

## WEEK OF OCTOBER 8



DAY  
1

## HOLINESS, SANCTIFICATION, & TRANSFORMATION

Let's talk about sanctification for a moment. Sanctification refers to progress in personal holiness, godliness, resistance to temptation, and increasing Christlikeness.

There are a couple of aspects of sanctification that are true of every believer: 1) we are consecrated to God and by God, and 2) we progress in holy living. You could use the word *transformation* instead of sanctification, and around Living Word we often do, because transformation encompasses both of these realities for the believer.

Holiness is a divine work requiring human cooperation. The Holy Spirit leads God's people into holiness and transforms them to reflect more and more of God's character. The Spirit of holiness produces conviction, desire, and reverent fear, thereby working holiness into people who are "in Christ."

The Apostle Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to obedience with the words, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling," but he adds, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12-13).

Holiness comes about in union with Christ and is imparted (given) to the believer through the Spirit of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30). The Spirit produces abundant fruit in the believer in terms of character traits (Romans 7:4; Galatians 5:22) and brings out key virtues (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Believers must, therefore, nourish this spiritual work and give the Spirit more to work with! For that reason, Christians are commanded to keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). This means that holiness is not about being perfect, or being sinless, but holiness happens through the cooperative effect of the Father's grace and the human will, the Spirit's leading and our following, and Christ's commanding and our obeying.

To quote a spiritual leader from 500 years ago, "the Spirit sets the wheels in motion for a new humanity to produce a new obedience." It might be helpful to add that not only does God set everything in motion, but he supplies all of his people with a new power to obey when they receive a new heart through faith in Jesus.

DAY  
2

## GODLINESS

Godliness is a lifestyle where one's character, actions, and attitudes are consistent with the character of God. God desires for us to be like him and to reflect his character to the world he loves so much. This is a growth process we should consistently be pursuing. And God empowers every believer to become like him. He never leaves us to do this in our own effort.

Pastor Timothy Keller once said, "One of the problems of discipleship and with discipling people is you can't hide who you are. You can't hide behind lots of books and materials. You've got to be a godly person." He called them discipleship problems, but he was being tongue-in-cheek. He meant *realities*. If you want to follow Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28:18-20 you will need to exhibit godliness. You will need to be a patient, wise, and loving person.

The classic text is 1 Timothy 4:7 (ESV) where he says in the middle of the verse: "Rather train yourself for godliness." He goes on to say in verses 8-9: "for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life

and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.”

The Apostle Paul is giving a command for godliness as a discipline in the life of a follower of Jesus. If we back up one chapter in 1 Timothy, we read what Paul describes at the end of chapter 3 as the mystery of godliness:

*I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness...*

Jesus is the very center. And with our eyes on Jesus, we are called to discipline ourselves to become like him. As stated in yesterday’s lesson, just like holiness, godliness happens through the cooperative effect of the Father’s grace and our human will.

## DAY 3

# TRANSFORMATION INTO A NEW CREATURE

Begin by reading Ephesians 4:20-24.

Each year, in late summer, I have an up-close view of radical transformation. My children collect monarch caterpillars from milkweed plants and put them into a mesh butterfly container to watch them grow. A monarch builds a beautiful, bright green cocoon with gold metallic spots around itself and begins its change.

When a caterpillar is turning into a butterfly, it literally turns to goo and reforms itself into an entirely new creature. It’s a little gross to describe, but incredible to watch. When the newly formed butterfly emerges from the cocoon, it’s a brand-new creature. That old caterpillar doesn’t exist anymore. It was broken down to make something much more beautiful.

This transformation is a beautiful picture of what Jesus does for us. When we are taught Christ, we are taught about just such a transformation. Old things become new. The New Testament is filled with descriptions of what we are like after this metamorphosis. We have a new mind, will, heart, inheritance, relationship, power, knowledge, love, wisdom, understanding, citizenship, righteousness, etc. The list goes on and on! Everything about us is made new in Jesus.

And so, we conduct ourselves differently. We have to figure out the right things to put on. Paul described all of the things we put off, but now we have to figure out what to put on. I imagine that when those monarchs emerge from their places of transformation, they’re feeling a bit awkward in their new duds. That is the way we often feel when we’re in our own process of transformation. Things don’t quite fit the way they once did. We need to make some adjustments.

The process of transformation is slow. Some things change instantly when we begin to follow Christ, but many things take time. Growing into spiritual maturity is our own process of breaking down to emerge as a new creature. Be encouraged that even when it feels like your transformation is taking far too long, God is still at work, transforming you into a butterfly.

## DAY 4

# OUR PART, GOD’S PART

Begin by reading 2 Peter 1:3-9 in *The Message*:

*Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God. The best invitation we ever received! We were also given absolutely terrific promises to pass on to you—your tickets to participation in the life of God after you turned your back on a world corrupted by lust.*

*So don’t lose a minute in building on what you’ve been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus. Without these qualities you can’t see what’s right before you, oblivious that your old sinful life has been wiped off the books.*

It’s easy to feel stuck in our Christian life. We try our best, we read scripture, pray, and try to grow in our faith, but sometimes it is hard to truly comprehend if we are really changing. This passage contains a beautiful promise: if we do our part in our transformation, we will mature into Christlikeness. Our part is simple. We do our best by developing good character, understanding, becoming disciplined, practicing patience, going through the world with wonder and friendliness, and loving well. When we do our part, God does his. It’s a mysterious process, but it is the way that we become like Jesus.

# PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

*You can always pick any idea from the sermon or the daily readings and biblical passages and talk about those ideas. A good format is to have each LifeGroup member share one idea that was most powerful for them.*

**Day One:** Where do you see the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?

**Day Two:** How do you train yourself for godliness? What does that mean to you? What practices do you have in place to help you in this area?

**Day Three:** How do you need to join with God in this process of transformation? What is the Holy Spirit telling you to put off? What new beliefs, attitudes, or practices do you need to put on?

**Day Four:** Do you feel stuck in your Christian life? When it comes to what the passage describes we need to do (developing good character, understanding, becoming disciplined, practicing patience, going through the world with wonder and friendliness, and loving well), which area do you need to focus on?