Serving Others Along the Road: Revealing Christ's Love through Holiness

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SERVING OTHERS ALONG THE ROAD

Revealing Christ’s Love through Holiness

Frank Moore
In the World but Not of It

John 17:14-18

In Book 1 of this Bible study series, *God’s Road Map for Us*, we looked at God’s original plan for humanity, our rejection of that plan, and His efforts to get humanity back on track with the plan. In Book 2 of the series, *The Journey Within*, we looked at holiness from the perspective of individual believers. Book 3, *Traveling with Friends*, turned our attention to holiness as we live it in the Christian community and the world. We talked about a proper understanding of corporate faith as biblical Christians.

In Book 4 we look at another essential perspective for biblical holiness. We now focus on letting holiness lead us into ministry and service. Book 3 reminded us that we can’t live a life of holiness in isolation but that holiness will lead individual believers to participate in the larger Christian community and the world. This participation in the world will include more than going out in public only when necessary—such as work or the grocery store. We’ll study biblical passages that challenge us to purposefully go forth into our world with a commission from God himself.

I remember hearing of an ancient saying that goes something like this: “There are two wings by which we rise—personal piety and community charity. No one can fly by flapping only one wing.” So true! The union of piety and service has been a hallmark of Holiness people throughout Church history. Even a quick read of the Church’s story reveals a close connection between consecrated hearts being sanctified by God’s Spirit and deep involvement in meeting the needs of hurting humanity. Let’s turn to Scripture to see God’s direction for our lives once He has established our hearts in holiness.
GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Give examples, either from your personal awareness or from Church history, of people who loved the Lord deeply who also heavily involved themselves in service to hurting humanity.

2. What have been some of the social causes holiness people have championed across the years?

3. Why do you think an experience of heart holiness leads so naturally to service and ministry involvement?

READ JOHN 17:14-15

In Book 2, Study 9, we learned how John saw spiritual matters in black and white. People either love God or they hate Him; they’re for Him or they’re against Him. Nobody gets to ride the fence. In Book 3, Study 6, John compared and contrasted the kingdom of God with the kingdom of Satan. Everyone belongs to one or the other; no third option exists. Now Jesus tells us the same thing. He contrasts His ways with the ways of the world and His Spirit with the spirit of the world. He warns us that we can expect to receive the same rejection and harsh treatment that the world gave Him. The world is likely to reject us just as it rejected Him.

If we stopped our reading at verse 14, we might assume permission from Jesus to take this gospel message of life and salvation and hide away with it, awaiting our transfer to heaven. But Jesus didn’t stop there, and He didn’t give us
permission to hide. Far from it! Notice the charge in verse 15. He's leaving us right where we are—in the world. He prays for a wall of protection to shield us from the evil one, but we're left in the rough and tumble of the world nonetheless. Talk about a challenge! Jesus admits He's sending us into hostile territory. Then He aims us in the direction of a firestorm.

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Why do you suppose both John and Jesus found it important to remind us of the sharp contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world?

2. Why did Jesus make a special effort in His last quiet conversation with His disciples to warn them that they could expect to receive the same rejection and harsh treatment that the world gave Him?

3. Why is it natural for us to want to withdraw from the world that rejects Christ's value system?

4. Why does Jesus not give us the option to withdraw from the world?
The language of verse 14 has Jesus comparing His disciples with himself. Verse 16 compares Jesus’ disciples with the world. We won’t fit into the world’s reality any better than Jesus did, because something about both Him and us places us out of sync with the world. Jesus says we are to live in the world but not of it. What a powerful message in those two-letter words!

With this command Jesus instructs us to live fully in our society. We rub shoulders with the world every day at work, school, and play. The clothes we wear, the cars we drive, and the food we eat all mark us as participants in a particular society. However, even though we physically function in this environment, we’re not of this world. That is, we don’t adopt the world’s value system or worldview. We don’t think the way the world thinks; we don’t adopt the world’s agenda. We march to the beat of a different drummer.

We know the Spirit of God sanctifies us as a gift from His loving hand, as we studied in Book 2, Study 7. This sanctification involves separation both from something and to something. He separates us from the world and its life of sin; He separates us to a life of holy service. This sanctification affects every part of us: spirit, soul, and body. Jesus adds a new thought regarding our sanctification in verse 17. He tells us that God sanctifies us by His truth.

Obviously, believers live in an atmosphere of truth. They tell the truth and live transparent lives, opening themselves fully to the light of God’s truth. More than that, however, Jesus indicates from the tone of this verse that our sanctification occurs with the aid of God’s truth. This truth exposes the bankruptcy of sin, the flesh, and selfish lifestyle choices. It rips the glitter and glamour away from the costumes worn to Satan’s parties to reveal the bondage, addiction, pain, suffering, and death that are the ultimate results of going the way of the world. God’s truth reveals this reality to His children and separates them from these harmful results.
PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. In your own words explain how believers are to be in the world but not of it.

2. How has God's truth separated you from the value system and worldview of the world?

READ JOHN 17:16

In verse 18 we have our marching orders. Not only does Jesus not allow us to hide from the world as recluses while we wait on our transfer to heaven, but He sends us right back into this world that has rejected both Him and us. It seems that after the rough treatment the world has given us, Jesus would let us hide out at church or in each other's homes! No. He sanctifies our hearts with His truth and then turns us right back around with the challenge “Go back into your world and help people.” That’s a hard homework assignment. The fire in the fireplace warms so well. Fellowship with Jesus and other believers fulfills so completely. What could be better? God's will does not leave us in our cozy, warm, protected environment, though. He sends us out.

God does not forgive us of our sins and sanctify our hearts to place us on a fireplace mantle like a trophy. He cleans us up and screws our heads on straight so we can go out and offer His comfort. He doesn't comfort us to make us comfortable but to make us comforters. That's the message Jesus gives us in this week's scripture study. That's Paul's call as well in 2 Cor. 1:1-14. He speaks in verses 3-4 of “the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can
comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”

That means we can’t withdraw from society and form a counterculture. Christians have tried that strategy from time to time throughout Church history. They withdrew to the mountains, caves, or wilderness to create a separate environment totally isolated from society. But we can’t be much good for God and His kingdom if we’re off by ourselves praying and singing. So Jesus sends us out into our world, just as the Father sent Him into our world.

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Why do you suppose the withdrawal plans of Christians to mountain, cave, or wilderness hideaways never worked very well for very long?

2. Why won’t God let us stay in our warm, protected environments?

3. Does Jesus’ challenge to us to go back into our world and serve excite or scare you? Why?

4. What does the following statement say to you? “God doesn’t comfort us to make us comfortable but to make us comforters.”
GROUP ACTIVITY

Divide the class into two groups. Have each group take one of the following sentences and complete it in various ways that support that particular mind-set. Share all responses with the entire class when ready.

1. Christians should withdraw from the world because . . .

2. Christians should go into the world to serve because . . .

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Gen. 28:15
John 15:3
John 1:10-13

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Take a moment at the conclusion of the session to encourage class participants to place their unanswered questions on note cards, along with this session number. They should then place their cards in an “odds and ends” box provided by the Bible study leader. Attention will be given to these questions in the last session of this study.