

Pursuing Holiness: You Can Be Everything God Created You to Be!

We live in a very casual society today, and it's easy to carry this attitude over into our walk with God. Many are not as serious as they should be—allowing things in their lives that they really wouldn't want to be there if they thought Jesus was going to come back tomorrow. But God's Word is clear about what He expects of us.

Hebrews 12:14 (AMPC) says, "Strive to live in peace with everybody and pursue that consecration and holiness without which no one will [ever] see the Lord."

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Does that mean that if you're not living a perfect life, you're not going to heaven? No, of course not. It's what Jesus did on the cross—not our own efforts—that freely gives us God's favor. But if we don't live consecrated and holy lives here on Earth, we won't experience the abundant life Jesus died to give us (John 10:10), and we won't represent Him in a way that makes others hungry for a relationship with Him.

Pursue is the operative word in Hebrews 12:14. To pursue something means you crave and go after it with all of your heart. So, this scripture is saying that if we are not *pursuing* holiness, we will not see the Lord. It has to do with how serious—or committed—we are in our walk with God.

If you have a deep personal, intimate relationship with God, you will want to change for the better. You won't be satisfied continuing to live the way that you were before Jesus, because the Holy Spirit lives in you—in your heart—and His job is to

be your Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners and Standby (John 14:16 AMPC). "He will guide you into all the Truth" (John 16:13 AMPC), and as He does, you'll begin to see things in your life that need to change so you can be closer to God and become all that He created you to be.

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I remember how my life really started to change after I got serious about my relationship with God and began studying the Bible. It's so wonderful to live with peace and joy and to have healthy relationships with my family and friends! It's made me want to continue spending every day trying to become a better person with His help.

God loves you, and He has an amazing plan for your life. The question is do you crave God with all of your heart and strength, or is He on the sidelines of your life while you continue living the way you want to live, regardless of what He wants? That's not the way to be happy and have the best life that God wants you to have.

Now, we all need Jesus because we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The word "sin" means to miss the mark—or God's standard—for us. But it also means to "miss" a reward. To miss the mark means you forfeit reward. It doesn't mean you won't go to heaven, because your behavior isn't what gets you into heaven. But you won't enjoy the journey of your life here on Earth because you won't have God's wisdom and peace. And there will be rewards in heaven that you won't want to miss out on either.

Have you noticed that you can catch the flu from somebody but you can't catch good health from them? Just like a healthy lifestyle is something we have to choose for ourselves, so is holiness. However, you can catch un-holiness by hanging out all the time with wrong people, willingly and repeatedly being exposed to sin. People who willingly live sinful lifestyles all week long but go to church on Sundays are not pursuing holiness.

God has a purpose for us, and that is to be a light in a dark world—to show others the love of God and what it means to live for Him. People can't see Christ in our hearts; they see what we do. That means we must make good choices even when everyone else is making a lousy choice. I'm not talking about putting on a religious attitude that is judgmental and critical of others. I'm talking about knowing who we are in Christ and living the life He showed us to live, over and over, until those who don't know God begin to want what we have.

We must remember that whatever God tells us to do, He always gives us the ability, by His grace and with His help, to do it. What sense would it make for God to tell us to live holy lives if He didn't give us a seed of holiness on the inside of us? So, when I teach on holiness, my hope is that it provokes you to get closer to God and not settle for anything less than His best for you. And He wants you to show others the love of Christ as much as you possibly can, wherever it's needed.

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