



Week Seven

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 2:11-12

This study follows a pattern of gathering—reflection—sharing—prayer.

GATHERING

Last week our practice focused on serving. How did that go for folks?

This week's theme in worship was 'a holy people' — what makes people distinctly holy? Laurie used 2 different examples — the passionate dedication of Harriet Tubman against slavery and the subtle swipe of the hand on a dust covered surface. Which metaphor for holiness best describes your experience or approach to holy living — the passionate resistance to the slavery of sin or the subtle but distinct exposure of the uniform dusting of sin in the world ?

SHARED REFLECTION: 1 Peter 2:1-12

Read 1 Peter 2:1-12 out loud once.

This passage divides into 3 sections. 2:1-3 gives a description of individual growth in holiness. The section from 2:4-10 uses the metaphor of the church as a building with Jesus Christ as the Living Stone to give a communal metaphor to holy vocation in the world (holy priesthood). Finally, 2:11-12 gives the action plan for both individual and common holiness (abstain and adopt ...). Read the entire passage again.

Reflect on the section from 2:4-10. How are descriptions such as chosen, precious or honored (without shame) applied to Jesus? How are they applied to those who believe in Jesus?

Pastor Laurie talked about the centrality of Jesus as a stumbling block or barrier to those outside of faith who share the desire for individuals as chosen, precious and honored but seek the source of this outside of the call and mercy of God in Christ. Where do you experience this conflict about the source of chosen, precious and honored in your interactions in life? Where do you resist it yourself?

Laurie also spoke about the "holy habits" patterns of abstain/resist on the one hand (the desires that wage war against your soul/self) and doing good, that is, lives of spiritual sacrifice on the other. What in this passage does Peter encourage believers to abstain from or resist? (See 2:1-3 and 2:10-12) What is the source for the good work or spiritual sacrifices that Peter exhorts the believers to adopt?

Laurie suggested holiness has both distinct expressions — the passion to 'wage war' against the slavery of sin (2:1 and 2:11) and the gentle and patient swipe against the deceptive covering of sin in all places (2:2-3 and 2:12). In your life, is the resistance to sin or the adoption of the good more pressing?

Week Seven ...

SHARED LIFE —

Next steps as a group

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday — the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. Lent is a season for focused habits of holiness — abstaining from certain goods in order to better dedicate energy and resources to growth in dedication and service. As a group, talk about whether you will journey together through Lent, break up to form other groups, or end your time as a small group with gratitude. *Consider attending the Ash Wednesday service together this week to mark this transition in your life as a small group together.*

Whether you are remaining together as a group or ending this group at this time, finish by talking about the practice you will take up for Lent. Remember the two sides to any holiness habit — both the habit of resistance (abstain from) and the habit of engagement (adopt). Remember that every spiritual sacrifice is in Christ, so pray for the power of Jesus' grace and Spirit.

Examples:

Resist looking at my phone first thing and begin each day with 30 minutes of devotions

Resist re-posting on social media and begin focused prayer for the person/situation

Resist speaking out of anger or malice and begin using words that build up

Resources for Lent

Here are several resources that may be good guides either individually or together this Lent

As a Small Group

Consider attending the middle hour class together during Lent, meeting at your regular time as well to discuss the teaching or making middle hour class your small group meeting.

Journey together through Lent using the small group study guides from the sermon series “Renewable”

Individually or with a Friend/Partner — (*Books Pastor Laurie will describe more fully on Ash Wednesday*)

Justin Whitmel Early, *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction* (IVP Books, 2019)

Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day: A 40 day journey with the daily office* (Zondervan, 2018)

Dallas Willard, *Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23* (Thomas Nelson, 2018)

Study guide : <http://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/dwillard/Life+Without+Lack+Small+Group+Study+Guide.pdf>

PRAYER

Be sure to dedicate time to praying together in God's presence and for one another. You may want to take some notes here to remember how to hold each other in prayer during the week.