

## Six Streams of Christian Life and Prayer

### Study Three: Practicing the Virtuous Life – The Holiness Tradition

Based on 'Streams of Living Water' by Richard Foster

For a swifter study, follow the items in bold type

#### Aim

To put into practice the desire of God that we should live in holiness, purity and virtue.

#### You will need...

A Bible, pen and paper.

#### Starter

Think back over one of the exercises you tried following last week's study.

- What did you learn about God and yourself by doing this exercise?

#### Prayer

Let us pray that through this study we might develop a more healthy and functional holy life with a greater ability to obey God's commands.

#### Jesus and the virtuous life

##### **Read Matthew 4:1-11**

- **Have you ever been tempted with an offer that was hard to refuse?**  
**Make a note of the circumstances**

This testing in the wilderness came just after Jesus' baptism when he had been identified as the Son of God. This is important, because the confirmation of Jesus identity 'triggers' the reaction from the devil to try to destroy him.

The first two temptations ('test' in some bible versions) challenge Jesus to prove his deity "If you are the Son of God"; while the third dares Jesus to reject his deity. Whatever else we discern in this passage (the Spirit leading Jesus, the devil using scripture) one thing is most important: Jesus remained true to his mission through out his testing. He could have used his power and relationship with God for food and safety, and he could have accepted power, fame and glory, but he did not surrender.

- **What do you think Jesus' responses tell us about the nature of sin and the importance of purity?**

#### God and the Holiness Tradition

It's a human reaction to feel as though God's commandments are sometimes rules to make us feel guilty and unhappy, but the truth is the complete opposite. Holiness is God's desire for us because it is the best way to live. The seventh commandment 'You shall not commit adultery' may restrict our sexual freedom, but it protects us from the pain and loneliness to which an adulterous affair leads. Holiness, purity and virtue protect us from sin, the rejection of God, which disrupts and fractures our lives. Living a holy life is functional for everyone, not just for the 'super-saints'.

#### Practicing the Holiness Tradition

We refer to the ten commandments, not ten suggestions, thus the holy life is one of willing obedience to God, for we understand that God wants the best for us.

- **Read Psalm 139. Pray for the Holy Spirit to purify your heart and mind; then listen. – set aside a substantial amount of time, perhaps an hour, for a deep and heartfelt prayer. The key is your willingness to surrender control of your life to God.**

- Respond to temptation with the word of God – memorise Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16; 6:13
- Try a twenty-four hour partial fast – gain spiritual strength by saying no to your appetite.
- Practice two guidelines for "taming the tongue"

1. Go a day without saying anything negative – (Psalm 141:3) Do not let the slightest hint of criticism or judgement come out of your mouth. Be positive.
2. Go a day without saying anything which is dishonest – (John 1:47) Be without falsehood, pray that the Holy Spirit will make your heart pure and honest. Watch your words, let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no.