



GROWING IN HOLINESS

A study on how to fight sin
and pursue holiness.

Written by Luke Humphrey for Redeemer Al Ain, August 2022
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Introduction

This study is about growing in holiness. Specifically, it is about identifying sinful desires and activities that keep us from growing in holiness and replacing them with holy desires and activities that lead to growth in holiness.

The reason that holiness matters in the Christian life is that it trains us to be able to enjoy God in heaven fully. The 19th century Anglican bishop J. C. Ryle puts it well:

*Most men hope to go to heaven when they die; but few, it may be feared, take the trouble to consider whether they would enjoy heaven if they got there. Heaven is essentially a holy place; its inhabitants are all holy; its occupations are all holy. **To be really happy in heaven, it is clear and plain that we must be somewhat trained and made ready for heaven while we are on earth.***¹

We pursue holiness not because we think that we are better than other people—that itself is an unholy thought. Rather, we pursue holiness on earth because in doing so we are pursuing our eternal happiness in heaven.

The first two sessions to this study are about foundational ways of thinking. These sessions lay the foundation for what it means to be holy, why we should be holy, and how we should be holy. The next four sessions identify specific virtues to pursue and sins to turn away from in order to pursue holiness in different areas of our lives. These are not exhaustive strategies and they don't include every tool, but they will hopefully help us understand sin, holiness, and our own hearts as we pursue our eternal joy in God.

May God's people reflect God's holiness to a watching world.

¹ Ryle, J. C.. Holiness (p. 26). GLH Publishing. Kindle Edition. Emphasis added.

Session 1: Definition and motivation

What does it mean to grow in holiness and why should we want to grow in holiness?

Read:

1 Peter 1:14-16 — 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, **15** but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, **16** since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Discuss:

1. What does Peter say our standard for holiness is? How do we know what holiness looks like?
2. In light of this passage, why should we want to be holy? What is the motivation for holiness?

Read:

2 Corinthians 3:18 — 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Discuss:

1. According to this passage, what is our goal for growing as Christians? What should we want to grow towards?
2. Why do you think Christians should desire to be glorified or transformed? How do these things benefit us?

Read:

Ephesians 4:11-16 — 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to

mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **14** so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. **15** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Discuss:

1. Verse 15 says that we are to "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." What does this mean and why should we want this?
2. In this passage, what is the difference between immature children and mature men?
3. According to this passage, how do Christians grow?
4. What does it mean to speak the truth in love to one another?

Read:

Romans 12:1-2 — 1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Discuss:

1. How does the way that we live relate to worship?
2. Verse 2 tells us to (1) not be conformed to this world but (2) to be transformed by the renewal of your mind. What does this mean and how does it happen?
3. How does this text motivate us to live holy lives? Why should we want to live holy lives?

Read:

2 Peter 1:5-8 — 5 Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, **6** and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, **7** and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. **8** For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Discuss:

1. According to this text, what are some of the characteristics that we are supposed to pursue?
2. How does growing in these different characteristics benefit us?
3. What does it mean to be "ineffective" or "unfruitful" according to this passage?

Reflection

The Bible uses many different images to describe the way that Christians grow in holiness. We grow in godliness as we become more like our holy God (1 Pet 1:14-16). We become more Christ-like as we are conformed to the image of Jesus (Rom 8:29, 2 Cor 3:18). We become more mature in Christ and are no longer children (Eph 4:13-15). We live as living sacrifices to God (Rom 12:1). Each one of these images helps us to understand what it means to grow in *holiness*.

The overarching motivation for growing in holiness is the worship of God. We live for the glory of God. As we reflect his holiness he is glorified. But this is not the only reason why we should want to grow in holiness. Growing in holiness also benefits us—it is for our good. When we grow in holiness, we are able to persevere in the Christian life and are not tossed around like children. As we grow in holiness, we are assured that we have truly been born again and are moving towards God's purpose of our glorification.

Session 2: How do we grow in holiness?

What are different ways and strategies for how we can grow in holiness?

Read:

Philippians 2:12–13 — 12 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, **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Discuss:

1. What do you think it means to work out your salvation (CF. Eph 2:10)? How does this relate to growing in holiness?
2. According to this passage, why are Christians able to work out our salvation? How does this practically help us?

Act the Miracle of Sanctification

Philippians 2 teaches us the spiritual dynamics that enable us to grow in holiness. Christians are saved by faith in Christ. And this salvation is worked out in their lives through our obedience to God. This does not just happen; it involves *effort* and *action*. We **work out** our salvation.

However, just because our activity is required, we do not ultimately depend upon or rely upon our activity. We work **because God works**. Pastor John Piper calls this “acting the miracle of sanctification.” Our growing in holiness—our working out of our salvation—is God’s work in our lives. But it is God’s work *in and through us*. We work because he works. This keeps us dependent upon God and his grace as we work.

Read:

Jeremiah 17:5–8 — 5 Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. **6** He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. **8** He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

Discuss:

1. What is the difference between the man mentioned in verse 5 and the man mentioned in verse 7?
2. According to this passage, why is the second man able to bear fruit?

Read:

James 4:1-2 — 1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? **2** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

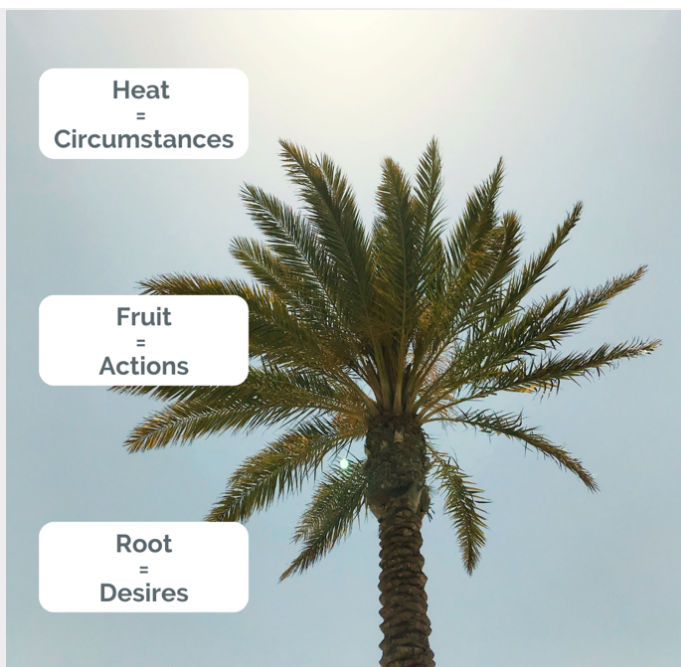
Discuss:

1. According to this passage, where do sinful actions come from?
2. What does it mean when James says that “your passions are at war within you”?
3. How does recognizing that sinful actions come from sinful desires/passions help us to understand our own lives?

The Tree Diagram

One of the images that Jeremiah 17 and James 4 help us to see is that of a tree with both roots and fruit. Sinful actions (unholy actions) don't exist apart from sinful desires. Just as good fruit or bad fruit is dependent upon the health of the tree's roots, so our external obedience is dependent upon what we desire.

The tree diagram (popularized by CCEF counselors) helps to show this.



Often we blame our sinful actions on our circumstances (we're tired, work was difficult, we were isolated, etc.). But these circumstances are merely heat that can cause strain. The problem with our sinful actions is our **sinful desires**. Our hearts are the problem.

Growing in holiness requires not just replacing bad actions with good actions, but replacing sinful desires with godly desires. Deep roots that love and trust God and take him at his Word are able to endure the heat of life's difficult circumstances.

Read:

1 Peter 1:13 — 13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 11:24–26 — 24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, **25** choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting

pleasures of sin. **26** He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Discuss:

1. According 1 Peter 1, how are we to live in a prepared and sober-minded way? What does this mean?
2. How was Moses able to refuse the fleeting pleasures of sin? What does this mean and how does it help us resist sin and grow in holiness?

Faith in Future Grace

The final word picture that we'll look at to help us know how to grow is faith in God's future grace. Faith means not only looking backwards and believing that Jesus died on the cross to pay for sins. It also looks forward to the reward of Christ and the greater pleasure that comes about through obedience to God. It looks at the promises that sin offers and sees them as the lies that they are in light of God's promises found his Word which are yet to come to pass.

Pastor John Piper explains in his book *Battling Unbelief* how we "wield the Word of God":

So when I say that we wield the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, what I mean is that we hold fast to this Christ-centered gospel truth with all its promises, and bank on them in every situation. We sever the lifeline of sin by the power of a superior promise. Or to put it more positively, we release the stream of love by faith in future grace. We become loving people by trusting in the promises of God.²

Much of the rest of this study will be looking at different promises that God has given us to use to grow in holiness in specific areas.

² Piper, John. *Battling Unbelief* (pp. 16-17). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Session 3: Growing in humility

Growing in humility by combatting the sin of pride.

Definitions

Pride:

Undue confidence in and attention to one's own skills, accomplishments, state, possessions, or position.³

Humility:

The personal quality of being free from arrogance and pride and having an accurate estimate of one's worth.⁴

Read:

Deuteronomy 8:17–18 — 17 Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' **18** You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Discuss:

1. Recall the tree diagram from session 2. According to this text, what is the fruit of pride (i.e. how does pride express itself)?
2. In light of this text, what would be some either lies we are believing or sinful desires that we are wanting when we give into the sin of pride?
3. How does knowing that God is the source of power and wealth help us to combat the sin of pride?

³ Gerald Cowen, "Pride," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1327.

⁴ Gary Hardin, "Humility," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 792.

Read:

1 Samuel 2:3-4 — 3 Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed. **4** The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.

Discuss:

1. What does it mean that God weighs our actions? How does this help us to fight the sin of pride?
2. How does the promise that "the feeble bind on strength" help us to delight in humility?

Read:

Psalms 138:6 — 6 For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.

Discuss:

1. How does the fact that God regards the lowly motivate us to combat pride and pursue humility?
2. What does it mean that God knows the haughty (i.e. proud) from afar? Why is this a bad thing?

Read:

John 5:44 — 44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Discuss:

1. What do we want when we seek glory from others? What sinful lies are we believing?
2. Why is it wrong to seek glory from others? What does it keep us from?

3. According to this passage, how does pride relate to unbelief?
How does that help us understand the nature of humility?

Read:

1 Peter 5:5-7 — 5...Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." **6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Discuss:

1. What does it mean to clothe yourself with humility toward one another?
2. What are the consequence for pride in this passage?
3. In verses 6-7, humility shows itself by casting anxieties upon God. How are these two things related?
4. What promises are in this text to motivate us to pursue humility?

Read:

Philippians 2:3-11 — 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Discuss:

1. Look at verses 3–4. How does humility relate to loving others? How does this work?
 2. What lies would we be believing when we give into selfish ambition or conceit? What sort of promises do these sinful actions make?
 3. How does the example of Jesus practically help us to in humility count others more significant than ourselves?
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Putting it together

1. What are some of the fruits of pride?
2. What are some of the false desires or false beliefs that lead to pride?
3. What truths or desires do we need in order to replace these false desires?
4. What promises does God give to the humble?
5. What fruit would serve as evidence that we are living in humility?

Summary Reflection

These different passages of Scripture help us to understand the nature of pride, which in turn helps us to fight against it. Pride is incompatible with genuine belief in God and genuine love for others, because it elevates the self to the center of the universe. We believe that we are better than others or that we deserve greatness and deserve glory, and this shapes the way that we treat one another and how we fail to genuinely worship God.

The way that we combat pride is by recognizing who we truly are according to the Scriptures—sinful and weak creatures made in the image of God—and by seeing the glory of humility. God *loves* to bless the humble. And this is the irony of pride. When we are proud, we actually miss out on blessing. But when we are humble we experience the joy of God's presence, the blessing of God's approval, and are actually *exalted*. Seeing these promises help us to desire to be humble because we see how good it actually is.

Session 4: Growing in the fear of God

Growing in the fear of God by combatting the fear of man.

Definitions

Fear of God:

Honoring God as supreme with your heart, will, and mind.

Fear of man:

Desiring the approval of other people as supreme and fearing their disapproval.

Read:

Luke 12:4-7 — **4** I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. **5** But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! **6** Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. **7** Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Discuss:

1. According to this text, why might we be tempted to fear man rather than God?
2. What are the reasons that this text gives for why we should fear God over man?
3. Verse 5 emphasizes the power and the severity of God. Verse 7 emphasizes the love and the care of God. How do both of these truths help us to maintain a proper fear of God?

Read:

Galatians 1:10 — **10** For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Discuss:

1. What does it mean to seek the approval of man? What does it mean to seek the approval of God?
2. Paul says that if he were trying to please man, then he would not be a servant of Christ? Why is this the case?
3. How does this verse motivate fearing God rather than fearing man?

Read:

Proverbs 9:10–12 — 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. **11** For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life. **12** If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

Discuss:

1. In light of this text, why do you think the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom?
2. What are the blessings that come with fearing the Lord?

Read:

Colossians 3:22–24 — 22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. **23** Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, **24** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Discuss:

1. What does it look like to do something out of eye-service as a people pleaser? How does this show itself?
2. According to this text, why should bondservants not be people pleasers but instead fear the Lord?
3. What are the promises that are given for fearing the Lord in this passage?

Read:

Matthew 6:1-4 — 1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. **2** "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Discuss:

1. Recall the tree diagram in session 2. According to this text, what are the fruits of desiring to be seen by other people? How does our root desire for the approval of others show itself in our actions?
2. In light of this text, what would be some either lies we are believing or sinful desires that we are wanting when we live to please men?
3. How does the promise of God's reward help us seek his approval as ultimate?

Putting it together

1. What are some of the fruits of fear of man?
2. What are some of the false desires or false beliefs that lead to fearing man?
3. What truths or desires do we need in order to replace these false desires?
4. What promises does God give to those who fear him?
5. What fruit would serve as evidence that we are living for the approval of God?

Summary Reflection

Fearing the Lord doesn't mean being scared of God, but honoring him as supreme in our lives. This means that we show our fear of the Lord when we live to please him and seek his approval. The fear of man—or the ultimate desire for man's approval—stands in contrast with the fear of the Lord. The reason for this is because it removes God from the place of supremacy and puts other people in it.

The reason we fear others over God is because we believe the lie that others can bring us things that God can't. Whether it is safety, praise, or success, our fear of man reveals that we are treating other people as the source of our blessings. This is idolatry.

This is why it is so important to remind ourselves of the blessings that only God can give. It exposes the weak power of the approval of others and shows the greater wealth of living for God.

Session 5: Growing in purity

Growing in purity by combatting the sin of lust.

Definitions

Purity:

An absence of blemish or stain, especially sin.⁵

Lust:

An overpowering and compulsive desire or passion, especially of a sexual nature.⁶

Read:

Proverbs 5:1–6,20–23 — **1** My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, **2** that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. **3** For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, **4** but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. **5** Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; **6** she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it... **20** Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? **21** For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. **22** The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. **23** He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.

Discuss:

1. How does this passage show the false promises that sexual sin makes?
2. What are the consequences in this passage for giving into sexual sin?

⁵ Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

⁶ Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

3. Verse 21 says that "man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord." How does this help us to fight against sexual temptation?

Read:

Matthew 5:8 — 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Discuss:

1. What does it mean to be pure in heart?
2. How does purity of heart make a difference when we think about sexual sin?
3. Why is seeing God a good thing that we should desire?

Read:

Matthew 5:27-30 — 27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' **28** But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. **29** If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. **30** And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Discuss:

1. Recall the tree diagram from session 2. What is the *root* to the *fruit* of adultery? How are these two things connected?
2. How does this passage show us the drastic steps that we need be willing to take to fight sexual sin?
3. What must we believe if we are willing to tear out our eyes or cut off our hands? What promises or warnings do we need to hold onto?

Read:

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 — 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! **16** Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." **17** But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. **18** Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. **19** Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, **20** for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Discuss:

1. What does it mean that our bodies are "members of Christ"?
2. One of the lies that sexual sin often makes is that either (a) it doesn't really hurt anyone or (b) it can be kept secret. How does this passage expose those lies?
3. According to this passage, what truths help us to fight against sexual sin?

Read:

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 — 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; **4** that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, **5** not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; **6** that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. **7** For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

Discuss:

1. According to this passage, what does it look like to abstain from sexual immorality?

2. How does knowing God make a difference in the way that we approach our sexual activity?
3. What are the consequences that sexual sin leads to in this passage?

Putting it together

1. What are some of the fruits of lust?
2. What are some of the false desires or false beliefs that lead to lust and sexual sin?
3. What truths or desires do we need in order to replace these false desires?
4. What promises does God give to those who live lives of purity?
5. What fruit would serve as evidence that we are living lives of purity?

Summary Reflection

Sexual sin is rooted in immoral sexual desire—lust. Jesus makes it clear that we need to fight this sin at this level. We will not be pure as God calls us to be if we only think about guarding against external activity and not fighting at a heart level. One of the ways that we do this is by seeing how deadly sexual sin is for us. A moment of pleasure leads to an eternity of destruction.

Seeing this in right proportion makes all the difference. The reality of heaven and hell should weigh upon us as we think about sexual sin. This leads us to want to take drastic temporary measures in order to have lasting pleasure forever. Because the promise of seeing God and enjoying fellowship with God are infinitely better than what sexual sin has to offer.

Session 6: Growing in trust

Growing in trust by combatting the sin of anxiety

Definitions

Trust

Reliance on and confidence in a person.⁷

Anxiety:

Distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune.⁸

Read:

Matthew 6:25–33 — 25 "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **28** And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

⁷ Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

⁸ Dictionary.com, *Anxiety*, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/anxiety>

Discuss:

1. What are some of the different things that Jesus points out that we can be anxious about? Why do you think we tend to be anxious about these things?
2. How do our anxieties and our worries reveal the things that we are actually valuing?
3. According to this passage, how does anxiety reveal our failure to trust in God?
4. What promises or truths does Jesus remind us of to be able to help us trust God and fight against anxiety?

Read:

Psalm 94:17-19 — 17 If the Lord had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence. **18** When I thought, "My foot slips," your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up. **19** When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.

Discuss:

1. How does the presence of God help us to guard against anxiety?
2. What does it mean that "your consolations cheer my soul"? What effect does this have upon the psalmist?
3. What promises or truths in this passage can we hold onto to help us trust God in our anxiety?

Read:

Philippians 4:4-7 — 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **6** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Discuss:

1. How is the command to rejoice in the Lord always an expression of trust?
2. What actions does this text recommend for those who are struggling with anxiety? How do these different actions express trust in the Lord?
3. What promises are in this passage that we use to trust the Lord in our anxiety?

Read:

Psalm 46:1-3 — **1** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. **2** Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, **3** though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

Discuss:

1. What are some of the things that can lead us to fear in this passage? Why do these things make us afraid?
2. What truths about God does this passage teach us to help us when we are afraid?
3. What does it mean for God to be our refuge and strength?

Read:

1 Peter 5:6-7 — **6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Discuss:

1. Why does Peter link humility with casting our anxieties upon God? What do you think this reveals about one of the sources of anxiety?
2. What promises or truths in this passage help us to fight against anxiety?

Putting it together

1. How does anxiety and unbelief relate to one another?
2. What are some of the false desires or false beliefs that lead to anxiety and worry?
3. What truths or desires do we need in order to replace these false desires?
4. What promises does God give to help us to trust him?
5. What fruit would serve as evidence that we are trusting God in our daily lives?

Summary Reflection

Anxiety is a sin that is "acceptable" in many different circles. But at its root anxiety reveals a love for things other than God (i.e. the object or situation that we are anxious about) and a failure to trust that God is our provider and the one who satisfies us. And as 1 Peter 5 shows us, anxiety can be rooted in pride where we actually are anxious because we feel like we should be able to control things around us.

The way to fight against anxiety is to bring our cares to the Lord and by believing that he is good enough and powerful enough to provide what we need. In this way, every truth about God can be used as a tool to fight to trust him. We battle anxiety by means of trust in God.

