

St Denys

Community Series Week 5 (June 18th 2017)

Leviticus 19 v 1-10 | 1 Peter 1 v 14-16 | Matthew 5 v 43-48

So far in our series on Community we've looked at

- God's desire to build a meaningful relationship with us
- How we are called to follow Jesus Christ
- How we are called together, and into unity, as a church

This week we're going to look at how we are called to live as Christians and as key verse to help us to do that I'm going to concentrate on the NT reading from 1 Peter 1 v 16 which says, '**Be Holy because I am holy**'

Now when we think about how God wants us to live straight away there's a distinction to make between those who have responded to God's call into relationship and those who have not. Those who are Christian and those who are not.

God provides general guidelines for all people to live by ... but also specific ones for those who say 'yes' to his invitation to take up their cross and to follow.

General guidelines for all people

If we talk about Jesus and the Scriptures as primary revelations of God then it becomes quickly apparent through what Jesus said and did, and through the Scriptures, that God gives general guidance as to how we are called to live.

Examples might be.....?

- 10 commandments
- Beatitudes
- [Micah 6 v 8](#) "*what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*"
- [Matthew 7 v 1](#) "*Judge not, that you be not judged.*"

However, I'm going to spend the rest of the time thinking about how God might want us to live as Christians, as followers, and then specifically look at that in the context of what that means in terms of living in

community with God and with each other.

Specific guidelines for Christians

To start with some jargon ...the theological term for re-establishing a relationship with God through Jesus Christ is called '**Justification**'. This is God's act of removing the guilt and penalty of 'sin' while at the same time declaring a 'sinner' righteous through Christ's atoning sacrifice.

So, if Jesus is the gate that we go through to re-establish that relationship with then '**Sanctification**' is about how we are called to live with that relationship now back intact.

To sanctify is to literally "set apart for particular use in a special purpose or work and to make holy or sacred." The verb "to sanctify" derives from the Latin verb *sanctificare* which in turn derives from *sanctus* "holy"

** Technical bit for the scholars!

So, sanctification means to become holy. In the NT, the same Greek root **HAG** ἅγιος underlies 'holy' and 'holiness' as well as 'sanctification'

HAGios

Adjective - sacred, set apart (e.g. Saint)

Theologically we think of sanctification as a process, but in parts of the NT its referred to as an event. E.g. In [1 Corinthians 6](#) Paul tells the Corinthians 'you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified'. Not it might seem odd that Paul places sanctification before justification, but that is only because he is viewing both (along with washing) as single events that took place upon conversion. Believers are once-and-for-all 'holified' at conversion. They are decisively set apart. The Holy Spirit has now set up residence within them. I guess we think of the ongoing process of becoming holy as how the Holy Spirit changes us once He's taken up residence.

However, for today I'm going to just refer to sanctification as the process whereby we as Christians understand how God wants us to live and strive to be changed by him.

HOLINESS

For many people when we talk about "holiness" it conjures up musty images of and stern prohibitions against drinking, dancing, and playing cards. Holiness is often associated with ethics and moral behaviour.

But as Children Of God we can't get away from this call to holiness (and I say COG deliberately here as opposed to saying Christian because you find it both in the OT and the NT) ... to be holy. You can find it in the OT and the NT alike.

Leviticus 11 v 44

"Be holy because I am holy"

1 Peter 1 v 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.'"

But to be holy doesn't mean first and foremost to live by a certain moral code. It doesn't strictly mean 'be pure' in that way. Instead, the most basic meaning of the word is to be "set apart" or "dedicated" to God - to belong to God

"I will be your God, and you will be my people," says God
(Leviticus 26 v 12 & Heb. 8 v 10).

Thus, prior to any consideration of morality, biblical holiness describes a unique relationship that God has established and desires with his people. This relationship has moral ramifications, but it precedes moral behaviour. Before we are ever called to be good, we are called to be holy.

To be a Christian means far more than merely to believe in God—as if the Christian faith were reducible to a code of beliefs. Rather, it means to be united with Jesus in and through the Holy Spirit.

"I have been crucified with Christ," says Paul, "and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2 v 20).

Elsewhere, Paul tells us that our lives are **"hidden with Christ in God"** (Col. 3 v 3) and that we have been **"seated with [God] in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus"** (Eph. 2 v 6).

Passages like these convey the mysterious, yet utterly real fact that, by virtue of our union with Jesus, we participate in the life of God. He dwells in us, and we dwell in him. And his plea with us is that we become like him.

It's in response to Christ's mercy and grace that Paul appeals to Christ's followers in [Romans 12](#) he says:

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect"

- But what does holiness look like?
- What does it mean 'to be holy'?
- Or to be sanctified'.
- What does that look like in our everyday lives?

Well again there is no shortage of specific guidelines when it comes to this either from Jesus or from elsewhere in the NT teachers.

THE GOSPELS

Littered with Jesus being very specific about how we are to live and what he expects of us. He talked a lot about the Kingdom of God and the cost of following him. To follow Jesus meant there were sacrifices to make in the way people lived and how they related to God and to one another.

He said very uncomfortable things like 'The last shall be first and the first shall be last' and he talked a lot about love and specifically about loving the unlovely, and the marginalised. And people as a rule didn't like loving the marginalised. They were on the margins for a reason .. out of the way where they didn'tinterfere with people's lives. They lurked in the

shadows where people felt they belonged. But Jesus told his followers they were to live in the light ... in fact to be lights in the darkness for others. That's a very inconvenient religion to follow! "I'm the light of the world" Jesus said in [John 8](#)... if you want to follow me then you need to live like me.

Let's look at literally just a couple of examples:

Repent

"From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" ([Matthew 4 v 17](#)).

Don't Lust

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery', but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell."
([Matthew 5 v 27-30](#)).

Love and pray for your enemies

"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" ([Matthew 5 v 44-46](#))

Seek God's Kingdom first

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." ([Matthew 6 v 33](#)).

Don't Judge

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged." ([Matthew 7 v 1](#)).

Treat people as you want to be treated

"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets." ([Matthew 7 v 12](#)).

Confront brothers in private first

"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother." ([Matthew 18 v 15–17](#)).

Forgive Seven Times Seventy

"Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" ([Matthew 18 v 21–22](#)).

Make Disciples

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." ([Matthew 28 v 19-20](#)).

Preach the Gospel

"And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." ([Mark 16 v 15](#)).

Don't' be greedy

"Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." ([Luke 12 v 15](#)).

Be generous to the poor

"And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. "But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." ([Luke 14 v 12-14](#)).

Love God

"And He said to him, " "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" ([Matthew 22 v 37-38](#)).

... And love one another

"This I command you, that you love one another." ([John 15 v 17](#)).

THE NEW TESTAMENT

So, no lack of specific teaching on how God wants us to live from Jesus ... and the same can be true of the NT writers also. For me I just tend to look at [Galatians 5](#) where St Paul is saying that if the Spirit dwells in you (and think back to what we said about justification and sanctification earlier) then we ought to see the fruits of that. In other words, if you're saying you're a Christian and the Spirit of God lives in you lets be seeing the evidence. proof of the pudding and all that. And Paul said the fruits of the Spirit look like this:

"love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"

So, in a nutshell if we're asking ourselves the question of how God wants us to live our lives ... you could argue that if we aim to be people who are loving; joyful; peaceful; kind; good; faithful; gentle and self controlled we won't go far wrong. The argument being that if we can get that right the rest of the stuff will pretty much take care of itself:

Finally, always remember it is God who has called us to live a holy life because, again as 1 Peter reminds us, He is holy. He is a Holy God.

We are **called** to be holy (1Pe 1:15).

We are **called** "out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1Pe 2:9).

We are **called** to suffer and follow Christ's example of meekness (1Pe 2:21).

In the midst of persecution, we are **called** "to inherit a blessing" (1Pe 3:9).

Best of all, we are **called** to "His eternal glory" (1Pe 5:10).