personally: *"Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile."* Can God give you a more intimate invitation to be alone with Him?

Learning from others

How is your book reading coming along? Continue to experience God in the lives of those who have traveled ahead of us. They may give you a different perspective and help you to understand the ways of God. You may hear the authors saying to you, *"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths"* (Isaiah 2:3).

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

- Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

Lesson 7: Our ‘Other’ Holiness Doctrine

Start the Conversation:

Have you heard of “backsliding” before? What does it mean?
How are salvation and holy living intertwined?

Doctrine 9 of The Salvation Army states: **We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.**

What is the true importance of this doctrine? Is it only a warning against the possibility of backsliding (which is an intentional and continuous turning away from faith and obedience to God, resulting in broken covenant and relationship with God)? Or does the doctrine mean something much more?

The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine (HoD) states that “Salvation is neither a state to be preserved nor an insurance policy which requires no further investment. It is the beginning of a pilgrimage with Christ” (HoD, p. 181). Now that we have described the “Way of Salvation” as incorporating three phases (justification, sanctification, and glorification), it may be helpful to look at the use of the word **salvation** in the 9th doctrine.

A word of caution is necessary in using too narrow a definition of words. We must always keep in mind that the “Way of Salvation” is one continuous process—although in phases, as has been described. This is seen in Paul’s declaration, *“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns”* (Philippians 1:6). Paul makes it clear that this “work” which is started, continued, and finally finished, is all part of one work. It encompasses our total reconciliation to God. *“This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, ‘It is through faith that a righteous person has life’”* (Romans 1:17). [See illustration at end of lesson]

*The Way of Salvation is
a continuous process*

However, for the sake of clarification, let’s discuss how the word **salvation** is used in our 9th doctrine. It seems apparent that this is not describing our conversion process, also known as “**justification**.” That was the event when God declared us righteous, whereas this doctrine is describing a process, continuing “in a state of salvation.” It appears just as evident that this is not our “**glorification**,” which is also an event that will occur on the day Christ Jesus returns. (See *lesson 3*.)

That leaves “**sanctification**” to describe “continuance in a state of salvation.” The more you look at this, the more it makes sense. This is the continuous process of “the message of the cross” which is the “very power of God” for “we who are being saved” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Look again at Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV): *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”* Isn’t this describing “continued obedient faith in Christ”? There is a great similarity between this passage from Philippians and the 9th doctrine. Since we previously used these Philippians verses to describe the work of sanctification, can we not also say that the 9th doctrine describes the process of “**consecration**,” which is setting ourselves apart so God can make us holy?

I found support for this view from a completely unexpected source—the Handbook of Doctrine! To be sure, the 10th doctrine is described as “The Doctrine of Holiness,” which is straightforward. But

in the same passage that describes the *via salutis* (the way of salvation), we find these words: “Doctrines 9 and 10 are inextricably linked, as continuance in a state of salvation leads to holiness and Christlikeness. As we consecrate ourselves (doctrine 9), God sanctifies us (doctrine 10)” (HoD, p. xix), and that is a direct quote, including parentheses! If doctrine 10 describes the destination, doctrine 9 outlines the journey.

“Continuance in a state of salvation” is describing **sanctification**, again defined as the “crisis and process by which the Christian’s life and character become Christlike, through the work of the Holy Spirit” (HoD, p. 348). We are continuing to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, as God does his work in us. This is our consecration, which is followed by God’s sanctification, placing the seal of the Holy Spirit on us.

This is the lifelong process of “we who are being saved,” again using the phrase from 1 Corinthians 1:18. This is the work of holy living, based primarily on loving God and loving each other. This is found in many passages in the New Testament that describe the process of holy living. “*And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image*” (2 Corinthians 3:18b).

Again, let me be clear. Our ‘work’ is to place ourselves in relationship with the Holy Spirit, living in us, where he can make us holy. We do this for the most part by practicing the spiritual disciplines, such as: reading, memorizing and meditating on Scripture, practicing prayer, solitude, fasting, worship, service, and many other disciplines. That is the primary importance of the ***Invitations to Relationship*** encouraged in this curriculum.

*We are called to
holy living*

We don’t make ourselves holy. Only God the Holy Spirit can sanctify us. However, we cannot—we must not—“stand around waiting for God to make us holy” once he has justified us. There is a process, and we must continue the process. The writer of Hebrews reminds us to: “*Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord*” (Hebrews 12:14).

This affirms the quote above from the HoD, that our salvation is “neither being a state to be preserved nor an insurance policy which requires no further investment” (HoD, p. 181). We have entered a “new relationship with God in which unbelief is replaced by belief and trust, resulting in new life” (HoD, p. 179). “*Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation*” (1 Peter 2:2). This certainly describes an ongoing process of salvation following the conversion experience, or justification.

Let’s define our terms. What is this “state of salvation”? Paul describes it early in his letter to the Colossians. “*Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault*” (Colossians 1:22). This is an incredible truth! Because of the work of Christ on the cross, God has not only declared us righteous, but he has also made us holy. That is our “state of salvation.” Remember the words of Christ as he prays for his followers: “*And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth*” (John 17:19). Our state of salvation is that we stand in the very presence of God, holy and blameless.

However, we can’t stop there. “*But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don’t drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News*” (Colossians 1:23a). There’s that word “continue” again, supporting evidence for this “other” holiness doctrine. The

“state of salvation” is describing a living, loving relationship with God, the process whereby he is continually reconciling us to Himself.

The 9th doctrine is an “if...then” statement, with key words being “depends upon.” If we want to continue a life of salvation being made holy by the Holy Spirit, then we must practice continued obedient faith. Paul describes this way of life in Romans chapter 6. As always, in every step of our reconciliation to God, in our “Way of Salvation,” we have choices: “*You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living*” (Romans 6:16b). Our “continued obedient faith” leads to righteous living!

But there’s more! “*Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy*” (Romans 6:19b). Continuance in a state of salvation through continued obedient faith leads to holiness and Christlikeness, as quoted from the HoD above. God is working in us to make us everything he wants us to be. He asks for cooperation and obedience from those of us “who are being made holy” (Hebrews 10:14). We choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living, which results in becoming holy. This is obedience leading to righteousness leading to holiness.

Paul encourages us to live obedient lives leading to holy living. “*We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better*” (Colossians 1:9-10).

Peter outlines continued obedient faith in Christ as he calls us to “Holy Living”: “*It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1 Peter 1:3). We have been made right with God because we “*have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 1:2). His sacrifice on the cross paid the penalty for our sin and reconciled us to God. This is the **salvation process of justification**.

Peter goes on to describe our **salvation process of glorification**. “*Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls*” (1 Peter 1:3-5, 9).

So in between the time of our conversion (Justification), and our resurrection on the day Jesus Christ returns (Glorification), how are we to live? We live lives of continued obedient faith in Christ, *Till He returns or calls me Home*. [Line from *In Christ Alone*, by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty; SBSA, Song #861]

We are called to holy living. Let’s follow Peter’s example, placing a verse in context that we so often use with no context. Between our justification and our glorification, here is the instruction: “*Now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy*” (1 Peter 1:15). “*Prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Live as God’s obedient children. Show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart*” (1 Peter 1:13, 14, 22). This is the **salvation process of sanctification**. This is fulfilling what Jesus calls the greatest commandments, which are to love God and love each other.

Doctrine 9 gives us an action plan for holy living! The other 10 doctrines describe our proper biblically defined creeds and are the foundation of our relationships with God and others. They certainly impact how we live. But doctrine 9 describes how we implement these beliefs, our blueprint for “righteous living so that you will become holy” (Romans 6:19).

This is how “continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.” This is salvation through the process of sanctification, becoming holy. Our 9th doctrine is unquestionably a holiness doctrine. True believers in Christ worshipping in The Salvation Army, embrace your theology!

We finish this lesson with a quote from General Paul Rader, taken from a previous edition of the Handbook of Doctrine called *Salvation Story*. “What Salvationists believe has never been incidental to how we live out our life in Christ as individuals, or as a global spiritual movement. Our faith, grounded in Scripture, and validated victoriously by personal experience, has been the motive force of our obedience in mission.” As General Shaw Clifton adds, “We can say a firm ‘Amen!’ to that” (HoD, p. xiv).

Questions:

- 1) Describe how the 9th Doctrine is a blueprint for “Holy Living.”
- 2) What is a “state of salvation”? How can we continue in it?

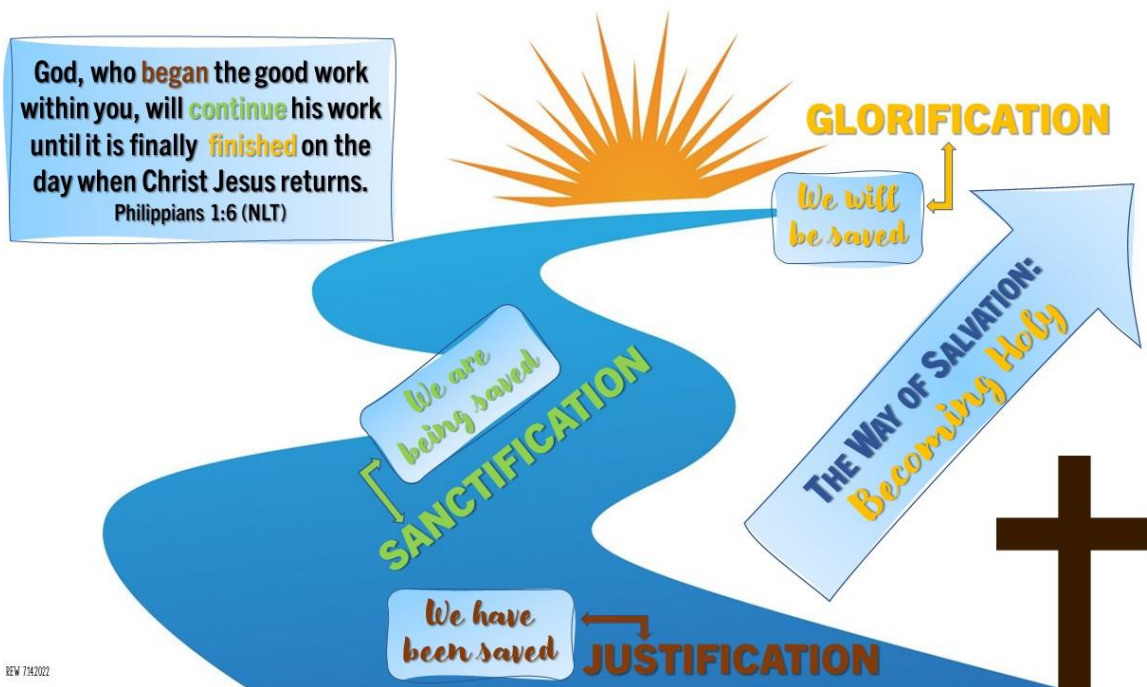


Illustration of “The Way of Salvation” – Justification to Sanctification to Glorification, as depicted in Philippians 1:6 (NLT).

Invitations to Relationship

Lesson 7

5 minutes	Invitation to the presence of God	<i>Psalm 139: 13-18</i>
10 minutes	Relationship with God through Scripture	<i>John 15</i>
5 minutes	Scripture memorization/meditation	<i>John 16:13a</i>
5 minutes	Listening for God in silent prayer	
5 minutes	Learning from others	

Invitation to the presence of God – Read Psalm 139:13-18.

Psalm 139 reminds us that Creator God gave your body to you. An act of loving obedience is to give it back to him.

Relationship with God through Scripture – Read John 15.

As you return to John 15, listen to what Jesus has to say to us as he pours out his heart in love.

Scripture memorization/meditation – Memorize John 16:13a

Jesus is getting us ready to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Spirit is our teacher and is Himself the truth.

Listening for God in silent prayer

Keep listening for God. *“Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life”* (Isaiah 55:3).

Learning from others

Keep reading and learning about the holiness walk from others who have experienced it.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

When the Spirit
of truth comes,
he will guide you
into all truth.

- John 16:13a (NLT)

Lesson 8: Evidence of Personal Holiness (Part 1)

Start the Conversation:

What does it mean to be declared righteous?
What does being set apart look like to those around you?

Am I holy? Are you holy? Are you in the process of becoming holy? To be sure, sometimes we don't feel particularly holy. There seems to be a lot of confusion among believers as we consider these issues. The Bible provides unambiguous evidence to allow us to answer these questions confidently based on "solid ground" rather than "feelings." We need to be sure of our holiness because the Bible clearly warns that "those who are not holy will not see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

First, let's address a common misperception of personal holiness. **God's holiness is sinless perfection**, among many other attributes; **our personal holiness is not**. Our Handbook of Doctrine (HoD) has a section heading entitled, "Holiness is not sinlessness." "We must not claim sinless perfection in this life" (HoD, p. 201). Because of our human nature we are prone to submit to temptation. Our 10th doctrine declares that we are "preserved blameless," not sinless. To be blameless is to be in right relationship with God, and not allowing sin, as far as we are aware, to control our lives. As believers we have allowed Christ to take his rightful place as Lord of our lives, and as the Holy Spirit reveals the presence of sin, we ask him to remove it.

The study of scripture facilitates this process. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that "*Scripture...makes us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong.*" If we are living in submission to the Holy Spirit, we can live blameless lives, as we are being made holy by the Holy Spirit. We allow the Spirit to show us what is wrong, and then allow him to correct it. This is part of holy living.

With that understanding, ask yourself again, are you holy? Remember that **sanctification** (becoming holy) involves both a crisis point (by which we mean a point in time) and a process (an ongoing work). Let's look at the first two of four criteria in scripture that give us some answers:

1. I have been declared righteous by God

The book of Romans testifies that I have been declared righteous because of my belief that Jesus has been sent by the Father and shed his blood for the forgiveness of my sin (justification). "*This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe*" (Romans 3:22, NIV).

Let's define our terms. **Justification**, according to the HoD, is "God's act of declaring people to be righteous before him, accepting them despite their past sins" (HoD, p. 346). Also, as defined by the HoD, righteousness is "being in a right relationship with God and people" (HoD, p. 347). Paul states in Romans that "*God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God (justified) when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood*" (Romans 3:24-25).

To be blameless is to be in a right relationship with God

Our 8th doctrine states that "**We are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ...**" Our justification through the power of the cross means that we have been declared righteous by God. Righteousness leads to holiness through continued obedient faith in Christ. Romans 6:16, 19 show proof of this: "*...Choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. ...Give yourselves to righteous*

living so that you will become holy.” The Handbook of Doctrine declares that “Continuance in a state of salvation leads to holiness and Christlikeness” (HoD, p. xix). We have stated above that “continuance in a state of salvation” is a living, loving relationship with God where he is continually reconciling us to Himself.

So now follow the evidence. We have been justified by God, which means God has declared us righteous. Our continued obedient faith leads to righteous living, and righteous living leads to holiness. The Holy Spirit is making us holy as we cooperatively participate in righteous living through obedience. This is the process of sanctification, which is being made holy.

Once again, the HoD defines **sanctification** as the crisis and process by which the Christian’s life and character become Christlike, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Let me give a simple illustration of this concept of crisis and process, in the formation of doctors. When students graduate from medical school, they are declared to be medical doctors by their state, with all the rights and privileges granted by their state of licensure. They are doctors.

So, what’s next? They continue becoming doctors, even though they already are doctors. They enroll in residency programs of various lengths, then take extensive board examinations both by the state and by their specialty to become board certified in their chosen area of proficiency. To maintain state licensure over time they are required every year to participate in continuing medical education programs, and to maintain board certification they are required to re-take the board examination at periodic intervals throughout their careers. As a patient, you want evidence of this continuing education and proof of proficiency in any doctor you see, no matter how experienced they are. They are doctors, and they are becoming doctors. (Perhaps that’s why they call it the “practice” of medicine.)

It is similar with holiness. The process of sanctification (becoming holy) continues the work that was started when we were justified. “*God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work...*” (Philippians 1:6). “*And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image*” (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is an ongoing work of “*we who are being saved*” from 1 Corinthians 1:18. This clearly indicates a progression in becoming holy. We are holy, and we are becoming holy. And our personal transformation starts when we are declared righteous by God.

2. I have been set apart

A second evidence of personal holiness is that we have been set apart for Christ. Two very similar but different verses in Leviticus describe the work of being set apart. As always, God initiates in loving interactive relationship (prevenient grace), and then we must respond. “*You must be holy because I, the LORD, am holy. I have set you apart from all other people to be my very own*” (Leviticus 20:26). God’s desire is to make us holy as he claims us as his own. “*For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time*” (Hebrews 10:10). He has set us apart, but since we are agents of free will, he will not force his love on us. We need to answer to his prevenient grace, which is the grace which “comes before,” the action by which God prepares and helps the hearer to seek him and find salvation” (HoD p. 347).

*Prevenient grace = grace
which comes before*

And what is our appropriate response? “*So set yourselves apart to be holy, for I am the LORD your God*” (Leviticus 20:7). Have you decided to follow Jesus? Is He your Lord and Master? Are you living a life of “continued obedient faith in Christ”? These are signs that you are proactively setting

yourself apart for Jesus. Song #255 from *The Song Book of The Salvation Army (SBSA)* speaks this reality into our lives:

*I'm set apart for Jesus, to be a king and priest;
His life in me increases, upon His love I feast.
From evil separated, made holy by His blood,
My all is consecrated unto the living God.*

*I'm set apart for Jesus, His goodness I have seen,
He makes my heart His altar, He keeps His temple clean.
Our union none can sever, together every hour,
His life is mine forever with resurrection power.*

*I'm set apart for Jesus, with Him to ever stay,
My spirit He releases, He drives my foes away.
He gives full strength for trial and shields when darts are hurled;
With Him and self-denial I overcome the world.*

- William James Pearson (1832-1892)
SBSA, Song #255

Living a life that is different from the world is a clear sign that you are set apart. *“Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect”* (Romans 12:2). *“Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes”* (Ephesians 4:23).

What do you allow into your mind, through conversations, television, books, movies, social media, and other pursuits on the internet? Are you following Biblical instruction to “set yourself apart to be holy”? This is a true indication that you are becoming holy. We remember the chorus,

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.*

- Helen Howarth Lemmel (1863-1961)
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BV Holland (Adm. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org)
SBSA, Song #445

This is our focus on Christ. *“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things”* (Colossians 3:2, NIV).

Philippians 4:8 gives us the following standard: *“Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”* Allow God to change the way you think. On a daily basis, with God the Holy Spirit, we *“Work at living...a holy life”* (Hebrews 12:14), demonstrating evidence that we are setting ourselves apart for Christ and his kingdom.

Invitations to Relationship

Lesson 8

5 minutes	Invitation to the presence of God	<i>Isaiah 55:1-13</i>
10 minutes	Relationship with God through Scripture	<i>John 16</i>
5 minutes	Scripture memorization/meditation	<i>John 17:17, 19</i>
5 minutes	Listening for God in silent prayer	
5 minutes	Learning from others	

Invitation to the presence of God – Read Isaiah 55:1-13.

Hear Christ calling you, “Come close, draw near, follow me.” We are encouraged to come to God in relationship and love. He is near! His words will accomplish his purposes.

Relationship with God through Scripture – Read John 16.

These words are now becoming very familiar to us. This time, after you have read the chapter, focus on verse 33 which reminds us of the peace he gives and his victory over the evil one. We share that victory in our own lives!

Scripture memorization/meditation – Memorize John 17:17, 19.

Last week’s verse promised us a guide. Now this guide, our Holy Spirit, shares God’s truth with us, as he is truth.

Listening for God in silent prayer

God may surprise you in the different ways he communicates with you personally. Consider Psalm 29:3-4:

The voice of the LORD echoes above the sea.

The God of glory thunders.

The LORD thunders over the mighty sea.

The voice of the LORD is powerful;

the voice of the LORD is majestic.

But remember when God found Elijah hiding for his life in a mountain cave, God did not speak to him in the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire, but spoke in the sound of a gentle whisper—the still, small voice (1 Kings 19:9-13). Listen closely, so you don’t miss anything God is saying to you, no matter how he chooses to speak.

Learning from others

Enjoy your Christian literature.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

- John 17:17, 19 (NLT)

Lesson 9: Evidence of Personal Holiness (Part 2)

Start the Conversation:

What are two criteria that scripture gives us as evidence of personal holiness?
What does it mean to be redeemed?

In our last lesson, we discussed that **sanctification** (becoming holy) involves both a crisis point (by which we mean a point in time) and a process (an ongoing work). We looked at two (of four) criteria in scripture that give us evidence of personal holiness: **1) I have been declared righteous by God**, and **2) I am set apart**. We continue today with the remaining two criteria:

3. The Holy Spirit claims me as his own – I belong to Him

More evidence that we are holy is that we have been redeemed. To “redeem” is to free or rescue by paying a price. God originally created us in his likeness to enjoy relationship with Him forever.

*God created us
in his likeness*

However, we were separated from God by the sin of our first parents, and by our own sin. Through our disobedience to God’s law, and our unbelief in Christ (John 16:9), we gave ourselves as slaves to sin. “Once you were slaves of sin” (Romans 6:17). “The universal consequence of sin is separation from God and loss of fellowship with him” (HoD, p. 114). When God redeemed us, he regained possession of us in exchange for Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

Now we belong to Him. “Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We who are redeemed belong to God.

God assures us of this truth. “And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). The NIV uses this language: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” We are sealed by the Holy Spirit—we belong to him. “You are a chosen people... a holy nation, God’s very own possession” (1 Peter 2:9). “God chose you to be the holy people he loves” (Colossians 3:12).

This assurance of belonging to God is emphasized in Romans 8:38-39: “And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Since we are that tightly bound to God in an interactive love relationship, we have assurance of our holiness, sealed by the Holy Spirit. He will never let us go.

Now I belong to Jesus,
Jesus belongs to me,
Not for the years of time alone,
but for eternity.

- Norman John Clayton (1903-1992)
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Renewed 1966, 1971 Wordspring Music, LLC
(Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org)
SBSA, Song #874

4. God lives in us

We need to get serious about the scripture verses we memorize, and some of the songs we sing. We so easily sing the Sunday School chorus, “It’s no longer I that liveth, but Christ that liveth in me,” and we don’t realize the tremendously important transforming spiritual truth in these words. “*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20).

Paul speaks about this in his letter to the Colossians. “*We are writing to God’s holy people in the city of Colossae, who are faithful brothers and sisters in Christ*” (Colossians 1:2). Notice he calls them **holy**. How does he know they are holy, when he doesn’t know them personally, and is not even there with them to observe their behavior? He tells them, “*And this is the secret: Christ lives in you*” (Colossians 1:27b). Paul knows they have the assurance of sharing Christ’s glory (his power and presence) because Christ is living in them. They are a holy people.

This is perhaps the most convincing argument that we are holy. It’s so obvious that it’s almost embarrassing not to have mentioned this before now. If Christ is living in you, aren’t you by definition **holy**? **God’s presence in your life makes you holy!** This is really the only evidence you need.

*God’s presence in our lives
makes us holy*

Let’s be clear, we do not make ourselves holy so he can live in us. We are powerless to make ourselves holy; the thought is absurd, but that is what the Pharisees were attempting to do. The power of the Holy Spirit changes us to make us ready to be the place where God lives. The Holy Spirit does the transforming work. “*Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think*” (Romans 12:2). A familiar Salvation Army chorus describes this process:

*Holy Spirit, come, O come,
Let Thy work in me be done!
All that hinders shall be thrown aside;
Make me fit to be Thy dwelling.*

- Richard Slater (1854-1939)
SBSA, Song #292

Jesus says, “*All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them*” (John 14:23). We have already seen in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. We are inhabited by God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are holy because God lives in us. What more proof do we need that we are holy?

Conclusion

Let’s review our Salvation Army definition of holiness from General Frederick Couatts: “Holiness is a relationship with God that increasingly expresses itself in Christlike living.” This is based on the scripture: “*And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image*” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

If you have been justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, you have allowed God to set you apart, you have set yourself apart to live for God, and Christ is now living in you, you are holy. And you are becoming holy. The seal of the Holy Spirit is on you, and you belong to Him. We must grasp these truths and allow the Holy Spirit to help us live this out in our everyday lives. We need to get past wondering if we are holy and start living intentional lives of holiness.

We should resist the temptation to make our understanding of holiness overly complicated and mysterious, and so place in doubt or even deny God's tremendous power. Remember, *"The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved (becoming holy) know it is the very power of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

A final passage from Colossians, used previously, brings this all into focus. *"Now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News"* (Colossians 1:22-23). If God has declared that you are holy, who are you to say you are not holy, or that you are unsure? Embrace your holiness! Hold onto it! Allow God to *"Continue his work (in you) until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns"* (Philippians 1:6). Amen!

Invitations to Relationship

Lesson 9

5 minutes	Invitation to the presence of God	<i>Psalm 19:1-14</i>
10 minutes	Relationship with God through Scripture	<i>John 14-17</i>
5 minutes	Scripture memorization/meditation	<i>1 Thessalonians 5:23-24</i>
5 minutes	Listening for God in silent prayer	
5 minutes	Learning from others	

Invitation to the presence of God – *Read Psalm 19:1-14.*

Nature declares God's glory, so let's participate! What a wonderful Psalm! Verse 14 is the desire of all our hearts.

Relationship with God through Scripture – *Read John 14-17.*

Review again this entire section of transformational encouragement through the words of our Lord and Savior. These chapters help us in so many ways.

Scripture memorization/meditation – *Memorize 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.*

We continue our memorization for now with truly doctrinal words. Don't stop memorizing—this is a life habit.

Listening for God in silent prayer

Simply wait and listen...

*"I will climb up to my watchtower
and stand at my guardpost.*

There I will wait to see what the LORD says."

- Habakkuk 2:1

Moving forward, there is no need to limit silent prayer to five minutes. Whatever time God gives you, spend it in his presence listening for his voice.

Learning from others

Don't stop reading. We have much to learn from those who have gone before us—ancient and contemporary. Let their words encourage you in your daily walk with Christ.

Continue your daily **Invitations to Relationship**. When you spend time in God's presence through spiritual disciplines, the Holy Spirit will make you holy through God's word and in truth.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
(NLT)

Final Word

And so, dear sisters and brothers, welcome to the School of Holy Living where the Holy Spirit himself is our teacher, becoming holy is our process, everyday life is our classroom, class is always in session (“*Even at night my heart instructs me*” – Psalm 16:7), and no one ever graduates. We are reminded of this in the words of Thomas Merton: “We do not want to be beginners. But let us be convinced of the fact that we will never be anything else but beginners all our life.” I’m OK with that. I’ve got all eternity to continue being taught by the Holy Spirit.

Please strive to make the daily spiritual exercise patterns part of your everyday walk with God. These lessons included examples *only*, and you will soon develop your own spiritual disciplines or “**personal invitations to a loving relationship with God.**” Always remember that that’s what they are. If you lose awareness of God’s immense love for you, and his desire to be in loving relationship with you, the practice of the *invitations to relationship* will soon devolve into dullness and drudgery, and that is just what the deceiver is hoping will happen. Ask God, the lover of your soul, to keep this from happening.

As stated throughout this study, becoming holy is not taught from a book, a course, or a lecture, but must involve the daily sacrifice of our time. The writer of the old hymn knew this:

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word;
Make friends of God’s children. Help those who are weak;
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone;
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy guide,
And run not before Him whatever betide;
In joy or in sorrow still follow thy Lord,
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul;
Each thought and each motive beneath His control;
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

- William Dunn Longstaff (1822-1894)
SBSA #790

The Holy Spirit is our teacher, and we become holy by giving our bodies as living sacrifices, in loving relationship with him, so he can transform us into what God has planned for us from before time. He calls us to himself with the gentle words, “Come close, draw near, follow me. Remain in my love.”

Consider these words from St. Athanasius from his classic, *On the Incarnation*: “This will give you a beginning, and you must go on to prove its truth by the study of the Scriptures.” I pray that God will give us wisdom and open hearts as we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us and make us holy.

Submitted by:
David Winters, MD

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References

Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline, The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1978)

Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 20th Anniversary edition, 2021)

Chris Lohrstorfer, *Learning to Breathe, Mastering the Art of Spiritual Respiration*, (Jackson, MS: Teleios Press, 2018)

Books for recommended reading

Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, see above. Perhaps the most well-known and well-loved writing on Spiritual Formation, has sold more than 2 million copies. Has stood the test of time, and still widely used.

Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 20th Anniversary edition, 2021) This book was very influential in the assembly of this curriculum.

Chris Lohrstorfer, *Learning to Breathe*. See above. This is a short read which expounds on a sermon of John Wesley. Excellent explanation of holiness.

Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004) A classic of Christian Literature, this is said to be the most widely read book in the world other than the Bible. This is for good reason.

C.S. Lewis has written many excellent books, possibly the most well-known being “Mere Christianity.”

Other sources

<https://youversion.com> Bible app installed on more than 500 million separate devices around the world. Many Bible translations in many languages available. Compare passages in different translations, search for phrases of verses. This app (or one like this) is a must for the serious student of the Bible.

<https://www.getverses.com> Useful app for Scripture memorization