

# Explore the Bible Series for March 11: Pursue godliness with whole-heartedness

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### Pursue godliness with whole- heartedness

- 1 Peter 1:13-25

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“If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right.” My father’s mantra still rings in my ears. Though I may have grown tired of hearing it as a child, I can’t help but admit his words were right on target, and they apply as well to our faith as they do to our daily lives. If Christianity is worth committing our lives to, isn’t it worth committing our heart and soul as well?

#### **Half-hearted Christians**

What would happen if a baseball team gathered half-heartedly on the field and played as if they didn’t care? What if they shrugged every time the ball whizzed past their heads instead of racing to catch it? What if they swung

the bat lazily, hitting the ball to second base instead of the outfield? That team wouldn't be worth watching, and they would soon lose their following.



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Yet isn't that what we do in the faith? After the newness of salvation wears off, we become lazy. We forget God's desire for us to focus on the journey and the testimony of our faith in him. We begin to compartmentalize our lives, living one way at home and at work, and another way at church. We slip into our Christianity as we dress on Sunday morning, and then take it off again, hanging it carefully on a hanger until it's needed again next week.

### **We take our faith for granted**

Peter wants to remind us our faith is the most valuable thing we possess. Salvation is a priceless gift, costing far more than silver or gold. It cost the blood of God's own Son, Jesus (vv. 18-19). Yet we live as if the gift was our right instead of the precious gift it is. We brush off sin and disobedience as if they are irrelevant to our faith, as if God's expectations are too high.

The truth is, sin is a very big issue. Sin expelled Adam from the Garden of Eden. Sin destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Sin turned the Israelites over to their enemies. Sin spilt the blood of Jesus on the cross. And sin keeps Christians today from enjoying the victory of a vibrant Christian walk.

## **We are called to be holy**

In Genesis 4:7, God tells Cain: “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”

Notice, God doesn't say we won't be accepted if we don't do what is right. As we discussed last week, his acceptance is a gift that doesn't depend on us. What God does tell us is sin will master us if we don't master sin.

We are called to be holy, not because we are better than others, not to prove we can achieve the impossible, but as a protection against sin. Only by living in holiness can we overcome the temptations of sin.

## **Holiness is an attitude**

Desiring to be holy is not the problem for most Christians. The problem is achieving it. We know God would never ask to do the impossible; therefore, holiness is possible. Why, then, do we have so much trouble with it? We must ask ourselves if we really know what holiness is. The answer may lie in what it is not.

Holiness is not knowledge. So, reading the Bible will not make us holy. Neither will Scripture memory or listening to sermons or reading good books. The reason is clear: Knowing what to do and doing it are two different things. It doesn't matter how long we've been a Christian or how much we know about God or the Bible. Knowledge isn't the key to holiness.

Peter actually gives us the key in 1 Peter 1:13. He tells us, “Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

## **Prepare your minds**

When we read we must be holy as Jesus is holy, we too often begin mimicking Jesus' words and actions. We forget God cares about our attitudes more than our actions. By focusing on our outward appearances, we make the same mistake the Pharisees made.

If we would spend our energies on changing our thinking, our actions would change without effort. Instead of trying to be holy, we need to think holy. Only by allowing God to overhaul our thinking process will we ever become like him.

But what does it mean to think holy? Peter tells us that as well. In verse 14, he tells us to be "as obedient children." We must decide we will obey God at all costs and that we will submit to his authority. Rather than acting like rebellious teenagers, we should act like obedient children. Rather than waving off our sins as if they don't really matter, we should take to heart Jesus' teachings.

The first commandment is to love God, but Jesus reminds us, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). The second commandment is to love others as we love ourselves, and Jesus makes it clear he means everyone. "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

## **Holiness is whole-heartedness**

Like the half-hearted baseball team, we won't achieve any fellowship unless we take the game seriously. As Christians, we have the skills necessary to play if we will only adjust our attitudes.

Maybe all we need is the reminder, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing

right.” We can agree Christianity is worth doing. We need to realize it’s worth doing right. And that’s where holiness comes in.

“Doing it right” means we become whole-hearted Christians. It means we stop trying to do Christianity and begin simply to be Christian. To be Christian, we’ve got to put our money where our mouth is and overcome sin. We’ve got to take God seriously when he tells us the only way to overcome sin is through holiness. We’ve got to listen to Peter and get our minds in the game. Only then will we be playing to win.

### **Discussion questions**

- What are some areas we as modern Christians haven’t really submitted to God? How do we allow the world’s teachings to taint God’s teachings?
- In the depths of your heart, when it comes to sin, are you more like the rebellious teenager or the obedient child?
- Can you think of a time when you have seen holiness overcome sin?