

Small Group Study: Be Sanctified!

Opening Prayer: Father God, you have called us to be holy as you are holy. We ask you to move in power by your Spirit in us to sanctify us by your Truth. Your Word is Truth. To you O'LORD, be all the glory and honor forever and ever, In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

Memory – Meditation Verse: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1-2

Opening Discussion:

- What does it mean to be sanctified?

Some in your group may not know what this Christian word we use rather loosely means. Others may have opinions on the meaning. Use this to get your group talking.

My two cents: Sanctification is the consecration (dedication) and purification (cleansing) of our lives. It is the change process that happens in a Christian as the Holy Spirit works in us to transform us into the likeness of Jesus. It is holiness.

- If we are saved by grace alone and forgiven of our sins, then why is it that God wants us to be sanctified?

Understand that God sees us as sanctified already; covered by the blood of Jesus we are pure and holy in his site. Yet, as an act of obedience and submission to the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, we are transformed more and more to his likeness. It is an act of worship. We show our love for God by our submission to His work in our lives. We don't sin to be accepted by God but we choose not to sin because we belong to God.

Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

¹ As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

³ It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸ Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

- What would a sanctified life that pleases God look like?

Ask people to share thoughts on how we should live our lives to please God. Paul speaks a lot about purity when he speaks of sanctification. But in other passages you will see other things as well that are part of a sanctified life.

- If the Thessalonians were living to please God as Paul had instructed, then why do you think he pleads with them to do it more and more?

Sanctification is something that happens in a follower of Jesus yet, we still live in a fallen world and we still remain sinners on this earth. Paul is reminding us here that we are to be on a constant process of growing and moving to be more like Jesus. Don't expect holiness on this earth, but do expect to be changed and a work in progress.

- What specific issues does Paul point out to the church to avoid? Why do you think he focuses on these matters? He focuses on sexual immorality and purity. He tells us to control our body. Not to lust. Not to take advantage of others. He calls us to live pure lives. I believe that Paul is indicating what is most tempting in life. Sexual impurity is so easily accepted. Think about it. Not many would excuse theft, or murder, or in the church – idolatry. Yet sexual impurity is either ignored, excused, or encouraged in this world and sometimes in the church.

- Reading back through the entire passage, whom does Paul identify that these instructions come from? (See verse 2 and 8)

This is from God. These instructions are given with the authority of Jesus. And the constant reminder is coming from the presence of the Holy Spirit.

- What does this passage tell us about rejecting this instruction?

When we reject the Word of God we are not rejecting the Church, or Paul, but we are rejecting God himself.

- What is our role in the sanctification process?

Ask people to share; I believe we must listen to God through the Word and the Holy Spirit and we must then submit and obey.

Closing Discussion:

- Without giving names, share with the group how you have witnessed others lives being destroyed because of a refusal to allow the work of the Holy Spirit to sanctify and make them holy.

Ask people to share.

- How would God have you pray for those people? How would God have you pray for yourself regarding sanctification?

Ask people to share and then pray together

Close in prayer for one another asking God to sanctify and purify each of you.