

PENTECOSTAL LIFE

SMALL GROUP Facilitator's Guide

Holiness

IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE

For the Spirit-filled believer who loves God, holiness is the normal—indeed the only—way to live.

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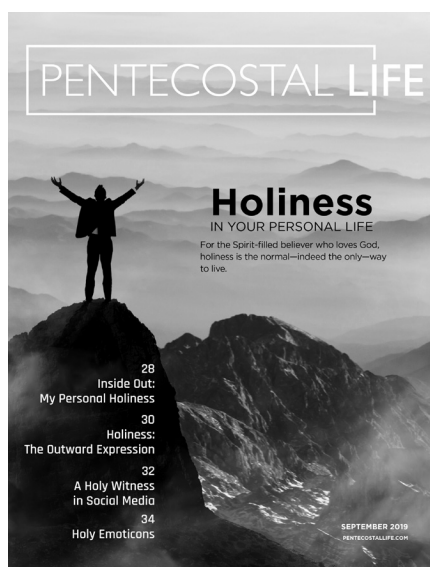
SEPTEMBER 2019

PENTECOSTALLIFE.COM

SMALL GROUP

Facilitator's Guide

Welcome to *Pentecostal Life's* small group study, *Holiness in Your Personal Life*. Thank you for providing leadership for this four-session study. Your enthusiasm for the study will help to inspire and educate your group members to learn about and appreciate the challenge of practicing holiness in your personal life.



Oneness — Small Group Overview

Authors: Terry R. Baughman, David K. Bernard, Michael Ensey, Seth Simmons

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Session Two	Holiness: The Outward Expression
Session Three	A Holy Witness in Social Media
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OUR VISION

The *Pentecostal Life* in every Pentecostal home

OUR MISSION

To publish a Pentecostal magazine that strengthens the hands of Pentecostal pastors, encourages and challenges Pentecostal believers, and reaches beyond the doors of Pentecostal churches

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Small Group Facilitator's Guide

Launching the Study

This study focuses on holiness in one's personal life. It comes from the four ENGAGE articles in the September 2019 issue of the *Pentecostal Life*. Every member of your group will need a copy of the magazine. As a leader, you will need the magazine and the complimentary downloadables from pentecostallife.com.

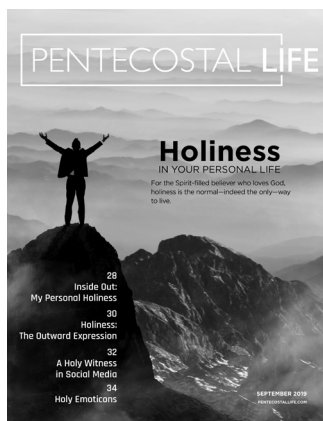
Before the Study

- Pray that you and the members of the group will be ready to receive what God wants to reveal to them through this study.
- Make sure your group size is small enough to encourage interaction by all participants; if it is too large, consider breaking up into several study groups.
- Set up a circular area where all participants have a seat that allows them to see each other.
- Place an extra chair in the circle to remind the group of the evangelistic nature of the study group. The group members can be encouraged to bring visitors and to pray for their salvation.
- As the facilitator, you should read the four ENGAGE articles to become familiar with the scope of the study.
- Each week, read the discussion questions and think through the answers you anticipate will be given. Prepare to lead the conversation and make notes on the direction you will take.
- Make certain each member of the study group purchases or has access to the September 2019 issue of the *Pentecostal Life* magazine. *Pentecostal Life* is available in single or bundle subscriptions at pentecostallife.com.
- Each week, instruct your study group members to read the appropriate ENGAGE article for the following week's discussion.
- Make a copy of the Study Guide for each student. They, as well as this Facilitator's Guide, are available as a download at pentecostallife.com in both Word document and PDF formats.

During the Study

- **Focus.** It is easy for small group discussions to veer away from the goal of the study. Gently encourage group members back to the question at hand if this happens.
- **Include.** Ask specific questions of those who are more hesitant to participate to encourage them to join the discussion.
- **Pray.** As appropriate, pray for the members of the group who are struggling.

SESSION ONE



Inside Out: My Personal Holiness By Michael Ensey

Holiness is an essential distinguishing characteristic of God's nature. His holiness informs every other divine attribute. As the people of God, we are called out of

darkness and into His marvelous light. We are filled with His Holy Spirit and commanded to emulate and reflect His holiness.

The term "holiness" tends to evoke certain emotions based on a preconception of what it means or how it is to be applied in the life of a believer. So let's make sure we are on the same page when it comes to our understanding of this term. Holiness is a biblical concept. The supreme source of our understanding related to holiness is the inspired Word of God. Through Holy Spirit illumination, His Word reveals to us everything that pertains to life and godliness. There is explicit instruction or commandments (e.g., don't murder) and there is implicit instruction or principles that must be applied (e.g., be separate from the world). Holiness is not irrelevant for the twenty-first-century church. In fact, it is more relevant today than ever before because carnality, sensuality, perversion, and secular humanistic philosophies are more prevalent, militant, and invasive than ever before. (See Romans 12:1–2.) Therefore, we must have a biblically informed understanding of what it means to be holy. We will consider our call to holiness in three specific areas: covenant relationship, lifestyle witness, and personal wholeness.

Covenant Relationship. The term "holiness" is synonymous with the concept of sanctification. Sanctification is initiated through the new birth, which includes the Bible standard of full salvation: repentance, baptism by immersion in the name of the Lord Jesus

Christ for the remission of sins, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance. Sanctification is the continuing process of becoming holy, which is to be set apart for God's special purpose through a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ. It is separation from sin and dedication unto God. It is both immediate in position (right standing with God) and progressive in application (spiritual maturity and growing in grace in the knowledge of Jesus Christ). Through this covenant relationship we become partakers of the holiness of God, for we cannot manufacture our own holiness by our works. Therefore, holiness is not a means of earning salvation but the result of salvation. Sanctification must be motivated by love (see John 14:15) and is produced in the life of a believer because of a desire to do that which is pleasing to God. Love is the antidote for legalism.

Lifestyle Witness. We are called to be different not for the sake of being different but for the sake of making a difference. Our lifestyle should testify to those around us that sanctification is actively at work within us. "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14, NKJV). Through the work of sanctification we conform to the character and will of God. We begin to think like He thinks, love what He loves, and hate what He hates. We will have the mind of Christ, and it will produce the fruit of the Spirit in us. A lifestyle of holiness communicates Christ to others and creates an attraction to Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Personal Wholeness. Holiness produces wholeness. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Wholeness is a practical

SESSION ONE (CONT.)

benefit of the ongoing work of sanctification in our lives. We will be whole mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically when we submit to the Spirit of God and obey the Word of God. Consider these five areas that are related to our personal wholeness:

1. Influence. Our thoughts, attitude, speech, and actions are the result of the voices we allow to influence our thoughts. Two primary sources of influence are media and friends. When it comes to the media we are watching, listening to, and engaging, we must consider two elements—content and consumption. Ask yourself these questions: “Is it godly?” and “How much time am I spending?” When it comes to your friendships with those who are not saved, ask yourself this question: “Who is influencing whom?” These two elements are critical when it comes to personal wholeness in your thought life.

2. Thoughts. The apostle Paul gave us the standard for managing our thought life. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8, NKJV). Right thoughts will ultimately produce right attitudes, words, and actions. (See Romans 12:1–2.)

3. Attitude. Our attitude will determine our altitude. Attitude is the lens through which we view life, which produces perspective. Perspective is a powerful thing. Two people can look at the same thing but have a very different experience or opinion because of perspective. A right attitude is key to being whole mentally and emotionally.

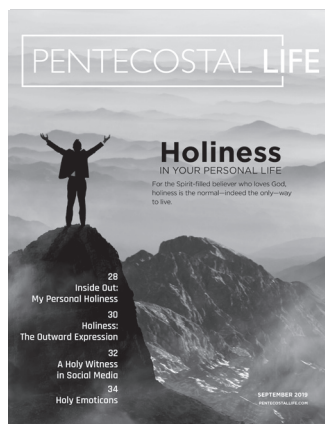
4. Speech. The words we speak have consequences. The writer of Proverbs declared, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21, NKJV). A good prayer to start off each day is, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14, NKJV). The words we speak to ourselves will greatly impact our wholeness.

5. Actions. Our actions are the sum total of our influences, thoughts, attitude, and speech. The combination of these elements produces consequences that will either promote or hinder the work of sanctification and our goal of personal wholeness. Every behavior has a goal, and we must ensure that our actions are in line with our personal vision. Our actions are a visible representation of our value system.

Holiness begins with internal transformation and produces external demonstration—Jesus on the inside working on the outside. It is a matter of the heart and possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit. Holiness will produce a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, a lifestyle that witnesses to others, and personal wholeness. It is the highway of holiness and the only path that leads to eternal life. **PL**

MICHAEL ENSEY

Senior Pastor | Christian Life Center | Heath, Ohio



SESSION ONE

Inside Out: My Personal Holiness

Objective

To understand that holiness is a matter of the heart and the result of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives that produces internal transformation through sanctification and external demonstration through lifestyle

Opening

1. Open by asking group members what emotions the word “holiness” evokes, based on the member’s preconception of the word’s meaning.
2. Ask a member to define the words “implicit” and “explicit.”

Key Scriptures

Psalms 19:14; Proverbs 14:15; 18:21;
Romans 12:1–2; I Thessalonians 5:23;
Hebrews 12:14

“Holiness begins with internal transformation and produces external demonstration—Jesus on the inside working on the outside.”

SESSION ONE (CONT.)

Inside Out: My Personal Holiness

Discuss the following questions:

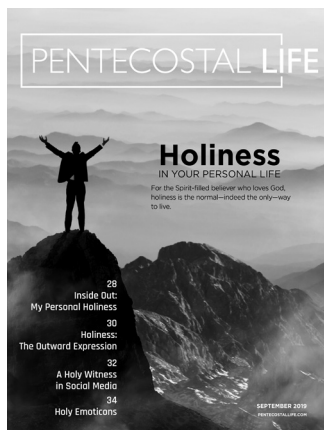
1. Define holiness as it relates to God's nature.
2. Define holiness in the life of a believer.
3. How is sanctification both immediate and progressive?
4. Describe the greatest hinderance to the internal work of sanctification in your life.
5. What is your greatest struggle when it comes to living a lifestyle of holiness?

Assignment

Read "Holiness: The Outward Expression" before next session.

[illegible]

SESSION TWO



Holiness: The Outward Expression

David K. Bernard

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

The Bible calls Christians to the pursuit of holiness and teaches the necessity of a holy life. God commands His people to be holy in all conduct because He is holy (I Peter 1:15–16). Salvation begins with regeneration, or the new birth; continues with sanctification, a process of progressively becoming more like Christ; and concludes with glorification, or resurrection with an immortal body and sinless perfection. From start to finish salvation is by grace through faith; we aren't saved by works, but the life of faith produces good works (Ephesians 2:8–10). We don't manufacture our own holiness; we partake of God's holiness (Hebrews 12:10).

The Pursuit of Holiness

Holiness means conforming to God's character. Specifically, holiness is *separation* from sin and worldly values and *dedication* to God and His will (Romans 12:1–2; II Corinthians 6:17–18). Holiness is both inward and outward. (See I Corinthians 6:19–20; II Corinthians 7:1.) It includes attitudes, thoughts, and spiritual stewardship but also actions, appearance, and physical stewardship. Both aspects are essential. Pursuing holiness means growing into maturity (Philippians 3:12–16; II Peter 3:18). The Christian's daily goal is to overcome sin (John 5:14; 8:11). We are not to sin; if we do, we can receive forgiveness by repentance and confession (I John 1:9; 2:1). We obtain the motivation and power to live a holy life through faith, love, and the Holy Spirit.

The Application of Holiness

The Bible teaches principles for us to apply in our circumstances, time, and culture. Without practical and relevant applications, principles tend to be abandoned. Outward expressions of holiness represent our underlying values, much like a flag. Our national flag is a piece of cloth with small intrinsic worth, but it symbolizes deeply held values such as patriotism, democracy, and freedom. Similarly, the most important aspects of holiness are godly attitudes, wholesome relationships, and a moral lifestyle. While certain outward expressions of holiness may seem comparatively small, they can be important visible affirmations of our principles and values.

The essence of holiness is to bear the fruit of the Spirit, which includes love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22–23). As Christians we learn to forgive, be thankful, respect authority, not let anything us cause us to stumble, and not be busybodies in others' lives. We put away evil thoughts and attitudes such as lust, hatred, malice, wrath, envy, jealousy, covetousness, bitterness, pride, prejudice, vengeance, and strife. Holiness includes justice and mercy in personal and social relationships.

Holiness also involves how we use our body. We should uphold sexual morality and the sanctity of marriage, while fleeing fornication. We should protect the sanctity of human life against murder, abortion, and assisted suicide. Since our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, we should practice moderation and stewardship in diet, exercise, and rest. We are not to use things that harm or defile the body, cause intoxication, or cause addiction.

We are to use our tongue for wholesome, gracious speech. Thus, we avoid tale bearing, backbiting, slander,

SESSION TWO (CONT.)

sowing discord, swearing by oath, using the Lord's name in vain, pronouncing curses, reviling, lying, idle words, and suggestive, indecent, or obscene speech. This principle extends to digital communications and social media.

The eye is particularly important as the gate of the soul and the primary source of input for the mind. We should avoid unwholesome reading or viewing. We must particularly beware of modern entertainment media, which typically contain sensuality, immorality, and violence. We should conduct recreational and entertainment activities in a wholesome atmosphere and with stewardship of time. Thus, we maturely regulate amusements, sports, and music.

Appearance and Dress

The New Testament gives these instructions for holiness in conduct and appearance: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Timothy 2:8–10). This teaching mentions special temptations for each sex, but it applies to anyone, male or female, who faces them.

Men are often prone to violent rage and skepticism. They are to worship God in holiness, while overcoming these besetting sins. In the same way, women are to worship God in holiness, while overcoming their typical temptations from the world. In romantic relationships, men initially tend to be attracted visually and physically, and thus women naturally desire to look attractive. Godly women can adorn themselves, or dress to be attractive and beautiful, but according to certain guidelines. They

should wear modest, feminine apparel, not clothing that flaunts the body. They should dress with self-respect and self-control, with decency and propriety, suitable to the occasion. They should not decorate themselves with ornamental jewelry (such as precious stones and metals), extravagant hairstyles, or costly clothes. Instead, for the lasting attraction that builds a long-term relationship, they should rely primarily upon a godly character revealed through good works.

Here we see the basic principles of Christian adornment and dress: modesty, moderation, avoiding personal ornamentation (which also excludes makeup and tattoos), and distinction between male and female. (See also 1 Peter 3:1–5.) The principle of gender distinction is taught throughout the Bible, and it includes both dress and hair. Women are to let their hair grow long instead of cutting it, while men are to cut their hair short. (See Genesis 1:27; Deuteronomy 22:5; 1 Corinthians 11:1–16.) These principles help us avoid the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life. (See 1 John 2:15–17.)

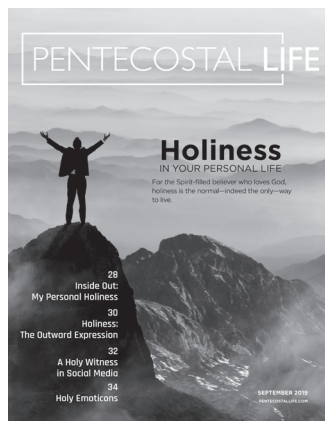
Conclusion

Holiness is an integral part of the salvation of the whole person. It is a joyful privilege, a blessing from God's grace, an abundant life of freedom and power. The life of holiness fulfills God's original intention and design for humanity. For the Spirit-filled believer who loves God, holiness is the normal—indeed the only—way to live. **PL**

For full discussion with scriptural references, see In Search of Holiness and Practical Holiness by David K. Bernard.

DAVID K. BERNARD

General Superintendent | UPCI



SESSION TWO

Holiness: The Outward Expression

Objective

To understand the importance of pursuing holiness in our daily lives including conduct, communications, and appearance

Opening

1. Before presenting any of the lesson's material, ask the members to offer their definitions of the words *separation* and *dedication*.
2. If any of the members seem unsure of their answers, assure them that the lesson will help them with biblical answers to their questions.

Key Scriptures

Genesis 1:27; Deuteronomy 22:5; John 5:14; 8:11; Romans 12:1–2; I Corinthians 6:19–20; 11:1–6; II Corinthians 6:17–18; 7:1; Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 2:8–10; Philippians 3:12–16; 12:10; I Timothy 2:8–10; I Peter 1:15–16; 3:1–5; II Peter 3:18; I John 1:9; 2:1, 15–17

“For the Spirit-filled believer who loves God, holiness is the normal—indeed the only—way to live.”

SESSION TWO (CONT.)

Holiness: The Outward Expression

Discuss the following questions:

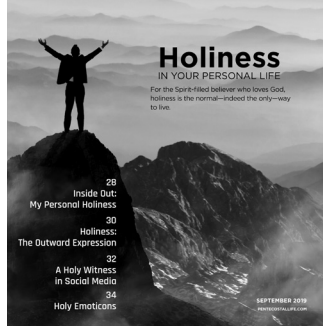
1. Is holiness important to me? Do I pursue holiness in daily life?
2. Can I identify areas in which I am separated from the world and dedicated to God? If so, what are they?
3. How do I display holiness first and foremost by godly attitudes and fruit of the Spirit?
4. Do I choose reading and viewing material based on biblical guidelines? If not, how can I begin?
5. How can I follow scriptural teachings in appearance and dress? In speech and digital communication?

Assignment

Read "A Holy Witness in Social Media" before next session.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SESSION THREE



A Holy Witness in Social Media Seth Simmons

Since the beginning of the church, Christians have faced persecution to conform to cultural norms. In response to this persecution, Peter wrote to strengthen the faith

of early Christians and to encourage behavior that would counteract the prejudices against them. In the same way, believers today can counteract the prejudices against them and be a witness of the gospel when authentic holiness is reflected on social media.

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:14–16)

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9, NKJV)

In 2015, the US Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage. This decision to redefine marriage sent shockwaves throughout the United States, and even unreligious people took note. The historical values of our society were in the midst of a radical cultural shift.

Around the same time, I was serving on the board of our local chamber of commerce and had the opportunity to befriend the owner of a promotional company. After the Supreme Court decision, she called me to express her concern, but she also noted that several people in her office were stirred as well: “Pastor Seth, I’m not sure if you’d be interested, but would

you, I don’t know, come and talk to us about the Bible or something?” I said, “Of course! That’s what I do! I’d be happy to come and talk with you about the Bible!” Over the course of the next eight months, I drove to her office every Thursday and taught a Bible study to her office staff and their spouses. A local coffee shop owner and her husband also joined the study, and a month later they were baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. God did wonderful things, and it all started from people getting stirred by a US Supreme Court decision.

North America is becoming more and more hostile to Christian values, but this will not diminish the mission of the gospel. If anything, we will see the church expand in an even greater measure just as it did in the first century. Furthermore, our evangelistic efforts in the twenty-first century may look more and more like those of the first-century church.

In the Greco-Roman world of the first century, everyone had their own gods, but Christians believed in one God—Jesus Christ. As a result of this exclusive belief, Christians faced severe persecution to conform to cultural norms. In fact, it was dangerous for Christians to even invite unbelievers to church meetings; the risk was too great. If the unbeliever reported Christians to the authorities, the meeting would have to be disbanded, believers would likely be persecuted, or, worse, even martyred for their faith in Christ. So how did the early church grow in a hostile culture when it was dangerous to invite people to church meetings?

The first epistle of Peter gives us insight. Peter wrote to strengthen the faith of early Christians and to encourage behavior that would counteract the prejudices against them in society. Peter explained that Christians are elect

SESSION THREE (CONT.)

exiles in a society that does not know God and should embrace their holy countercultural identity in Christ: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9, NKJV). The differences between Greco-Roman societal values and the values of Christianity were fundamental, ethical, and lifestyle differences that were unavoidable. “What brought about the differences, in a word,” as Derek Tidball explains, “was ‘holiness.’ They were called by a holy God to live a holy life” (*The Message of Holiness*).

Christianity grew because ordinary people lived authentic lives of holiness in public life.

It is the same for us today and perhaps even more so with the advent of social media. Believers can counteract the prejudices against them by being a living witness of the gospel when authentic holiness is reflected in the digital world. So in our postings, comments, and interactions with others on social media, let us first consider these questions based on the admonition Peter gave:

- Am I acting according to the former lusts in my ignorance (I Peter 1:14)?
- Would my digital postings and comments be considered holy (I Peter 1:15–16)?
- Would this honor the admonition to “love one another with a pure heart fervently” (I Peter 1:22)?
- Am I “laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings” (I Peter 2:1)?
- Is this showing “forth the praises of him who hath called [me] out of darkness into his marvellous light” (I Peter 2:9)?

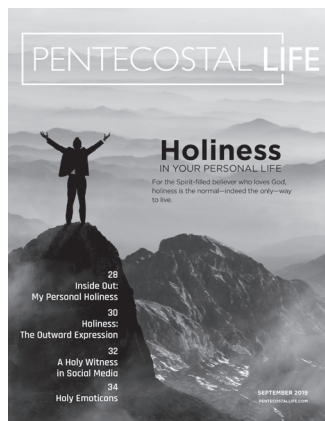
- Will this interaction allow me to be considered “honest among the Gentiles” (I Peter 2:12)?
- Would this reflect a holy desire to “[s]ubmit [myself] to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (I Peter 2:13–14)?
- Will this allow me to fulfill the will of God “with well doing . . . [and] put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (I Peter 2:15)?
- Is this living “as free, and not using [my] liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God” (I Peter 2:16)?
- Will this allow me to reflect Christ in my suffering?

“For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. . . . Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (I Peter 2:20, 23)

Filtering our social media interactions through these questions will be a healthy way to live with authentic holiness in public life. Although decrees and decisions will be made to undermine the values of Christians in public life, just like first-century believers, the church in the twenty-first century will be a resilient, holy witness in the world. **PL**

SETH SIMMONS

Assistant Pastor | New Life Austin, Texas



SESSION THREE

A Holy Witness in Social Media

Objective

To inspire the believer to reflect authentically his or her sanctified life on social media so that genuine, Christlike holiness can be a witness of the gospel to unbelievers

Opening

1. Invite members of the group to talk about their experiences of radical cultural shift they have experienced.
2. Invite them to answer the question, "How have you adapted to these shifts as an Apostolic?"

Key Scriptures

I Peter 1:14–16,22; 2:1, 9, 12–16, 20, 23

**“The church in the twenty-first century
will be a resilient, holy witness
in the world.”**

SESSION THREE (CONT.)

A Holy Witness in Social Media

Discuss the following questions:

1. Am I acting according to the former lusts in my ignorance (I Peter 1:14)?
2. Would my digital postings and comments be considered holy (I Peter 1:15–16)?
3. Would this honor the admonition to “love one another with a pure heart fervently” (I Peter 1:22)?
4. Am I “laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings” (I Peter 2:1)?
5. Is this showing “forth the praises of him who hath called [me] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9)?

Assignment

Read “Holy Emoticons” before the next session.

[illegible]

PENTECOSTAL LIFE



Holy Emoticons By Terry R. Baughman

If angry emojis fill our digital communication, maybe it's time for an attitude adjustment.

Emoticons (a shortened form of *emotion* and *icons*) have become a graphical way to represent our feelings and emotions. Sometimes people communicate in text messages by simply sending an emoticon or a string of emojis. Rather than cold text, which may be misunderstood and convey a mistaken message, emojis provide a visual way to represent the intention of the words or feelings expressed.

Sometimes a smiley face can minimize the impact of a sharp critique or a word of rebuke. A laughing emoji with tears streaming (LOL) can turn a critical comment into a sarcastic statement or humorous expression. A *thumbs-up* can affirm agreement or imply acceptance of a previous message. It is amazing to see how quickly language has adapted to technology from the introduction of pagers in the '90s to the smartphones and texting devices today. Early users of pagers found ways to send words through numbers. Sending 07734 became "HELLO" when turned upside down, while 911 sent a message to call quickly. Now GIFs and memes are becoming the new way to communicate emotions and responses.

The downside to electronic messaging is that there are still misunderstandings and miscommunication. Digital communication might be even more prone to mistaken implications. It certainly has become easier to speak bluntly, giving vent to anger through a digital response, than it would be in face-to-face discourse. There seems to be more liberty of expression when we are not facing the offending persons. SHOUTING (a text in ALL

CAPS) or vulgar name-calling have become all too common forms of expression in this new digital arena of communication.

When highly visible public leaders tweet insults at their opponents, it seems to give permission for everyone to give voice to their frustration and blast their feelings through social media or personal messaging. Vulgar comments and critical exchanges certainly did not begin in contemporary times, but the instant communication of technology gives opportunity to immediately respond in the anger of a moment when it might have been tempered with the passage of a few moments or dismissed in a matter of days. Now, whether it is a tweet, a text, or a social media post, the evidence is there to be captured, collected, and archived for future exposure in an embarrassing exchange. Often, when responding in anger, the very moment the send button is clicked we wish we could stop the transmission and delete the response.

A wise Proverb states, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1, NKJV). Other proverbs warn against venting in anger: "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression," and another, "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated" (Proverbs 29:22; 14:17). The mention of *wicked devices* is not a reference to digital technology, but rather evil schemes. However, the application might be the same. Before taking up a device to text, send an email, or post on a social media platform to air our grievance and vent our frustration, let us take it to the Lord in prayer. If we will pray about it first, most of our righteous steam will be relieved, allowing our angry energy to be turned toward restoration and redirected to a more productive outlet.

SESSION FOUR (CONT.)

While the word *holiness* usually evokes images reflected in the outward appearance, it is much more than modest apparel and neat grooming. It is true that people look first at dress and physical attributes, but it does not take long for the inward characteristics to show through even the most carefully guarded exterior, especially if negative attitudes and a critical spirit are revealed. Paul taught, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:6, NKJV).

Biblical instruction for holy living and right conduct are positive principles to live by whether we are conversing in person, in print, or across the digital platform. The directives of Scripture are even more important in this generation when words and expression can carry such great weight to so many people in an instant. Paul shared his desire with Timothy: “That men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (I Timothy 2:8). Prayer is the antidote for angry outbursts and a necessary filter for a disbelieving diatribe.

Holiness is both physical and spiritual. Paul gave equal weight to both when he wrote to the church at Corinth, “Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Corinthians 6:20). Both belong to God. He also reminded them, “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you” (I Corinthians 6:19).

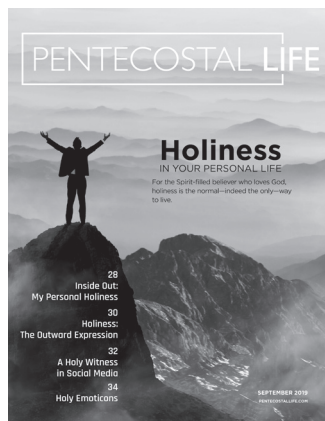
Paul encouraged the Ephesian church: “Put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24, NKJV). He continued with quite a list of behaviors that demonstrate the new life of holiness and godly conduct. Interestingly, all of them have to do with attitudes and emotions. (See the entire list in Ephesians 4:25–32.) In brief, Paul insisted that believers do the following:

- Stop lying and start speaking the truth.
- When angry, don’t give in to sin. Get over it before the day’s end!
- Quit stealing and go to work so we are able to give to someone who is truly needy.
- Choose words carefully and speak only uplifting words of grace.
- Don’t disappoint God’s Spirit by your actions.
- Abandon negative behaviors expressing rage, harsh words, slanderous accusations, and all kinds of hateful attitudes.
- Be kind, merciful, and forgiving—just as God has been toward us.

Whether we are communicating face to face, in a recorded message for sharing, with a text or personal email, or posting in a social media chat, let us follow these biblical instructions to maintain an attitude of holiness and a godly example of righteousness. We can present Jesus to our world only when we speak His Word through the power of His Holy Spirit. Let our words, and our *emojis* reflect Christ in us! **PL**

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SESSION FOUR

Holy Emoticons

Objective

To understand that biblical instructions for holy living and right conduct are positive principles to live by

Opening

1. Invite the members of the group to give their definition of *emoticon*—without referring to any particular emoticon.
2. Invite the members of the group to talk about their favorite emoticon and how they might use it.

Key Scriptures

Proverbs 14:17; 15:1; 29:22;
I Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 4:24–32;
Colossians 4:6; I Timothy 2:8

“We can present Jesus to our world only when we speak His Word through the power of His Holy Spirit. Let our words, and our *emoticons*, reflect Christ in us!”

SESSION FOUR (CONT.)

Holy Emoticons

Discuss the following questions:

1. How has communication changed in your lifetime?
2. If you use technology for communication, do you feel it has enhanced or hindered your ability to express yourself?
3. What are some positive benefits of digital communications?
4. Is it possible to speak more bluntly through texting or in social media than it is in person?
5. How does anger affect relationships?

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