

SESSION 2

ACTIVE FAITH



What are some things the average person considers holy or sacred?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLactive

THE POINT

Live a life that is set apart for God.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

You're in a crowded room and suddenly everyone turns to look at you. Under the weight of those stares, your heart starts racing. Maybe a bead of sweat breaks out on your brow, and you take a half step back, looking for a way to hide within the wallpaper.

If you've ever felt that way, you're not alone. Most Americans—61 percent—would rather blend into the crowd than stand out.¹ This tendency is so strong that fashion designers and advertising moguls bank millions on our desire to look and be like everybody else.

For followers of Jesus, the problem with our habit of blending in is that the Bible calls us to be set apart. In fact, the Scriptures command us to think and behave differently than the world around us. This has nothing to do with fashion or branding; it has everything to do with lifestyle and character. We are called to be holy—to be set apart—because Jesus is holy.

As we'll see in this session, the Book of 1 Peter helps us discover the joy of living a life that is set apart for God.

WHAT DOES **THE BIBLE** SAY?

1 Peter 1:14-19, 22-25 (HCSB)

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance.

15 But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct;

16 for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy.

17 And if you address as Father the One who judges impartially based on each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your temporary residence.

18 For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from the fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold,

19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.

22 By obedience to the truth, having purified yourselves for sincere love of the brothers, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

23 since you have been born again—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living and enduring word of God.

24 For “All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls,

25 but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached as the gospel to you.

Key Words

Holy (v. 15)—Separated or set apart for God. By nature, God is distinct, different, set apart, holy. Similarly, believers are to live distinctly, too.

Fear (v. 17)—Not terror but reverent awe or proper respect toward God in light of the responsibility to live holy and to live consciously of God's judgment.

Word of the Lord (v. 25)—The gospel or good news that God uses to bring people new life that His people are to proclaim.



What is your reaction to the commands in verses 15-16?

QUESTION #2

1 Peter 1:14-16

It seems a little odd to me that in a letter written to a group of persecuted Christians, Peter threw in a reminder to be holy. Pain and suffering can have a way of leading us to God, but they also can steer us away from God. It all depends on our individual response. Some people will try to do what is right, no matter what it costs. Others will do whatever is easiest to handle a difficult situation.

We need the reminder to live holy lives. There have been many times where I handled a situation in a way that reflects my selfishness rather than Christ's holiness. My background is that of a do-it-yourselfer, an overachiever, and a naturalist. So when faced with a huge problem, I want to revert back to my old ways:

1. I don't see the spiritual side of things; I just see the problem. (That's the naturalist in me.)
2. I obsess over the right way to handle the issue. (That's the overachiever in me.)
3. I try to fix whatever I can on my own without getting help, since getting help will take too long and involve possibly messy relationships. (That's the do-it-yourselfer in me.)

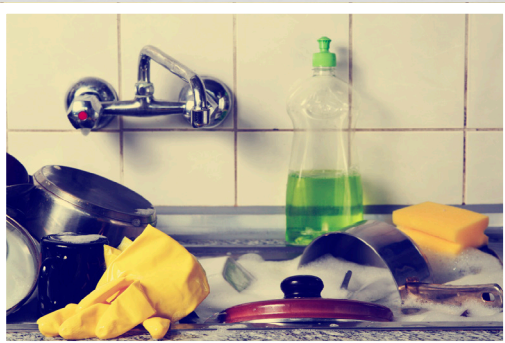
To live by the truth is to live a life set apart for God—a holy life. Peter reminded us not to slip back into our former lifestyles and habits, but to continue to pursue what is good and true. He reminded us to pursue Jesus even through times of great trial.

In verse 14, Peter encouraged us to live as obedient children. In my experience, children are labeled as "obedient" when they trust their parents even though their instinct is to rebel.

On the other hand, the rebellious children I've seen over the years are the ones who scream and throw fits to get their way. Sadly, Christians can be exactly like those rebellious children when we handle situations with out-of-control feelings and self-centered goals. Instead, we are called to face problems with an intention of striving toward holiness—because the One we profess as Lord of our lives is holy.

WHAT IS HOLINESS?

Which of these images best illustrates your understanding of holiness? Explain.



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1 Peter 1:17-19

I once spoke at a youth conference where we had a question-and-answer session each night. One student asked about my thoughts on the topic of abortion. I answered, “I think our culture has lost its awe and wonder at the gift of life.” This lack of awe at the creation and work of God is reflected in a lack of awe for the Creator Himself.

I grew up in the coastal state of Oregon, and our family took many trips to the beach. Due to our love of wading, exploring, body surfing, and swimming, my parents taught us one important lesson: a healthy fear of the ocean. There were riptides that could drag us out to sea, rogue waves that could knock us down, and even not-so-friendly sea creatures such as stinging jellyfish that could harm us. We were to enjoy the ocean, but we were to always keep an eye out. We were to never lose our reverence for the ocean’s power.

Though the ocean doesn’t have near the power of the Creator, it seems much harder to give God the respect He’s due. Granted, it’s not the same kind of fear of the ocean—a worry that God will knock us down and drag us out (or sting us). However, God is the One who created our universe and every aspect of it. A right understanding of His awesome power should lead us to evaluate our attitude toward Him and our relationship with Him.

God is truly worthy of our reverence. Consider just a few reasons why:

- ▶ God is the all-powerful Creator whose perfect love saved us from ourselves, and did so with finality.
- ▶ God’s power can overcome our habits and former ways.
- ▶ God can overcome whatever we think we are enslaved to do.
- ▶ God can make things new, even in a world full of evil.

These (and other) realities cause me to stand in awe before Him.

When do people take the fear of God too seriously or not seriously enough?

QUESTION #3

1 Peter 1:22-25

As Christians, we often fail to take seriously the set-apartness of our love for one another. We'll bring food to the sick or help build a playground for the kids. But the moment we disagree—whether it's over theology or the color of the new church carpet—we make the opposition a target for hostility.

Many times these negative actions and attitudes stem from selfishness rather than a focus on Christ. Nearsighted Christians sometimes treat people as objects to be used. They try to rally others around their way of thinking or do “good works” with the goal of being affirmed.

In contrast, notice Peter's emphasis on a pure heart:

- ▶ A pure heart doesn't love for the purpose of getting something in return.
- ▶ A pure heart doesn't love only those who think in the same way.
- ▶ A pure heart doesn't serve itself before all others.

The Word of God calls us to a higher standard: a genuine, sincere love for one another. This standard of love and obedience to Christ is what others will notice. Our Christ-centered, holy love will set us apart from the world around us. The trials and pains of this life will come and go—eventually coming to an end once and for all. But our love for each other will remain when it's grounded in Christ. That's why we're called to strive for a loving, safe place within the church.

What are the implications of God tying our obedience to Him to our love for others?

QUESTION #4

How can we support each other in living holy lives?

QUESTION #5

PURE

LIVE IT OUT

How can our lives point to a powerful, holy God?

- ▶ **Strive for obedience.** As you read God's Word this week, look for principles and commands you can intentionally obey.
- ▶ **Check your motives.** Evaluate what motivates you to serve God and others. Do you serve to obey God and glorify Him, or do you serve to be affirmed and appreciated? Repent of any skewed motives and move forward.
- ▶ **Remember God's Word.** Memorize 1 Peter 1:22 this week. Recite that verse at the beginning of each day as a reminder to love others with a pure heart.



Holy living may not lessen the impulse to blend in or to be part of the crowd. But when all eyes do turn your way, they'll see Jesus. So go ahead—be set apart for His sake.

The Mouth Guard



We were enjoying lunch when my son told me about a volunteer at church. "They told him his services were no longer needed," he said. "Can you believe that? He's been doing that job for 10 years. How do you fire a volunteer?" I was outraged. "And he's so good! Who will replace him?" "That's what's wrong with our church. People just go off and say and do things without knowing what they're doing," I said, taking a sip of my chocolate shake. The more I thought about it, the angrier I got. I began to think of other slights I had heard about and things that needed to be straightened out.



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