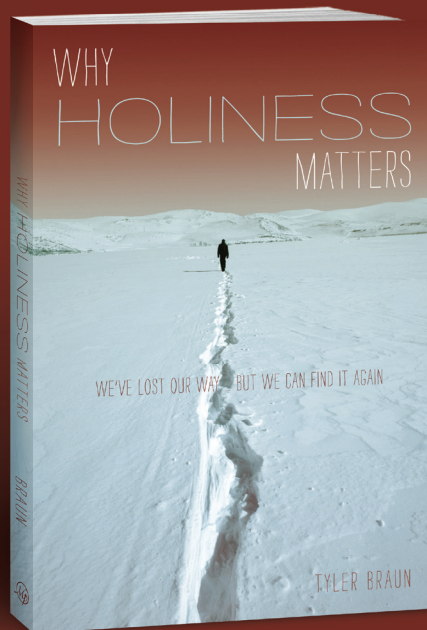


WHY HOLINESS MATTERS

A STUDY GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

TO GET THE MOST OUT THIS STUDY GUIDE,
please take time to write down one or two
sections of each chapter that stuck out to you.

Take time to reflect on those sections in
preparation for sharing with your small group
or whoever you are studying the book with.

Make sure to choose wisely the people who
you study the book with. This book dives head
first into the pain and difficulty of sins from
the past and present. You should share these
things with people you trust and respect.

Finally, end each chapter study together in
prayer for everyone in your group.

WHAT'S HOLINESS?

In a culture that seems to dislike Christians but accept Jesus, it has become commonplace for many Christians to “believe in Jesus” but live no different than the world around them. Following Jesus for many of us is nothing more than beliefs we hold inside ourselves that we neither share with anyone nor let affect the way we live. Before we can move toward living holy lives, we must first look at our lives and see how far we’ve strayed from God’s holy desire.

- What differences (positive and/or negative) have you seen between the way Christians in the Millennial Generation and Christians in previous generations live out their faith?
- What external behaviors have you been told to avoid in order to be more holy?
Have you followed this advice?
- Does your life reflect more of the culture around you or the God inside you?
- While discussing faith in Millennials, compartmentalized was a word that was brought up. In what ways do you become a different person when the situation or environment changes?
- Each of us has a propensity toward sin, and yet few of us openly confess and move beyond our sinful patterns of living. Instead, we put a lot of effort into justifying sin as something else. Spend some time writing down the ways you have tried to justify your sin.



INNOCENCE

I recently heard someone say, "You can't teach yourself innocence." Innocence is something most of us can hardly remember having and rarely remember cherishing. In our pursuit of ridding ourselves of innocence, we've allowed sin to become an acceptable reality in our lives. Sin, as the antithesis of holiness, slowly builds a wall between God and ourselves, making the true life God desires us to have impossible to taste.

- All of us have lost something as our innocence has been lost. What are some of the key things you have lost?
- Sin often forces us into hiding because we don't like exposing our guilt. Write a short note to God explaining to Him the struggle you have with exposing your baggage.
- In losing my innocence I "learned" the lessons that God wouldn't answer my prayers, wouldn't help heal my pain, and would continue to hold out on me. In losing your innocence, what untrue lessons did you learn?
- Because God's holiness is completely different than any human attribute, we often push Him away in confusion. What pictures come to your mind as you think of God's holiness?



WRATH

Each of us has likely experienced what we sensed to be God's wrath and judgment in different ways. I pushed myself to see God as someone who loved perfect people, not wretched sinners. In our pursuit of sin through losing our innocence we chose His judgment and discipline.

- All of us, at some point, have had a run-in with the bull-horn-yelling, sandwich-sign-wearing, you're-going-to-burn-in-hell-without-Jesus people. What is your first reaction when you see these people? What do they teach others about God? Does their message have any truth?
- Sin is a subtle creature that doesn't make itself known until we've given up something important. Describe a sin that you didn't recognize until it was beginning to take root in your life.
- Corporate sin was a topic examined within this chapter. Can you think of a circumstance in which the sins of one person affected many others?
- Dallas Willard says that the Gospel is not a sin management strategy. The Good News is that, through Christ, we are released from the power of sin. In what ways have you tried to manage sin?



SHAME

No question, this was the most difficult chapter to write and will likely be the hardest one for us to discuss with God and others. Those of us living in shame know that it isn't easy to begin opening ourselves up to the pain we are fighting. With that said, I can't encourage you enough to take a risk. Tell someone your past or your present shame. Have a conversation with God about the pain you are fighting. If shame is a defining struggle for Millennials, our way beyond it is found in taking off our masks and risking something.

- Looking into the past or accepting the reality of the present, what pieces of your life have caused you to feel an overwhelming sense of shame?
- In the place of the negative self-thoughts we have that continue to build our shame, we must speak the truth of how God sees us. Spend time meditating on the follow passages of Scripture: 1 Peter 2:9, Psalm 139, 1 John 3:1, Romans 5:8, Galatians 4:6-7, Zephaniah 3:17.
- Our identities are incredibly powerful because they dictate what we do and how we live. How would you describe your own identity?
- God doesn't want us to stay in a place where we live self-sufficiently. In what ways do you need God's presence to become real and tangible in your life?



God's love should be a confusing thing to us. Why should a God we have constantly turned our back on continue to pursue us with an unending love? It boggles the mind, yet it remains true. A pursuit of holiness that begins in a place other than affection from God toward us is a holiness of human effort and therefore not holiness at all.

- How have you previously viewed worship?
- It's so easy to get caught up in a Christianity in which we must bring a perfect sacrifice because clearly God cares about our actions and decisions. How does knowing that the perfect sacrifice God desired is found in Jesus free you to pursue holiness?
- Can you think of a time when you did something for another person, not merely because you were supposed to, but because you loved them? In a similar way, does your love for God ever inform the way you live?
- I find the story of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50) to be one of the most powerful stories in the Bible. What part of that story resonates most with you? Why?
- God's love comes to us in many forms: people, places, circumstances, blessings, quietness, etc. How have you experienced the love of God?



VALUES

One of the most poignant examples of the impotence of Christian values in our culture today is shown on the popular television show *The Bachelor*, and its spin-off *The Bachelorette*. Nearly every season, the show features at least one individual who self-described as a “person of faith,” and we watch as physical intimacy is slowly given away in front of the camera. If our beliefs don’t change the way we live, what does that say about our faith? We have an opportunity to reflect a God who not only saves us with His love, but also saves us to live out holiness beyond our private piety.

- What values do you see lived out in Jesus’ actions during His life and ministry?
- In your own life, who are the people acting as “guide posts” (like Sacagawea was for Lewis and Clark), pointing in a direction for you to navigate toward?
- What traditional values do you see more as traditionalism (as defined in this chapter)? What values of your own generation do you see as traditionalism?
- In examining your life, what values have you failed to uphold but now see as integral to the outworking of your faith?
- So often we make decisions without ever considering why. What are the reasons why you navigate life the way you do (consider the story of Jenny Mellor in *An Education*)?



COMMUNITY

As a pastor it feels somewhat weird to be advocating the importance of Christianity community because so much of my vocation is surrounded by journeying life with people in community. However, it's quite obvious that church is losing its grip among many in my generation. I went to a Christian college and only a few of my friends now attend a church consistently. By devaluing the importance of community, I believe we've forgotten that God exists within Himself as a community.

- Have you made being part of a Christianity community a priority? Why or why not?
- When you think of attending church, what comes to mind (positive and/or negative)?
- One of the biggest lessons we can learn about community is that it is created by us taking the first step instead of waiting for people to pursue us. What are some specific things you can do in the next month to pursue a deeper level of Christian community with those around you?
- Who are some of your friends and mentors whose influence took you to a level of intimacy with Christ? Who are some people you can now reach out to for the sake of carrying on the legacy of influence the previous people have had on you?



MISSION

It's easy for the church to become a comfortable home for Christian believers to gather, but it's far more difficult for the followers of Christ to enter out into the world, seeking to serve. We often hide from the brokenness of our world because it's a lot easier to condemn the sin of the world than to extend a hand and help it find a better way. God has called each of us into His mission in our world—to lay our lives at His feet. When we refuse to enter into the brokenness of our world, we miss out on the beauty of how God is working as well.

- Who are people around you who are living out the mission of God with their lives? What are they doing differently than other Christians you know?
- Early in this chapter, a short section is devoted to answering the question: Why should we care about engaging our culture with God's redemptive purposes in mind? How would you answer that question?
- Do you tend to separate or synchronize with culture? In what specific ways?
- The "me-first," Don Draper attitude is commonplace in society today. In many ways it isn't just commonplace, but it's often glorified. Write down, describe, and explain 5 ways you can die to selfish gain and personal desires this week.



ARTISTRY

While each of us has a propensity to sin and damage the abundant life God desires for us, our depravity is not the full picture of our reality. God saves us knowing where He can take us: God saves us to change us. This birthing of holiness within our lives is the slow work of sanctification in which we begin to reflect more of Christ. As Ian Morgan Cron said so beautifully, "Jesus died for our beauty as much as our brokenness." This beauty of holiness is the artistic work God is slowly painting onto the canvas of our lives.

- What are your favorite pieces of art (plays, books, songs, movies, paintings, etc.)? What makes them beautiful? What characteristics do they have that you are drawn toward?
- If your life as it exists today were a painting, what would it look like? How messy would it be?
- Looking back over the previous 5 years of your life, in what ways have you seen God's presence in your life shape you more into who God desires you to be? How have you resisted His work in your life?
- Does the reality of holiness first beginning as God's work in you bring comfort? Why or why not?

Remember that holiness is an unwavering devotion birthed out of a deep affection from and for God. Seek to enter into His affection for you and let it drive you toward a life of devotion.