

Holiness



A Devotional
from the  of Lara Love
& Walk by Faith Ministry

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A Devotional from the Heart of Lara Love

Copyright 2016 newest edition

Walk by Faith Ministry

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Dear friends,

What a blessing it is to share with you this little devotional the Lord has placed upon my heart that you now hold in your hands.

It is my hope you will use it in devoting your heart and life and time to Him daily, and that you will receive through it a healthy combination of love and conviction, of grace and encouragement, of understanding of His Word, the Bible, and of inspiration to love and serve Him with all your heart and to walk in His ways all of your days.

This issue with the theme of holiness was borne of my heartfelt desire to tell the world we were created in God's image, and to encourage people to be holy as He is holy which He calls us to be and which we can only be through repentance and a life devoted to believing in and following the Lord Jesus Christ.

No matter how dark the world becomes, we must refuse to reflect the world's darkness and instead be holy vessels filled with the light of the Lord Jesus Christ! Ever learning to yield ourselves to God and to

be holy as He is holy! May we all strive in Christ for holiness!

Love & blessings,

Lara

Committed to Holiness

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [behavior];” 1 Peter 1:15 [behavior] added.

The woman who stood before me tried hard to convince me God sees believers in Christ as holy, as though it's a done deal once we are born again by repenting and believing Jesus died on the cross for our sins. But I would not budge. For the greatest burden I carry for those who already believe in Jesus as Lord is the lack of understanding, and the lack of commitment, I see when it comes to holiness.

God sets us apart to be His holy people when we are saved, but for the rest of our lives we need to become transformed to become the holy people He has created us to be. This is a process.

He forgives us and sets us apart to be holy. By His grace, in His strength, by His Holy Spirit, with His love and through studying the Bible, we undergo a transformation process to be like our Father God. Holy.

Are you committed to this process? Does your life reflect your commitment?

Holiness—Just How Far Will You Go?

“...I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” Phil. 3:8

Would you turn your back on the world to please the Lord? Would you say no to your best friend to bring God glory? Would you give up being popular to do what God says is right? Would you walk away from riches and success if God called you in a different direction? Would you go against everything the world has taught you even if people called you crazy?

God is holy. The world is not. No matter how hard the world tempts you to live according to its ways, holiness is about being willing to look and sound and act different from the world no matter the cost. You might lose loved ones, money, worldly success, popularity, even your dreams. You might suffer persecution. You might find yourself alone. Holiness doesn't promise to bring pleasure to the flesh. Holiness can be hard. Holiness is about being the person God created you to be.

Will you go to any lengths for God? What are you holding onto He wants you to let go?

Are You a Holy Vessel?

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified [to be holy], and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.” 2 Timothy 2:20-21 [to be holy] added

Lots of people say they want to be used by God, but a holy God wants to use a holy vessel. Would you use a filthy water pitcher to serve water at a fancy dinner party for loved ones? Of course not. Then how can we dare to serve God with our hearts full of anger, fear, jealousy, and all manner of wicked thoughts? And how can we serve Him with our lives full of wrongdoing?

To ask God to forgive us is not enough. He wants us to purge from our hearts and our lives the ways of the world we have lived by. Receiving His forgiveness and jumping right back into our sins does not produce a holy vessel. We need to strive to be pleasing in His sight by making a dedicated commitment to turning away from our sins and genuinely living for Him.

What kind of vessel are you?

Is Sin Your Enemy or Friend?

“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Hebrews 12:4

One night, I wanted to scream—and scream. The 16 mostly special needs and senior rescued dogs in my care at the time were noisy and needy. And I was tired and cranky. But I had spent years seeking God’s forgiveness every time I treated the dogs poorly. This time, I wanted to do what was right. Almost every time temptation had come in the past to lose my temper, I had fallen into the temptation. Would sin be my friend once more that night, or would it become my enemy?

I poured out my heart to the Lord, telling Him how I felt instead of taking it out on the dogs and begging Him to help me do what was right this time. I submitted myself to God and in His strength resisted the sin. I still have a long way to go, but that night I enjoyed the victory of resisting the sin. I realized it really is possible through Christ to learn to live God’s way instead of my own.

Is there sin in your life you need to resist? Make sin your enemy. And resist it in the strength of the Lord.

Swimming Upstream

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” 2 Peter 3:14

I’m not a swimmer, but I know how hard it is to swim against the tide. It seems like the tide of humanity is in fuller force than ever when it comes to impurity, threatening to take with it every person it possibly can into a sea of endless evil. The tidal wave of temptation threatens to take the whole world under, doesn’t it?

While we are forgiven for our sins through faith in Christ, we have a responsibility once we are born again to work on our hearts and our lives so that when we stand before the Lord when that day comes we will be found blameless. It takes diligence to swim against the tide. When so much of the world is going in the opposite direction, it takes perseverance to stick with going the way of the Lord. God will give us the strength to swim against the tide so we can live our lives for Him.

Do you find yourself being overtaken by the tidal wave of the world, or are you swimming against the tide? Make sure you’re swimming in the right direction. In His. In Him. For Him!

He Alone Is Holy

“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.” Rev. 15:4

Have you ever felt like you are just never going to measure up? Like you're just never going to be good enough? And do you feel like God calling you to be holy is just about the most impossible thing you've been called to do? In fact, do you feel like you might as well quit before you even try because the notion is so ridiculous?

I come from a background of trying to measure up. When someone told me I was a perfectionist, I just about laughed. I thought so poorly of myself that I knew it was absurd to even try to measure up. But I did try—and failed. Of course I failed. I could never measure up to the standards I set for myself. Then, when I started to study the Bible and saw God's standards, I figured it was all over. How could I possibly be holy?

I finally understand the only one who is truly holy and righteous is God. My job is simply to grow in His image and look to Him as my role model. Is He yours?

When Your Life is Anything But Holy

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” I John 1:9

One of the most painful things I’ve ever experienced is loving the Lord as much as I do and sinning against Him. The more I love Him, the more I hate my sin. That’s a good thing, but it can be rough when I am frustrated because I keep falling into the same old sin. The devil has tried hard to keep me down when I have fallen, barraging me with condemnation. “You’ll never get up. You’ll fall again. Might as well quit now. Don’t bother getting up.”

But the Lord by His loving kindness has led me to His mercy seat, reminding me that He has forgiveness for those who confess their sins and are genuinely sorry for them. I have learned to come running to His mercy seat, standing on His promise of forgiveness. And slowly, over time, by His grace, I am doing more standing and a lot less falling.

Is there an area of your life you have become so frustrated you figure you might as well just stay on the ground rather than come back to God? I have a word for you. Repent and return. The Lord stands waiting.

When Jesus Shuts the Door on Us

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able...Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:...We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” Luke 13:24-27

I know a man who when he led a Sunday school class used to say he didn't want to be left behind when Jesus comes back. My first thought was wonderment at why he was worried about that since his faith is in Christ. But then I remembered the day long ago a loved one referred to some verses in the Bible that to this very day utterly astound me.

I was shocked to learn that Jesus will turn some people away who say they know Him. Why? Though they fellowshiped with Him, they are doers of evil.

We do not get saved to keep doing wrong. We get saved to be transformed into the people God created us to be to spend eternity with Him.

Don't be left behind.

Pleasing the One You Love

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.” 1 Thess. 4:1

I used to love my sin. Now I hate it. Why? The more I read the Bible, the more I love the Lord. The more I love the Lord, the more I want to please Him.

A woman I met doing beach ministry one day assumed I love the Lord so much because of what He has done for me. I corrected her. I am infinitely thankful for what He has done for me, but my boundless love for Him is because of who He is rather than because of what He has done. The more I study His Word, the more I know who He is. Holy. Sovereign. True.

Have you ever loved someone so much you will go to any lengths to love and bless and bring that person pleasure and joy? I have never loved anyone in the universe as much as I love God, nor have I desired to please anyone the way I want to please Him. I do not want to be holy like He is because I have to. I love Him so incredibly much that I want to.

Do you? Let today be a new beginning.

Spring Cleaning Anyone?

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” 1 Thess. 4:7

I’m embarrassed to say my house is dirtier than it has ever been. I don’t have the budget for a weekly housekeeper, and I don’t have the time or desire to keep up with the cleaning. A friend commented on how incredibly organized I am. My house is set up for my full-time ministry work, rather than as a typical home. But the bottom line is that I just can’t keep up with cleaning it. I’m too busy seeking the Lord and working to fulfill His ministry calling on my life.

Why am I airing my “dirty laundry” so to speak? Because despite the state of my house, my life is cleaner than it has ever been. I am constantly, daily, spending time with the Lord, studying the Bible, and striving to keep myself clean for Him. I could have the cleanest house in the world and a filthy life. But I would rather have a clean life for the Lord. I am more focused on getting rid of the sin from my heart and life than keeping up with my housecleaning. The greatest cleanup comes with repentance and God’s forgiveness.

Is it time to do a spring cleaning with God?

Failure to Yield

“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” Romans 6:19

I couldn't believe the ticket I got for backing out of a driveway straight into a car loaded with wild teenagers. How could I get a ticket when they were driving too fast? Sure, I caused a bunch of damage. But my car got messed up also. I was faulted for the accident, to my shock, and the ticket read, “Failure to yield.” That's the nature of sin, isn't it? A wreck waiting to happen all because we fail to yield to God. I wanted to blame the kids in the car, but I had caused the accident.

When we receive Christ as Lord, we are supposed to stop yielding to sin and to start yielding to doing the right thing with holiness as the result. We may be set apart to be God's holy people, but this does not mean we necessarily act like His holy people. We need to stop yielding to the ways of the world so we can start being the holy people He has separated us out from the world to be.

Have you failed to yield to Him? Repent.

Time for a Change

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation [behavior] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Eph. 4:22-24 [behavior] added

Who hasn't heard of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde? I can never remember which one is which, but I do know this. One is the right one to be, and the other is absolutely not. It's all the same person, but it's like he's two different people. I can totally relate. Who can't?

When we start off following Jesus, some of us may foolishly believe we will now live happily ever after. But when God's Holy Spirit comes to live inside us, we still have our human flesh. And as much as we may find ourselves acting differently in a good way, we might also find ourselves acting out our old behaviors. Talk about Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde! Our job is by God's grace and with His strength to get rid of our old self and put on our new self—just like changing clothes, only it's not anywhere near as easy. Through Christ, however, we can change.

Is it time to make a change?

If at First You Don't Succeed

“And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh...” Jonah 3:1-3

Most people seem to have heard the Bible story about Jonah and the whale. In the telling of the story, the focus so often seems to be on Jonah ending up in the whale's belly because of his sin against God. But the significance of the story isn't about his visit inside the whale. It's about his ultimate repentance, obedience, and God's mercy both for Jonah and for the countless people he used Jonah to help save.

One of my biggest struggles has been how discouraged I have become as a result of the countless times I have stumbled and fallen when I so desperately wanted to do what was right. I didn't just come to hate my sin. I was tough on myself when I fell. When Jonah repented, God was able to use him in a mighty way. God doesn't convict us of our sins so we can stay in them. He does it so we can grab back ahold of Him and leave them behind. *Instead of staying down when you fall, rise back up and return. To Him.*

He Called Me “the Mouth”

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” Psalm 19:14

When I was a teen, my Dad gave me a new nickname. He called me “the mouth.” I shouldn’t have been surprised. I had once been shy. Needless to say, my mouth became anything but. Little did I know the Lord, whom I did not yet know, would one day use my mouth to preach. Nor did I know that when I would come to know the Lord, I would learn that God wants my mouth and what I meditate (think) on, and my actions to bring Him glory. My Dad hadn’t called me “the mouth” because I was using it for any good purpose. Decades would come to pass before I would realize I needed to submit my heart, my mouth, and my actions to the Lord.

I am no longer a bratty teen mouthing off to my Dad. And I am working hard, despite how often I fall and need forgiveness, to not have my Father in heaven call me “the mouth” for any other reason than I desire to bring Him glory from what comes out of it.

Are you using your mouth for the Lord?

What Kind of Fruit Tree Are You?

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Gal. 5:19-23

As the world's standards take a bigger plunge than ever, the Bible is as clear as it has always been about the difference between the world's ways and God's. The human flesh, without God, bears fruit that is purely wicked. And the fruit of walking in Christ is pure and lovely. I have tried for years in my own strength to produce the fruit God desires, to no avail. Why? Because my flesh cannot produce the fruit God desires. But when I abide in Him, I bear the fruit of His Spirit. My job is to simply, and humbly, and thankfully, bear the right fruit.

What kind of fruit tree are you? Do you bear the fruit He desires?

When You're Ready to Quit

*“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”
James 1:2-4*

I can be as tenacious as a pit bull. That can be a bad thing—or good. My sin history is enough to prove what the wrong kind of tenacity can do. But the right kind of won't-give-up attitude can be key to incredible transformation. Two media members asked me in separate interviews about my incredible life transformation. They seemed to both want to know what role I played. The answer? Simple. ALL glory goes to God. He took a life utterly broken for decades and turned me into a sold-out, on-fire, joyful ministry leader who dedicates her life 24-7 to loving and serving Him.

The only role I played was I didn't give up no matter how hard it got. I stayed in God's Word, learned to do my best to repent when I needed to, and gave Him the thumbs up to change me. He did it. Each time I could have quit, I held on—harder and tighter. I held on for dear life to the Lord. And I still do. *Don't give up. Hold on! To Him!*

Whose Life Is it Anyway?

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” 1 Cor. 6:20

Oh, how I used to scream and cry and curse and throw temper tantrums in the face of the Lord when I didn't get what I wanted. I told Him He wasn't fair. He didn't love me. He had no right. Oh, how wicked were my words! Oh, how wicked was my heart! Who was I, with my history of brokenness at the hands of others coupled with brokenness by the sins of my flesh, to tell God who sent His only begotten Son to the cross to save me and give me everlasting life that I didn't agree with His will for my life. I was nobody. Nothing. Nothing but a sinner in the hands of a merciful God. Holiness is supposed to be beautiful, isn't it? But when I think of holiness sometimes, I think this. It hurts to do what's right when my flesh is begging to do what's wrong. It's so hard to walk in God's ways when I'm desperate to satisfy my flesh. *But now I get it. My life is His now. He saved me. He paid for my redemption. And at last I realize I wouldn't want it any other way. For there is nothing greater than belonging to Him. Whose are you? Your own—or His?*

The Blessing of Correction—OUCH

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” Hebrews 12:11

I don't know about anybody else, but it took me a long time to realize there was anything constructive about so-called constructive criticism. I was not one who enjoyed being criticized—to say the least. Nor did I like having my faults pointed out to me. I was not teachable, I was too prideful to realize I needed to change, and I preferred finger pointing at others if the truth be told. Then I became too broken, and too desperate, to fight any longer.

And, lo and behold, I discovered the one from whom I needed the constructive criticism more than anyone else wasn't a parent, a spouse, a counselor, or a friend. I needed God's conviction, and I needed His instruction. I needed His correction. And I needed His love, grace, mercy, strength, and power to change. God doesn't set us apart from the world to leave us in our mess. He, the perfect Father, separates us to teach us to become like Him. Holy like He is.

Don't resist His correction. Thank Him for it.

The Truth and Nothing But the Truth

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” John 17:17-19

In His long, beautiful prayer in John 17 of the Bible, Jesus said He wasn't praying for the world. He was praying for those God had given to Him. For those of us who believe in Christ as Lord, are we not those God has given Him? Aren't we, then, to be made holy by God's Word? How can we be made holy by His Word if we do not immerse ourselves in it?

As an evangelist, I am constantly interacting with people and keeping myself open to opportunities to minister to people. The biggest missing piece I see among believers is countless ones who are not committed to studying the Bible and following Christ. When God sets us apart to be His Holy people, we need His Word so our lives are transformed to bring Him praise. We should not merely rely on others to feed us His Word. We should feed ourselves His Word and grow holy by it.

Are you being made holy by His Word?

A Lesson from Enoch

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Hebrews 11:5

Ever heard of Enoch in the Old Testament? Whatever happened to him? He didn't die. He simply was gone. But how could this be? Why didn't he die? Because he pleased God. There is not much to Enoch's story in the way of words. He doesn't occupy a big portion of the Bible to say the least. But his story is powerful nevertheless. Do you know what Enoch did? Enoch “walked with God (Gen. 5:24).” God wants us in His company, and He wants us to please Him. This astounds me that the Creator of the universe who is perfectly holy wants us in His company. It also amazes me that we have the ability to please Him. The question is, do we?

For much of my life thus far, I did not walk with the Lord. I walked in the opposite direction. Now I walk with Him. And it delights me to think I could bring Him joy.

Are you walking in God's company? Would you like to please Him? Then do.

Your Every Thought

“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.” Psalm 139:1-2

My beloved long-time pastor who is now with the Lord shared his heart one night at Bible study when he explained how God had brought him to a place where he not only wanted to be rid of his outward sins. Now he wanted to be rid of his sinful thoughts. God knows every one of our thoughts. He is concerned with our hearts (thoughts and feelings) and with our actions.

A long time ago, I bragged about making dinner for someone who was very abusive toward me. Some time later, when God took the hardness off my heart, I was convicted that my heart was full of sin. Pride. Hatred. Hurt. Judgment. Arrogance. Self-righteousness. The list goes on. I had to repent. Though my action was right, my thoughts were entirely wrong.

Today, I seek the Lord throughout the day and night. I trust Him to show me my sins so I can repent. I want to please Him with my actions—and my thoughts.

Do you have holy thoughts? Or do they need an overhaul? God's mercy awaits.

When Pride Gets in the Way

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 2 Cor. 12:9

Pride doesn't like to admit wrongdoing, does it? Neither does it like to confess weakness, right? The world teaches us we should be strong, not weak. Years ago, I struggled with the idea I was a newspaper columnist when my then husband abandoned me. How could I help others via my writing when I was such a mess? A woman told me God could use my brokenness, and I learned my weakness was an opportunity for the Lord to show my readers His strength. I learned a great lesson in the beauty of being transparent.

Being holy for God isn't about trying to look perfect to the world. Nor is it about trying to be perfect. It is humbly submitting to God's way of living and being willing to admit when we fall short. Paul in the Bible bragged about his weaknesses because he knew Christ's power would be visible as a result.

Are you willing to be transparent? Humble yourself, and let God show His strength.

The Perfecting of Holiness

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Cor. 7:1

Uh oh. So much for thinking it's a done deal when we are born again by repenting and believing Jesus died on the cross for us. Sure, our sins are forgiven. Thank God! But guess what follows our spiritual birth? Growth! How so? Our holiness needs to be “perfected.” The Bible concordance reveals the Greek word translated into “perfecting” also means “fulfilling further or completely.”

In other words, something that has begun needs to go through a process until completion. This is the sanctification process whereby we learn to live how the Bible teaches us to live while leaving behind our old way of living.

Notice the Bible says WE need to cleanse ourselves. From what? The filth of our wicked ways. I have been to countless churches that don't teach about sin, hell, repentance, and condemnation. In other words, they don't teach the Truth that we must turn away from our sins and live to glorify the Lord. *Are you going through the sanctification process? Are you ready to begin?*

What Are You in Hot Pursuit Of?

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:” Hebrews 12:14

Have you ever been in hot pursuit of a relationship? Or a dream? Or a vacation? Or a promotion? Or tickets to a championship football game? Or passing your final exam on your college degree? Or a good, hot meal when your stomach just won't quit growling? Or a hot cup of coffee? Or finding the perfect present for a loved one? Or a good night's sleep? Or of anything at all, for that matter?

When the Bible tells us to “follow” holiness, the Greek word translated into “follow” also means “pursue.” God is telling us to pursue holiness. In the day and age in which we live, we are constantly tempted to pursue everything imaginable and unimaginable but God. In fact, those who pursue the Lord are often persecuted, ridiculed, rejected, laughed at, and left behind by the world. Nevertheless, there is nothing more important in our lives to pursue than the Lord Himself and holy living.

We need to look at our lives regularly to make sure we are pursuing Him and His way of living as our number one priority. *Is the Lord your number one pursuit?*

Knowing God's Will

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;” 1 Thess. 4:3-4

I used to spend tons of time trying to figure out God's will. I foolishly believed I could pray hard enough and think hard enough and maybe get the answer. I didn't understand God's will is found in God's Word. And I didn't know the way to find out His specific will for my day-to-day life is to spend time with Him praying and studying the Bible and seeking His face. Furthermore, I didn't realize the more I study the Bible, the more I am able to hear His specific will for my individual life. Why? Because God never speaks against His own Word. So anything I think I hear from God about my life needs to line up with His Word. Now I comprehend God's desire for us to be sanctified and made holy, and that I need to seek God and dig deep into His Word to be transformed by Him and for Him. I need to look no further than His face and His Word to know His will. Then I need to do what I have heard. *Do you seek His face daily? Do you dig into His Word every day? Seek Him above all else.*

Feast on God's Word

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

I used to be bored, intimidated, confused, and overwhelmed by the Bible. I felt like a kid again in a classroom with a mean teacher hanging over my head making me read a textbook way too hard to understand. I made myself study, but nothing much came of it. My attitude was all wrong.

Today, I love to study the Bible more than almost anything else. I see now God loves us so much He wants to speak to us personally, reveal Himself to us, teach us His ways, help us live right, and prepare us to spend forever with Him. And there is so much more than that, too, when it comes to studying the Bible.

God wants us to dig deep into His Word, to “divide” it by dissecting it, to treasure it, to be convicted by it, to be transformed through it, and to learn to live by it. Learning to live a holy life begins with learning about our holy God and letting Him teach us His holy ways.

Do you study His Word daily? Grow to love God's Word if you don't already.

Are You Holy Or Not?

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:10

Get ready for the big debate. Are we already holy or not? As one woman explained, we are holy in terms of our position. How so? Through faith in Christ, we are forgiven and sanctified (made holy). But there is a difference between being considered holy and acting the part. Another woman engaged in the conversation about holiness said God sees us as holy because Christ shed His blood for us. But just because God sees us as pure, does this mean we act holy and pure?

God forgives those who repent and believe in Christ, and sets us apart as His holy people. But what we do with our salvation is key. We can spend the rest of our lives in our old sins, far off from the Lord. Is this holy? God sets us apart to prepare us to spend eternity with Him.

Just where do you stand when it comes to being holy? If you have repented and been forgiven, are you now being prepared to spend eternity with God? Is your life a life of holiness? Are you living holy? Is it time to begin?

Jesus Is Not an Excuse

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” Romans 6:1-2

Long before I came to know the Lord, I was deeply disturbed by a bunch of guys in a fraternity in my college who went wild on weekends and then bowed their knees to God in confession at church on Sundays. They seemed to run back and forth between the frat parties and their church confessional. Saturdays were for sin, and Sundays for mercy. Life was lived between the two. I was worse. I didn't even believe in God, let alone know I needed His love and forgiveness.

Now I get it. We all need forgiveness. But God doesn't hand it out to condone our sin, pat us on the backs, and tell us to run off and go enjoy our sin before running back to beg for more mercy. He is holy like we should want to be. His desire is for us to learn how to live free from sin. Sure, when we fall, we should run to Him. But not for the purpose of getting cleaned up to go out and make another mess. We need to aim for holiness.

What are you doing with God's mercy?

What You Won't Let Go

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” Mt. 22:37

How can you love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind when your heart, soul, and mind are consumed with something you know you need to let go? When God calls us to be holy, He wants our hearts, souls, and minds to be on fire for Him. But when our focus is on something we are holding onto for dear life, then we cannot possibly hold onto Him for dear life as we should.

If God is telling you to let something go, then do you think it's time to let go? Perhaps you don't feel strong enough to let it go. You're probably not strong enough.

Instead of relying on your own weakness, depend on God's strength. If He has told you to do something, He will enable you to do it.

I have had to let go of so much in my life. It seems there is always more letting go to do. I have failed miserably when I tried on my own. Now I know I need to hold onto Him for dear life to let go of what I need to let go.

Think it's time?

Keep on Shining

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;” Phil. 2:15

A random man in a park told me Satan wanted to put out my light. He told me a single light in an entirely dark stadium is enough to make a difference. He told me this when I was struggling to keep moving forward in my ministry calling. The man wasn't random after all. God had sent him with a powerful message.

Just because the world is getting crazier and darker, which is what the Bible said would happen, doesn't give us the excuse to let our lights dim. I can't think of a more important time than in the midst of such dire darkness to let our lights shine brighter than ever.

I am inspired more than ever to work to be pure for the Lord, learning to let go of what I need to leave behind and being willing to walk the way God has called us to walk. God doesn't want us to walk in sin. He wants us to walk with Him. Blameless so we do not allow sin to cast a shadow over our lights.

Is your light for the Lord shining bright?

The Purity Test

“...Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.” James 4:8

My classmates in my freshman dorm came up with this idea to pass around a written purity test to see just how much we all had sinned sexually as we began our four years in college. Only the word sin wasn't used. In fact, the more wrong we had done, the greater grade we would get on the test and the more praise we would get from our classmates. Though I scored low on the test compared with many others, I spent the next four years and many years afterward on a downward spiral of sin headed straight for hell. I did not yet believe in God, and it was only when I truly came to know the Lord that I understood the depths of my sin.

I had looked to the world for my standards, and learned that greater sin meant greater popularity in the eyes of the world. Though this is still true, today I love the Lord more than this world. In living for Him, I desire to purify myself for Him to show Him my love and adoration.

Do you work daily to purify yourself for the Lord? If not, are you ready to begin? Today?



The Best Message in the Universe

Ever since the first man and woman Adam and Eve sinned against God and were kicked out of their perfect lives in the Garden of Eden and lost most importantly their relationship with God, all humans have been born into sin which results in the curse leading to death and eternal separation from God in hell and the lake of fire. Why? Because we as sinners cannot be in the presence of a perfect and holy God. We all fall short of God's glory, and nothing we can do can earn His love, forgiveness, and everlasting life.

But God loves us so much He sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to the earth as a man, to die a heinous death on the cross to pay the death and hell penalty for our sins by taking God's wrath at us for our sins upon Himself, and to be raised from the dead and to now sit on the right hand of God in heaven until He returns again as the final steps unfold leading to His forever Kingdom of heaven that will be filled with Christ's followers. If we are genuinely sorry we have sinned against God and repent of our sins, believe Jesus is the Son of God and died for us and

was raised from the dead and is Lord, turning from our sins to a life devoted to God and His ways, we are forgiven and enter into a relationship with God and receive the promise of eternal life in heaven with Him! We are born again spiritually with a clean slate and saved from God's wrath, death, and hell and the lake of fire.

Belief in Christ as Lord is NOT an intellectual faith. Even the demons believe. True faith in Christ is an ongoing belief in Him, all that He is, did, is doing, says in the Bible, and a true trust in Him as Lord whereby we turn from our wicked ways and live according to the ways God teaches us in the Bible. We are not called to just believe in Christ in our minds. We are called to follow Him by yielding to God our very lives and demonstrating in our hearts, words, and actions that we have turned away from the ways of the world and turned to the Lord. We are to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him whereby we die to ourselves and live for Him. Countless people who believe they are going to heaven based on an intellectual belief, an emotional experience, church attendance, good works, etc., will

be turned away by Christ and end up in hell and the lake of fire forever apart from God because they neglected to understand and put into practice that believing in, and following, Christ is a WAY OF LIFE of living for God!

God commands us above all else to love Him with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves (Mt 22:37-40). Once born again, we must go through a life-long sanctification process in which our minds are renewed by studying the Bible, our lives are transformed by God's Spirit, and we are conformed to Christ's image. Good works cannot earn our salvation, but good works should be the fruit of true repentance demonstrating we are truly living for the Lord. Our purpose is to love God, to love others, to proclaim the Gospel message to others and to help lead people into God's Kingdom as we follow Christ, using the gifts God has given each of us to bring Him glory while rejoicing in and enjoying forever fellowship with Him!

Spend time with the Lord daily, studying the Bible and learning to live by it, praising and worshiping Him, pouring out your heart to Him, praying and

seeking His face, listening for His voice which will always line up with His Word, and loving and obeying and revering and fearing and honoring God through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Assemble in fellowship with fellow followers of Christ as God commands us whether in a church, Bible study, and/or house church.

As the world draws to an end, and God's judgment nears, evil and false teaching abound. Check everything you hear and read against the Bible because God only and always speaks in line with His Word. Anything not in line with His Word is not from Him.

Live day by day, breath by breath, to love and serve the Lord with all your heart forever! Rejoice in Him! Grow in Him! Live to bring Him glory forevermore!



Scriptures

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one:” Romans 3:10

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” Romans 3:23

“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” Eph. 5:6

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23

“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Mt. 13:41-43

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the

kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”
John 3:3-6

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Rom. 10:9

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:38

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” Matthew 16:24

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Romans 12:2

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,

that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”
Romans 8:29

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,
and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear
Son.” Colossians 1:13

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the
light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk
in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 8:12

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by
the word of God.” Romans 10:17

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and
they follow me.” John 10:27

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall
enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth
the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Mt. 7:21



Special Invitation

If you would like a free copy or copies to distribute of my *Finding the Light* Gospel tract, which includes my personal story along with the life-changing message of the Gospel written in a clear, simple, straightforward manner, please contact me using the contact information on the back page of this devotional. You can also see a copy of it on my ministry website.

Love & blessings,

Lara



About Lara Love

I am a 100% Jewish follower of Christ, evangelist & author & special needs & senior rescued dogs mom devoted 24-7 to loving & serving the Lord and helping people to become and remain forever followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For loads of love, encouragement, inspiration, & help, and to read my story & see my books, Gospel tracts & devotionals, & Daily Inspiration online, and to meet the ministry's very special dogs, please visit me and my little ministry online & feel free to get in touch if you are led!



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