

familiar friday - pursue holiness
(a repeat daily)

"pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" heb 12:14

i read something recently that really touched my heart. i know it is a story that belongs to someone else, and i will try to retell it using my words instead of theirs. the difficulty in that is that most of it was told to them by someone else. it is a story that i feel really needs to be told though. so whoever wants to take credit for them, feel free and know that i claim it not as my own. i hope this touches you as much as it did me.

the #1 Regret of a 70 Year Old Christian

a middle aged person sat down with a woman who they have fellowshiped with for several years. this woman was filled with wisdom and insights and knowledge. seeking to learn more from her years, they asked "what was the biggest regret of her life", knowing she would respond well. they didn't know her words would be so impactful.

"pursue holiness," she responded.

"if i would have known that God wanted me to pursue holiness when i was in my twenties, that would have changed the trajectory of my life, and saved me a lot of heartache. young people need to learn how to pursue holiness."

is there a more important message for young christians today?

i remember in my thirties, calling in one time for prayer. the person on the other end of the line commented, "you are just the right age to do beautiful things for God. you are about the age of Jesus in His ministry."

i think this is something young christians particularly need since time, seeming endless, in reality, is not. it slips away so quickly just as it will one day end. at least us older folks know how limited it can be.

the young folk tend to be more concerned with being cool than being holy. and this is a problem. it is a pursuit that christians can seek with effort, without being self-justifying. the charge to "pursue holiness" may seem daunting or ambiguous. so here's a few reminders for young christians on this great pursuit.

1) recognize that the pursuit of holiness is important.

God wants you to pursue holiness. seems obvious, right? it's not. many young christians are not hearing this message. it needs to be seasoned with grace, of course, but mentioned often in our pulpits, in our books, in our posts. the first step is recognition.

2) get mentors.

to be fair, it's hard to find mentors. really hard. people are busy and have a hard enough time looking out

for themselves let alone the soul of another. but don't give up. pray that God will give you mentors, and that he will surround you with older, wiser christians. i was so fortunate in my walk to be friended early by the person who birthed this ministry. though about the same ages, her walk had already been through many things i had yet to encounter. she was also very spiritual and used by God for many things.

3) develop a strong devotional life.

i'm always amazed at how many christians i meet who rarely spend time alone with God. community is vital (more on that in a bit), but the regular rhythm of personal devotions is essential, one that young christians would do well to develop sooner than later.

4) read books on holiness.

i don't say this often, but r.c. sproul's book, "the holiness of God", changed my life, and is (and will probably remain) one of the best books i've ever read. i had been a Christian for years and knew little about God's holiness. sproul paints a picture of God's holiness that, for me, changed the way i viewed the christian life. i wish every christian would read it.

5) stay in community.

lone rangers are dead rangers. to pursue holiness, you need the church. stay in community. God's people will help you become more like Christ.

6) remember that holiness is about grace-driven effort.

it's easy to get legalistic when talking about holiness. but i think too many christians are quick to throw up the legalism flag when checked on this matter, partly to hide immaturity or to defend some idol. yet, it's easy to let the pendulum swing too far on either side. there needs to be a balance. you will fail often in this pursuit, and that's okay: because Jesus is for failures and failures only. but don't become so holy that you stop trying. as kevin deYoung says, "let's not be more 'gospel-centered' than the Bible. the bible is not afraid of words like striving, fighting, effort, and work."

what do you think?

i needed to write this piece more than you needed to read it. i've by no means perfected holiness, but who has? glorification will come for God's elect. but now, it's sanctification. it's enjoying Jesus and striving to become more like him. this message of holiness is for you and me, and i hope you take heed. after all, i don't want you to end up with the same regret.