

SANCTIFICATION

ROAD MAP



INTRODUCTION

If you have become a believer in Jesus, you have been set apart! You have been called out of a world of darkness and unbelief and “called into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:9). Jesus called and we believed, causing us to be “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1:2); we are now “saints by calling” (1:2), that is, God’s “holy ones.” The word sanctification means to be set apart for some special purpose. And God has a special purpose for YOU. You are not yet what you are meant to be, but you are no longer what you once were! Knowing that we’ve been called and given some special purpose by the Savior of the world can bring passion, intensity and excitement to our lives, as we seek to please the One who loves us. The Apostle Paul put it this way; “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Philippians 3:12). This study is all about pressing on to become all that God desires.

Sanctification occurs in a moment of time. In one sense, we are set apart at the moment we first believe in Jesus. But sanctification is also a process; a life-long process of God working in our lives, shaping our character, and molding our hearts into His image. Sanctification began when you believed, you were set apart for God, but will continue for the rest of your life.

The reality of being set apart by God is meant to unleash a passionate spirituality within us; a confidence, risk-taking, and joy. But it can also bring both fear and uncertainty;

What is expected of me?

What if I crash and burn?

What do I need to do to grow?

People who have walked this road of sanctification often arrive at a moment of clarity that can help those of us who are much earlier on in our journey. After years of trial and error, failure and disappointment, these two men said this:

*“I am determined to be absolutely and entirely for Him and Him alone!”
- Count Zinzendorf*

*“I live every moment of every day for an audience of one!”
- Os Guinness*

- *Reflect on these two quotes. How can they help us in the process of sanctification?*
- *How does knowing that you've been set apart by God affect you? How does it make you feel?*
- *Do you think of yourself as "sanctified," or do you think of yourself more or less as a "normal" person? How can you begin to walk more as a sanctified person?*

~ Refer to Discussion Questions ~

These men learned a crucial lesson; who your audience is determines everything. If you live for yourself or the expectations of others, you'll live one way. If you live for Jesus, the "audience of One," you'll live another way. In fact, our spiritual journey begins, proceeds, and ends, by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). Sanctification is not us making ourselves better because of what Jesus did for us, 2000 years ago. It is the on-going work of Jesus today in our lives.

The h2o mission is "Love God, love people, and serve the world." But we're not going to do that very well if we have no idea of the process, the journey, the path. So, this study is meant to inform you of (1) the Lord of Sanctification, (2) the Big Picture of Sanctification, (3) the Goal of the Christian Life, (4) the Dangers of this Journey and (5) God's Work in our Sanctification. It is meant to provide a sanctification road map.

PART 1: THE LORD OF SANCTIFICATION

The Old Testament is written in the Hebrew language. So, unless you know Hebrew, it is easy to miss something crucial to what the Bible teaches. When the scripture says "LORD" (all caps), it is referring to God by His name, Yahweh, meaning, "I am!" But when the scripture says "Lord" (lower case), it is referring to God's role as the Ruler of the universe. There are three attributes of Lordship, of His ruling the universe, that permeate the scripture and are the foundation of how God has revealed Himself. The acronym "C.A.P." can help us to remember them.

C, Control; Lord means that God is in control of everything.

A, Authority; Lord means God is the One to whom we will one day give account.

P, Presence; Lord means that God is present, in every place, at every time.

In the Old Testament, the primary title by which God is addressed is "Lord," acknowledging His control, authority, and presence. But in the New Testament, the primary title that Jesus is known by...is also "Lord." In the Old Testament, God reveals His Lordship as control, authority, and presence in numerous

scripture. In the New Testament, Jesus does the same thing! He manifested His control over all; nature, disease, even death. He manifested His authority over all, by declaring, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" (Matthew 28:18). And He manifested His omni-presence also, saying, "and lo, I am with you always!" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus also identifies Himself intimately with God's personal name, LORD, "Yahweh," when Jesus declared, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58). When we say "Jesus is Lord," we declare that He, the One who died for us, is in control, the One we will give account to, and present at all times, in every place.

If you're interested in studying more about the deity of Jesus, go to "The Nature of Jesus" in our "101" series.

This is a game changer. Because calling Jesus "Lord" is acknowledging "I am in relationship with the One who runs everything. I personally know the God who is at work in this world and in my life." Every time we say "Jesus is Lord," we are acknowledging His control, His authority, His presence. Some people keep Jesus small in their lives. They only allow Him to be the One who died for them, treating Him as if He just watches from a distance. They don't rely on Him very much,

if at all, for their progress in sanctification. In contrast, people who make Jesus big in their life don't just see Him as the One who died for them. Instead, they see Him as the One who also rose again and sits at the right hand of God ruling the universe. They depend on Him daily and find Him faithfully at work in their lives in the process of sanctification. Now does it make sense why Os Guinness would say, "I live for an audience of One"?

*"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely... Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24*

- *How does the Lordship of Christ relate to our sanctification?*
- *Why is it referred to as a "game changer?"*
- *How can remembering CAP change our thinking whenever we refer to Jesus as Lord?*
- *Do you think you have a "big Jesus" or a "small Jesus?"
How can that change?*



PART 2: THE BIG PICTURE OF SANCTIFICATION

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

Romans 8:28-30

The Bible uses some really big words and we want you to “get” what they mean. In eternity past, before God even made the world, God foreknew you (verse 29) and chose you to be His (Romans 8:29, Ephesians 1:4). Foreknowledge is God knowing what will come to pass, but it also refers to God setting His love upon us before He even made the world.

In Christ, God has loved you with an eternal love.

“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will...”

Ephesians 1:4-5

Before the world ever existed, before there were mountains and trees and rivers and beaches; before elephants and peacocks and rainbow trout and amoeba; before the universe existed, before there were stars and galaxies and super-nova; before anything existed, in utter darkness...there was God. And God’s mind began to form His plan for creating this universe, and as He thought, He came to...you. And right then, in that moment, before the creation of the world, He chose you. And He chose you because He loved you. He has loved you...well, **for all eternity.**

The ramifications of God having an eternal love for you are mind boggling...

If God has eternally loved us then His love for us cannot be based on our past, because He loved us before we had one. His love for us cannot be based upon our efforts and our accomplishments because He loved us before we did anything.

Before you had even been born, God determined the end from the beginning; that is, He **predestined** (verse 30) that all who believe in Him and begin the Christian journey, will actually be conformed to the image of Jesus. In other words, though we do NOT have the power, the motivation, the passion to become like Jesus, God has determined that His work of sanctification will be successful in your life. You WILL change, you WILL grow, and ultimately, **you WILL be transformed into the image of Jesus...simply because God is really good at this.**

He set His love upon you in eternity past. He determined that you would become like Jesus. Then, when you heard the gospel, He called you. Biblical "calling" is not something given to special Christians, the really super ones. If you have believed, God Himself called you to be His. Responding with faith to the gospel message, you were justified, that is, God washed you clean **as if you had never sinned**. Justification, being clean before God is your perpetual state from this day forward. Though sanctification is a process and we will fail, we remain in a pristine, un-blemished state before God, because Jesus paid for all.

*"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."
Hebrews 10:14*

So you have been loved, chosen, predestined, called, justified...and one day you will be glorified as well. **Glorification** is the transformation of our sinful bodies being into a sinless state when we are with Jesus in eternity. Are you beginning to see how involved God is to your sanctification?

Now go back to verse 28 which wraps this all together.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

To clarify, to say that God "causes all things to work together for good" does not mean God causes all things. God doesn't cause things such as evil and sin. But He does cause them to work together for good in our lives. So, get this--even our past failures, our mistakes, what has happened to us, how others have sinned against us--in all this, God is redemptively at work, causing them to bring about ultimate good in our lives. Why? Because God called us. And anyone He calls, who becomes His, experiences His powerful, passionate work in their lives.

Don't miss the Big Picture. God will complete the work He began. This work began before you were born and before you had sinned, so it is not contingent upon your performance as a believer. And God is not distant and aloof, but intimately involved in our lives, causing everything to fit into His master plan for our spiritual growth.

If we were to put this on a time line, it would look like this.

Foreknowledge & predestination Calling & Justification >-----< Sanctification Glorification

Sanctification is the entire process, from justification to glorification, of God working in our lives and causing us to grow, to become more like Jesus.

- *What is your reaction to all you just heard?*
- *How does it make you feel that God has predestined your progress, that is, your sanctification to become more and more like Jesus?*
- *What does verse 28 reveal about God's intensity of involvement in our lives?*

PART 3: THE GOAL OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- *Who remembers the main points from parts 1 & 2?*
- *Does anyone have any questions from what we've studied so far?*

The goal of sanctification, according to scripture, is nothing less than the image of Christ formed within us.

*“He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son”
Rom 8:29*

“The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” 1 John 2:6

*“My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you”
Gal 4:19*

God wants the image of Christ formed within us, that is, for us to **think** like Jesus, to **feel** like Jesus, to **be** like Jesus. As the image of Christ is formed within us, our “walk” changes as well. Again, this is what God is committed to making happen. But as Bill Hybels once wrote, “Too often we Christians settle for inauthentic Christianity. We experience only partially the changes God can produce in our lives, and go through the motions that keep our faith lukewarm at best and make our Christian lifestyle mostly a vicarious experience.” We don’t let God into the different spaces of our lives, instead settling for a “Sunday spirituality” that is inconsistent with our Mondays and Tuesdays. God’s work of sanctification has to do with our character. God desires to transform our present character into godly character.

~ Refer to Discussion Questions ~

God wants to grow our character. As Aristotle taught us, “we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” In other words, character is revealed by what we do. And what we do reveals what we are internally. Character is who you are when no one but God is watching. Or as D.L. Moody put it, “Character is what you are in the dark.” Rather than discouraging us, this should **encourage us**. Because God already has made us new. And since He is already at work inside of us, we can trust Him to change us **from the inside out**. C. S. Lewis said, “A saint is someone who makes God believable,” not because the Christian has it all together, but because the grace of God has

allowed him or her to be honest about where they are at, and know He is perfectly accepted, though we are always very much “in process.” God desires we gain godly character, but loves us perfectly as His children right now.

Rather than overwhelming us, AS IF enough of our effort and focus could actually make us like Jesus, this goal is so high as to cause us to lose all hope in our ability to accomplish this, in order to learn how to trust God as the only **One** capable of sanctifying us. Understanding this is important, because there are many lesser goals that Christians can have.

- *How does the goal of the Christian life change how we live?*
- *If the goal is to become like Jesus, how would embracing this as YOUR goal change your eagerness to grow? Your willingness to look at difficult character struggles? To let others into the process of your own growth?*
- *What lesser goals might we have for our lives? Are these goals necessarily wrong?*
- *How can we make sure we become authentic?*

“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” Eph 4:15

“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.” Col 1:28

- *What is speaking the truth in love? Why is this an essential piece to us growing up?*
- *How easy or difficult is it for you to speak truth?*
- *Do you see how sanctification, then, is not a personal thing only, but a community thing as well?*
- *What is the role of spiritual leaders in your process of sanctification, according to the Colossians verse?*
- *How can your approach to growing change in light of what we've talked about?*

PART 4: THE DANGERS OF THIS JOURNEY

We've already mentioned the first danger of this journey, having the wrong goal. For example, Christ followers can miss out on all God has, by pursuing personal happiness, as their ultimate goal, rather than keeping that as a good but lesser goal. Though all who belong to Jesus will ultimately be with Him in eternity, some Christ followers will shipwreck their lives with poor life choices. Others will remain defeated in our struggle against sin and addiction. Others will never acquire a love for the scriptures, remaining largely ignorant of God's will. It's gut check time for you to realize that this journey is dangerous. It's far better than NOT being on the path, but...this won't be easy. This series, not just this study, is meant to **drive you into the arms of Jesus**, who alone, can shepherd us "through many dangers, toils, and snares" as the song Amazing Grace says. Perhaps the greatest tragedy is when a person who has been set apart by God, for a special purpose, becomes like the world that you and I are called to influence.

"Today, as always, the greatest danger to those who would follow Jesus is not overt persecution by society, but subtle seduction by its values."

Tony Campolo

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

John 10:27-29

- *Like the above quote references, in what ways can we be seduced by the world's values?*
- *How is it comforting to know that Jesus never loses anyone who is truly His?*
- *As you consider the various difficulties of the Christian journey, what concerns you the most for your own life?*

PART 5: GOD'S WORK IN OUR SANCTIFICATION

God will use many tools in our process of spiritual growth. He will use the teaching of the Bible, our personal study, the community of believers, the encouragement of friends and spiritual leaders, conflict in relationships, trials & hardships, responsibilities and pressure, your job, your schoolwork, your dating relationships, your loneliness, unexpected blessings, your hopes and disappointments, your failures and success. As Romans 8:28 declares, "God causes all things to work together." So, God is at ALWAYS at work! Sanctification includes every area of your life! And even though God is at work, it is NOT "Let go and let God," as if our spiritual progress is automatic, without our engagement. Nor is it "work hard on yourself," as if we are alone in this journey. It is trusting God to work AND putting forth effort ourselves.

"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

Phil 2:12-13

"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Phil 1:6

We are to work out, that is--live out--our salvation with a deep reverence precisely because...the God who made the world is at work in you, giving you both the will (or desire) and the work (the ability or power) to be pleasing to Him. And scripture gives us this strong assurance; what God begins He will always perfect.

A crucial first step. If God is always at work in us, a crucial first step is simply becoming aware of what He is doing and cooperating with Him. We don't need to figure it all out! We just need to sense what God is up to, and yield to His hand in our lives! Many believers have found that prayer plays an absolutely vital role in sanctification. They've found this to be true because it reminds us that we're not alone in this process, it asks God what He is up to, and it helps us to rely on Him, not our own effort. Therefore, prayer is woven into the fabric of this entire 201 series. You'll get action points after each study, practical steps that can be taken on your own, or with a trusted friend. This is intended to help you cross the bridge from theory to real life.

- *As you look at your own life, right now, can you see areas where God is at work?*
- *Why do you think it is important to be clear that sanctification is a work of God, but it is something we must engage in as well?*
- *Does it make sense to you that prayer is absolutely vital to sanctification? Why or why not?*

SUMMARY

We've looked at the Lord of Sanctification, the Big Picture of Sanctification, God's work throughout history and we've examined the goal of the Christian life. We talked about the dangers of this journey as well as the assurance that God will accomplish all He begins. But it's worth repeating: **our spiritual journey begins, proceeds, and ends, by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.**

ACTION POINT

One aspect of prayer is simply praying the scripture back to God. For example, with reference to Philippians 1:6, can you imagine praying something like this... "God, I thank You that You began a good work in me, a GOOD work. I'm not sure I see You at work in me, but I believe it. Help me see what You're doing Lord. And thank You that You will perfect it, You'll never stop working on me. I want to be 'confident of this,' Lord, but I need Your help. In Jesus' name, amen."

Your assignment is to incorporate praying scripture back to God, either by yourself or with another Christian, and to start asking God to work in your life.

The Road awaits. You have no idea of what God can do in your life.