



REBOOT

What does it mean to live a righteous, “holy” life?

Answers typically fall into one of two camps: Either we define it in terms of personal holiness, whereby we cultivate a right relationship with God by living distinctly separate from the world, or we define it as social holiness, whereby we live as active participants in the redemptive work God is doing in our world.

Typical of Western American people, we tend to create these binary categories. We see either/or, when it really should be both/and. Detaching the personal from the prophetic creates a false dichotomy, or a false separation. The two are deeply related – they’re two sides of the same coin. We cannot separate loving God with heart, mind, soul, and strength from active and purposeful love of our neighbor. There’s a synergy that exists between them.

In other words, the more we fall in love with God, the more we will be compelled to love others. And the more we love others, the more deeply we will fall in love with God.

Wesleyan theologian Kenneth Collins states it in the following way:

“The deep, hidden, and profound work of the heart’s renewal in the image and likeness of God cannot remain hidden, for it will inevitably be displayed in the life and works of Christians as they care for a hurting world. . . .To use a familiar Wesleyan phrase, faith works by love; inward religion, so mysterious and personal, is necessarily manifested in outward religion, in public life” *(Wesley on Salvation, pg. 101).*

This month we will be examining our hearts and lives for evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in us. How is the Spirit shaping us as we pursue God’s personal and social holiness? In what ways do we need a “reboot,” or a reset, so that our hearts are better aligned with God’s heart?

Let’s start the year 2020 off with our hearts, minds, souls, and strengths centered on the love of both God and neighbor.

SESSION ONE MICAH 6

When you are in the middle of a conflict, do you tend to respond with “fight,” “flight,” or “freeze”?

READ

Micah 6:1-8

REFLECT

This passage is set up like a traditional ancient Near Eastern lawsuit, whereby a person brings charges against someone who has wronged him. Yahweh issues accusations against Israel in vv. 1-6. Since there were no others present when God made a covenant with His people at Mount Sinai, God calls upon the mountains to serve as His witnesses (Exodus 19:1-8). The Israelites have failed to live according to the covenant that they had agreed upon, and Yahweh is distressed. He chronicles their history together, reminding the Israelites of all the ways that He delivered them. God kept His terms of the covenant. How will Israel answer for her unfaithfulness?

Verses 6-7 function as Israel’s defense. Their response is far from sincere – it’s sarcastic, demonstrating just how defiant Israel is to Yahweh’s correction. It’s as if they’re throwing their hands up in exasperation and saying, “What more do you want from us, God? What will be enough to please you?”

Finally, v. 8 settles Yahweh’s legal dispute with His people. God has already shown the Israelites time and time again what He requires of them; the commands to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God have always been their responsibilities as God’s covenantal people. Let’s take a look at this passage in more detail to discover what it has to say to us about living as God’s covenantal people today.

RESPOND

- The Prophets, of which Micah is included, remind us that God feels deeply for His people. This ability to feel pain and suffering is called pathos. Why do you think we tend to strip emotion away from God? How can you hear pathos in this lawsuit God issues against His people?
- The Israelites respond to God’s accusations with sarcasm and defiance. Their “human” response is so relatable! Why is God’s correction often painful to hear? How do you tend to respond when the Holy Spirit convicts you?
- Which of Yahweh’s requirements do you resonate with most (act justly, love mercy, or walk humbly)? Which is the one that doesn’t come naturally to you?
- Just like the Israelites in this passage, our sin often stems from apathy to God’s Way. How can we become attuned to the pathos of God, whereby we feel the same way about sin that God does?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Share your story. As you continue to seek, name, and celebrate the loving presence of Jesus in your own life, ask God for an opportunity to share your story of faith with someone this week. Maybe a co-worker, a fellow student, a family member, or even a stranger. Listen for the Spirit’s promptings, and as He leads, have courage to step out and share!

CLOSE IN PRAYER

SESSION TWO ISAIAH 40

What is one thing you would have a hard time living without?

READ

Isaiah 40:18-26

REFLECT

The Scripture reading today reminds us just how holy (set apart, separate from the world) God is. There is no one or nothing like Him in all of creation! Yet, there has been a temptation ever since the very beginning of the world to substitute other things for the grandeur of God's glory. We see the Israelites do this time and time again, and this sin of idolatry was one of the reasons why they found themselves exiled in the land of Babylon during the time of this passage in Isaiah. We tend to look at the Israelites' temptation to worship false images as primitive and ignorant. All the while, we forget just how often we substitute our worship of God for the worship of something made by human hands. Let's take a look at our passage today and humbly contemplate the ways we each have given greater worth to something than God.

RESPOND

- This passage has several poignant questions. Read through the passage and find them. Why do you think God asks these questions? How do you think the Israelites would have responded?
 - Worship means giving worth to something or someone. We could call it "worth-ship." In vv. 18-20, God tells the Israelites that those who make idols choose the very best of materials. In their eyes, their god is "worth" this sacrifice. Several times, the Israelites used their finest gold to construct idols. Why do you think they had the tendency to give the most "worth" to what they could see (idols) instead of God, whom they could not see?
 - In this passage, God lists some of the amazing things He is capable of doing. This is supposed to remind us of how much God deserves our full "worth-ship."
- How might the worship of God wean us off of any idols that may exist in our hearts?
- What are some of things in our culture that we give our most "worth" to? What do we consider to be the best achievement? What does the life that is best lived look like? What do we tend to strive for the most?
 - If you are comfortable sharing with the group, what is one thing that tends to take up most of your attention or "worth-ship"?
 - God wants the other contenders vying for our worship out of our hearts. This is easier said than done. What are some specific ways that we can examine ourselves for idolatry? How can we eliminate our reliance on things other than God to fulfill us?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

What is a way that you can practice giving God worth this week? Think simple. Carry a short prayer in your heart, take intentional time each day to list the blessings God has given you, dance in God's presence, or worship God while you walk through your neighborhood.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Optional: Use a hymn or simple worship song to serve as a closing prayer.

SESSION THREE COLOSSIANS 3

Name one thing you like about yourself, then go around again ask the group to name things they like about each other.

READ

Colossians 3:1-15

REFLECT

In this passage, Paul reminds the church in Colossae that the truest thing about them is their identity in Christ. Christ is their life. Whatever defined them before this point concerned them no longer – God gave them a new identity and a new calling when He redeemed them and accepted them into His family. Because of this new way of seeing themselves, the new Gentile believers had a responsibility to live according to God’s Way. God’s grace saves us and declares us holy, but He also calls us to grow into this holiness. We are set apart by God in order to be continually shaped and changed by the Holy Spirit.

RESPOND

- Several times Paul calls the Colossae church “holy,” but, like all new believers, they still had a lot of things to work on (v. 12). Do you think that the first listeners would have been surprised to be called “holy” by someone like Paul? How might this have inspired them or intimidated them?
- Does it feel uncomfortable or intimidated to think of yourself as being “holy”? Why or why not?
- We often tend to define ourselves by our family roles, our achievements, our job titles, or our social status. Why do we think more about ourselves in terms of these earthly criteria than we do our spiritual status as God’s children?
- “Identity” means being identical in every situation. In other words, our identity is the part of us that is the same no matter where or what we’re doing. How does God define the truest thing about us? What would it take for us to really believe this about ourselves?
- What does it mean for Christ to be your life (v. 4) or your “all” (v. 11)?
- Paul tells us to put our earthly desires to death. What are some specific practices we can do to lay the things within us that are contrary to God’s best in the grave?
- How does love compel us to live as holy people (v. 14)? Since love is the thing that binds everything together, what does this say to us when we feel shame or guilt about the ways that we have failed to live according to God’s holiness?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

There’s a lot we do spiritually as individuals. But it’s often what we do together that leads to breakthrough. This week, share a conversation, a prayer, a Scripture, or some other part of your journey with someone else.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

SESSION FOUR EXODUS 33

If you could take a class on anything that interests you, what would it be?

READ

Exodus 33:12-18

REFLECT

Moses demonstrated a humble desire to know God and His Ways better. Our passage of study is situated in the middle of a long passage that is full God's instruction, yet Moses wants to know more. He isn't satisfied with just knowing about God – he wants to know and experience God's glory personally.

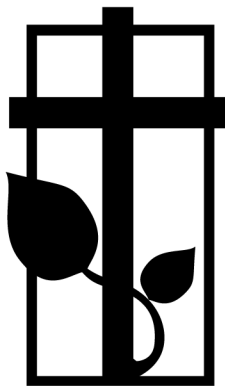
RESPOND

- Moses refuses to go unless God goes with Him. He was strongly attuned to God's presence. Oftentimes, though, we are not. We may sometimes go a full day without acknowledging that God is with us. What would it look like for us to be so attuned with God's presence every day? What could change?
- Moses notes that the thing that sets the Israelites apart from other nations is that they have God's presence. How does God's presence set you apart from others? And if it doesn't, why do you think this is?
- God says to Moses, "I am pleased with you and I know you by name" (v. 17). This sounds remarkably similar to what God says about His Son Jesus (Mark 1:11). Do you believe God when He says this about you? Why or why not? How can choosing to abide in God's presence change how we view ourselves?
- Moses asks God to show him God's glory. This is a very risky thing to ask! When was the last time you spent time in God's presence and asked Him to reveal Himself to you? Have you ever had a moment when you caught even just a glimpse of God's glory?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Share your story. As you continue to seek, name, and celebrate the loving presence of Jesus in your own life, ask God for an opportunity to share your story of faith with someone this week. Maybe a co-worker, a fellow student, a family member, or even a stranger. Listen for the Spirit's promptings, and as He leads, have courage to step out and share!

CLOSE IN PRAYER



REYNOLDSBURG
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH