



A SINNER'S
GUIDE TO
HOLINESS



'HOLINESS' MAY SEEM A LONG WAY OFF. BUT
GOD HAS A PLAN FOR GETTING YOU THERE.



John Chapman



A SINNER'S
GUIDE TO
HOLINESS

John Chapman

Guidebooks for Life

Bible-based essentials

for your Christian journey

A Sinner's Guide to Holiness is the first in a new series of straightforward, practical Christian books from Matthias Media. As the series unfolds, it will deal with the important, nuts-and-bolts topics that Christians need to know about as we walk each day with our Master.

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HOLINESS

1. Where it begins



I SUPPOSE IF YOU ARE anything like me your attitude to holiness goes something like this: “Oh God, make me holy, but not too holy and not too soon.”

Lurking deep down inside each of us is the thought that if we were to be made holy, in the way that God is holy, then there could well be some things we very much want for ourselves from which we would be excluded. We would miss out on something good that we could otherwise have. We fear that God may call on us to do something we will hate. We suspect, half-unconsciously, that God may not have our best interests at heart after all. He may interrupt our quest for money, or for popularity, or for success, to our great loss and disadvantage.

This thinking, although natural, is of course wrong, and it is one basic reason why there is such an



urgent need for us to consider the subject of holiness. One major purpose of writing this book is simply to remind us again that “no good thing does [the LORD] withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps 84:11). To be holy—that is, to be like God in character—is to live the ‘good life’.¹ If we desire to live that good life, then our understanding of this subject should not be considered an optional extra. We should read on. Even more importantly, we should pray for understanding of holiness and pray that God will indeed cause us to be holy.

What is holiness?

What then is holiness? Holiness is a term that is regularly used not of people but of God. He is often referred to as “the Holy One of Israel”.² The idea behind such a title is that God is entirely other, distinct and separate from everything he has made.

When the word ‘holiness’ is used in connection with God, it’s a bit like an expanding suitcase. The more you know about him, the bigger the concept of holiness becomes—and the more meaning you

1 John 10:10

2 This reference occurs mainly in the Psalms and Isaiah. See, for example, Psalm 71:22, 78:41 and 89:18, and Isaiah 1:4, 5:19 and 24, 10:20, 12:6, 17:7, 29:19, 30:11, 12 and 15, 31:1, etc.



discover is packed into this one word ‘holiness’. Because God is great, speaking of his holiness is to open up a massive subject where we will discover that we see in part rather than in whole. This should not put us off, however. If we really reached the point where we thought we’d comprehended everything there is to know about God, there is also a very good chance that we would be getting it wrong.

I want to consider two essential characteristics of God’s holiness. I want to consider, firstly, God’s holiness as power and might. Secondly, I want to consider God’s holiness in terms of his perfect purity.

Holiness as power and might

God is holy—separate, distinct, and other—in his power and in his might. He is not the same as us. We must realize from the outset that he is different; and different in that he is far greater and more powerful than either we could be or we could even hope to grasp hold of.

This difference or separateness—this *holiness*—is well illustrated in the book of Job. The book of Job is named after its principal character, and, except for a bit at the beginning and a bit at the end, it is simply a long poem. It opens with a good man who, as well as being good, is also healthy, wealthy and wise. He has a large family, and his many children are a source of great delight to their father. Into the bargain we may add that Job is godly—something that the writer of Job



is at pains to insist on from the very beginning.³

However, in one fell swoop the wheels completely fall off Job's semitrailer. Job's property is plundered and stolen. His houses burn down. All his children are killed in an accident. His health fails. He himself becomes so sick and so badly disfigured that when his three friends visit him they can hardly recognize that it is Job.

Job's three friends are so distressed at the sight they see, that after a period of silence (which is their most helpful contribution) they feel obligated to make some theological reflections on his condition and position. They sum up the situation, and suggest to Job that his present troubles must be because of God's judgement on him for something very sinful that he has done. Job immediately protests that he isn't any more sinful than they are. They all feel the need to speak, however, and their message is fairly uniform. They speak one at a time and Job answers them each time. So while they only have to speak once, he has to answer three times. It is a long and tedious process he has to go through, as he hears the same arguments again and again from three slightly different, but essentially identical, perspectives.

Because all three friends take the same wrong-headed line, by the end of the conversations Job has been almost driven to distraction. His suffering has

3 Indeed, the point about Job's righteousness is made by God himself in Job 1:8.



been greatly compounded. He knows that what they are saying is totally incorrect; he sees that their theological understanding of the situation is simplistic, and that it has completely missed the mark. The three friends put us in mind of the saying that for every complex problem there is a simple solution—a solution that is almost certainly wrong.

I almost forgot to tell you that when all three friends have finally worn themselves out, yet another friend comes and sticks his oar into the discussion. He adds nothing new, but manages to intensify Job's suffering by underlining and repeating what all the others have already said.

In chapter 23 of the book, we read as follows:

Then Job answered and said:

“Today also my complaint is bitter;
my hand is heavy on account of my groaning.
Oh, that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come even to his seat!
I would lay my case before him
and fill my mouth with arguments.
I would know what he would answer me
and understand what he would say to me.
Would he contend with me in the greatness of
his power?
No; he would pay attention to me.
There an upright man could argue with him,
and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.”
(Job 23:1-7)



Here, Job seems to be very close to blasphemy. “If I could find God, I would have it out with him” is what he is saying. It is almost as if he views himself as God’s equal.

This seems to me to be the inevitable result of Job accepting, at least in part, the wrong theology he is being told by his friends. Wrong theology always results in wrong behaviour. It is one reason why we should not despise the study of theology, as if it doesn’t matter what we believe. It is also a very good reason why we should pray regularly for those who teach us about God, and why we should study the Bible for ourselves with great diligence and care.

The book of Job continues for quite a few more chapters. Job’s friends persist with their simplistic line of theology, and Job continues stubbornly to respond that he is completely innocent of any wrongdoing.

Eventually, and after all have said their piece to the point of exhaustion, God appears to Job.

When reading the book of Job for the first time I remember thinking, “Surely, now that God has appeared, he will be able to say that Job was right all along, and that his friends were in the wrong”. It seems only right and fair, given what Job has suffered. But if this seems the obvious response on God’s part, we are in for a great surprise. God’s response doesn’t follow the expected pattern at all. It appears, indeed, that there is a far more important matter that needs immediate attention, and God has appeared in order to address it.



Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind
and said:

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words
without knowledge?
Dress for action like a man;
I will question you, and you make it known
to me. (Job 38:1-3)

I must say that to have God speak to me in this way would have made me feel extremely apprehensive. When I am told to ‘brace myself like a man’, I never imagine that what is about to happen will be a relaxing or pleasant experience. And indeed, God’s cross-examination of Job is very ‘heavy roller’ treatment. God begins by asking Job if he was present with him, helping him, when he created the cosmos.

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of
the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone,
when the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

“Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst out from the womb,
when I made clouds its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling band,



and prescribed limits for it
and set bars and doors,
and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stayed?'

"Have you commanded the morning since your
days began,
and caused the dawn to know its place,
that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,
and the wicked be shaken out of it?
It is changed like clay under the seal,
and its features stand out like a garment.
From the wicked their light is withheld,
and their uplifted arm is broken." (Job 38:4-15)

"Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades
or loose the cords of Orion?
Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season,
or can you guide the Bear with its children?
Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?
Can you establish their rule on the earth?"

"Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,
that a flood of waters may cover you?
Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go
and say to you, 'Here we are?'
Who has put wisdom in the inward parts
or given understanding to the mind?
Who can number the clouds by wisdom?
Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,
when the dust runs into a mass
and the clods stick fast together?" (Job 38:31-38)



It is a long speech; the longest in the book so far, and it is not over yet. God continues in this way for the rest of this and the following two chapters. It is totally and utterly overwhelming.

Listen then to how Job reacts to these words of God. This time, we are not at all surprised to find that the Job who speaks is a very different man from the one who first demanded that God would appear and give him justice.

Then Job answered the LORD and said:

“I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.’
I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:1-6)

As Job is presented with the greatness and awe of God’s majesty, he says something not too far different from, “I am little, and you are big. Little people shouldn’t tell big people where to get off”. That is, he has said what he should not have said, and he now humbly repents of stepping over this line.

One thing noticeably absent from God’s speech is



this: Job receives no immediate answer to the question ‘Why?’ The reason for his suffering is not given. He does not even learn at this point whether he or his friends were right in their assessment of his condition and its causes. Rather, his question fades into the background, lost and forgotten in the face of the *otherness* of God, his holiness, greatness, and power.

Because of this, we must conclude that Job’s ‘repentance’ is not because of some moral sin, obvious or hidden. He repents not for some specific wrong thing that he has done in the past, but because he has failed to treat God as he deserves. In his speech-making, he had made his demands as if he and God were almost equals. Now he is reminded, and has come to terms with the reality, that he is not able to demand God’s action. God is God, and Job is not. Job is to relate to God as God really is, not as an equal. Job is to relate to God in full recognition that God is infinitely greater than Job in power, might and holiness.

This in turn demonstrates a very important aspect of our response to the holiness of God.

During the course of my ministry I have met unbelievers who say to me, “I would become a follower of Jesus provided that he would do such and such”; or “I would start believing in God if only he would fulfil this condition or provide this or that proof”. This thinking is both foolish and wrong-headed. It demonstrates that the one speaking has simply not come to terms with God’s holiness. The fact of the matter is that God



is God and we are not. We are his creatures, nothing more. We are not the Creator, and we have no right to impose any terms or conditions upon him or upon the nature of his existence, or upon the way he must behave towards us.

It is part of the extraordinary blindness of humans that we persist in believing the lie—first perpetrated in the Garden of Eden—that if we disobey God we can then go on to be his equals.⁴ We argue with God; we choose to revise his words and his will whenever these things don't coincide with our wishes. We know the reality is that we are part of God's creation and not ourselves the Creator. Yet we still persist in thinking we are God's equals. This is both stupid and irrational.

This wrong and foolish attitude needs to be repented of, if ever we are to relate to God as we ought.

Holiness as purity

We turn now to consider a second aspect of God's holiness, and that is his moral purity.

God is without sin; evil forms no part of his character. This truth about God's holiness is well described by the prophet Habakkuk. Habakkuk, chapter 1, says:

You who are of purer eyes than to see evil
and cannot look at wrong,

4 Genesis 3:5



why do you idly look at traitors
and are silent when the wicked swallows up
the man more righteous than he? (Hab 1:13)

Notice that although Habakkuk is complaining bitterly, he simply takes it for granted that, of course, God is too pure to look on evil. This statement is so foundational and obvious to Habakkuk that he cannot see that it requires any proof at all. On this perfectly true assumption, he is then able to call upon God to do something to defeat evil, especially when it touches and affects the people of God.

This aspect of God's holiness is also illustrated in God's calling of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah writes, in chapter 6:

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. (Isa 6:1-4)



This is a vision of God in his inexpressible greatness and glory. See how Isaiah now responds to this terrifying vision of God in his majesty:

And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isa 6:5)

It has come home to Isaiah with great horror that he is sinful and God is pure. He cannot have relationship with God, unless first something fundamental changes. He is too tainted by sin and impurity to do anything else but wail in sheer terror. We remember God’s word to Moses: “You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live” (Ex 33:20).

What changes? Isaiah is helpless to act. We read on and see that it is God himself who takes action through one of his spiritual servants:

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for”. (Isa 6:6-7)

God is holy in the moral purity of his character: so perfectly holy that those who meet him must first have their sins dealt with.

We see this holiness of character once again in Luke, chapter 5:



On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch". And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord". For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men". And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. (Luke 5:1-11)

Peter is overwhelmed with the greatness of the Lord Jesus. It is as if he reasoned, "If he knows all about the lake and everything in it, what then does he know about me?" He becomes dimly aware of his own



sinfulness. Like Isaiah he is overtaken by the horror of this thought and he confesses his unworthiness. Like Isaiah, he understands that when he comes face-to-face with God, his sin must immediately be dealt with.

Similarly, when the apostle Paul encounters the risen Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road, he becomes aware of the depth of his rebellion against God. See how he recalls the incident when he describes it in Acts, chapter 26. Paul is addressing King Agrippa:

“In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’” (Acts 26:12-18)



What a terrible shock! Before this encounter, Saul (later named Paul, the Apostle) was so convinced that the Christians were mistaken that he did everything in his power to crush and destroy them. Then the risen Christ confronted him. The encounter was so literally awe-full that he and his companions fell to the ground, unable to continue in their quest. At that very moment, Paul saw and understood that the whole direction of his life had been in complete error. Something had to be done; his sin and rebellion had to be dealt with, and the direction of his life now had to go through a 180-degree change.

We meet a final example in the book of Revelation. Here, we are given a description of the risen Lord Jesus and his appearing to the Apostle John. In Revelation, chapter 1, John writes:

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."



Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. (Rev 1:9-16)

John reacts to the revealing of Jesus' glory and holiness in a way with which we are now familiar.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades." (Rev 1:17-18)

Each time the people involved in these encounters react, it is with an awareness of their own sinfulness, and with repentance. This is as it should be, and the response of repentance immediately brings comfort and reassurance from God who is as gracious and compassionate as he is holy.



We are not like God

Once we see God as he really is, we find that we are not like him. We cannot match him in strength and power, nor are we pure in heart like him.

What's more, we also discover that we are, at least in part, morally guilty for our failure to be like God in his holiness. Of course, in the matter of power and strength, we lack his holiness because we are his creatures; we are not the Creator. But in the other aspect of holiness, that is, purity of heart—well we lack this because of sinful decisions that we have made, and the awful consequences that follow from early bad choices.

The reality of our situation in the face of God's holiness is that we have turned our backs on him. We've pretended that we are his equals. We've argued with him and we've ignored him. This is what the Bible means when it says that we are 'sinful'. Instead of reflecting the image of our Creator, we have attempted to remake him in our image. Recognizing this error in ourselves is a basic and necessary step towards true holiness.

God's plan for us

God's plan for us is that we should be holy in character as he is holy in character. The following verses illustrate this clearly:



For [our fathers] disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. (Heb 12:10)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification⁵ ...
(1 Thess 4:3)

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom 8:28-30)

God's plan is that we will be holy, that all the Christlike characteristics will be formed in us. In fact, this is what life is about. The more I grow like Jesus, the more successful I am. The less like Jesus I am, the more I have failed in life. It has little to do with how much money I make, what my career is, how the family is. In the end the real thing in life is "are we holy as God is holy?"

It was quite a while in the Christian life before I realized this. I had my Christian life in one box closed up

5 The words 'sanctification', 'sanctified' and 'holy', together with the word 'saint', are all taken from the one Greek word in the original language of the New Testament.



tightly and the rest of my life in another. I thought I would be a successful Christian if I was successful in my career. In fact I believed that the more successful my career, the more I was living the Christian life the way God wanted it. It didn't occur to me to ask the question, "What would Christ do in this situation?" or even, "What does the Bible say?" I just pressed on with what I thought would make me a success. This is quite different to the Bible's understanding of living the holy life.

Holiness begins with repentance and faith

The only wise and intelligent response for humans encountering the holy God is repentance and faith.⁶ Indeed, this is the way we begin the Christian life. The apostle Paul holds up as a model for all Christians to follow the way the Thessalonians responded to the gospel. This is how he describes it:

For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess 1:9-10)

6 Acts 20:21



What is repentance?

Let us begin to clear away some of the dead wood from our thinking by being clear, firstly, about what repentance is *not*.

Repentance is *not*, at its core, simply a sense of sorrow—feeling sorry for something. Sorrow may *accompany* true repentance, but it is not the essence of it. A person may be genuinely repentant and yet not feel much sorrow at all, or indeed any deep emotion. On the other hand, it is possible to be full of sorrow and sadness, but not to have made a single step towards repentance.⁷ The person might simply feel sorrow over having been found out in a compromising situation!

Repentance must be understood, rather, as a complete change in direction. It is an about-face with regard to God, and with regard to the way we relate to him. In the past we may have ignored, disobeyed and even argued with God. Now, however, the repentant person has turned away from this behaviour and has decided to serve God in a way which is pleasing to him instead.

Did you notice how the Thessalonians responded? They “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”. They may well have previously worshipped the Greek or Roman gods. At heart, it is fair to assume that they were worshippers of themselves, simply projecting their desires and fears on to invented gods. That behaviour stopped, however, when they repented.

7 Hebrews 12:17



They rejected this former way of life and said, “From this day onward, I am serving the living and true God”.

Repentance is well illustrated by the story the Lord Jesus tells in Matthew:

“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today’. And he answered, ‘I will not’, but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir’, but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first”. Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.” (Matt 21:28-32)

Did you notice that the first son’s initial response was “I will not go and work in the vineyard today”? However, he changed his mind and went. He, in fact, repented.

May I ask you if you have done that?

It would be foolish to think that you could have a life of holiness and yet not have begun correctly. Now would be a wonderful time to begin, if you have not already done so. Why not stop reading for a moment and tell God that you wish to change your behaviour towards him and that, from today on, you will serve him as the true and living God?



Not only repentance, but faith as well

Repentance, however, is not enough! Let us look again at the example of the Thessalonians:

... and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess 1:10)

They not only repented, but they also transferred their trust⁸ from themselves and their idols, and instead placed their trust in the Lord Jesus to be their rescuer on the day of judgement.

No doubt Paul had told them they were sinners, in as much as they had not served God as their God, that this was a serious situation, and that, unless they repented, they would be lost on the future day of God's wrath.

No doubt Paul had also told them that Jesus had taken the punishment their sins deserved when he died on the cross for them, and that they could be completely forgiven if they put their trust in the promise that God would receive them on the merit of Jesus' death.

So their faith was firmly grounded in the facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Now the essential element of this faith *in Jesus*—the

8 In the original Greek of the New Testament, the words for 'faith', 'trust', and 'belief' are identical. They mean more than head knowledge; they refer to a complete and total reliance on the thing or person that is trusted.



faith that the Thessalonians had, and that we must also have—is not simply a vague spiritual feeling of some sort. The essential element of faith is not even how *much* of this trust that someone has. The essential element of faith in Jesus is that such faith is *in Jesus*; not in ourselves, not in anyone or anything else. This essential element is what actually makes faith effective, useful and attractive. If our faith is not *in Jesus*, then it is no different from the faith that any other person might have in money, success, family or achievement.

True faith, then, is when I stop trusting in myself and my own goodness, and transfer my trust to the God who promises to forgive me because of the death of Jesus.

Such faith is well illustrated in Romans 4. Abraham is held up for us as a man of faith. See how his faith is described:

No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. (Rom 4:20-21)

He was fully persuaded that God had power to keep his promise.

Are you fully persuaded that God will forgive and receive you on the basis that Christ's death is sufficient to cleanse you from every sin?⁹

9 1 John 1:7



Why not tell God that you agree that you need forgiveness and ask him to forgive you and enable you to put your trust in the death of Jesus?

To summarize the point that is being made here: a life of holiness begins with repentance and faith as the appropriate way of responding to the holiness of God.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE QUESTIONS ON THE following pages are designed to help you discuss the content of *A Sinner's Guide to Holiness* with others—your spouse, or a friend, or the small group you meet with at church. Use these questions as a way of talking back over the content of each chapter, and encouraging each other to put God's word into practice.

Chapter 1 — Holiness: Where it begins

1. What do you immediately think of when you hear the word 'holiness'? Is this accurate when compared to how the Bible speaks of it?

Read back over Job 38 (on pp. 15-16), Job 42:1-6 (on p. 17), Isaiah 6:1-7 (on pp. 20-21) and Revelation 1:9-18 (on pp. 24-25) before answering the following questions.

2. What aspects of God's character and nature struck you from these passages?
3. What are the reactions of the people mentioned, and what do they teach you about how you should respond to God?
4. Why should we seek holiness?



5. What does God do to help people who want to be holy as he is?
6. In response to what God has done, how do we begin a life of holiness?

Pray that God will make you holy.

Chapter 2 — Holiness: How it progresses

1. Why isn't it enough for Christians just to be forgiven their sins?
2. What makes it hard to continue to work at holiness?
3. Look again at Hebrews 12:1-17 (on pp. 39, 47, 50, 52).
 - What commands are given concerning holiness?
 - What examples?
 - What encouragements?
 - What warnings?
4. Read Romans 8:28-30 (on pp. 37-38). How do these verses help us understand the place of suffering in our lives, and how it leads to holiness?
5. What areas of your holiness do you need to work on?

Use the answers to these questions as a basis for prayer.

Chapter 3 — Holiness: Its fulfilment

1. Having read this chapter, give your impressions of what heaven will be like. How much is heaven a feature of your thinking? Is this good or bad? Why or why not?

