The Pursuit of Holiness
by Jerry Bridges
A Farmer...

- plows the field
- plants the seed
- fertilizes the field
- cultivates the field

BUT he cannot

- germinate the seed
- make it rain
- make the sun shine
Farming ... is a joint venture between God and the farmer. The farmer cannot do what God must do, and God will not do what the farmer should do.
The Pursuit of Holiness…
is a joint venture between God and the Christian. No one can attain any degree of holiness without God working in his life, but just as surely no one will attain it without effort on his own part. God has made it possible for us to walk in holiness. But he has given to us the responsibility of doing the walking; He does not do that for us.
Why don’t we talk about our responsibility to walk in holiness?

1. We are reluctant to face up to our responsibility. We **pray for victory** when we know we should be **acting in obedience**.

2. We do not understand the distinction between **God’s provision** and **our own responsibility** for holiness.

“What am I to do myself, and what am I to rely on God to do?”
• Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (NIV)

• Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. (NASB)

• Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (ESV)

• *Pursue holiness, for without holiness no one will see the Lord.* (author’s paraphrase)
Pursuing holiness...

- is a process
- requires diligence and effort
- is a life-long task
Holiness Is for You
For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:14
Holiness Is for You
Is God mocking us?
How is sin NOT my master?
Is it my “destiny” to be a slave to sin?
What good is it to be “under grace”?
What is holiness?

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 (ESV)
What is holiness?

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

1 Peter 1:14-16 (NIV)
What is holiness?

Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.

Revelation 22:11 (NIV)
What is holiness?

To live a holy life is to live in conformity to the moral precepts of the Bible and in contrast to the sinful ways of the world. It is to live a life characterized by the "[putting] off of your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires... and [putting] on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:22,24)
Why do we not experience more personal holiness?
Why do we not experience more personal holiness?

1. Our attitude toward sin is more self-centered than God-centered. We are more concerned about our own “victory” over sin than we are about the fact that our sins grieve the heart of God. We cannot tolerate failure in our struggle with sin chiefly because we are success-oriented, not because we know it is offensive to God.
Why do we not experience more personal holiness?

2. We have misunderstood “living by faith” to mean that no effort at holiness is required on our part. We must face the fact that we have a personal responsibility for our walk of holiness.
Why do we not experience more personal holiness?

3. We do not take some sin as seriously. We have categorized into that which is unacceptable and that which may be tolerated a bit.

“Is the Lord to be obeyed in all things whatsoever He commands?
– Andrew Bonar
What does this passage say about God’s holiness?

Complete God’s holiness handout
How did you define holiness?
God has called every Christian to a holy life.

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16
1 Peter 1:15-16

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”
The Holiness of God

• Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God.
• He cannot but do what is right.
• God’s holiness is perfect freedom from all evil.
1 John 1:5
God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.
The absolute holiness of God should be of great comfort and assurance to us. If God is perfectly holy, then we can be confident that His actions toward us are always perfect and just.
We are often tempted to question God’s actions and complain that he is unfair. This is the devil’s lie, the same thing he did to Eve. Because He is holy, all His actions are holy.
Habakkuk 1:13

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.
The Holiness of God

Because God is holy, he can never excuse or overlook any sin we commit, however small it may be.
James 1:13
When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.
The Holiness of God

Because God is holy, he cannot ever tempt us to sin.

We may feel that God has put in a situation where we have no choice…
Saul waited the seven days for Samuel but he did not come. His army was deserting. He had to take action. He felt that he had no other option.
The Holiness of God

Because God is holy, he hates sin.

We may trifle with our sins or excuse them, but God hates them.
The Holiness of God

While it is true that he accepts us solely through the merit of Christ, God’s standard for our character, attitudes, affections, and actions is “Be holy, because I am holy.”
Holiness Works
Living and working as holy people
• Holiness is Not An Option: Handout 2
• Complete the exercise in groups
Holiness is Not an Option

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will ever see the Lord.  Hebrews 12:14
Holiness is Not an Option

• Does our salvation depend to some degree on our attaining some level of personal holiness?

• What do you think? The verse says “without holiness no one will see the Lord.”
Holiness is Not an Option

1. Even the best Christians can never merit salvation through their personal holiness. Our righteous deeds are like filthy garments in the light of God’s holy law. (Isaiah 64:6)
Holiness is Not an Option

2. Scripture repeatedly refers to the obedience and righteousness of Christ on our behalf.
Romans 5:19

- For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.
- This perfect life is credited to those who trust in Him for their salvation.
1 Peter 3:18

- For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.
- By his death on the cross he fully paid the penalty for our sins and placated the wrath of God toward us.
Hebrews 10:10

• “And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

• Our holiness before God depends entirely on the work of Jesus Christ for us.
Holiness is Not an Option

• Does Hebrews 12:14 refer to this holiness which we have in Christ?

• What do you think? The writer says we are to “make every effort…to be holy.” Without this holiness no one will see the Lord.
Holiness is Not an Option

Scripture speaks of both
• a holiness which we have in Christ before God
• a holiness which we are to strive after.
• These two aspects of holiness complement one another.
Holiness is Not an Option

So the writer of Hebrews is telling us to take seriously the necessity of personal, practical holiness. When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives at salvation, he comes to make us holy in practice.
Holiness is Not an Option

When God saves us through Christ, he not only saves us from the penalty of sin, but also from its dominion. The whole purpose of our salvation is that we be “holy and blameless in his sight.” (Ephesians 1:4)
Holiness is Not an Option

Holiness is not necessary as a condition of salvation but as a part of salvation that is received by faith in Christ.
Titus 2:11-12

• For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”
Holiness is Not an Option

The same grace that brings salvation teaches us to renounce ungodly living. We cannot receive half of God’s grace. We will experience not only forgiveness of our sins but also freedom from sin’s dominion.
Holiness is Not an Option

God’s nature demands holiness in the life of a Christian. When he calls us to salvation, he calls us to fellowship with himself and his son Jesus Christ.

(1 John 1:3)
Holiness is Not an Option

But God is light; in him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)
How then can we have fellowship with him if we continue to walk in darkness?
Holiness is Not an Option

1. Holiness is required for fellowship with God.
2. Holiness is required for our own well-being.
3. Holiness is necessary for effective service to God.
4. Holiness is necessary for our assurance of salvation.
Holiness Works
Living and working as holy people
• The Holiness of Christ handout 3

• You will need to do this handout individually but you may discuss it with your group.

• You should share your answers with your group. This will help you understand the question and will give you other points of view.
The Holiness of Christ

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21
The Holiness of Christ

• Considering the holiness of Christ requires us to be firmly grounded in our security in Christ.
• As we study holiness we will see more of our own sinfulness.
• As we see our sinfulness we will flee to Christ for refuge.
• We must understand the holiness of Christ and the fact that his righteousness is credited to us.
Jesus lived a perfectly holy life

- without sin (Hebrews 4:15)
- one who committed no sin (1 Peter 2:22)
- him who had no sin (2 Cor. 5:21)
- in him is no sin (1 John 3:5)
- the righteous servant (Isaiah 53:11)
- one who loved righteousness and hated wickedness (Psalm 45:7)
What Jesus said about himself...

• Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? (John 8:46)
• He dared to ask!
What Jesus said about himself...

• He was perfectly conformed to the will of his father.
• Not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me (John 6:38)
• My food is to do the will of him who sent me (John 4:34)
• I always do what pleases him (John 8:29)
The Holiness of Christ

A serious view of the holiness of God – his own moral perfection and infinite hatred of sin – will leave us seeing with utter dismay our own lack of holiness. His moral purity serves to magnify our impurity.
Assurance

• See your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for. (Isaiah 6:7)

• The more we grow in holiness, the more we need assurance that the perfect righteousness of Christ is credited to us.

• The Holy Spirit makes us aware of our need of holiness.

• God made him who had no sin to be sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
Assurance

The Holy Spirit makes us more aware of our lack of holiness to stimulate us to deeper yearning and striving for holiness. But Satan will attempt to use the Holy Spirit’s work to discourage us.
Assurance

If you diligently pursue holiness, you must often flee to the Rock of your salvation. You flee there, not to be saved again, but to confirm in your heart that you are saved through His righteousness alone.
Example of holiness for us

- Christ left an example for us to follow in his steps.
- Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)
Example of holiness for us

• Jesus said, “I always do what pleases him.”
• Do we dare take that as our goal in life?
• Are we willing to scrutinize all our activities, all our goals and plans, and all our impulsive actions in the light of this statement: “I am doing this to please God”? 
Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervours, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills.

John Brown, nineteenth-century Scottish theologian