

How To Become More Holy And Loving

When you think of holiness, what comes to mind?

We call a person holy; we think about someone who abstains from anything polluted, unclean, or displeasing to God.

What Does The Bible Say?

44 For I am the Lord your God. You must consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. (Leviticus 11:44a NLT)

God is holy.

God's holiness means that He is unique, pure, and powerful.

Anything that belongs to God is considered holy.

15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. 16 For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15–16 NLT)

As a follower of Christ, we are to be holy like Christ.

16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. (1 John 4:16 NLT)

God is love.

8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:8 NLT)

As a follower of Christ, we are to love like Christ.

Therefore, God is both holy and loving.

So we are to be loving and dedicated to God.

What Does The Bible Say?

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. 2 He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the

fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3 Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.”

5 “Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.” 6 And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! 7 A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

8 When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.” 9 For he was awestruck by the number of

fish they had caught, as were the others with him. 10 His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

When we are around perfection, we realize we are not perfect. We shut down.

Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!” 11 And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. (Luke 5:1–11 NLT)

Jesus is holy, and instead of pushing people away, He says, “Join me!”

Christ's holiness gives a new purpose, direction, and mission.

What Does The Bible Say?

23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. (Romans 3:23 NLT)

So we all deserve God going away from us. That is what hell is—the withdrawal of God's loving, kind presence from us.

We all deserve hell because of our sins.

8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:8 NLT)

However, it is the acknowledgment of our sinfulness that begins the goodness of the good news.

4 If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. (1 John 2:4 NLT)

Lifestyle Sins is open rebellion against God.

4 Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God. 5 And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him. 6 Anyone who

continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is. (1 John 3:4–6 NLT)

Lifestyle Sins / Accidental Sins

How Can You Obey?

What is the barometer of salvation?

It is not a memory of saying a prayer or getting baptized.

It is not being perfect because we will not ever achieve that.

It is when we feel sorry when we disobey God.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS:

1. God Disciplines Those Who Lead His People Astray.
2. God Disciplines His People When They Continue in Disobedience.

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the

Bible: The events of 2 Kings took place after the kingdom was divided following the reigns of David and Solomon. The events of this section took place around 586 BC when Jerusalem and Judah fell to the Babylonians.

Explore:

In 2 Kings 24:17, we learn that Judah, while under Babylonian captivity, was assigned a new king. This was an unusual occurrence as Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, installed this new king and also changed his name. Formerly known as Mattaniah, he would now be known as Zedekiah. King Zedekiah was 21 years old when he began to reign and reigned for 11 years, replacing his nephew Jehoiachin. He did what was evil in God's eyes and also rebelled against the king of Babylon. This final chapter of 2 Kings details not only the siege of Jerusalem, but also the capture and deportation of King Zedekiah to Babylon.

God Disciplines Those Who Lead His People Astray

(2 Kings 25:1-7)

Zedekiah, while ruling in Jerusalem, was a vassal king, a king who ultimately served in a subservient position under another king, in this case King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The events of chapter 25 began in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign.

Zedekiah continued in the evil ways followed by most of the kings before him (2 Kings 24:19) and then revolted against Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:20b). At this point in Zedekiah's reign, he had no regard for God and no fear of the king of Babylon. He was determined to do whatever he pleased and was willing to face whatever ramifications dealt to him.

The king's decision to rebel against God led to unnecessary battles for the nation. When Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city (verses 1-2) and later breached the walls and began to destroy the city, it was not simply an act of war. It was the result of ongoing evil by Zedekiah and most of his predecessors in direct disobedience to the words of God's prophet (Jeremiah 27). They

did not want God's rule or reign in their lives or in the kingdom. This continuing evil provoked the Lord to anger, causing Him to give Jerusalem and Judah over to their enemies just as He had promised (2 Kings 23:26-27; 24:20).

Even when judgment was deserved, however, God offered grace. If the people would submit to Nebuchadnezzar, things would go well (Jeremiah 38:17-18), but the people continued to resist God's correction. Disobedience was eventually followed by suffering and death as famine and fear came upon the land (verses 3). This famine was so great that the most inhumane atrocities were perpetrated by the people, including, but not limited to, parents eating their own children (Lamentations 2:20; 4:9-10). Finally, the Babylonians broke through the wall of the city causing Zedekiah and his army to flee. The Babylonians pursued and overtook the king, causing his army to scatter (verses 4-5). King Zedekiah found himself alone and defeated,

17 miles from home in Jericho. His disobedience and disregard for God's law and purposes were now coming to fruition.

We can make our choices but we cannot control the consequences of punishment or reward. When Zedekiah was captured for his rebellion, not only against Nebuchadnezzar, but ultimately against God, his punishment was swift and severe. He experienced the consequences of his decisions, as did his children and all of God's people. With no security, Zedekiah was captured by the opposition forces and was forced to watch as the Babylonians slaughtered his sons. If this experience was not brutal enough, they gouged out his eyes, making the murder of his sons the last thing he ever witnessed (verses 6-7). The king was then bound in chains and taken into Babylon. It may be proper to assume that had Zedekiah known the extent of the consequences of his rebellion, he may not have made the same decisions. Unfortunately, we can never know the extent and

degree of pain that disobedience will produce in our lives and those closest to us.

Explore:

God Disciplines His People When They Continue in Disobedience (2 Kings 25:8-21)

One of the final responses of Nebuchadnezzar to Zedekiah's rebellion was to destroy Jerusalem. After all, Jerusalem was the epicenter of worship for Israel. In verse 8, the plan was set in motion as Nebuchadnezzar appointed Nebuzaradan, the chief Babylonian official under the king and Nebuchadnezzar's personal bodyguard, to burn the city (verses 8-9). While the "burning" would include every important structure in Jerusalem, the first structure mentioned as having been burned was the "house of the Lord" or the Temple. For the inhabitants of Israel

and Ju- dah, the loss of the Temple conveyed a strong mes- sage. The Temple symbolized God’s presence and the worship of Yahweh. Although the Temple had rarely been utilized properly during Zedekiah’s reign, its destruction, along with the loss of the Temple artifacts and the killing of the priests, symbolized a sad reality of the loss of genuine worship.

Nebuzaradan also burned the king’s house or the palace, a structure that had stood for almost four centuries. This is significant because the “palace” represented both the king and the kingdom. In addition to that, the walls of the city were destroyed (verse 10). As a result, the remaining inhabitants could not defend themselves against their Babylonian conquerors. Many Jews were carried into Babylonian captivity in this third wave of deportations. Instead of experiencing the blessings of God, the majority of the people were taken away into bondage in Babylon, with the exception of the poorest of the population that Nebuchadnezzar would use to work the land

(verses 11-12). See 2 Kings 24, 2 Chronicles 36, and Daniel 1:1-2 for accounts of the first two waves of captives taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

Verses 13-17 tell us what Nebuchadnezzar did with many of the furnishings and utensils of the Temple after its destruction. The very mention of these items highlights the contrast between Solomon's glory days of the Temple and Zedekiah's day when it was destroyed. The large bronze pillars and many of the pieces of furniture were broken down for easier transport to Babylon. This was necessary considering the fact that Jeremiah reported that these contained so much bronze that they could not be weighed (Jeremiah 52:20). The detailed list of items used by the priests in the service of the Temple again reminds the reader of the beauty and magnitude of worship in the Temple in days gone by. These items were all carried away into Babylon, presumably to melt down and sell for the proceeds. See 1 Kings 7:15-16 for specific characteristics of the bronze pillars.

In verse 18, the reader is introduced to Seraiah, the first named individual to be delivered to Nebuchadnezzar. Scholars believe Seraiah to be an ancestor of Ezra (Ezra 7:1). Here he is simply described as the chief priest. Captured with him was Zephaniah, the second priest, the one responsible for maintaining the order of the Temple. These two individuals were likely called by name because of their positions and ability to lead the people in another revolt. With the king captured, his sons murdered, and the two chief priests of the Temple detained, the nation would be in chaos.

Further, the broad capture included a chief military officer and numerous advisers (verse 19). All of these officials were delivered to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, at Riblah, his southern headquarters. There, the king executed all 72 of these leaders (verses 20-21). The final statement of verse 21, that Judah was led away into captivity, was a summary statement meant to detail the events leading to Judah's capture and

demise. The point was clear: God's prophecies were fulfilled, and Judah would now suffer the same fate as Israel.

Explore:

Moses warned the people of what would happen to them and the nation if they chose to rebel against God. As far back as Deuteronomy 28, the warnings were given to the Israelites. This entire section of Scripture is one long, "if...then" statement as the Lord warned Israel of what would happen to them if they failed to love and obey Him. What the Lord required of them was faithful obedience to His commands and statutes. Consider some of the specific consequences of not fulfilling their responsibilities:

You will be cursed in your city and in your country (verse 16).

The Lord will send curses, confusion, and rebuke in all you set your hand to do (verse 20).

The Lord will cause you to be defeated by your enemies (verse 25).

The Lord will bring you and the king whom you have set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known (verse 36).

You will become a byword among the nations where the Lord sends you (verse 37).

You will bear sons and daughters but they shall not be yours for they will be delivered into captivity (verse 41).

The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar (verse 49). Though written hundreds of years before 2 Kings 25, Moses' words were prophetic and were lived out in the events of Zedekiah's reign and the Babylonian exile. The Lord is to be loved and obeyed by His people. Judah had failed to obey Him wholeheartedly and the hand of the Lord was now pressing against them.

Explore:

Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 605 BC. taking some of the treasure and 3,023 captives, including Daniel and his friends (Jeremiah 52:28; Daniel 1:1-2).

Nebuchadnezzar returned eleven years later taking 832 captives back to Babylon (Jeremiah 52:29).

Nebuchadnezzar returned in 586 BC. taking the final 745 captives and burned Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:30).

Explore:

The events of 2 Kings 25 seem random without an understanding of chapter 24. Zedekiah's ten-year reign was characterized by self-interest, brutality, and indecisiveness. In the end, his commitment to self-preservation led him to make an alliance with Egypt and revolt against Babylon. This revolt set in motion the events of 2 Kings 25. Zedekiah ended up dealing with another leader, Nebuchadnezzar, who was even more ruthless and self-serving than he was. God's judgment, however, was not based on Zedekiah's wickedness alone. The nation had been turning away from God for some time. Consider some of the more prominent acts of chapter 24:

Verse 1 - Jehoiakim became a vassal king to the powerful king Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 9 - Jehoiachin did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father had done.

Verse 19 - Zedekiah also did evil in the sight of the Lord, likened to King Jehoiakim.

Verse 20 - the anger of the Lord came upon Judah.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School

teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6). Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ- followers. When they do,

Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 5

How would you explain a donkey and a serpent speaking to humans?

Question 2 of 5

How would you explain holiness?

Question 3 of 5

How do these two attributes of God, holiness and love, work together?

Question 4 of 5

When Peter caught all those fish, why did he say to Jesus, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.”

Question 5 of 5

What is the difference between lifestyle sins and accidental sins?