

5. A New Purpose

Union with Christ means our life's purpose is to pursue and grow into holiness.

Last week we discovered that for people united to Christ, our ultimate horizon, our destiny as people, is to have the image of God restored in us. But what does this mean for our day to day lives?



In the letter of *1 Peter* we read that followers of Jesus are set apart as God's holy people (2:4-10), but are also called to be holy. (1:13-15). To pursue holiness in our lives, which if we're honest, often seems at best not very fun, and at worst, a waste of time.

Wilbourne notes:

"Holiness is like broccoli for many of us. We know we're supposed to want it, but we don't, not really. And we might even think the good news is that we no longer need to pursue it." (pg172)

Discussion

1. What is "holiness"? What does it mean to "be holy"? (See note at bottom of page 24)

2. What's your reaction when you're called to "pursue holiness"? Is it something you desire? Is it necessary?

UNION WITH CHRIST

Our union with Christ gives us assurance in our holy standing before God because of Jesus. And yet it also gives us the motivation we need (namely, the power of the spirit living in us!) to pursue holiness despite our unwillingness and inability.

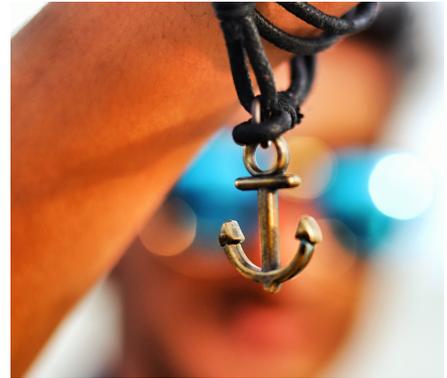
Wilbourne puts it to us that union with Christ is both the “*anchor*” and the “*engine*” of holiness.

What does the Bible say?

Union with Christ is the “*anchor*” of Holiness:

3. Have a look at these passages and discuss them together

- *1 Corinthians 6:11*
- *Hebrews 6:19-20*
- *1 Corinthians 1:30*
- *Hebrews 10:10*



Union with Christ is the “*engine*” that drives our pursuit of holiness:

4. Read these verses, jot down some notes and discuss as a group:

- *1 Peter 1:1-2 - chosen to be holy*
- *1 Peter 1:13-16 - called to be holy*
- *Ephesians 1:4 - saved to be holy*



NAVIGATION POINT

Being holy and becoming holy can often seem like they are at odds with each other but, as Wilbourne says, it's like a small boy putting on his fathers shirt. He is in it but he doesn't fill it out yet. He has not grown into it.

Part of a letter from Samuel Rutherford says:

"You doubt ... whether you be in Christ or not? ... I answer ...you owe charity to all men, but most of all to loving and lovely Jesus, and some also to yourself, because your new self is not yours, but [Christ's], even the work of his own Spirit: therefore to slander His work is to wrong himself."

5. How does your union with Christ as an "anchor" - the knowledge of your holy standing before God - help you when you don't desire holiness?

6. How does your union with Christ as the "engine" - the work of the spirit in you - help you pursue holiness when it seems out of reach?

7. How do you think we could help each other DESIRE and PURSUE holiness?

NOTE

To be holy means to be set apart for God's purposes, which is why in the old testament inanimate objects, such as bells or pots, are sometimes referred to as 'holy' (Zech 14:20-21) — not because the pots or bells were morally pure, but because they were wholly consecrated to God's use. Set apart for God.

When used in reference to human beings, holiness means to be set apart to reflect God's character in all of our ways — his goodness and love, his kindness and compassion, his concern for justice and the poor.