

Holiness (22 mins)

INTRODUCTION

Thank you brother Coley for putting this all together. Thank you to the men here today who are passionately seeking God ... and to the Pastors and leaders here this morning
- God's word says in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

God's word tells us to honor our Pastors, because each of you perform the difficult work of a spiritual shepherd in a sometimes ungodly world. Praise God for the love in your hearts

For those here today that don't know me, let me give you a quick background. I live here in Lenoir City, just a mile or so down the road from this school on a 44 acre horse ranch with my wife Tami, of over 30 years, my daughter Taylor, my son-in-law Chris and my grandson Bennett Alan. I retired 2 years ago from Pilot/Flying J after a 40 year career in Marketing and Strategic Planning.

I stand humbly before you today as the leader of a Men's Ministry called "Men of Covenant" and I appreciate the opportunity to tell you a little bit about it today.

USED TO

I'm going to begin my message this morning by grounding all of us in reality. I'm going to share a message that's based on the current state of the world we live in and how as Christian men, we are charged with making it different than it is – in fact, better than it is – even, dare I say ... more Godly than it is.

So let's get right down to the facts ... according to The Barna Group, there are 210 million professing Christians in the US today. That number stuck in my head because I love math. It's one of my God given gifts. And when you "do math" on those statistics, you quickly come to a surprising conclusion – the numbers don't add up.

You see, there are ONLY about 350 million people in the whole country and when you divide 210/350 you come up with 60% ... so what this data is telling us is that 60% of the people in this country are CHRISTIANS?

This can't be true, because ALL the evidence – back to my "reality" statement a few minutes ago – points in the opposite direction:

- 18MM US children (nearly 25%) live in a home without a father
- As much as 50% of evangelical Christian men are in sexual sin
- 1/2 of US Christians say that sex between unmarried adults is "sometimes" or "always acceptable"
- Only 32% of identifying born again Christians say that there is such a thing as absolute moral truth
- 54% of Christians express acceptance of homosexuality, rather than discouragement.
- 62% of Americans say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases
- Only 6% of American adults claim to have a biblical worldview

210MM Christians living out their faith should absolutely overwhelm this country with God's influence, but what we see are statistics contrary to that data. What we see are Christians acting like secular people. We see Christians supporting cultural standards that are not of God. We see Christians unaware that there IS an absolute moral truth and standard

... and there is a cost when Christian men don't LIVE as Christians

The evidence of that cost is that just ONE GENERATION AGO ...

- We used to pray in schools each morning.
- We used to say "Merry Christmas", not "Happy Holidays"
- We used to think killing babies in the womb was murder.
- We used to know the difference between a man and a woman.
- We used to agree on the Bible as the source of absolute truth.
- We used to let teachers, not men in dresses, read to our kids.
- We used to give authority over our children to parents.
- We used to attend church to worship God; not to be entertained.
- We used to think men should not get married to each other.
- We used to believe sex was sacred to the marriage bed.

We now reap the consequences of those "used to's" by teaching our children untruths like prayer is not important, that Christmas is about Santa Claus, that Abortion is a "woman's choice", that you can pick your gender; have sex with anyone anytime you wish, and that the truth is whatever you make it.

And men are behind this ungodly mess because ...

- Instead of spiritually leading their families, men are LEAVING them
- Instead of seeking sexual purity they are instead addicted to PORNOGRAPHY
- Instead of standing against sins of abortion and homosexuality they IGNORE them
- Instead of standing against cultural immorality, they have PASSIVELY allow it

Christian men are supposed to take on the Christian name

THEN

Christian men are supposed to absorb the Christian knowledge provided by their pastors and the bible, THEN ... importantly but apparently missed along the way

Christian men are to take on the CHARACTER of a Christian ... or as Billy Graham put it:

"We aren't only called to BECOME Christians; we are called to BE Christians."

FIND A MIRROR

So what happened? How did we move so far from God in just a generation or two?

How come we now have so many men with the "name" Christian, but lacking the character or behavior of one?

As my old boss used to say to me, when I was stuck in a mess that I had made myself "Find a mirror" Yup, in this case the problem is us ... of to be more specific Men!

Preachers and teachers of the word were supposed to equip the flock to GROW in the MATURITY of their faith

– over the years, many DID NOT

Christ following men have always been called to WORK OUT their faith in the process called progressive SANCTIFICATION

– many HAVE NOT understood the challenge OR accepted the call

It seems so polar opposite to what you would expect from men, because by the design of God himself men are “doers”

- We create things
- We fix things
- We solve things
- We are not naturally inclined to sit on our hands ... we go and we do

And that “doing” is part of how we recognize the growth of our faith. A man who is growing closer to God WILL PRODUCE FRUIT as a reflection of that relationship. If faith without works is dead – then why do we have a whole generation of men that do the bare minimum spiritually?

I guess I’m not surprised why the message is rarely preached AND even more rarely taken to heart. After all, the message of holiness, MUST include the “cost” that Jesus warned His followers about.

Following Him, and pursuing holiness has COSTS:

- You’ll lose your self righteousness
- You have to lose your sins
- You will have to give up your plan for your life
- You will give up worldly favor and be demonized, chastised, hated, scorned and marginalized

I’ll paraphrase how this preaching might look: “Hey bud – you should pursue holiness ... oh, and by the way you’ll need to be ready for everybody to hate you, maybe lose some friends along the way, change the lifestyle you were in love with, drop that whole “proud of myself” attitude and spend a LOT more time focused on helping people other than yourself ... What do you say ... you in??

Yea – following Jesus is hard. If it wasn’t then MANY would be SUCCESSFUL at it. But Jesus himself told us that it’s a challenge:

Luke 13:24

"Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

I conducted research a few years ago when preparing to write a book about this very subject. The topic of “Holiness”, and I dug into what has been happening in the pulpits and in the hearts of men over the past 50 years. Here’s the cliff note answer of who dropped the ball

The answer? ... It was us

Every preacher who was afraid to challenge his men to pursue holiness – owns a piece of this outcome. Every man who says he’s a Christian but lives his life like he doesn’t have to do ANYTHING else after professing faith in Christ owns it as well.

Whether weak preaching, poor discipleship or passive men – it seems that not many have had the spiritual courage to share (as Paul Harvey used to say) “the rest of the story” with men Christian men

The “rest of the story” is, of course, that there is more to a relationship with Jesus, than simply saying the sinners prayer

- It’s the hard part
- It’s the “old man’s gotta first die” part
- It’s the “stop the sinning” part
- It’s the “dump your plan” and get aligned with His plan part
- It’s the herculean task of “being more like Christ” and less like you

It’s the part where you pick up YOUR cross every day and take on the biggest challenge you will EVER accept in your entire life. It’s what pastors call the process of “Sanctification.”

It’s the part of being a Christian where we “change our conduct, to fit our identity”

I’ll say that again, because it’s the essence of my message today

Christian men – ALL of them - are called to behave in a new way, do things that reflect their newfound love of all things related to God’s kingdom.

Ultimately, it’s the challenge laid out by Jesus himself when he said these 2 words in Luke 9:23: “Follow Me.”

And THAT ... in a nutshell, is exactly what the Men of Covenant program is designed to do Help a man who, having been saved by grace, is now following Jesus

MEN OF COVENANT

So my goals this morning are twofold:

1) To explain what “Men of Covenant” is – the mechanics of it

AND ...

2) To tie it back to what “follow me” looks like in a man committed to Christ

Let’s dig in to the program called “Men of Covenant” ... and you’ll quickly see that these two subjects are intimately tied together.

The Men of Covenant mission statement is “Shepherding Men in the Pursuit of Holiness”

Our mission the reason why we exist is all encapsulated in this mission statement. It’s simple really. We exist to do all we can to help men “get holier as they follow Jesus”

We take Paul’s directive in Philippians 2:12 very seriously

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out** your own salvation with fear and trembling”

BEST CHANCE

The Men of Covenant program is designed to give a man the BEST CHANCE to grow in holiness. We do this by providing a road map of sorts – we call it our “Member Guide” and it’s a small but powerful 50 page booklet that distills the concept of holiness into it’s most critical elements.

PURPLE LINE

It’s sole purpose it to help a man KNOW ABOUT, FIND, FOLLOW and STAY ON that purple line that takes him from worldly to holy and from old man to new creation.

It’s a sad commentary that I spent more than 50 years of my life, NEVER knowing there was a line to follow at all. Never knowing there was more to accepting Jesus as my savior.

Now ... we know that nothing can happen in a man without the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit, BUT the Men of Covenant organization, design, teaching and preaching all align to help men grow in holiness. We trust the Holy Spirit to be the engine to drive our efforts, but Paul’s words “work out” means to we are called to do OUR part as well.

TWO PARTS

Men of Covenant has 2 parts:

- 1) Large group meeting – 12 sessions per year, first Saturday of each month (30-50 guys)
 - These monthly large group meetings are called the Men of Covenant Meetings
 - We have a breakfast, share testimonies and hear from a speaker on the subject of – Holiness
 - Speakers include: Pastors, Authors, Navy Seals, Farmers, and Evangelists – all with amazing stories of lives reshaped by pursuing God and a holy life
- 2) Small group meetings – Minimum 12 meetings per year, dates vary, held in private homes (4-7 guys)
 - These monthly small group meetings are called the Band of Brothers

Every session, be it the larger group or Band of Brothers meeting all leverage the same 3 ways to drive toward holiness:

1. We Pray and Worship
2. We Study of God’s Word
3. We practice Fellowship & Discipleship

BAND OF BROTHERS

Although both parts of Men of Covenant are important, the most powerful impact, the biggest miracles and the best blessings come from Band of Brothers sessions

The meetings are loosely scripted and every man has a copy of the very same card that was handed to you all this morning. One side has the Men of Covenant 5 pledges and the other shows the Band of Brothers meeting agenda. It helps leaders and members stay on track

The meeting design is focused on sharing your struggles in the pursuit of holiness with brothers in Christ who are most certainly “in the same boat” – it might be confessing sin, asking for prayer, praying for one another or gentle correction

The leader selected for that month will share a short message to get the ball rolling and set a topic for discussion – again, the messages are related to “the pursuit of holiness”

Finally, a small amount of time is taken to review a chapter in the Member Guide by using 3 simple discussion questions – this part of the meeting gets all new men acquainted with the book and the “purple line” we referenced a few minutes ago.

The bulk of the time in the meeting is focused on sharing and praying with and for each other. This is the true value of the Band of Brothers. Miracles follow these meetings. We have seen men healed of disease, men delivered from sin and men who build a deep trust with each other where none existed before.

Leaders in the room

If you agree there is a need for men to pursue holiness.

If you agree there is much more to the Christian walk for a man AFTER he is saved.

If you agree that the world is made a better place when a man becomes holier

AND ... if you don't already have a men's ministry

... then the Men of Covenant program is available for you NOW and it's FREE

If you are a pastor or teacher and did NOT get a copy of this book - [see me afterwards for a free copy](#)

TURNKEY AND FREE

1. Order a few books
2. Invite a speaker on the subject of holiness
3. Schedule a breakfast meeting
4. Share the website with your men
5. Use the provided presentation materialsx
6. Boom – your first session in underway
7. Following that session, you can begin to build out your Band of Brothers teams

If you DO have a men's ministry, consider increasing your focus on the all important concept and process of holiness.

Now I want to address the other Men in the room ... If you agree that our proper role is to pursue holiness

AND if you are not already involved in a mens ministry

... then join us at Men of Covenant the FIRST SATURDAY of each month

- Get a free hot breakfast
- Meet other like minded men
- Hear a message that aligns with your faith and journey to please God
- Leave a better man, a more equipped man, a more loving man and a holier man

HEBREWS 12:14 (BUT DO NOT READ IT YET!)

I'll close by sharing something written in 1877 by J.C Ryle in his benchmark book titled "Holiness." Second only to the bible and the men within it, I believe Ryle has written the definitive book on the subject

Near the middle of his book, he uses Hebrews 12:14 to make a powerful point:

"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; **without holiness no one will see the Lord.**"

Ryle goes on to say ...

"Alas, what searching, sifting words are these! What thoughts come across my mind as I write them down! I look at the world and see the greater part of it lying in wickedness. I look at professing Christians and see the vast majority having nothing of Christianity but the name. I turn to the Bible, and I hear the Spirit saying, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Surely it is a text that ought to make us consider our ways and search our hearts."

Ryle continues by asking a series of questions directed to ALL men who claim the title "Christian"

... and if you'll permit me, I'll attempt to deliver HIS message with the same tone and sense of urgency that he might have done it 150 years ago:

"The most pertinent question to ask is this: **"Are you holy?"**

Listen, I pray you, to the question I put to you this day. Do you know anything of the holiness of which I have been speaking?

I do not ask whether you attend your church regularly, whether you have been baptized and received the Lord's Supper, whether you have the name of Christian.

I ask something more than all this: **are you holy, or are you not?**

I do not ask whether you approve of holiness in others, whether you like to read the lives of holy people and to talk of holy things and to have on your table holy books, whether you mean to be holy and hope you will be holy some day.

I ask something further: **are you yourself holy this very day, or are you not?**

And why do I ask so straightly and press the question so strongly? I do it because the Scripture says, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It is written, it is not my fancy; it is the Bible, not my private opinion; it is the word of God, not of man: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord"

Men – I want to be able to answer "YES" to Ryle's burning question
I want the Holy Spirit to drive my ever growing holiness

- I want that list of "we used to's" to become "we now do's"
- I want that list of evil statistics to move into the Godly column
- I want men to take back their rightful role as spiritual leaders

Only a Holy Spirit driven, unending pursuit of holiness can do that
... and the fruit of this pursuit? What happens when men become more holy?

- God is glorified
- Our families are blessed
- The church is strengthened
- Our brothers are disciplined
- This country is changed to the glory of God

Teachers and Pastors here today – our role is to shepherd men to be holy
Christians men here today – your role is to pursue that holiness with all your heart

Because without Holiness, no man shall see the Lord

Amen and thank you all

END END END END END

200 attendees (25 pastors/leaders)

Vision:

Each man to leave knowing the gifts of Spirit in him or at least be seeking to find, know and begin using those gifts to disciple the next generation of followers of Christ.

Short Sessions:

To give some men an example of where they can start