



THE PATH TO HOLINESS

RMPP EVENT 40

SCHEDULE

Welcome and Zoom Etiquette

Opening Prayer

Speaker Introduction

Message: *The Path to Holiness*

Q&A and Discussion

Breakout Rooms

Closing Prayer

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THE PATH TO HOLINESS

SYNOPSIS

Paths lead to destinations, but you shouldn't expect the journey always to be smooth and easy. What obstacles exist on the path to holiness that could distract and derail you on this all-important journey?

| **Audio Link:** -

| **Scripture Reflection**

In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. - *Hebrews 12:14 (NLT)*

Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God. - *2 Corinthians 7:1 (NLT)*

EVENT

40

| *Personal Reflection*

1. What is in my heart keeping me from growing in greater holiness?
2. Where in my life do I need to grow in greater holiness?

| *Personal Application*

1. How can you grow in cultivating holiness in your life?
2. How can you grow in expressing holiness in your life?

| *Recommended Reading*

The Holiness of God: *R.C. Sproul*

The Hole in Our Holiness: *Kevin DeYoung*

Go and Sin No More: *Michael L. Brown*

A WORD FROM...

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

In 2024, the theme for all four events is “The Path...” And this year, we will be looking at the following:

The Path to Holiness

The Path to Life

The Path to Blessing

The Path to Contentment

With any path we walk, we need to be aware of the pitfalls and barriers that can distract us, derail us, and cause us to fall away long before we reach our destination. What is keeping you from walking in holiness? What distracts you from the life God has called you to? What derails you from experiencing God’s blessings? What causes you to stumble in learning how to be content? These are good questions; Lord willing, we will know the answers as we look into God’s Word together and learn from one other through each devotional and subsequent connect group discussion.

And so, to begin this year's journey together, we will learn about The Path to Holiness. Of course, there is plenty of good, solid teaching on this subject, and any simple internet search will reveal thousands, if not tens of thousands, of resources for you to peruse. And on page 5 of this booklet, you can read some of the books I recommend on this all-important subject. But we aren't necessarily going to dive into the intricate ins and outs of holiness (your internet search will show you the resources for that!); instead, we are going to look at our hearts and lives and ask these crucial questions,

- "Do I even want to be holy and fully set apart?"
- "What is in my heart keeping me from growing in greater holiness?"
- "Where in my life do I need to grow in greater holiness?"

Yes, these are tough questions, but they will lead to good answers and a bright light for us and others on the path to holiness. I am excited to embark on these four paths this year, and I pray that you are just as excited and ready as well.

Remember, paths are best navigated when we have clear guidance (i.e., God's Word) and with a team of brothers providing support and encouragement (your connect group). So do not get weary, and do not veer off course; stay the path...

Christian Lent

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

DEVOTIONAL 1

On our journey to holiness, we need to understand what the Bible teaches about this all-important topic.

“Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. But the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:13-14).”

“Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior, because it is written ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’ (1 Peter 1:15-16, Leviticus 11:44).”

Each of us is following a path - even if it's the path of least resistance! But more important than the path is the destination. What is the destination of the path you're walking? What would you like your destination to be? Let's look at the pathway to holiness. What does God's Word say about this? God is holy and desires holiness in all His creation.

- *“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty - the whole earth is full of His glory! (Isaiah 6:3)”*

- *“Just as He who called you is holy, so you are to be holy in all you do... (1 Peter 1:15).”*

- *“God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life (1 Thessalonians 4:7).”*

- *“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation... (1 Peter 2:9).”*

Intimacy with God requires personal holiness.

- *“I urge you, brothers..in view of God’s mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is true and proper worship (Romans 12:1).”*

- *“Without holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).”*

God has enabled us and helps us to be holy.

- *“You have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God the benefit you reap leads to holiness... (Romans 6:22).”*

- *“Offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness (Romans 6:19).”*

- *“Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God - our righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).”*

- *“God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness (Hebrews 12:10).”*

We have a part to play in being holy.

- *“Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24).”*
- *“Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Corinthians 7:1).”*
- *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever leads to a good reputation, whatever is excellent and worthy of praise - dwell upon these things (Philippians 4:8).”*

But can I actually be holy?

- *“I am Almighty God. Walk before Me and be blameless (Genesis 17:1).”*
- *“You shall be blameless with the LORD your God (Deuteronomy 18:13).”*

According to Andrew Murray (1828-1917), the South African writer, teacher, and Christian pastor, God’s Word speaks of a holiness that is both possible and attainable. God expects His children to be holy! God’s Word speaks of a holiness that is both our duty and our hope. To know such holiness as personal reality, you must begin by accepting God’s command and obeying it with your whole heart. Our natural tendency is to want to understand something before we choose to obey. In

this way, we often give up before we even begin! We “know” we can never be completely holy, so we give up without even trying, Murray says this is not God’s way. Jesus says, “If any man does...then he will know (John 7:17).” Only when you accept the command to be holy with adoring submission and obedience can you hope to understand the holiness that God asks and gives.

“Let your heart be holy devoted to the LORD our God... (1 Kings 8:61).” Are you willing to...

- 1. accept and obey God’s command to be holy, and*
- 2. allow Him to work out His holiness in you (Philippians 2:12-13)?*

Murray continues that God invites us to “remember and rest upon His omnipotence. He is Almighty God - all things are possible to Him...God Almighty with all His power is wholly for you; you be wholly for God.” Your knowledge of God and your faith in who He is - these are the two things necessary for you to live a holy life pleasing to Him. “It is in our life fellowship with God, in His realized presence and favor, that it becomes possible to be perfect with Him.” Not a sinless perfection in this lifetime, but a heart that is completely, perfectly devoted to Him.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. What does it mean for you to walk before God?
2. In what way does God desire you to be blameless?
3. Are you willing to accept and obey God's command to be holy, without fully understanding what this means in your life?

| ***Read***

Matthew 5:8

| ***Reflect on This***

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.” - *Robert Frost*

DON'T GET STUCK!

DEVOTIONAL 2

On our journey to holiness, we must understand how laziness and apathy can derail our pursuit because our feelings are fickle.

I used to put everything off. There was a season when I always said, “procrastination is my middle name” and I was proud of it! I thought of myself as a lazy person, and to be honest, I didn’t care too much about anyone other than myself. All of this was before I found myself drawn to Jesus, loved by His people, invited to become like Him and in so doing, to seek to love others even as I am loved myself. But even after rearranging my life one area at a time to get closer to Jesus, I am still tempted by laziness and apathy.

I am convinced that one root of both laziness and apathy is self-protection, especially if we’ve ever risked doing something and then been disappointed in the outcome. We might tell ourselves, “I need to conserve my energy so why should I risk real effort, or choose discomfort? Why should I hope that anything (including myself) can change?”

Often, we want to avoid pain. The pain of opening ourselves to hope and being disappointed. The pain of trying something new, or taking a risk and being rejected, or simply not having our efforts meet the reward we feel that we deserve. Sometimes it is so much easier (in the short-run) to just do something that makes us feel better quickly - either through self-satisfaction (eat that!) or distraction (watch that!). Both laziness and apathy help us avoid the pain of spending ourselves on behalf of others without knowing if we'll be received and regarded.

Both laziness and apathy are temptations - places where we are tempted not to trust that what God has said is true. So how do we get stuck in laziness or apathy now? I think one significant pitfall is our screens and devices. I know that it asks so much less of me to look at my email one more time, or answer a question with google. It's easier to shop for something or distract myself with an app on my phone than it is to risk reaching out to someone for a real relational connection, or to read scripture or to pray (opening ourselves to a relational connection with God). Relational connections involve risk: the risk of rejection, of making a mistake, of being disappointed, of being challenged to grow. The odds are that whatever distraction tool we choose, we're pretty good at using it to hold the challenge to change at arm's length.

But holiness is becoming like Jesus. Jesus was the least self-protective person ever. Why? Because He knew it was worth it. He knew the Father would provide what He needed. He knew the character of God. We can become more like Jesus as we do the things He did. And we especially need to focus on just two of those things: He knew the Word of God (responding to it in obedient faith for there is no true knowledge without obedient response) and He prayed.

In Psalm 1 we are told that blessed is the man who doesn't walk with those who are doing bad things, but rather, His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:2)

If we want to work against laziness, we can engage with scripture (the "law of the Lord" is another word for instruction or teaching). We can read, think about, and chew on what God has done and what God has said to His people. When we do that, we actively work against laziness.

What can we do about apathy? Paul wrote to early church communities that we have been called by God to be his own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he did for all people everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. (1 Corinthians 1:2)

We can call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can pray! Prayer is the opposite of apathy. It says spending my heart, my words, my desires and my time in the direction of being with God and asking Him to do something is a worthwhile endeavor. Choosing apathy is really saying “I don’t think God can” or “I don’t think God cares”, both of which have been shown to be false at one time or another in each of our lives. At the same time the temptation is very real because there are times we have prayed and not received an answer. We experienced disappointment because it seemed like we didn’t receive the compassion or capability of God to touch our situation. But even Jesus didn’t always get what he desired when he prayed. Think of the night before He was crucified and He asked His Father to find a different way to do things. And yet, after pouring His heart out to His dad He concluded, “not My will but Yours be done.”

What can we do when tempted by or stuck in laziness or apathy? Very simply, we can meditate on the scriptures and we can call on the name of the Lord Jesus. We can read and we can pray.

Iven and his family lived in Bangkok, Thailand for many years, working especially with those on the margins of society. These days they are living in Washington state, called to be friends of Jesus and seeking to support others on the journey of belovedness.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. What distracts you most from reading scripture or praying?
2. What is it you really, truly desire from life? How do laziness and apathy sabotage your receiving that desire?
3. How might becoming more like Jesus change you personally? What part could reading scripture and praying play in helping you? Are you ready to commit to a practice of reading and praying daily?

| ***Read***

Romans 12:11-12

| ***Reflect on This***

“Prayer is not the opposite of action. It’s the opposite of apathy.” - *Skye Jethani*

THE MIX-UP

DEVOTIONAL 3

On our journey to holiness, we must understand how legalism can distract our pursuit of holiness because, while seeming similar, it is not.

I thought that I had planned well for that outreach fellowship: sufficient prayer support, hundreds of invitations sent out, appropriate instructions given to the leadership team on how to “handle” pre-Christians, arrangements for greeters to be at the doors, tracts made available, etc. Initially, I had even thought of including some dress code guidelines in the invitation just to avoid any embarrassing situations, but somehow that had slipped my mind.

The whole evening was to kick off with an opening prayer, followed by an introductory talk on the value of establishing a relationship with Jesus. However, I was so driven by the desire to appear “right”, that without realizing it, everything that mattered - including the presence of Jesus - had taken second place in my planning.

To cut a long story short, some of those well-planned arrangements fell through. However, Jesus showed up, cut through all these plans, and did what He does best through those leaders whose hearts and minds were more focused on Him than on rules and regulations. Jesus broke the ice and opened hearts to hear His Gospel in a very simple, but impactful way. By the time the evening was over, it was clear that the Holy Spirit was orchestrating everything, and that Jesus was being glorified.

Needless to say, the Lord ministered to me as well in a mighty way and helped me understand how easy it is to allow legalism to distract me from His path of holiness. Indeed, I realized to my horror that we can feel so right and justified in our approach that we confuse legalism with holiness and end up with a real mix-up that does not help advance God's Kingdom.

You see, there is nothing that drives people away faster than rules, or legalism. Without meaning to, we sometimes introduce pre-Christians to Jesus by placing much more emphasis on their non-adherence to certain social practices considered to be contrary to a Christian witness, than on God's grace. In a way, we teach them to connect with God through works, simply because we place our own ethical practices at the same level as God's laws and get a false sense of superiority.

Friends, I have seen how legalism can distract our pursuit of holiness by seeming to be similar, when in reality, nothing could be further from the truth. It can even cause the heart to forget that God sings over us because of the work He has done, not because of what we have done.

In its most basic sense, legalism suggests that we can earn God's favor by works. It promotes self-authority by taking what cannot win us favor with God (type of clothing you wear, the kind of movies you watch, what you eat or drink, etc.) and binding everyone to these legalisms. In the words of one American pastor, legalism is "an attempt to win God's favour outside the completed and sufficient redemptive work of Christ". In Galatians chapter 3, verse 3, the apostle Paul takes head on those Christians who, after being saved by grace, then go back to the law - probably to give themselves a better sense of being religious: "Are you foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?" He reminds us all that there is nothing we can do to win salvation because it is a result of God's grace alone.

However, because of our human nature, we tend to favor the easy route on the path to holiness, and so we end up focusing on rules and regulations (which are easier to apply), rather than on the formation of a Christlike character. For instance, it is arguably easier to put on clothes that are acceptable to a

particular community in order to “fit in” (legalism), than to put on the nature of Christ (holiness).

I believe that God requires us to submit to Him in all areas of our lives but without setting up our own tests of submission. Paul emphasizes this point when he asks us the question in Colossians 2:20-21, “Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’? These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings.”

A good question to ask yourself, as a Christian, is “Do the pre-Christians in my circle of friends know me because of my love for them or because of the rules I lay down for them to become Christians?” The reason I am suggesting this is because when we pay more attention to the letter of the law than the spirit of the law, it can lead to immense confusion in the minds of those who have yet to accept Jesus as their Savior, and can also cause many Christians to lead a diluted life in which they dare not do anything extra for fear of being labeled legalistic.

Sadly, some Christians today still hold on to the belief that salvation through faith in Christ is not enough and that sanctification is brought about through adherence to certain rules and behavior, such as no smoking or drinking, no movies, no wearing of lipstick, etc. Now, while the observance of some of these rules will keep you away from some sins, it is no substitute for the fruit of the Spirit and His work in you.

In summary, what I am suggesting is that we should make every effort to distinguish between what amounts to legalism and what is true holiness. Remember, the journey to holiness is not always smooth and easy. There are obstacles along the way, such as legalism, that could distract and derail us. However, our pursuit of holiness should never be deterred by the fear of becoming legalistic. If we set our heart and mind on Jesus Christ, He will make our path straight, because He “loves those who pursue righteousness” (Proverbs 15:9b).

Steve served on the pastoral team at the Evangelical Church of Bangkok from December 2015 to June 2023. He has now returned to Kenya where he and his wife Liz continue to serve the Lord.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. Have you ever elevated to the status of moral law something the Bible does not require?
2. What led you to the reality that salvation is by grace through faith?
3. What “legalistic” practices have you seen influence Christians or modern-day church practices?

| ***Read***

Luke 13:14

| ***Reflect on This***

“Legalism says God will love us if we change. The Gospel says God will change us because He loves us.” - *Tullian Tchividjian*

MAYBE I WILL, MAYBE I WON'T!

DEVOTIONAL 4

On our journey to holiness, we need to understand how our selectiveness in choosing holy living can slow down our pursuit.

There's a very popular saying which I'm sure most everyone has heard that says "all paths lead to God." This sounds good to man, but Jesus makes it very clear in John 14:6 where he states,

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

In a way, all paths do lead to God, as everyone will stand before him one day, but there is only one way that will present you before God without fault and that is through Jesus.

What I love about God is he gives everyone a choice. He doesn't force anyone to follow him. You choose how and what path you will walk in life. Looking back on my personal path, I can only blame myself for my inability to choose the right path because

I was walking in my flesh. When you're walking in the flesh, you are guaranteed to walk the wrong path. What does that mean when you hear the term walking in the flesh? When the Bible speaks of the flesh, more often than not, it refers to our natural tendency to sin, inherited through our earthly nature. Examples of the works of the flesh are given to us in Galatians 5:19-21,

“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

There was a point in my life as a young Christian where some of those behaviors described how I was living, or, if I'm being honest, maybe even all of them to some extent. Yet, I considered myself a Christian because I believed in Jesus and was “a good person.” I was unhappy and confused because I thought, “Hey, I'm a Christian now but why don't I feel any different; why am I in these same ruts in my life?” Well, it was because those traits of the flesh are in direct conflict with the traits, or “fruit” of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23,

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Choosing to follow my flesh instead of the spirit was a huge roadblock on my path in life and I had no one to blame but myself because I chose to follow my flesh.

If you're experiencing obstacles in your desire to walk a path of righteousness, I'd ask that you first look at the roadblock of your flesh. Denying our flesh and leaving our old life behind will mean sacrificing our own fleshly desires that distract us from following Him. God doesn't adjust his standards to our lifestyle; we are to adjust our lifestyle to his standards. It will be hard, and it will be bumpy, but when you finally empty yourself and ditch the flesh and hitch your new Holy-Spirit-filled self to Jesus, you will find rest and peace for your soul. Jesus says so in Matthew 11:28-30,

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Even through the tough times you will know you are on the right path because you are being led by the only one who

knows it - Jesus! Trust in him, not your flesh.

Brian lives with his wife and son in Detroit, Michigan. They have seen God work in their lives according to His faithful promises. This experience has strengthened their marriage and their walk with the Lord, leaving them with a burning desire to be ambassadors for Christ and share the gospel to all who will listen.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. Have you examined what is slowing you down on your path to righteousness?
2. Have you come to God in prayer about your situation?
3. Do you have men around you who can walk alongside you on this path?

| ***Read***

Romans 8:5-7

| ***Reflect on This***

“The only literal enemy in our Christian life is the flesh.” -
Peter Nii Korley

LOVE IS THE ANSWER

DEVOTIONAL 5

On our journey to holiness, we need to understand how love for God's Word, will, and ways will motivate our pursuit.

“There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.” - Luke 7:41-43 NKJV

“The assurance of His total forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ means we don't have to play defensive games anymore. We don't have to rationalize and excuse our sins. We can call sin exactly what it is, regardless of how ugly and shameful it may be, because we know that Jesus bore that sin in His body on the cross.” - Jerry Bridges

If you're reading this devotional, it's likely that you've been forgiven for a lot of bad things that have caused you much shame. The good news is that even when we were living a

sinful life, Romans 5:8 tells us God showed how much He loves us by sending His son, Jesus, to take the punishment that we deserved. When we come to Him in repentance, He takes away our sin and invites us to live our lives in relationship with Him. He offers us the joy, peace, and fulfillment that we were looking for all along. His offer of forgiveness continues as we learn to live in relationship with Him and overcome our sin day by day (Romans 5:1-11). The more we realize how much He has forgiven us, the more our love for Him grows (Luke 7:36-50).

Through relationship with Jesus, we realize that the sinful things that we once thought were so valuable actually have no value. Even though our sexual sins may have felt very powerful, they actually robbed us of our strength. They put us into spiritual debt. When we turn away from our sins and ask Jesus for forgiveness, He forgives our debts and teaches us to value His ways. In this relationship, He asks us to surrender the worthless things that caused us shame, and gives us things of great eternal value in their place. His love for us empowers us far more than the destructive false love of sexual sin cripples us.

Focusing on the love of Jesus and the better gifts He offers to us helps us resist sin. A while ago, I was looking at social media as I was getting ready to fall asleep. Temptation hit. I had a choice to make. I could surrender to the offer of a lesser pleasure that would give an immediate powerful

payoff, but would bring shame and guilt; or I could look to Jesus who truly loves me and offers a much better reward for surrendering to Him. Thankfully I chose to forsake the shameful offering of sin, and embrace the Lord's offering of peace. It was my love for Jesus and the desire to live for Him that helped me forsake sin. I got off of social media, turned on some audio Bible verses, and went to sleep. I woke the next morning to a wonderfully intimate prayer time with Jesus and I could sense Him sharing powerful spiritual insights. Jesus' love for me and my love for Him helped me turn away from the lesser action of sin and turn towards His wonderful gift of sexual purity and emotional peace. His love can help you too.

It is so much easier to walk away from something if you know what you are walking toward. Ask the Lord to help you understand His love for you and His goals for your life. As your love for Him grows, your appreciation of the value of His gifts will grow too. Focus on these things during your times of temptation. God's love and His gifts are far more powerful than the destructive pleasure of sin.

Dan Hitz is the Executive Director of Reconciliation Ministries of Michigan. He is an ordained minister and licensed professional counselor specializing in helping people overcome sexual brokenness, sexual abuse, and trauma. Dan has been in the ministry for over thirty years and lives with his wife, Marianne, in Metro Detroit, Michigan, USA.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. Can you fully receive the love and forgiveness that Jesus offers you, or do you struggle with condemnation?
2. What has your sexual sin cost you emotionally, relationally, and experientially?
3. What has Jesus offered you in exchange for your sin?

| **Read**

Luke 7:41-43

| **Reflect on This**

“The assurance of His total forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ means we don’t have to play defensive games anymore. We don’t have to rationalize and excuse our sins. We can call sin exactly what it is, regardless of how ugly and shameful it may be, because we know that Jesus bore that sin in His body on the cross.” - *Jerry Bridges*

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

DEVOTIONAL 6

On our journey to holiness, we need to understand that God's character is defined by holiness, and the same should be said of the lives of His children.

Muddy Footprints...

When I was growing up in Louisiana, there are a few memories that stand out above the rest. Louisiana is usually hot and can often get pretty muddy - the kind of mud that when you step in it you could lose a shoe. I remember when I was very young, going out in the woods with my Dad, I don't remember everything that happened that day but I do vividly recall watching where he stepped.

This was easy to do because each time he stepped he left gigantic (to me at the time) foot prints in the mud. I remember thinking how neat it would be to be able to take steps that were as big as his, and to be able to have feet as big as his were. You see, as a son, I wanted to be just like my dad, to the point where I even wanted to step where he stepped.

Planned Steps...

I look at this situation a bit differently now since I am a father myself. A couple of years ago my family was able to visit a sticky waterfall in Northern Thailand. It was an amazing experience of beautiful scenery and great family time. But it also made me a bit anxious. You see, the waterfall is safe to climb up, but only if you step where the water is flowing. For some reason (there is an interesting plaque there explaining some of the science), the rocks are textured to grip in the water, but outside the water a very slippery algae grows.

We had to choose our steps wisely so that we didn't slip and cause people behind us to fall as well. In life, I desperately want to make good and wise choices for my kids to follow and this requires me to take care to step well – just like we used care where we stepped at that waterfall. As a dad, I know that if I walk well, they benefit. As it says in Proverbs 20:7, “The righteous who walks in his integrity – blessed are his children after him!” I have known this verse to be true as I am blessed to be the son of a man of integrity; now I hope to pass that legacy on to my own children.

Heavenly Father...

God is a better equipped father than I am, thankfully, and he wants us to follow Him as well. Our Creator knows what we are capable of and where danger(s) is. God knows that if we are to safely navigate the world we are in, we must follow His lead. And God's key ingredient for us to pursue in our lives is holiness. The holiness of God is an attribute that we can study for a lifetime and never exhaust. Book after book has been written on the subject and it is scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments. He has instructed us, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16, quoting Leviticus 11:44).

Holiness is both being separated from and separated toward. We are to be different from the world around us as we cease taking part in sinful activities. But we are also to be different from the world in the way we pursue the things of God – the way He thinks, and loves, and works. In his book, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Eugene Peterson says, "Holiness is not a destination, but a journey that we embark on with God's guidance." Two (of many) places in the Bible where we can see some of the ways we can pursue this "journey" toward holiness are Romans 6 and 2 Peter 1. Let us pursue the traits listed in these and other passages just like we tried to step in our father's footprints as little children.

Jonathan is currently teaching Bible at an international school and is a regular speaker at his church. He served as a pastor in Western New York for a decade prior to moving to Bangkok, Thailand where he now lives along with his wife and their four children.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. As a child I wanted to be like my dad, because I knew him. How well do we know our Heavenly Father? Are we content to simply “be His son,” or are we seeking to know Him more and better? (John 17:3)
2. Whether we are a father or not ourselves, are we considering those behind us who may be using our steps as a pattern for their life?
3. Have I let past choices fool me into thinking I am unable to pursue holiness in my life today? We are invited to lean on and follow a God who is both the beginning and builder of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), so please consider asking Jesus to help renew your journey today.

| **Read**

1 Peter 1

| **Reflect on This**

“Holiness is not a destination, but a journey that we embark on with God’s guidance.” - *Eugene Peterson*

LOOKING BACK...

DEVOTIONALS 1-6

During this connect group cycle, we pray that you have been challenged, encouraged, and inspired as you pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity in your life. We want to encourage you to now take some time to reflect on the last six devotionals and see how you can consistently apply the many truths that have been shared and that you have learned in your life.

Devotional 1

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 2

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 3

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 4

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 5

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

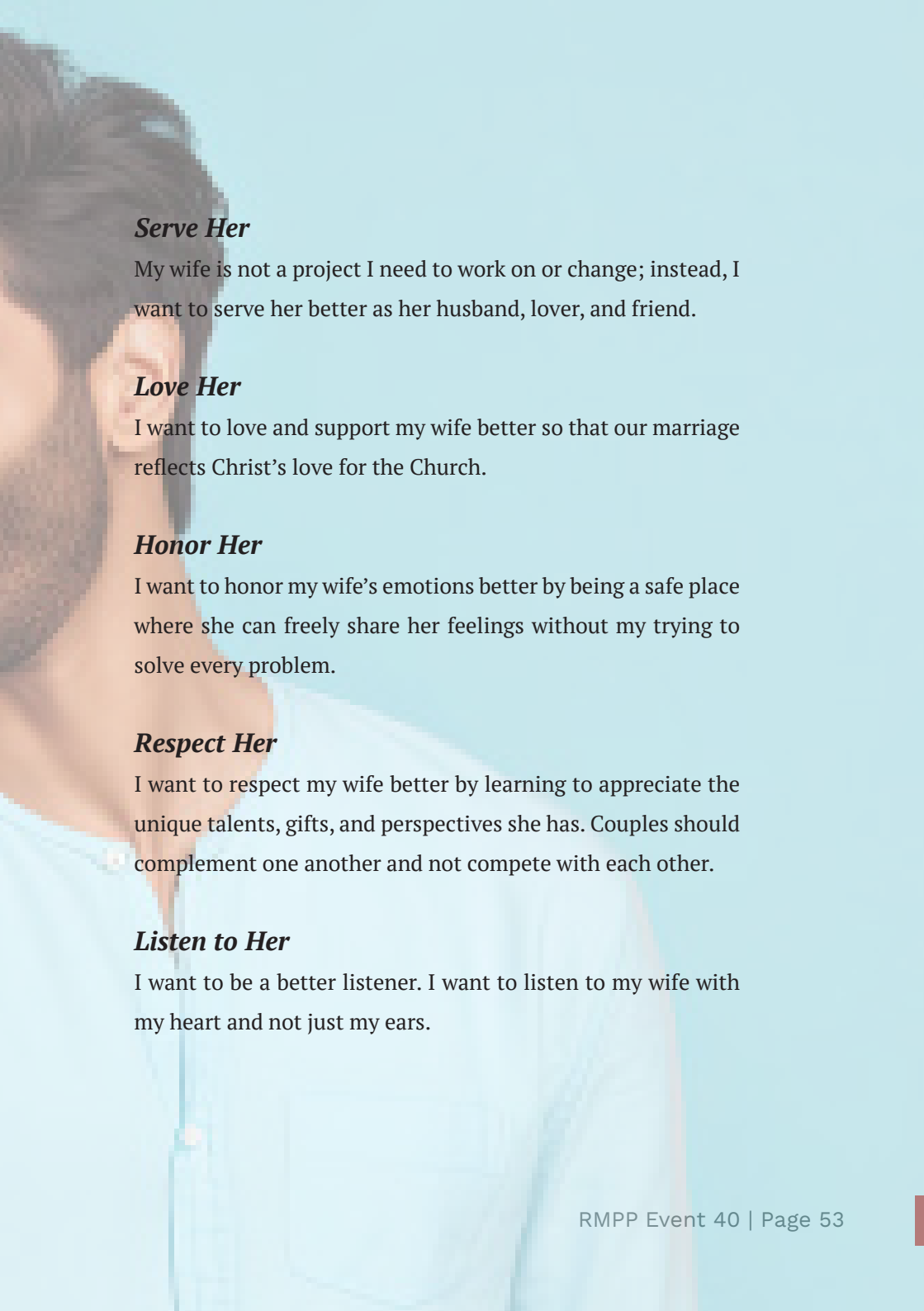
Devotional 6

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

FAST AND PRAY FOR YOUR WIFE

Each month, we encourage you to set aside a time to fast and pray for your wife (or future wife) for one or all of the following points. As husbands (or future husbands) commit to praying and fasting for their wives, we will see a significant spiritual breakthrough and a spiritual legacy created.



Serve Her

My wife is not a project I need to work on or change; instead, I want to serve her better as her husband, lover, and friend.

Love Her

I want to love and support my wife better so that our marriage reflects Christ's love for the Church.

Honor Her

I want to honor my wife's emotions better by being a safe place where she can freely share her feelings without my trying to solve every problem.

Respect Her

I want to respect my wife better by learning to appreciate the unique talents, gifts, and perspectives she has. Couples should complement one another and not compete with each other.

Listen to Her

I want to be a better listener. I want to listen to my wife with my heart and not just my ears.

INTRODUCING RMPP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

| *What Is RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity (RMPP) is a community of men who are committed to growing in integrity, purity and wholeness through relevant teachings, accountability, mentoring and honest dialogue. You might not be sure that you really need to be part of a community like this because you don't struggle with compulsive addictions or sexual sin. While it is very important for many men to focus primarily on resisting sexual temptation and sin, we want to inspire and challenge you to pursue more. Although growing in purity is a big part of the vision for RMPP, it's much more than that. It's also learning about deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment with like-minded brothers. We believe that when we invite Him into these areas, He will extend His healing hand and bring about wholeness. Max Lucado says this very well.

EST. 2014

“Our Savior kneels down and gazes upon the darkest acts of our lives. But rather than recoil in horror, he reaches out in kindness and says, “I can clean that if you want.”

We are men who are not willing to settle for a life of spiritual mediocrity. We choose to relentlessly pursue greater depths of purity and wholeness for ourselves and for our families. Welcome to the RMPP community.

| How does RMPP support the local church?

RMPP does not intend to replace or represent a church; it only creates a safe place for men who want to stay active in their own church community. When a man joins the RMPP community he joins other like-minded men who desire to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. He is choosing to walk out in greater honesty and vulnerability. He is choosing to pursue purity in all aspects of his life. Aspects such as deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work

boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment.

We then pray that as these men grow in greater maturity that they would influence their families. That they would impact their communities and their work places, and that they would be an example for other men in their home church. We believe that as men take hold of the awesome and holy call to live lives that reflect Christ, that the church will be inspired and the world will take notice.

| *What happens next?*

If you have ever attended a men's retreat, you probably remember being deeply impacted by worship, challenged by teaching, and being in community with many men who shared your excitement and enthusiasm for growth and change. A few weeks or months down the road, the gathering became a distant memory as you settled back into the routines of daily life. We don't want to create just another mountain top experience. We are committed to creating a long-term mentoring relationship for everyone who attends an event. That is why you are holding this devotional book in your hands. As you flip through these pages you will see that there devotionals with corresponding

questions. Each devotional is meant to solidify the teaching of the event by encouraging and challenging you, as well as helping to stimulate discussion through thought provoking questions, verses and quotes.

| *Who writes the devotionals?*

Christian men from around the world have written these devotionals and have overcome real issues in their life through God's grace, goodness, mercy and love. We hope and pray that their testimonies and stories inspire, challenge and point you to Christ.

| *What are RMPP connect groups?*

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue both purity and wholeness within an environment of peer support and encouragement. The journey to greater purity and wholeness is a journey that involves inviting other men to walk alongside of you. It is a place where you can share your prayer requests, victories, and struggles and where you can be heard, prayed for and challenged to grow in all areas of life. A connect group is designed to be a support system for you for as long as you want.

During your time in a connect group you will be:

Challenged: You will be challenged to grow in your love for Biblical truth. The men in your group will challenge you to grow in your knowledge and application of God's Word thereby enabling you to stand firm in the midst of life's trials.

Encouraged: You will be encouraged to persevere when life, work, and numerous responsibilities may seem overwhelming. The men in your group will support you through prayer, encouragement and a listening ear.

Inspired: You will be inspired to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. While pursuing Christ-likeness may not always be easy, it will also be worth it. The men in your group will be there to inspire you on that journey.

Accountable: The men in your group, as well as your group leader, will support you and hold you accountable as you pursue greater freedom and victory. Be assured that whatever you share in your group will be strictly confidential.

| ***When are the events held?***

RMPP events are held online 4x a year in February, May, August, and November.

| ***Who can attend?***

RMPP events are open to all men worldwide.

| ***What about privacy?***

Because of the sensitive nature of RMPP events, video or audio recording by participants is not allowed. Also, details of personal testimonies are not to be published via email, social media, or in any other form. Thank you for contributing to a safe and secure environment that helps build honesty and vulnerability.

| ***Who started RMPP?***

Real Men Pursuing Purity was founded in 2014 and is an initiative of The MST Project.

MEET THE TEAM

THE MST GLOBAL BOARD

Christian Lenty is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 21 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

Rex DeKoning is the 60-year old husband and father of a large family. A former nurse and pastor, he now works in Thailand with New Counseling Service as a counselor. Rex has experienced great healing of addictive behaviors after he confessed everything and began to live an accountable life. Rex is highly motivated to inspire other men to seek out a mentor, as it has helped him to walk freely, build honesty and vulnerability.

Nick Chilver is married and is part of a blended family containing 6 children. He is grateful for the people God has brought into his life and across his path. And as he continues to learn to better reflect Him, it is his prayer that God will grant

him the privilege of helping others on the path to freedom and into the Light. He resides in Thailand with his wife.

Mike B. Wood is married to his wonderful wife of 28 years. He is a Pastoral Counselor in the area of sexual recovery therapy. He is a man in process, passionate about bringing men together to share life together. This is where we study God's Word together and share the challenges we face. This inspires us to accept what God has freely given us: His love, mercy, grace and acceptance. He and his wife have lived in Thailand for 18 years.

EVENT DATES AND RESOURCES

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

| *2024 Event Dates*

Mark your calendars, plan to attend, and invite a friend to one or all of the events below.

Event 41: May 18-19

Event 42: August 17-18

Event 43: November 16-17

| *The Pursuit of Purity*

The book, *The Pursuit of Purity*, is meant to transform the way you think and live, putting you on a lifetime path of purity and wholeness leading to consistent victory.

W: themstproject.com/pathway-to-purity

E: hello@themstproject.com

THANK YOU

| *With Gratitude*

We would like say thank you to the following for their contribution to RMPP.

Financial Donors

Thank you for generously providing funding that allows for RMPP events, seminars, and translation of materials.

Devotional Authors

Thank you for writing devotionals that inspire, encourage and challenge each of us to pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness and Christlike maturity.

| *Scriptural Oversight Team*

RMPP has a Scriptural Oversight Team consisting of several pastors from local churches that review all devotionals for theological integrity.



CONNECT GROUPS

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity within an environment of peer support, encouragement, and accountability.

Connect groups are held worldwide on a weekly basis. To inquire about joining a group or to find out more information please email hello@themstproject.com.

If you are interested in starting an RMPP connect group at your church, men's ministry, Bible study, college group, etc., please contact us. We'd love to support you and have the resources to help you.

A photograph of two men smiling and embracing. The man on the left is Black, wearing a white tank top and a white headband. The man on the right is older, with a grey beard, wearing a light blue t-shirt. They are both smiling warmly at the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**JOIN ONE
TODAY!**

FEBRUARY 2024