

HOLINESS

FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE

GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

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CONTENTS

About This Guide	4
1. Sanctification Overview	5
2. It's Everywhere	6
3. Seven Approaches to Holiness	7
4. Sanctification and Sex	8
5. Sanctification and Healing	9
6. Images of Sanctification	10
7. Growing toward Entire Sanctification	11
8. God's Part in Sanctification	12
9. Our Part in Sanctification	13
10. How to Know You're Sanctified	14
11. Continual Cleansing	15
12. Understanding the Sanctified Life	16
13. Sidetracks from Holiness	17
14. Holiness and Gender	18
15. A Sanctified Church	19
16. Personal Testimonies	20



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The following questions equip small group leaders for going through *Holiness for Ordinary People*, 25th anniversary edition, using a group discussion model. There are a variety of ways to package the book for small group studies. Here are some examples.

Sixteen weeks. One chapter a week as the book lays them out. This is the most comprehensive way to study the book.

Six weeks for a group already familiar with holiness. Review chapters 3–5 and 13–15.

Six weeks for a basic introduction. Review chapters 1–2, 6, and 8–12.

Six weeks for a mixed background group unfamiliar with holiness. Review chapters 2–5, then close with chapter 1.

Four weeks for a comprehensive collapsing of the book. Review chapters 1–2, 4–6, 7–10, and 11–16. Use a group model to assign the chapters to readers who summarize their reading to the class before the group leader selects one or two discussion question from each chapter.

The discussion questions here are meant for the leader to use with a group and are based on the notion that everyone has read the chapter before coming to the group. However, group leaders should give a short summary of the chapter to kick off the meeting. The questions are designed in a sequence, but many can be omitted without serious loss and, of course, questions can be revised or others can be added to strengthen the relevancy in your own group and location.



SANCTIFICATION OVERVIEW

1

1. *Holiness for Ordinary People* describes a religious experience (usually after conversion) where God gives new power to a Christian in order to live a holy life. This book often uses the phrase *entire sanctification* for the experience and the word *holiness* for the resulting life, but there are numerous other terms or phrases for this second experience. While there are nuances between the various terms, in this book we generously consider them all describing the same thing. To start the discussion, have the group list as many of these terms or phrases as they can. For example: being filled with the Spirit, baptized with the Holy Ghost, the deeper life, the upper room experience, the Spirit-filled life, Pentecostal power, perfect love, living in the Spirit, a second work of grace, and the fully devoted life, etc.

2. Most books end with a summary; this book begins with one. After reading chapter 1, how would you describe the point of the book in a single sentence? Encourage short answers.

3. While the book (and some denominations) uses the term *entire sanctification* a lot for this experience, it describes a life of constant growth. How can you be more than entire? Can you think of any other examples where a thing is complete yet still growing?

4. What term or phrase do you prefer out of those you have discussed?

5. After reading this chapter, make a list of the things that are *not* being said about sanctification.

6. The central summary statement of chapter 1 (and the book) is that holiness is perfect love and not always perfect performance. Holy living is not about absolute perfection but allows developing maturity. Can you think of an act where love was perfect yet the deed was less than perfect?

7. If holiness is loving God and others, how does this book suggest a person can actually become completely full of love?

8. Do you know anyone anywhere in the world—past or present—who was completely full of love?



IT'S EVERYWHERE 2

1. Of all the Scripture quoted in chapter 2, which one jumped out at you as the clearest in urging people to be holy or sanctified?
2. Of the stories about the holiness quest through history after Bible times, what stood out to you as a new or surprising story of seeking holiness?
3. Make a list together of holy things in the Bible: actual holy places, holy objects, holy times, and holy people or groups or people. What does this list tell you?
4. Looking again at the list you made, what would a brief definition of holiness be that you could use to describe holy in all of these cases?
5. Holiness is everywhere in the Bible. What do you think is different about holiness in the New Testament verses the Old Testament?
6. When Jesus said, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48), what could he possibly mean? How would you explain this verse to a teenager? Would you explain it any differently to a middle-aged person? If so how?
7. Jesus gave the two great commandments (Mark 12:29–30) in clear speech. How might these commandments be explained if they are impossible to keep?
8. Some Christians believe that God never commands what he won’t enable. If this is true, what are the various ways (channels, means of grace, enablement) God provides to actually obey what he has commanded?



SEVEN APPROACHES TO HOLINESS 3

1. Of the seven approaches to holiness listed in the chapter, which one are you most familiar with from today's church culture?
2. List all seven approaches together and see if you can remember which denominations or theological groups seem to favor most.
3. The seven approaches are listed in the chapter from the least actual change in a person's life, through gradual change, to swift and dramatic change. The two holiness questions are: Can God actually change a person so that they are different, and how much? Pick a few of the seven approaches and answer these two questions for each.
4. Taking only the final three approaches, list one or two positives and cautions about the approach.
5. If there are so many different approaches to holiness, how can you decide which one is right? Do you pick the one that best suits you? How can an ordinary Christian decide between these various views? Which one is already true of you? How does an ordinary Christian decide these things when other Christians differ?



SANCTIFICATION AND SEX 4

1. Brainstorm your own “bumper sticker names” for the four responses a Christian might give another dealing with sin. Write them so everyone can see them.
2. Which of the four responses do you think is the most popular among Christians today?
3. Which do you think is most rare?
4. Can you think of Scripture passages that seem to fit with each response?
5. Brainstorm a list of fifteen sins, urging variety in severity and kind. After you have fifteen, ask the group if they think people use different approaches depending on the kind and severity of a sin. (For instance, many Christians expect immediate victory over adultery or child sexual abuse, while they expect gradual recovery over gossiping or a critical spirit.) Why do many Christians switch their view of how quick a sin can be recovered from, depending on the sin?
6. Talk about the situation mentioned in this chapter where a man like Josh has fallen in love/lust with someone who is not his wife. Ask the group how such a man would get spiritual power from God? Make a list of the group’s advice.
7. Talk specifically about the fourth approach: deliverance from inclination. This is the traditional promise holiness preaching has taken. Ask if anyone in the group can share a testimony of a Christian who was not only delivered from the practice of a certain sin, but was delivered from the drive to commit that sin.



SANCTIFICATION AND HEALING 5

1. Invite someone to share a story they have of instantaneous healing in their life or that of a friend.
2. Invite a story of slow healing in their own life or that of a friend.
3. Invite a story of how God used human means for healing.
4. How do you think sanctification is like healing?
5. Why do you think God sometimes delays sanctification? Why doesn't he immediately give you power over sin the moment you ask?
6. What sort of human means does God use to sanctify people and make them holy?
7. Invite people in your group to give a testimony (their own or another's) of being "spiritually healed" of an individual sin—either slowly or quickly.
8. Ask if there is anyone in your group who would be willing to share how they actually experienced a cleansing of the Holy Spirit that was so broad and deep that their entire life changed from that point on. In today's culture, people love testimonies, but there is extraordinary prejudice against anyone who testifies to victory since it is interpreted by many as a judgment against those who do not have that victory. This makes most Christians today more willing to confess to their secret sins than the victory God has given them. We live in an age when it is more popular to testify to our sins than God's power, so look for people to testify, but don't be surprised if they don't want to.



IMAGES OF SANCTIFICATION 6

1. This chapter had four Bible images and two ordinary illustrations of sanctification. Start by listing the four Bible references (human sacrifice, crucifixion, cleansing by washing, drunkenness) and ask what aspect of sanctification each of these four Bible images emphasize most?
2. How can these images be misinterpreted by taking them too far?
3. Why might human beings naturally shrink from these images?
4. Sanctification has both an instantaneous element and a continuing element. Describe how there is a continuing element following the at-once element in each of these images.
5. What additional lessons can you get from the illustration of a magnet?
6. What lessons can be drawn about sanctification from the life-house-deed illustration?
7. Invite anyone to share their own testimony of a time in their life when, as a Christian, they came to a place where they totally surrendered their life to God and sensed that everything had changed. As an alternative, if you know someone outside the class who experienced this powerful work by God, you might invite them in to share their testimony.



GROWING TOWARD ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

7

1. Start by drawing an umbrella with the word *sanctification* on it. Add the usual five stages of sanctification underneath (initial, progressive, entire, continual, and final). What do you remember from Sue's story about each of these stages of this sanctification journey?
2. Invite anyone to share their testimony of how they experienced clear dramatic changes at their salvation (initial sanctification).
3. Invite people to share a story of how they grew spiritually after becoming a Christian and a story of how God changed them gradually so that they are now transformed.
4. Most Christians can tell of their victory over an individual sin, but the book describes entire sanctification as gaining victory of the inclination to all (willful) disobedience. Why do you think most Christians today have doubts that this is possible?
5. How might gradual sanctification that happens before entire sanctification be different than continual sanctification occurring after?
6. If all Christians will experience final sanctification before heaven, why should you care about spiritual growth while you are still alive? Make a list of several reasons why.
7. What individual temptation are you facing right now that you need God's deliverance power from? If the group is not ready for this, simply close in prayer mentioning unnamed temptations where God can give deliverance. Ask this only if your group is very open and vulnerable with each other.




GOD'S PART IN SANCTIFICATION 8

1. What are the two basic things the chapter says that God does in entire sanctification (or use other terms: filling of the Spirit, the baptism of the Spirit, the upper room experience, or the deeper life)? What are the two primary actions God takes in this experience (power for serving, power over sin, or power and purity)?
2. What are two ways of understanding sin in the Bible and theology that is vital to any teaching on overcoming sin?
3. How would you explain the idea that it is possible for a Christian to live above sin to someone not in this group who has not read the book?
4. Churches (and individuals) who teach on the Spirit-filled life tend to emphasize the power-over-sin aspect of the experience or the power-for-service aspect. Describe how a preacher from each “tilt” in emphasis might describe the Spirit-filled life in a sermon.
5. “Most believers sooner or later recognize one or both of these problems: (1) there is sin they can’t beat; or (2) there is power they don’t have” (p. 106). If it is *not* true that God can give them power over sin and power for service, what kind of life is the alternative? Try to describe it. There *is* an alternative, since the vast majority of average Christians live this sort of Christian life. Your job here is just to describe it and let it go.
6. Who does this work in you? God, of course, but which member of the Trinity takes this sort of action?
7. Since this chapter describes only God’s part in this spiritual work (granting power over sin and power for service), let’s end by peeking ahead and seeing what the two parts you play are in this work of God’s grace—consecration and faith.



OUR PART IN SANCTIFICATION 9

1. This book describes entire sanctification as a work God does in partnership with us—God does the work completely but not without our cooperation and participation. How was our initial salvation also a partnership work—what role did we play in initial salvation? What role did God play?
2. What are the two “parts” you can play in becoming Spirit-filled or entirely sanctified?
3. Of the many denominations and parachurch groups that teach this experience, some emphasize either God’s part or your part in this work of grace. Share how one might describe sanctification if you emphasized God’s part. Now if you emphasized your part. Which approach are you personally familiar with?
4. Consecration is willfully committing all of yourself to God. What songs or hymns focused on this act of consecration? If you can’t name any, find a hymnal and look some up together or search the Internet. What Scripture passages talk about consecrating our all?
5. How is a total consecration to God like a wedding? How is it different?
6. Find Bill Bright’s tract “Have you made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life?” online. Examine and make several observations as a group on how this little tract describes total consecration and the Spirit-filled life.
7. Being saved by faith and becoming Spirit-filled or sanctified by faith are similar in what ways?
8. Considering the last two chapters—God’s part (power over sin and power for service) and our part (consecration and faith)—what other elements might also be considered that affects the package of receiving from God (timing, atmosphere of faith/unbelief, burned over faith, past abuses)?



HOW TO KNOW YOU'RE SANCTIFIED 10

1. How could a person know they are saved?
2. What are the two kinds of total consecrations described in the book? How might a person experiencing each of these describe entire consecration differently to others?
3. How would you describe what the book means by “power over willful sin”? How is this concept of sin similar to premeditated sin or different from it?
4. Some describe this Spirit-filled experience for Christians with the phrase “perfect love.” Where in the Bible would you find teaching that love is more than a duty and God actually promises to fill us with love?
5. Obedience as a passion of life can come from the Lord, but obedience itself can spring from other sources that are different from Spirit-filling. What are some of the other sources of (external) obedience Christians could experience (laws, rules, self-discipline, culture, etc.)?
6. The witness of the Spirit is mentioned as a way to know you are filled with the Spirit and sanctified—an internal witness. How could you test such an internal witness to make sure you weren't just fooling yourself by clever self-deception?



CONTINUAL CLEANSING 11

1. This chapter emphasizes that the *life* of sanctification is equally as important as the *event* of being filled with the Spirit. Open your group discussion by inviting married members of your group to tell stories about how they emphasized the event of their wedding at first, then more the marriage itself instead of the wedding.

2. The book claims a completely sanctified person can still experience times of spiritual dryness. What are some of the causes of spiritual dryness? Is there anyone in this group willing to tell of such a time in their life? Do you know of another's dryness testimony you could tell?

3. Holiness teachers and preachers made a big deal about a one-time total commitment to God, yet this chapter reminds us that this consecration must be continual and repeated—a living sacrifice. What other commitments in life usually have a one-time event followed by continual and repeated commitment?

4. We are saved by faith and filled with the Spirit by faith as well. How might a person be filled with the Spirit and, walking the Spirit-filled life, then lose their faith that they are Spirit-filled? How might a person avoid this? What should a person do if it happens?

5. Why might God have designed it that you should be continually and repeatedly filled with the Spirit and not only once?

6. This chapter makes entire sanctification, or being filled with the Spirit, look a lot more gradual and continual than the other chapters. Why do you think that most Christians don't amble gradually into the Spirit-filled life? In other words, do most Christians grow gradually and steadily into perfect love? The fact is most don't. Most get stuck somewhere along the way, often after gaining victory over the "big bad sins." These "stuck" Christians are the ones who finally recognize that there is sin they can't beat and power they don't have and are ripe to hear more about this grace from God.



UNDERSTANDING THE SANCTIFIED LIFE

12

1. What are some of the reasons why it is difficult in the world today to tell others you have been filled with the Spirit and sanctified?
2. Some have made wild claims that a Spirit-filled person can never be tempted again. How would you answer that?
3. Jesus was tempted yet did not sin. When does temptation turn into sin?
4. If a person was filled with the Holy Spirit then willfully, with premeditation, sinned against God, what should they do to get back to where they were?
5. If the Holy Spirit has made a Christian's love complete for God and others, how could he or she ever grow anymore? What could be more complete than complete? Think of an illustration to explain this.
6. The Bible speaks of being both Spirit-controlled and self-controlled. What is the difference? How do they both relate to each other?
7. What are some cautions (from the book and your own thoughts) you might give to a person who believes the Holy Spirit completely filled them?



SIDETRACKS FROM HOLINESS 13

1. Introduce this chapter's discussion by asking your group to think of sidetracks, abuses, or extremes springing from other Christian doctrines: like security of a believer, spiritual gifts, God's sovereignty, human free will, God's grace, etc.
2. How might legalism be associated with holy living? Can you tell any stories from your own past like the book did? From other places? From the present?
3. Explain what the book called "two-trip-ism." Can you explain how this sort of approach can apply to being saved?
4. How would you describe a church that took holiness "creedalism" to the extreme?
5. What might tend to nudge people who wanted to live a holy life to separate from the world? Can you tell of any examples from history or your own experience?
6. All of the above stories are from the past. What are today's sidetracks, abuses, or extremes in the church when it comes to holiness and sanctification? What will future generations eventually say are the extremes and excesses you practiced in religion?



HOLINESS AND GENDER 14

1. Make a list of the top ten sins that you hear most mentioned in sermons.
2. Assign each of the ten sins above into one of three categories: more common for men, more common for women, and equally common to both. After finishing, what did you discover?
2. If you made a list of the top ten sins of men, what would you put on that list? What would you list as the top ten sins of woman?
3. How would you describe the sin of hiding mentioned in the book?
4. The total surrender God calls for in entire consecration asks you to set aside anything you might make first place in your life—even good things. What are the things women are more likely to let become first place in their lives? What about men?
5. How might the gender of a preacher affect his or her preaching on sin?
6. How does the chapter suggest women often experience being filled with the Spirit differently from men?
7. Is there a woman in this group who would give a testimony about her full surrender to God and his filling with the Spirit?



A SANCTIFIED CHURCH 15

1. It is hard for modern people to imagine corporate sin. We tend to consider everything individualistic. What are some of the ways Israel sinned as a group in the Bible, ways that brought God's judgment on them as a group?
2. Can you think of some ways nations have sinned through history?
3. What are some examples of how Israel, the Romans, the United States, or any other nation through history have acted holy?
4. Can you think of some examples of how a local church could sin? (Be careful of telling stories here of nearby churches or in your own church.)
5. What are examples of how a local church can be holy?
6. The book gave a series of corporate means of grace—ways God can sanctify a local church as a group. Describe how several of these happen or tell about a time when you felt like corporate means of grace was happening.
7. Are there other collective experiences you'd add that could sanctify a church?



PERSONAL TESTIMONIES 16

1. There are nine personal testimonies in this final chapter, running the range of denominations and doctrinal positions. They all experienced something that radically changed their life as a Christian. Even if your group has not read the chapter, have nine people will read one testimony each, then share the testimony from what you remember.
2. From these testimonies, what are the common threads that run through them all?
3. Invite any in your group who would be willing to venture a similar testimony to share (maybe even arrange one or two ahead of time).
4. Turn now and guide everyone to read the Afterword, beginning on page 209.
5. Close the entire study by inviting group members to share a “what’s next testimony”—where they see themselves headed in their spiritual life after this study. Let this be totally open-ended and affirm and encourage everyone in the group as they move forward spiritually.