

PURIFIED UNTIL WE LOVE LIKE BROTHERS

Part 1: Building a winning team

Peter 1:1, 22

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I. Holiness required

Leviticus 11:44, 19:2, 20:7. 20:26; 21:6;

Numbers 6:5, 1 Corinthians 1:5 Hebrews 12:14,

1 Peter 1:16, Revelation 22:11.

II. Holiness acquired

A. Purified

“The Almost-Christian” by John Wesley

B. Obeyed that truth

C. Sincere love

III. Holiness mired

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A. Deep

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INTRODUCTION

Yesterday the playoffs started.
Twelve teams will battle all month.
Anybody have a prediction?
Would you like to hear Vince Lombardi's prediction?
(Lombardi was such a legendary coach
the super bowl trophy is named after him.)
Yes, he died in 1970, but he already predicted winner 2012.

“There are a lot of coaches with good ball clubs who know the fundamentals
and have plenty of discipline but still don't win the game.
... if you're going to play together as a team,
you've got to care for one another.
You've got to love each other.
Each player has to be thinking about the next guy and saying to himself:
If I didn't block that man, Paul is going to get his legs broken.
I have to do my job well in order that he can do his.

“The difference between mediocrity and greatness
is the feeling these guys have for each other.”

According to coach Lombardi
This afternoon's games between Pittsburgh or Denver, Atlanta or NY
will be decided by the team that cares the most for each other.

It's true of football teams
families,
companies
ministries,
whole churches
Today's message will tell you how that kind of caring is developed.
We'll end with a prayer time for any person,
family, work place, or ministry
that needs a little extra help.

I. Holiness required

1 Peter

If you look at the sermon outline, and see the topic “holiness,” you may think I changed subjects from what I introduced earlier. You may wonder what became of the “building a winning team” topic. Today the scriptures will show you

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holiness is required to build a winning team.

That should not be a surprise –
holiness is required anytime we need God’s help.
it’s not a new requirement
Holiness has always been God’s standard.
Verse five is a quote of

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Leviticus 11:44

I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy...

This same requirement, to be holy, is given again in 11:45,

Leviticus 19:2, 20:7. 20:26; 21:6;

Numbers 6:5

1 Corinthians 1:5

and

Hebrews 12:14,

It’s repeated in 1 Peter 1:16,

and wraps up in Revelation 22:11.

From Genesis to Revelation,

from beginning to end God’s requirement on families,

business, kingdoms,

priests, prophets, peasants,

teams, cities, and nations has always been

“Be holy, because I am holy.”

Holiness has always been required for building a winning team.

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There's no greater example of how holiness builds a winning team than
God the father, God the son
God the Spirit – a team that we call “the holy trinity.”
Notice that “holy” part.
They are a winning team that loves each other,
have always loved each other,
and will never do anything contrary to loving each other.
Holiness is at the core of their loving relationship
No wonder God calls us to be holy like he is holy--
Holiness is required for a winning team
because there is no love without it.

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You may look at the people you have to love
and think “love is tough enough,
but holiness is impossible!”
“If holiness is required, I should just give up.
Sure, I believe God can make me holy,
but I don't expect it to happen within the people
I live with,
or work with.
It's even hard to find holiness in the people I go to church with...”

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Look at the address of this letter
1 Peter 1:1 ... To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus,
Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.
He calls them “strangers”
Today “stranger” means unknown, or weird.
In that day a stranger was simply a foreigner.
As a result of emperor Nero's persecution
Christians were scattered all over the empire,
they were strangers in the lands where they lived.
So the churches they were part of were not a result
of some friends who got together to make a church.
They had to make a church out of whoever was available.

The people in these churches may not have been friends.
They may not have liked the same type of church music.
They may not have liked the same kind of food at church dinners.
They may not have been able to agree on the order of service.
This scripture was not written to people who had the luxury
of attending church with people who were already their friends.
They were refugees who's only connection to each other
was their mutual refugee status.
They are stuck with each other.

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It's hard enough making a church work
when people have a diversity of preferences,
but now the Apostle seems to be making things even harder when
he tells them it's not sufficient for them to be in a church together,
holiness is required and that means
they are going to have to love each other.

1 Peter 1:22

*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere
love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

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Have you noticed there are hardly any stories of the disciples
bickering and arguing with each other as they followed Jesus?
Certainly the disciples did not all see things the same way.
If they were like any other travelers
John would be bugging everyone asking "are we there yet,"
Matthew wanted to stop for coffee, but
Simon didn't want to stop because that would make them late.
Andrew kept complaining that James was touching him,
Philip ate all the potato chips,
and Bartholomew snored.
Twelve guys on a long hot trip together,
it's the perfect recipe for quarreling!

I think there are no stories of them fighting with each other

because Jesus simply would not have it.
He was trying to build a team that would win the world
therefore, the holiness he required included loving each other.
Jesus wouldn't let them fight with each other,
and walk with him at the same time.
Holiness was required.
So Peter tells us we have to love each other because he knows
holiness is required of all those who want to follow Jesus.

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II. Holiness acquired

If there were no higher level to which we could ascend in this life -
- if the holiness that's required is not attainable,
1 Peter would never have been written!
The whole book is calling us forward, deeper
to become more sanctified, more holy.
This requirement is reasonable,
God is only asking us to follow his example,
and be like him.

We know it is possible to acquire the
required love producing holiness because
the people Peter is writing to, have already met the requirement.
Look how he describes them
22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth



A. Purified

We know what "pure" means.
For years we've been hearing Ivory soap tell us it is 99.9% pure.
I guess the truth in advertising requirements have gotten after them
because now they are claiming to be

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only 99.44% pure.

Something is made pure when the contaminants are removed. Purification is clearly a work the Holy Spirit does in our lives, removing the parts that are not Christ like.

Peter says this has already happened in the lives of these people he writes to because the Holy Spirit has already removed any contaminated spirit, attitude, ambition, or action that is contrary to the call to love each other.

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The theologian **John Calvin** said “nothing is more difficult than to love our neighbors in sincerity.” John Calvin knew more about systematic theology than I will ever know. But on this topic I disagree with him because if the contaminating sin is removed from our lives, and replaced with the spirit of Jesus, then loving our neighbors will be unavoidable.

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I prefer the theology of **John Wesley** who evaluated the reality of someone’s Christian experience not by asking “what church do you go to,” because just going to church doesn’t mean you’ll acquire the holiness God requires.

So Wesley asked people

Do you then love your neighbor as yourself?

Do you love every man, even your enemies,

even the enemies of God, as your own soul?

(“The Almost-Christian” by John Wesley)

He asked those questions because he believed the purification of our lives made loving others possible.

If you are wanting that to happen in your life, your family, your team, your church -- keep reading.

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Peter says these strangers acquired the required holiness because they

B. Obeyed that truth

If you are wondering what “truth” he’s referring to there’s no simpler definition than the one Jesus gave when he was praying and asked.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

We are sanctified, purified by our continual obedience to the truth: revealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

Truth that is demonstrated to us by the life of Jesus, and truth that is corroborated by the Bible.

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C. Sincere love

Now look at the results of holiness acquired:

1 Peter 1:22

... **you have sincere love for your brothers...**

A sincere love is the result of the purifying, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit which we receive by obeying the truth.

The sincere love, and the sanctifying work are acquired together.

When you receive the spirit of Jesus in your life

you get his sincere love for people

but you don’t get one without the other.

The word Peter uses for “sincere” is “anypokritos” from which we get the word “hypocrite,” a negative word in our culture today.

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In Peter’s day actors and actresses were called “hypocrites” because the term “anypokritos” was the word for “mask.”

Actors in the day used masks to pretend to be a certain character.

So by the time Peter uses the term “anypokritos” he is calling

the church to love each other “unmasked,” open, honest

letting people see your real motives.

The love holiness produces affects that motive:

not loving a person for what they can do for you,

a sincere love is because you want to, not because you have to.

The love holiness produces also affects our intent:
It is a love that is primarily concerned for the other person's best
even if it means they get something you want.
A sincere love continues no matter what the other person does,
because it's the love of Jesus which
always protects,
always trusts,
always hopes,
always perseveres.
A sincere love is what a winning time requires,
and what holiness acquires.

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III. Holiness mired

If you have one of those deep thinking, analytical minds
you might be thinking
“Well, if Peter is saying they have already been purified,
if they have already acquired the desired level of holiness,
why is he writing to them about doing more?”
That would make as much sense as me preaching that all of you
should get shoes.
Since it's obvious that all of you already have shoes.
it wouldn't make sense for me to tell you to get shoes.
Here, unfortunately is where holiness gets mired.

When we think of holiness as a one-time event,
something that we get one time then have forever,
instead knowing it as a steady process
we are mired in thinking “because I surrendered to the holy spirit
twenty years ago, I am still sanctified.”

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That makes as much sense as the husband who would not say
anything positive to his wife, no matter how much she tried to prompt it.
Finally, after decades of effort she broke down in exasperation and asked
her husband “Do you love me?”

He put down his newspaper, glared at her, cleared his throat and said
Forty-five years ago we stood before the pastor and he asked me
if I loved you, and I said “I do.”

Thinking that resolved the issue, he went back to his paper.

She cried out, that was forty five years ago,
how do I know if you still love me?

This time, without lowering the paper he said
“I told you the truth 45 years ago, and if anything changes,
I’ll let you know.”

Unfortunately some people mire the process of team building
by thinking that one time event provided all they needed.

This letter from Peter proves it’s not a one-time event.

But just as a marriage relationship has to grow
if we are going to develop the kind of holiness
that’s required for team building

God has something to teach us every day,
and we need to grow until we die.

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IV. Holiness desired

So the Apostle Peter writes to these Christians
who are scattered all over the Roman empire
in churches with people who are not necessarily their friends
to tell them the type of holiness God desires,
and the kind required to build a team.

1 Peter 1:22

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth

... that’s already accomplished

so that you have sincere love for your brothers,

that’s the result, now here’s where you need to grow:

love one another deeply, from the heart.

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A. Deep

love one another deeply,

The KJV translates that word “fervently”
that’s a good definition for the kind of love we are called to because
fervently is not casual.

Deep love involves is keeping your mouth closed when you’re **angry**.
The kind of deep, fervent love he calls us to develop for each other
Deep love is not **business** as usual.

Deep love is the kind of love that makes people **desire** small group
meetings,

Deep love involves assisting **children’s** ministry
even though you don’t have children,

Deep love involves assisting youth ministry
when you’re glad you don’t have them.

Deep love involves the prayer you pray as you walk across the parking
lot when you tell the Lord you are available to be an **encouragement**
to someone else that day.

Deep love involves telling people “I’m trying to love the person you’re
talking about,
so please stop **gossiping** about them.”

Deep love is spending time in the café because you want to get to **know**
someone.

Deep love is what drives so many of you to spend Sunday having **lunch**
with others in the church.

Deep love involves showing up for the Wednesday night **meal** even
though you don’t like what’s on the menu,
but you love the people it supports.

Deep love involves is **patronizing** one company over the other because
the other company has a policy that abuses people.

Deep love involves getting here early enough on Sunday to **pray** for one
of the requests on the altar.

Deep love involves caring about what you drop in the **river** because
someone else is trying to fish in that river.

Deep love involves **sitting** with someone different each Sunday.
is not content with **seeing** each other once a week, on Sunday morning.

Deep love involves **taking** a turn in the nursery when you don't have toddlers.

Deep love is not content with just saying “**welcome back**” when somebody has been away from church for several weeks.

Deep love involves contacting them to see why they've been away.

There are a million ways this kind of love is acted out because

It's not just a feeling for someone

It's an action that shows you care.

It's always about the other person and often sacrificial.

It's the kind of love that cares if someone is growing or not.

It's the kind of love that challenges other people to be their best,

It's the kind of love that helps when someone is having a hard time,

It's the kind of love this world cannot understand, cannot produce,

and cannot resist.

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The kind of love God requires, and holiness acquires comes

B. From the heart

It's not the kind of love that comes from a church program.

It's not writing out cards to absentees because I ask you to do it.

It's not attending a small group because that's what the church is doing.

It's not assisting at helping hands or in the nursery because it's your turn in the rotation.

It's not anything you do because someone expects you to do it.

It is a response to work the Holy Spirit does so deep within you,

it surprises the person who receives it because they didn't deserve it,

it surprises the people who perceive it because they didn't expect it,

and it surprises you because you didn't know you had it in you!

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Lights: platform off, 14-17 off, house fades down. #11 stays on

This kind of love, that is essential to building a business

founding a family,

constructing a church,

or taking a team to the championship.

It is the kind of holiness God desires and here's the really good news...
It is the kind of love the Holy Spirit automatically produces
in the lives of those who invite his presence.

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Conclusion

In a few minutes, I'm going to conclude this message with
some examples of how you can apply it,
or learn more about it.

But right now we need to give the Holy Spirit some time to work.
Right now each person needs to evaluate their **holiness gauge**.
Does your love for others say "full of the Holy Spirit,"
or empty?

In high school my 1966 Oldsmobile F-85
had a gas gauge that would go past full.
A full tank of gas was great,
but I felt the best when I looked at that gauge
and it said I was more than full.
When I would go to the station for that expensive 50 cent a gallon gas
I never stopped when the needle would reach "full" because
I knew there was always room for a little bit more.

Today, does your love gauge say you've got room for a little bit more?
Do you want to be a part of that winning team enough
to ask the Holy Spirit to pour more of his love into your life?
We're going to take a little break right here to give you time to pray.
If you need some help with that, I'll be right over here.
We'll pray for any person, family, work place, or ministry
who wants a little bit more,
then we'll come back together for the conclusion of the message

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POTTERS HAND – Dave Redder

EPILOGUE

Someone who experienced this love from the heart wrote this:

"I want a church that includes fussy kids, old liturgy, bad sound, weird congregants, and painfully amateur "special music" now and then.

But more importantly, I want to be part of an un-cool church because

I want to be part of a community that shares the reputation of Jesus, and like it or not, Jesus' favorite people in the world were not cool"

If the Holy Spirit has spoken to you today

you'll be wanting to do something or learn something more about this kind of love.

Here are eight things you could do:

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1. You can learn more in our Bible study this Wednesday night
Philippians, the church that loved.
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2. We have the technology to create online small groups for people who would like to be in a Bible study, but their schedule does not permit it. If you would like to experiment with this kind of group contact the church office, or write "online" in your attendance book.
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- 130**
3. I have copies of a test to help you evaluate your love quotient. See me to get one.
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- 131**
4. Announcements – newsletter - look for an opportunity to love.
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- 132**
5. Books from library
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- 133**
6. Café
-
- 134**
7. Blog on Facebook contains a personal story of difference love made and an opportunity for discussion.
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- 135**
8. Cassette
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- 136**

9. Tithing – Board meeting tomorrow night will make deep cuts into the church budget eliminating or curtailing ministries unless we begin to see the offering as chance to love by making an investment in each other.

Sources

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