

# “Be Holy, For I Am Holy”

Lesson 8: Overcoming Obstacles To Holiness



**Discovering God's Word**  
Bible Study Series

Be Holy, For I Am Holy”

## Lesson 8: Overcoming Obstacles To Holiness

Learn about some common obstacles Satan uses to prevent people from being holy and how you can overcome them all

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### Discovering God’s Word Bible Study Series

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God’s word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God’s word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God’s instructions.

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**“Be Holy, For I Am Holy”**

# **Lesson 8:**

# **Overcoming**

# **Obstacles To**

# **Holiness**

“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:13-16).

The Christian’s life is expected to be different from the ways of the world – and from the ways in which he/she lived prior to becoming a Christian. The life of a Christian is a holy life that is patterned after God’s holiness!

To be holy is to be separate or set apart. In the spiritual sense, it refers to our responsibility to be separate from the ways of the world (the ways that are common, profane, and sinful) in order to be entirely devoted to God! The standard that must be used to determine our holiness is God (who is perfectly holy), and the message that He has revealed to mankind. Furthermore, it is only by the grace of God that we can be made holy after we have sinned – and that grace which has been shown toward us ought to provoke us to giving our lives entirely to the service of the Lord! Our continued responsibility, then, is to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord (2

Corinthians 7:1) – in thought, in word, and in conduct. We can do this by testing all things about our lives by the standard of God’s word, clinging to the good, and abstaining from the evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

But, since we are in the world, we experience obstacles in our pursuit of holiness. We have an enemy who is trying to destroy us in Satan. 1 Peter 5:8-9 says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” Ephesians 6:11 identifies Satan as having schemes (or, strategies) for defeating us, while Ephesians 6:16 pictures Satan as hurling fiery darts at us. Furthermore, 2 Timothy 2:26 indicates that the devil attempts to trap us and keep us enslaved to do his will.

Specifically, temptation and deception is the way Satan attempts to destroy us. He attempts to lure us away from being in fellowship with our holy God by using things that appeal to our fleshly desires. Notice James 1:14-15: “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” This is the same thing that he did with Adam and Eve (in Genesis 3:1-6). And, this is the same thing that he did with Jesus, albeit unsuccessfully (in Matthew 4:1-11).

There are many things and many people Satan uses to try to lure us away from God. He may appeal to our desires for earthly wealth, earthly possessions, or earthly pleasures. He may appeal to our earthly desires for ease and comfort of living. He may appeal to our earthly desires to be popular among our friends and family members (Note that Satan can tempt us through other people, just as he tempted Jesus through Peter in Matthew 16:21-23). But, in all things, we are taught that we must resist the devil and his lies! 1 Peter 5:9 instructs us to resist the devil and be steadfast in our faiths. James 4:7 instructs us, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

The purpose of this final lesson in our series on holiness is to consider some specific obstacles that are commonly used by Satan to lure us away from God – and to consider how we can overcome them all!

## ***Obstacles To Holiness***

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Throughout this series, we have been considering what holiness means, the holiness of God, and how we can be holy in God's sight. But, as we focus on living lives of holiness, we also need to recognize the real presence of things that try to disrupt our pursuit of perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Fortunately, there are things mentioned in the Bible that help us to identify these common obstacles. 2 Corinthians 2:11 says that we "are not ignorant of [Satan's] devices." As we study and make application of God's word, we can identify these obstacles and overcome them. So, let's begin by identifying some obstacles to holiness.

### **Fleshly desires**

1 Peter 2:11 begs those who are Christians to view themselves as "sojourners and pilgrims" (temporary residents) in this world so that they will "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." Satan wants to distract us from pursuing holiness by our fleshly lusts (desires). Therefore, let's consider some passages that will help us understand this obstacle.

(1) Romans 8:5-8. Romans 8:5-8 says, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Earlier (in chapter 7), Paul identified the inward conflict between the ways of the flesh and the ways of the Spirit. He demonstrated that he often found himself violating the commandments of God and fulfilling the desires of his flesh. Under the Law

of Moses, there was no remedy for this problem. Such an individual would be confined under sin. However, through Christ, those who choose to conduct their lives according to the instructions of God rather than the desires of their own flesh are able to escape the bondage of sin (8:1)!

Now, having the opportunity to be forgiven of our past sin, it is our responsibilities to set our minds on the things of God rather than the things of the flesh. For, 1 John 2:15-17 identifies that everything in the world (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life) is not of the Father, but is of the world (and the whole world lies under the sway/influence of Satan, 1 John 5:19). However, if we are focused on the physical things of the flesh, we will be conducting our lives according to those things – and we will not be able to please God (compare with Galatians 5:19-21)! But, if we are focused on the spiritual things of God, we will be conducting our lives according to those things (compare with Galatians 5:22-23).

(2) Matthew 19:16-22. Here is one Biblical example of this principle. In this passage, Jesus met an individual who desired to have eternal life. The man was even doing many things that were pleasing to God. However, when Jesus instructed this rich, young man to "go, sell what you have and give to the poor," the man went away sorrowful because he had a great amount of earthly possessions (verses 21-22).

What was the problem? Although he desired the spiritual reward of eternal life to some extent, his desire for earthly things (things of the flesh) was greater! He was simply unwilling to devote his entire life to the service of God and make all of the sacrifices God wanted Him to make! Instead, he chose to pursue his own fleshly desires.

In the same way, there are many people today who have the desire to have eternal salvation in Heaven. Many of them even come to Jesus in order to find it. However, they are unwilling to devote their entire lives to His service. There is some fleshly desire they (ultimately) choose to pursue rather than seeking holiness through Jesus Christ.

(3) Galatians 2:20. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now

live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

This type of commitment to Christ will enable us to overcome all fleshly desires that will try to pull us away from God! Paul no longer viewed his life as being his own. Instead, his life had been offered as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1-2). As a result, he would not be focused on pursuing his own earthly desires any longer (Galatians 5:24).

Instead of living his life to fulfill his own fleshly desires, Paul had dedicated himself to living entirely in the service of the Lord. So, he willingly committed his life to the proclamation of the gospel – even to the point of being persecuted frequently (see 2 Corinthians 11:22-33). Eventually, according to historical record, Paul was even beheaded for his commitment to serve the Lord! This is the type of commitment God requires of everyone who desires to follow after Him – that they seek Him above their own fleshly desires.

## **False standards**

There are many times we can become distracted by Satan from our pursuit of holiness by thinking that a false standard is a true standard for determining our holiness. There are many different standards Satan would like for us to appeal to concerning holiness that do not actually lead us to true holiness. Yet, they make us feel good about ourselves and make us believe that we are living according to the ways God would have us to live. Therefore, let’s consider some passages that will help us understand this obstacle.

(1) 1 Peter 1:15-16. 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, “but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”

As we discussed in lesson 2 of this series, God is our standard of holiness. We saw that God is entirely holy and that we must be holy in order to be in fellowship with Him (1 John 1:5-7). Therefore, if we walk in the ways of sin and darkness, we fail to be in fellowship with this holy God (also see Isaiah 59:1-2).

This standard for holiness applies to every area of our conduct (according to verse 15). So, as

we seek to conduct our lives in a way that is approved of God, we must live by His standard. We read about this standard for holiness in the message He has revealed through His Holy Spirit (in the gospel of Jesus Christ). Therefore, all of the words that are contained within the Divine revelation forms this standard by which we will all be judged (John 12:48; Revelation 20:11-15).

(2) Jeremiah 10:23. Jeremiah 10:23 says, “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”

Thankfully, God *has* given us a standard to live by! For, this passage teaches us that it is outside of man’s ability to direct our own steps and live in a way that pleases God! God’s ways are much higher than our ways, and His thoughts are much higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). So, without this God-given revelation that tells us how to live in a way that is acceptable to Him, we would not be able to know what is right or live in a way that is pleasing to God!

(3) Proverbs 14:12. Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

Mankind often attempts to direct his own ways. As he does this, he attempts to do the things that *seem* right in his own eyes. So, he may act from his own intuition, his past experience, his learning, etc. However, God reveals that conducting our lives in this way leads to death! Our own thoughts, ideas, and feelings are not sufficient in guiding our lives in a way that pleases God! Instead, God requires that we fully submit ourselves to His laws! This is the only way that will result in being pleasing to God!

(4) Matthew 15:3-9. One of the false standards that mankind often appeals to is his own tradition and teaching. This was true about the Pharisees (as you consider this passage). They appeared to be serving and worshiping God – and even seemed to believe that they were doing so themselves.

However, serving God according to man’s own traditions and teachings fails to please God! This only leads to a form of religion, an outward appearance of religion, and a false confidence in

salvation. But, this does not actually help us grow closer to God and serve Him!

(5) Acts 23:1. Acts 23:1 says, “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’”

Another false standard mankind commonly appeals to is his own conscience. It is commonly believed that an individual pleases God as long as he/she does not violate his/her own conscience. Paul even said that he had conducted his life in “all good conscience before God.” However, simply living according to the direction of one’s own conscience is not an acceptable standard for our holiness. This is even seen by Paul. Other passages indicate how he had persecuted and killed Christians – and did so in good conscience (i.e. Acts 26:9-11). While our consciences can be very helpful in serving the Lord, they only will do so if we train them according to God’s standard! Our consciences, of themselves, are not proper standards for living in a way that pleases God.

## **Culture**

All who are pursuing holiness live in this world. And, living in this world is full of challenges to holiness. Satan wants to distract us from pursuing holiness by things related to how those who are living around us believe and live. Therefore, let’s consider some passages that will help us understand this obstacle.

(1) John 15:18-21. In John 15:18-21, Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.”

The ways of the world are different from God’s ways. If they were the same, the world would not hate those who would speak God’s message to

them or those who would live their lives according to God’s standard. However, the world has repeatedly demonstrated that its ways are different from God’s! Being “in” the world, therefore, will present numerous obstacles to those who desire to follow God – as there will be pressure placed on the Christian to become like the sinful culture around him/her (i.e. to become assimilated into the culture).

Therefore, God’s people (who are pursuing holiness) must view themselves as being “in” the world, but not as being “of” the world. That is, Christians must view themselves as being temporary residents of this world who are longing for an eternal home in Heaven! This way of thinking leads to abstaining from the fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11-12). So, Christians are not to be cut from the same mold the world is cut from. Romans 12:2 instructs that we do not conform to the world. Instead, we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds in order to prove what is that “good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

(2) Deuteronomy 7:1-8. As God prepared to bring His holy people (the nation of Israel) into the promised land (the land of Canaan), He gave them instructions concerning the people and culture of that land (in Deuteronomy 7:1-8). God knew that if they did not destroy the sinful elements of the culture in that land, they would be ensnared by those things and live in the same sinful ways. For instance, God knew that if they allowed the altars, pillars, and carved images from that culture’s idolatrous worship to remain in the land, the Israelites would eventually become ensnared by those things and begin to worship those false gods.

So, God instructed that they destroy those sinful elements of the culture in the land. They were not to make marriages with the peoples of the land, they were to destroy all the elements of their idol worship, etc. This would all help them to remain God’s holy people (separated from the profane and sinful ways of the world). However, as you read the books of Joshua and Judges, you discover that the Israelites were (in large part) not obedient to these warnings and instructions. As a result, the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies (read Judges 1-2).

Clearly, God recognizes the obstacles living in a world full of wickedness poses to an individual's pursuit of holiness. God's holy people must do as much as is within their power to get away from the evil and unholy activities of a culture in order to keep from being negatively influenced by it.

(3) 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1. As we have considered from this passage in previous lessons, God's people must live different from their sinful culture. Christians must not participate in the same sinful things ("Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?," verse 14). Just as Christ has no part with the evil one, God's people should have no participation in the same sinful things as unbelievers!

Therefore, God's people are instructed to come out and be separate from the world, pressing on toward perfect holiness. Quite simply, if we desire the blessings that come from being children of the Almighty God, we must live according to His instructions. We must be separate from the sinful cultures around us – just as God wanted the Israelites to remain holy when they entered the promised land! We must not view ourselves as permanent residents on this earth who want to experience all that this world has to offer. Instead, we must view ourselves as sojourners and pilgrims who are passing through this world on a quest for a better (a Heavenly) homeland (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13-16).

## Peers

One of the elements that make living holy lives in a world full of wickedness so difficult is that we live around many people who are being used by Satan to distract us from our pursuits of holiness. For instance, Matthew 16:21-23 even demonstrates how that the apostle Peter was used on one occasion to tempt Jesus (albeit unsuccessfully). Therefore, let's consider some passages that will help us understand this obstacle.

(1) 1 Corinthians 15:33. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'"

The people we put ourselves around can have negative influences on us! In its context, this passage is talking of those who were spreading lies about the resurrection. And, they were apparently being successful in convincing others *not* to believe in the resurrection! So, the Corinthians were not to deceive themselves so as to believe that the people they put themselves around would have no influence on them!

In fact, the Scriptures consistently teach us that the people we put ourselves around *can* influence us – either for the good or for the bad. This passage demonstrates that the people we put ourselves around (i.e. our family members, friends, co-workers, etc.) can lead to the ruin of our good morals/good habits. 1 Corinthians 5:6 (as well as the entirety of chapter 5) demonstrates that it does not even take much association with evil influences to negatively affect our good morals! The passages says that a "little leaven leavens the whole lump." In contrast, passages like Matthew 5:13-16 and 1 Peter 3:1-2 demonstrate that it is also possible to be influenced by godly individuals for the good!

(2) 1 Kings 11:1-8. This passage records the downfall of an extremely wise man – because of the influence of his peers. We have already seen that God did not want His holy people to make marriages with those of other nations, because He knew that doing so would result in the Israelites turning away from Him. Now, this is demonstrated to be true by Solomon in this passage. Even though he was an extremely wise man (who was known for his great wisdom and wrote much of the book of Proverbs, which contains many pieces of great wisdom), the foreign women he allowed to be in his life successfully influenced him to turn away from God.

Solomon's good morals, thus, were corrupted by these evil influences. This is a perfect demonstration of the truth we have just discussed from 1 Corinthians 15:33. Solomon had written (in the book of Proverbs) about being aware of and staying away from immoral and evil women. Yet, he allowed himself to be negatively influenced by them.

(3) Proverbs 1:10-19. Proverbs 1:10-19 says, "My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. If they say, 'Come with us, Let us lie in wait to shed blood; Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without

cause; Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, And whole, like those who go down to the Pit; We shall find all kinds of precious possessions, We shall fill our houses with spoil; Cast in your lot among us, Let us all have one purse' — My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path; For their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed blood. Surely, in vain the net is spread In the sight of any bird; But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners.”

This text describes the often played-out scene in which evil people attempt to influence others to participate in their wickedness with them. The text records how that these individuals often make false and empty promises (i.e. promises that there will not be any consequences for their actions, promises that they will not get caught, promises for great gain or pleasure as a result of their evil deeds, etc.). However, the text warns that participating along with these evil individuals will result in serious consequences.

So, this passage simply exhorts us to refuse to participate in the ways of sinners – no matter who they are! God exhorted His people not to follow a crowd to do what is evil (Exodus 23:2). Even if you will be alienated from those who you love and spend time with, God wants you to refuse to participate in evil with them! This applies to all of your peers – whether it be your family members, your friends, your co-workers, your neighbors, your classmates, etc.

## **Apathy**

Satan wants God's people to lose their passion (zeal) for serving the Lord and pursuing holiness. He is even OK with people claiming to follow Jesus Christ, as long as they only have a casual interest in doing so. You see Satan wants to distract us from pursuing holiness by becoming apathetic (not overly concerned or interested in pursuing holiness). He wants people to think that they do not need to be too “radical” in pursuing holiness. He wants us to think that a “little” sin is permissible. Therefore, let's consider some passages that will help us understand this obstacle.

(1) Titus 2:11-14. Titus 2:11-14 says, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

God's grace has made salvation available to all mankind. Without the grace of God, none of us could be saved from our sins. Therefore, as we discussed in lesson 3 of this series, it is only by the grace of God that we can be made holy in the sight of God after we have sinned.

God's grace, therefore, ought to provoke us to be zealous for every good work. The grace of God will lead those who are honest and sincere away from ungodliness and worldly lusts – and toward living soberly, righteously, and godly. In fact, everyone who is a Christian must realize that Christ did not give His life on the cross so that His people would be apathetic (i.e. not very interested or passionate) in their service to Him! Instead, the Christian must realize that Jesus Christ sacrificed His life so that he/she would give his/her life entirely to the Lord's service! The word “zealous” has to do with the picture of a burning fire or passion. Therefore, God expects each Christian to burn with passion in His service! This includes having a burning passion for pursuing holiness in the fear of God.

(2) Matthew 12:30. Matthew 12:30 says, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”

Jesus makes it clear that He demands our complete allegiance. Just as He also demonstrates in Matthew 6:24. He taught, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

So, Jesus' teachings challenge those who desire to be apathetic! Jesus tells those who only desire to follow Him some of the time or only partially pursue holiness that they are actually His enemies. They are not on His side! In order to correct



this, we must determine to be entirely “with” Christ (in all things, at all times)!

(3) Revelation 3:15-16. Revelation 3:15-16 says, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”

There were so-called “Christians” in the first century who were apathetic in their service to the Lord. This was the church in Laodicea. They appear to have been going through the motions of doing some good things for Christ. But, they really were not following Christ in a zealous kind of way.

As a result of their attempt to serve the Lord in this way, Jesus rebuked them for their lukewarmness! Their service to Christ was as useful as a lukewarm beverage to someone who needs a refreshing drink! In fact, I believe that this passage demonstrates Jesus would rather that we be all the way against Him than for us to be lukewarm followers of His. Therefore, Jesus said that He would vomit them out of His mouth – and He will do the same to those who are only partially committed to following Him today (if we will not repent)!

## ***How To Overcome All Obstacles To Holiness***

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We face many real obstacles to living lives of holiness. I am sure that the ones we have discussed are only a few. However, consider the promise that our holy God (who cannot lie, Titus 1:2) made in 1 Corinthians 10:13. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” God has promised that you can overcome all temptations and obstacles to being holy! He simply will not allow Satan to tempt you so as to put an insurmountable obstacle in front of you. No matter what the obstacle is, God has promised that there is a path to holiness. Therefore, before we conclude this series of lessons, I ask that you

consider a few points that will help you be holy through any temptation.

### **Recognize the true value of your soul**

Jesus teaches that your soul is more valuable than anything in this world. In Matthew 16:26, He said, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Also consider what Jesus said in the following passages.

In Matthew 5:29-30, Jesus said that it would be better to physically mutilate your body than it would be to have your soul cast into Hell: “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”

In Matthew 10:28, Jesus taught that it would be better to be killed physically than for your soul to be cast into Hell: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

So, no matter how Satan is trying to lure you away from serving God, you must know that nothing and no one is worth losing your soul for! Therefore, no matter how much living for sin might appeal to your physical desires, no matter how much you would like to be accepted by the world and your peers, no matter how pleasurable your culture makes sin appear, etc. – you must determine that none of these physical things are worth the price of forfeiting eternal salvation in Heaven and spending eternity in Hell’s torment!

### **Count the cost of discipleship**

You must understand that there is great cost associated with living a holy life in service of the Lord. Jesus identified this cost in Luke 14:25-27, 33 (which we’ll discuss in just a moment). For now, realize that the cost of discipleship is complete dedication to serving God, that He must come absolutely first in your life.

However, before you become a child of God, you need to seriously consider whether you are *willing* to give what God requires of you! Luke 14:28-32 talks about how folks realize the need to count the cost in other areas of life (i.e. like a man who intends to build a tower or a king who contemplates going to war against another king). So, if this principle is recognized in other areas, it certainly must be applied to our lives as Christians – so that we do not start out to live for God, only to refuse to give our lives entirely to His service.

So, you need to seriously consider whether or not you are willing to devote your entire life to God's service. But, you need to make this decision with the full understanding that (as has been discussed in other lessons in this series) you will reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7-8). If you decide not to give your life fully to God, you will spend eternity in Hell fire. However, if you decide to give your life entirely to God, you will spend eternity in Heaven!

### **Seek God absolutely first**

There are many passages that describe the type of commitment God requires of those who will follow after Him. But, remember that we have already seen God does not accept anything less than a full commitment to serving Him (go back and review Matthew 6:24 and Matthew 12:30). Now, consider the following passages to continue to see what kind of commitment God requires you to make in serving Him.

Matthew 6:33 indicates that we must seek all that is involved in being part of God's kingdom and living according to His righteousness absolutely first in our lives: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Luke 14:26-27, 33 indicates that we must seek God first – even above our own family relationships, physical possessions, and our own earthly lives! And, if we fail to follow Christ above everything and everyone else, He says that we cannot be His disciples. Verses 26-27 say, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever

does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Verse 33 says, "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

This means that we must give ourselves entirely to seeking the ways of God and submit ourselves to Him. Ephesians 5:17 instructs that we "understand what the will of the Lord is." 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 instructs that we put all things to the test, clinging to everything that is found to be in harmony with the will of God, and abstaining from everything that is found to be contrary to the will of God. So, you must determine not to allow anything or anybody to come before God in your life!

### **Practice self-discipline**

Jesus says that the one who desires to follow after Him must "deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). In the larger context (Luke 9:21-26), the extent of this self-denial is that we must even be willing to deny ourselves of our physical lives! Certainly, we must be willing to deny ourselves of anything and everything that conflicts with the will of God!

Paul also demonstrated the necessity of self-discipline in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (as discussed in lesson 7). He demonstrated how self-discipline is essential for athletes who are attempting to win an earthly (temporary) prize. Then, he made the point that those who are Christians (those who are seeking after a Heavenly and imperishable prize) must be even more willing to exercise self-discipline in order to live in a way that pleases God! If you fail to exercise the proper self-discipline, you can become "disqualified" of eternal life!

So, you must be willing to discipline your body and your desires, bringing them into the complete obedience of Jesus Christ! Remember, nothing and no one is more valuable than your soul. Therefore, you must simply say "no" to any of your desires that run contrary to the desires of God!

### **Put on the whole armor of God**

Earlier in this study, we talked about our enemy who attempts to lure us away from God by appealing to our earthly desires. We talked about

how he is trying to destroy us and ensnare us. We talked about how he employs schemes to get us to fall and how he is hurling “fiery darts” at us.

As an answer to this, God has given us armor for protection. This armor is of a spiritual nature and is identified in Ephesians 6:10-18. Notice that if we put on the *whole* armor that God provides, we will be able to stand – and withstand the devil!

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

So, we must diligently work to put on truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God – and pray always! If we do, we will be victorious in our fight against the devil and overcome all obstacles to holiness!

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## ***Conclusion***

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In this lesson, we have observed: (1) That there are many obstacles we face in living lives of holiness and complete dedication to God. And, (2) that we can overcome these (and all) obstacles to our holiness by making the proper commitment to Christ!

Are you living a holy life? Consider 1 Peter 1:15-16 once more (before closing this study): “but

as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” If you are not living a holy life, make your life right with God today! God has given you the opportunity to be holy. Now, you must take advantage of that opportunity. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2)!

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## ***Study Questions***

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What does it mean to be holy?

Will you experience any obstacles to holiness? Why or why not?

### **1. Obstacles To Holiness**

Discuss some lessons from the following passages about the obstacle of fleshly desires:

1. Romans 8:5-8 –

2. Matthew 19:16-22 –

3. Galatians 2:20 –

Discuss some lessons from the following passages about the obstacle of false standards:

1. 1 Peter 1:15-16 –

2. Jeremiah 10:23 –

3. Proverbs 14:12 –

4. Matthew 15:3-9 –

5. Acts 23:1 –

How will practicing self-discipline help you overcome all obstacles to holiness?

Discuss some lessons from the following passages about the obstacle of culture:

1. John 15:18-21 –

How will putting on the whole armor of God help you overcome all obstacles to holiness?

2. Deuteronomy 7:1-8 –

3. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 –

Discuss some lessons from the following passages about the obstacle of your peers:

1. 1 Corinthians 15:33 –

2. 1 Kings 11:1-8 –

3. Proverbs 1:10-19 –

Discuss some lessons from the following passages about the obstacle of apathy:

1. Titus 2:11-14 –

2. Matthew 12:30 –

3. Revelation 3:15-16 –

## **2. How To Overcome All Obstacles To Holiness**

How will recognizing the true value of your soul help you overcome all obstacles to holiness?

How will counting the cost help you overcome all obstacles to holiness?

How will seeking God absolutely first help you overcome all obstacles to holiness?