

Sunday, October 9, 2022 am

CLOSER TO GOD 2022 (29)

Pursuing Holiness (7)

Who do you associate with and where do you go with them?

As we continue our study of drawing closer to God and emphasizing our pursuit of holiness, we have addressed how it relates to every area of our lives. Thus far we have noted that it affects our disposition, attitudes, what we do, our conversations and our appearance (modesty). Today, we continue this study by talking about where we go and who we associate with.

I. Who are your friends?

- a. Who do you prefer to associate with? It is a question that we need to ask as we examine ourselves and our priorities. If we are pursuing holiness, we will answer this question seriously.
- b. Warnings:
 - i. When Israel was to inherit the land, they were commanded to destroy everything and everyone. Numbers 33:51-56. The concern was idolatry. If you do not cut off both ungodly things AND those practicing such, they can become a snare to you.
 - ii. Exodus 23:2, "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil..."
 - iii. Psalm 1:1, *Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;*
 - iv. Proverbs 1:10-19, *My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent... My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path;*
 - v. 1 Corinthians 15:33 – evil company corrupts good habits
 - vi. 1 Peter 4:3-4 – they think it strange... Having recently addressed this text, here we simply note that Peter speaks in the past tense. You see in this text former friends, often by THEIR choice.
 - vii. Jesus spoke of leaving friends and even family for Him – Matthew 19:29.
- c. What about your friends in the world?
 - i. The Bible does not teach that we are to be hermits, or live in monasteries or communes. Such goes directly against our need to go into the world and teach (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Philippians 2:15, etc.).
 - ii. Do they know you are a Christian? It ought to be evident. And at the very least, if they find out you are a Christian, would they be surprised?
 - iii. In many of the above passages we see warning against preferring worldly friends, yet that is what far too many do. They are more concerned about popularity and worldly acceptance than whether or not God accepts them. And here is the problem: It WILL affect where you go, how you talk, what you do and even how you dress. If you desire worldly popularity, these are the ONLY things that they care about.
 - iv. Again, I am not saying you cannot be friends or associate with those who are not Christians, BUT there needs to be caution in that and we need to be careful that we do not overly invest in such. Heed the warning of James 4:4.
- d. Are you choosing your friends wisely?
 - i. The power of wisdom and choosing friends – Proverbs 9:6 says, *Forsake foolishness and live, And go in the way of understanding. Proverbs 13:20, He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.*
 - ii. Proverbs 2:10-13, *When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, To deliver you from the way of evil,*

From the man who speaks perverse things, From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness;

- iii. Psalm 84:10, *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*
- iv. Psalm 119:63, *I am a companion of all who fear You, And of those who keep Your precepts.*
- v. Do you prefer your brethren? Romans 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 – commended, but increase more and more.
- vi. Do you prefer associating with those of high moral standards? Or at the very least, those who will respect you for your stand? (cf. Unlike 1 Peter 4:3-4)

II. **The places we go (Consider Purer in Heart 20)**

- a. Everyone is going somewhere – and I am not here speaking of eternity (though it will certainly affect our eternity). Wherever we go, we are being an influence. We are being salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). Pursuing holiness will govern where we go.
- b. Often where we go is determined by WHO we associate with. Which is why I am combining these points in this lesson. In fact, there are not many verses that specifically address where we go and do not go.
- c. But consider:
 - i. Come out from among them and be separate – 2 Corinthians 6:17.
 - ii. Consider Peter warming himself at the fire. If Peter had not been there, would he have denied the Lord? (Matthew 26:69-75).
 - iii. Consider King Solomon – with his many idolatrous wives. 1 Kings 11:3-4 – they turned his heart away from the LORD and to other gods.
 - iv. Consider also Rahab. When Jericho was destroyed, she was in the RIGHT place which resulted in her life being spared (Joshua 6:22-23). Rahab is an interesting study, as she becomes an ancestor to Jesus (Matthew 1:5).
 - v. AGAIN, these deal with people, but also the places where they were at.
- d. Places we ought not to go – the Bible does not give a list of places to avoid (except Proverbs 5:8 which speaks of going to the house of the immoral woman), but as always there are principles to consider.
 - i. If drunkenness is condemned, we ought not to go where drunkenness is encouraged or permitted. Bars, night-clubs, drinking parties, etc. (cf. 1 Peter 4:3-4). In fact, we ought not even engage in that which can LEAD TO drunkenness (e.g. social drinking, imbibing in alcoholic beverages).
 - ii. If lust is condemned, we ought not go to places that produce lust – places that encourage immodesty – beaches, etc. or lascivious behavior (school dances, dance clubs, etc.), or movies that outright promote immoral behavior. Consider Galatians 5:19-21, esp. “*And such like.*” Notice that Paul mentions adulteries, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, etc. These are sensual sins driving by carnal lusts. Again consider 1 Peter 4:2-3 (lusts – 2x). Also 1 Peter 2:11, “*abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.*”
 - iii. If profanity is condemned, (2 Timothy 2:16, Colossians 3:8, Ephesians 4:29, 5:3-4, etc.) we ought not go to places that promote profanity – R rated movies, and most PG-13 movies. Someone once said that PG (or pg-13) can be defined as “Profanity guaranteed”. While there might be exceptions to this, it is certainly the rule. And there are resource that can help you know the content of movies BEFORE you go.
 - iv. If covetousness is condemned, (Hebrews 13:5, Colossians 3:5) we ought not go to places that promote covetousness – such as casinos, etc.
 - v. Matthew 6:19-21. Again James 4:4 notes that friendship with the world is enmity with God.
- e. Places we ought to be –

- i. Assembling with the saints – Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Corinthians 14:26 – when you come together; Psalm 122:1, “*I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD.’*” For a host of reasons, God’s people ought to be important to us.
 - ii. Encouraging our brethren – Hebrews 3:13 speaks of exhorting one another daily; 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14, etc. Do we take time to go and see our brethren who need to be encouraged?
 - iii. Helping the needy – Hebrews 13:16, Do not forget to do good and to share; Hebrews 13:2. Ephesians 2:10 – we are the workmanship of God, created for good works.
 - iv. Wholesome entertainment – while there are places, we should not go, there are places and things we can do. Everyone needs to recreate themselves from time to time. If we are choosing our friends wisely, we find wholesome activities – wholesome movies, walks in nature (or elsewhere), game nights, etc. It’s all about WHO you are with!
- f. Living a productive life – good stewards of your time.
- i. We know as Christians God expects us to give Him our best. Colossians 3:23, to servants, we read, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” Ecclesiastes 9:10 speaks of doing what you do “with all your might”. Titus 3:14 speaks of maintaining good works. The point is we are to be busy and productive with our lives.
 - ii. This is a factor when we think about who we associated with and where we go. We cannot spend all our time being wasteful and be pursuing holiness. “Where we go” may be perfectly fine within itself, but if it is taking us away from better things (or what is best), we need to pause and consider. Remember we are addressing pursuing holiness (an ongoing action).
 - iii. And after “rest”, we need to get back to work.
 - iv. Ephesians 5:15-17 speaks of walking circumspectly (wisely and alert, carefully, mindfully) and redeeming the time. This is just one of those factors to consider as we strive to redeem the time.

These are some thoughts associated with our activities and associates. It is my hope that in this lesson, as well as previously, we can see how our pursuit of holiness is going to affect everything about our lives, from our disposition and attitudes to our actions in whatever we are doing. And thus, I ask, “Are you pursuing holiness?”