

Summarizing the Core Values of a Biblical Ministry

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Romans 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:15-17

Evidence abounds that the church of Jesus Christ exists in a postmodern world, and unfortunately that the postmodern world has invaded large segments of the church. The body of Christ is in great danger of losing its distinctive identity and purpose and thus forfeiting its dynamic mission on planet earth.

What is needed is a new generation of spiritual leadership that has cultivated the skill of staying in the light and out of the darkness (Ephesians 5:8-13); leadership that is capable of defining “good” and holding it tight, and defining “evil” and holding it off (1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22).

Clearly, New Testament Christians are called to a posture of *radical* non-conformity to the cosmos and *resolute* conformity to Jesus Christ. This is what previous generations of Christians have called separation from the world-system.

As Christian leaders, how can we protect the church of Jesus Christ – at least that part of it we are called to lead – from further decline? How can we aid in its restoration to its original moorings and its missional purpose?

For me the answer to these sobering questions lies in our absolute loyalty to **several theological realities** which must become for us the shapers of our ministries. Together they constitute that foundational set of principles which governs and regulates all that we do in ministry. They become for us the *core values*, the *non-negotiables* which set the parameters within which we serve Christ’s cause, and they enable us to keep our rudder straight in a postmodern world.

1. The Glory of God (Romans 11:33-36)

³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!

³⁴ “*For who has known the mind of the LORD?
Or who has become His counselor?*”

³⁵ “*Or who has first given to Him
And it shall be repaid to him?*”

³⁶For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.

a. A brief overview of this text. *Four moving statements* define the shape of Paul’s doxology:

1.) There is a Joyful Exclamation of Praise (v. 33).

2.) There is a Rhetorical Question of Candor (vv. 34, 35).

- 3.) There is a Theological Affirmation of Truth (v. 36a).
 - 4.) There is a Final Ascription of Glory (v. 36b).
- b. An expansion of the concept of glory.
- 1.) First, I want to be Definitional.
 - a.) The N.T. word for “glory” is *doxa*. It carries the connotation of brightness, splendor, magnificence, fame and honor (A & G).

Some think that *doxa* carries the idea of “opinion” or “estimate,” then of “repute” or “reputation.” (D.N.T.T. Vol. 2, p. 44). That is the way it was used in secular Greek, and it is possible that it was used that way in the LXX and N.T. Greek. If so, it means that we are to have a high “opinion or estimate” of God and that we are to live in such a way that others’ opinions of God would be greatly inflated and positively impacted.

- b.) The O.T. word for “glory” is *kavod*. It carries the connotation of being honorable, impressive, worthy of respect, as well as of magnificence, splendor and beauty (TWOT, et al)

But the most basic idea of *kavod* is that of being “heavy or weighty.”

Philip Graham Ryken in his book, *Discovering God*, has much to say about this. The following is a distillation of his ideas. He says that the Hebrew word for “glory” (*kavod*) comes from the Hebrew word for “heavy” (*kaved*). The word was used in multiple ways:

- ❖ **It was used of physical weight.** The Bible says that the high priest Eli was “heavy” (1 Samuel 4:18).
- ❖ **It was used of material wealth.** The Bible says that “Abram was very rich (*kaved* – “heavy”) in livestock, in silver, and in gold” (Genesis 13:2).
- ❖ **It was used of personal significance.** Eventually the Hebrew word for “heavy” was used to describe anyone who deserved honor and recognition. In modern English, we would call them “heavyweights.”

Ryken expands on this concept:

The biggest heavyweight of all is Almighty God. No one is more substantial than He is. No one has more influence. No one has a higher position or a weightier reputation. No one is more deserving of honor,

recognition, and praise. However weightless He may seem in the postmodern church, God Himself is *heavy*. In other words, He is *glorious*.

c.) Theologians agree that God is glorious in *two basic ways*:

❖ First, God is glorious in **what He does**.

Glorious in Creation: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). The Creator-God is so heavy that He has left His imprint on the universe like a work boot in wet cement. (Ryken)

Glorious in Redemption: God said to Moses prior to the Exodus: “I will gain honor (glory) over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD...” (Exodus 14:4). Every salvific act of God enhances or puts on display His glory!

❖ Second, God is glorious in **Who He is**.

Even without creation and redemption, God would still be glorious in Himself. It is God’s very nature to be “heavy” or glorious!

The radiant, luminous cloud of dazzling, brilliant light by which God led the people of Israel out of Egypt was called “the glory of the LORD” (Exodus 16:10). Ezekiel saw the very same thing (Ezekiel 10:4) – “a visible manifestation of the invisible attributes of God” (Ryken). The Puritan Thomas Watson called God’s “glory” – “the sparkling of the Deity.”

2.) Second, I want to be Textual.

a.) **Leviticus 10:1-3**

b.) **1 Corinthians 10:31**

c.) **1 Peter 4:10-11**

d.) **Ephesians 1:3-14**

3.) Third, I want to be Applicational.

- a.) First, we need the reminder that the concept of God's glory is not a static, sterile, abstract or purely theoretical idea. We should be *moved* by God's glory to develop a *passion* for Him.

A holy affection or passion for God, though driven by a deep appreciation for His glory, can be fed and nurtured by embracing *three biblical strategies*:

- ❖ Be Enamored with Christ (Philippians 3:1-10).
- ❖ Be Saturated with Truth (Luke 24:32).
- ❖ Be Surrendered to the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

- b.) Second, I want to define *several broad principles* which are anchored to a proper understanding of God's glory, and which serve as boundaries within which we are called to carry out ministry.

- ❖ We are to engage in nothing that is *cheap or superficial*.
- ❖ We are to engage in nothing that is *corrupting or defiling*.
- ❖ We are to engage in nothing *concessive or compromising*.
- ❖ We are to engage in nothing *cloudy or confusing*.

As stated above, these are broad principles which provide boundaries within which to do ministry, but in some ways they lack specificity. This means that spiritual leaders will constantly be called upon to think vigorously, wisely and biblically about specific applications of this doxological principle to 21st century ministry.

- c.) Third, God-glorifying ministry will demand *two great pastoral qualities* of us.

- ❖ We must become *akribos* leaders (Ephesians 5:15): "See then that you walk *circumspectly*, not as fools but as wise."
- ❖ We must become *dokimadzo* leaders (Ephesians 5:8-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22; Philippians 1:9-11).

- d.) Fourth, when "God's glory" takes first place in our hierarchy of core values for ministry, it radically shapes and reshapes the way we "do" ministry. I want to share *a couple of ways* in which being driven by a passion for God's glory will shape our ministries:

❖ First, if we are committed to this *doxological principle*, there are *several trends* characteristic of much of contemporary church growth theory that most of us will want to resist:

- Trend #1 – The “lemming-like rush” (Os Guinness) for sociology, technology and methodology combined with an abandonment of theology and expository preaching. This approximates the secularization of ministry.
- Trend #2 – The satisfying of consumeristic greed as a mode of attracting one’s crowd.
- Trend #3 – The accommodation of low-level commitment.

The following chart may help to bring into focus the grave dangers of accommodating low-level commitment:

What Low-Level Commitment Breeds

1. Experience of _____
2. Absence of _____
3. Emergence of _____
4. Practice of _____

What High-Level Commitment Breeds

1. Experience of _____
2. Presence of _____
3. Emergence of _____
4. Practice of _____

- Trend #4 – The embracing of pragmatism over principle.

❖ Second, if we are committed to this doxological principle, it will shape even the way we do outreach and evangelism. Doxology **precedes** soteriology. From my reading and personal thought, I believe there are *three reasons* why this proper balance (between doxology and soteriology) is so critically important:

1. **Because God always comes before man.** All authentic ministry is God-centered not man-centered.
2. **Because evangelism is temporary, worship is permanent.**
3. **Because our ministry philosophy and methodology inevitably take on the properties and character of our primary focus.**

In closing the discussion of the first of our core values or non-negotiables – The Glory of God – I want to quote once again from Philip Graham Ryken, *Discovering God*, pp. 15, 16:

How much does God weigh?

If David Wells is right, God is not tipping the scales the way he used to. In a book called *God in the Wasteland*, Wells describes a curious condition he calls “the weightlessness of God.” He writes:

It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless. I do not mean by this that he is ethereal but rather that he has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. He has lost his saliency for human life. Those who assure the pollsters of their belief in God’s existence may nonetheless consider him less interesting than television, his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence, his judgment no more awe-inspiring than the evening news, and his truth less compelling than the advertisers’ sweet fog of flattery and lies. That is weightlessness.

It is the weightlessness of God, more than anything else, which explains the failings of the evangelical church. It is because God is so unimportant to us that our worship is so irreverent, our fellowship so loveless, our witness so timid, and our theology so shallow. We have become children of a lightweight God.

And now we are prepared to take a serious look at the **second theological reality** which must shape our ministries.

2. The Truth of God (Acts 5:1-11).

Philip Ryken introduces his discussion of the true God in the book, *Discovering God*, with these words:

Not long ago a certain head of state complained that his people were living in a “contaminated moral environment.” Of all the vices he observed in his culture, the one that troubled him most was lying. His country seemed trapped in what he called a “web of mendacity,” a tangled web of lies.

The man who said these things was not an American. He was Vaclav Havel, the former president of the Czech Republic, and he described his society like this:

Because the regime is captive to its own lies, it must falsify everything. It falsifies the past, it falsifies the present, and it falsifies the future. It falsifies statistics. It pretends not to possess an omnipotent and unprincipled police apparatus. It pretends to respect

human rights. It pretends to persecute no one. It pretends to fear nothing. It pretends to pretend nothing.

Havel was describing life in communist Czechoslovakia. But his words show what happens to any culture that exchanges the truth for a lie. (p. 175)

I believe it is proper to say that the story of the 20th century is the story of the battle for truth. The chronicling of its history is the chronicling of its **truth journey**. Others have documented this battle and defined the journey as unfolding **in three steps**:

- 1.) There was the *traditional era* where truth was mediated to the culture by the preacher out of the Bible.
- 2.) There was the *modern era* where truth was mediated to the culture by scientific naturalists in their laboratory and by rationalistic philosophers in their logic.
- 3.) Finally there came the *postmodern era* where truth is now mediated to the culture by rock musicians and where the MTV world-view reigns supreme.

First there was truth as defined by God – “true truth”; then there was truth as defined by man – “tainted truth”; and finally there was no truth – non-reason, nihilism, despair, the tragic loss of truth. This is a microcosm of the 20th century’s philosophical and spiritual journey. In this kind of world, where truth is anything anybody wants it to be, passionate truth bases are absolutely indispensable.

This journey might be charted like this:

Traditional Era	Modern Era	Postmodern Era
1. Scripture the Base	1. Reason the Base	1. Individual the Base
2. Biblicism	2. Rationalism	2. Nihilism
3. Divine Revelation	3. Human Reason	3. Cynical Pessimism
4. Truth defined by God	4. Truth defined by man	4. Truth is Indefinable
5. Knowing from God	5. Knowing for yourself	5. Knowing is Impossible
6. “True-Truth”	6. Tainted-Truth	6. Anti-Truth
7. Moral Certainty: The Absolutes of God	7. Moral Chaos: The Relatives of man – Throws out God and relies on human reason	7. Moral and Intellectual Chaos: No Concept of Truth – Throws out both God and human reason

In the “modern era” there was a “category of truth,” but it was “truth” as defined by man apart from God. What happens here is that men reason logically to the wrong conclusion because they begin with the wrong premise *viz.*, “no God” (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). This is to play “the fool,” and any so-called “truth” coming from it is destined to be “tainted” by fallen man.

In the “postmodern era” we face not just moral relativism, but *absolute relativism* – a relativism of truth. Modernity believed in a “truth” of its own making (there was a “category of truth”). Postmodernity, on the other hand, rejects outright the very category of truth, and replaces God and human reason with raw feeling. *This is moral and intellectual suicide.*

The bottom line is that the 20th century witnessed “the vaporization of truth.” (Albert Mohler)

Robertson McQuilkin wrote that “falsehood is the basic fault-line in the foundation of the soul, putting all the superstructure in jeopardy. All the believability a person has, his very integrity, *totters* on the shifting sand of *one lie*. Deceit holds hostage all other virtues.”

In Isaiah 59 Israel is confessing her sins to Yahweh, and in vv. 14 and 15 this is how she defines the shape of her sin; “justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; **for truth is fallen in the street**, and equity cannot enter. **So truth fails**, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.” In other words, in cultures where truth falls in the streets, holy living is despised and immoral “predators” will assault you. Many of the power-brokers in our culture are predatory, and their “prey” is the Judeo-Christian ethic, the absolute truth of Scripture, the Person of Jesus Christ and His followers.

In a sense, this is what was happening in Acts 5:1-11. We have here the **first tragic loss of truth inside the body of Christ**.

From this text we learn *four powerful lessons* that relate to truth and our relationship to it. All of them constitute a sobering warning to 21st century Christians in our postmodern world.

- a. A brief overview of this text – its *four powerful lessons*:
 - 1.) The Transparency of Scripture – It Tells the Truth.
 - 2.) The Strategy of Satan – He Hates the Truth.
 - 3.) The Hypocrisy of this Couple – They Betrayed the Truth.
 - 4.) The Severity of God – He Protects the Truth.
- b. An expansion of the concept of truth
 - 1.) Its Identity: Truth is that which corresponds to the divine nature, especially as that is revealed in the Person of Christ and the full content of Scripture (John 14:6; Ephesians 4:21; Psalm 119:160).
 - 2.) Its Primacy – I believe that the primacy of divine truth is established by observing the following two claims.
 - a.) Absolute truth is the fundamental moral category in the universe. My rationale for this is four-fold:

- ❖ The whole cosmic catastrophe began on the basis of a lie (Genesis 3:4).
- ❖ The ultimate enemy of God is the antonym of truth (John 8:44).
- ❖ The triune God is a God of truth (Jeremiah 10:10; John 14:6; Ephesians 4:21; John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).
- ❖ God's Word is defined as truth (John 17:17; 2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 119:160).

b.) Absolute truth matters profoundly to serious-minded, deeply committed Christians. This shows itself in at least three ways:

- ❖ Serious-minded Christians pay attention to the biblical mandates to guard the gospel; to hold fast the faithful word; to promote, preserve, and keep pure "sound doctrine;" to preach the word; to walk in truth; and to contend earnestly for the "once-for-all" revealed faith.
- ❖ Serious-minded Christians are always committed to preaching God's Word expositively (2 Timothy 3:14-4:2).
- ❖ Serious-minded Christians are prepared to draw lines, take stands, set limits, erect boundaries and refuse concessions based solely on *obedience* to biblical absolutes.

For me, this is the ground, the moral justification for all authentic expressions of Christian separatism.

When Paul said: "Come out from among them and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17), he used a special verb – *aphoridzo*. It's the word that mandates the setting of a limit, the erecting of a boundary, the drawing of a line. That is what separatism is: the moral courage and willingness to draw a line, set a limit, erect a boundary beyond which we will not go based squarely on a critically exegeted and carefully defined Bible absolute.

The engine driving this kind of action is a passionate love for God and His truth, which is the fundamental moral category in the universe. Because truth is God's truth, we have no right to give it away. Rather we are to rise to its defense.

3.) Its Objectivity and Knowability

We are neither agnostics nor Athenians. The Athenians, according to Luke, built an altar to “the unknown God” (Acts 17:22, 23). But the God of truth is not unknown or unknowable, because He has revealed Himself to us. And this is a revelation which is both *objective* – personified in Jesus (Who has now gone to heaven) and deposited in Scripture (which we hold in our hands) – and *knowable* – through the quickening and illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-16) and the accurate exegesis of a text (2 Timothy 2:15).

- 4.) Its Efficacy – Theologian Carl Henry said several years ago that: “Our generation is **lost to the truth of God**, to the reality of divine revelation, to the content of God’s will, to the power of His redemption and to the authority of His Word. For this loss it is paying dearly in a swift relapse to paganism. The savages are stirring again; you can hear them rumbling and rustling in the tempo of our times.”

That is one way of expressing, from the negative point of view, how essential, vital and efficacious truth really is. As Solomon put it: “Where there is no vision (revelation), the people perish” (cast off restraint) (Proverbs 29:18a).

Clearly, “truth” is a highly charged, infinitely efficacious change agent that is indispensable to our human journey. Integrating God’s truth into every area of our life and ministry is critically important for *several reasons*: Together they affirm the infinite efficacy of divine truth:

❖ **God’s Truth is the Ground of Authentic Education.**

In principle, education has always been about truth.

❖ **God’s Truth is the Ground of Authentic Regeneration.**

Truth “begets” – it gives birth!

1 Peter 1:23 – “having been *born again*, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, *through the word of God*, which lives and abides forever.”

James 1:18 – “of His own will He *brought us forth by the word of God*. . .”

❖ **God’s Truth is the Ground of Authentic Liberation.**

Truth “rescues” – it sets free!

John 8:23 – “you shall *know the truth*, and the truth shall *make you free*.”

❖ **God’s Truth is the Ground of Authentic Transformation.**

Truth “sanitizes” – it cleanses lives!

John 15:3 – “Now *you are clean (katharoi) through the word* which I have spoken to you.”

John 17:17 – “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*”
This is a picture of powerful moral transformation from the inside out.

❖ **God’s Truth is the Ground of Authentic Maturation.**

Truth “grows – it produces maturity!

1 Peter 2:2 – “As newborn babes, desire the *pure milk of the word* that you may *grow thereby.*”

God’s Word is like mother’s milk! It grows us into spiritual maturity and equips us to handle life.

In closing the discussion of this core value or non-negotiable – The Truth of God – I want to quote once again from David Wells in *The Compromised Church*, pp. 26, 27:

In the early post-War years evangelicals were determined that they would not repeat the fundamentalists’ mistakes. They distanced themselves from their rather rough and belligerent cousins by speaking of themselves as “neo-evangelicals.” The language was Carl Henry’s, though it has usually been credited to Harold Ockenga. What was “neo” about them was that they would not be anti-intellectual, separatistic, legalistic, or culturally withdrawn. They shed fundamentalist uncouthness, earned Ph.D’s from the finest universities, sat at the ecumenical table, dispensed for the most part with dispensational premillennialism, and loosed themselves from most cultural taboos.

The final chapter has not yet been written on this experiment, but when the time comes there will be an interesting question to answer. For all the warts and flaws of fundamentalism, **it did succeed in preserving the Word of God and the Gospel.** Will this also be true of the evangelicals? They are undoubtedly much nicer than the fundamentalists, but in the end will they fail where the fundamentalists had succeeded? That will be a delicious piece of irony if it turns out to be true.

It is no surprise that Solomon says: “Buy the truth, and do not sell it” (Proverbs 23:23). We need a whole new generation of believers who refuse to sell the truth, whoever the highest bidder may be. Whatever kingdom, empire or salary, whatever name or fame may be offered, we are responsible to affirm that the truth is not for sale, and make certain that we hold tenaciously to it whatever the cost may be.

Now a brief look at the third theological reality which must shape our ministries.

3. The Holiness of God (Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 6:9)

The whole of God’s Word compels us to acknowledge God’s bright and burning holiness. As Hannah said in her prayer of gratitude for the gift of Samuel: “No one is holy like the LORD” (1 Samuel 2:2). This perhaps explains why the biblical word used to describe God more than any other is the word “holy.” As sons and daughters of the holy God, we are called to bear the likeness of our Father: “As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15).

The subject of God’s holiness and its ethical implications for us – whether personally or missionally – is too broad to cover adequately in this setting. My intention is simply to combine ideas from these Scripture texts, and others that relate, and survey the subject of divine holiness under *four critical headings*. I am indebted in this discussion to Philip Ryken in two of his books: *Discovering God* (pp. 129-142), and *When You Pray* (pp. 65-76). These are not my only sources, but they have helped me immensely in developing the following ideas.

a. What Holiness Means – A Radical Difference

The Old and New Testament words for holiness (*kadosh* and *hagios* respectively) mean:

- To be set apart in purity.
- To be separated from what is common and ordinary in order to be devoted to God’s service.
- Apartness or distinction from that which is common or profane.

Many things were “hallowed” or made holy in this way in the Old Testament:

- The Children of Israel
- The Levites
- The Tabernacle
- The Sabbath Day

- The Holy of Holies

When God says that He is holy, He means it. Isaiah had a vision of the Holy God in Isaiah 6:1-8. It was a time of national crisis and impending disaster, and His vision, which equipped him to minister more effectively to the world of his day, unfolds in *several graphic stages*:

1.) What Isaiah Saw – God _____ (6:1-4)

Everything about the whole experience was designed to show the transcendent holiness of God.

- ❖ God was _____ in a Holy Place (v. 1).
- ❖ God was _____ by Holy Angels (v. 2).
- ❖ God was _____ with a Holy Hymn (v. 3).
- ❖ God was _____ by Holy Sights and Sounds (v. 4).

2.) What Isaiah Felt – The Prophet _____ (6:5)

“I am undone” = ruined, destroyed, cut off!

3.) What Isaiah Admitted – The Prophet _____ (6:5)

- ❖ To see God in all His holiness is to see ourselves in all our sin. That may say something about us. Perhaps we don’t see sin as we should because we don’t see God as we should.
- ❖ This may explain the contemporary trivialization – even justification – of sin, and what has become our “lite church” mentality.

4.) What Isaiah Experienced – God _____ (6:6,7)

These two verses are loaded with truth about God’s way of salvation:

- ❖ First, the “coal” was taken from off “the altar”; it came from the place of sacrifice (v. 6).
- ❖ Second, the salvific act was instantaneous (v. 7). The verbs “touched” and “taken away” are coordinate perfects in Hebrew (Alec Motyer).

- ❖ Third, all of this arises from the payment of the sacrificial price (v. 7). The Hebrew verb for “purged” or “atoned for” (*kaphar*) means to provide the ransom price, the price which God’s justice against our sins requires.

5.) What Isaiah Pledged – The Prophet _____ (6:8)

- ❖ There is a logical progression here.
- ❖ All of us owe God an obedience like Isaiah’s for we, too, have not only been *cleansed* by Jesus Christ, but *commissioned* by our heavenly Father and *indwelt* and *energized* by the sovereign Holy Spirit.

Isaiah never forgot what he saw in the throne room of heaven. He never lost his sense of God’s majestic holiness. And he never stopped shaping his ministry in the light of that holiness, nor did he stop telling people that there is a way for unholy people to be reconciled to a holy God.

b. Where Holiness Begins – A Majesterial Being

That’s why Jesus teaches us to pray: “Hallowed be your name” (Matt. 6:9). In Jewish thought a person’s *being* is concentrated in his *name*. The name of God stands for the nature of God. It identifies who and what He is. And God’s name is “holy” (Psalm 103:1; 111:9).

This is where holiness begins – in the holy name, i.e., the holy being, the holy essence of the holy God. It is all sourced in His majesterial being!

So what are we actually praying when we pray: “Hallowed be your name”?

- “Hallowed” is the word that means “to treat as holy; to hold in reverence.”
- The followers of Christ are people who above all else passionately desire that the honor and reverence and glory and adoration that are due God’s name might be given to Him.

c. What Holiness Costs – An Unspeakable Sacrifice

King David once asked: “Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place?” The answer he gives is: “He who has clean hands and a pure heart.” (Psalm 24:3, 4)

But this is exactly our problem. We have filthy hands and impure hearts. We are as unholy as God is holy. In order for us to come into God’s holy presence something has to be done about our sin. Otherwise we find ourselves standing at the bottom of the hill, keeping our distance from the holy God.

As we have seen, that is how Isaiah felt following his vision of the Holy One (Isaiah 6:5). And we have seen already how Isaiah's distance from God was remedied on the ground of a sacrifice (Isaiah 6:6, 7).

That is what holiness costs – the unspeakable suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ in our behalf (John 1:29). This, too, is a powerful motivation never to do anything that skews the view of others regarding the holiness of God!

d. Where Holiness Shows – A Transformational Life

If Christ died to make us holy, then holy we must be. Holiness should be our birthmark, a mirror of our Father's likeness. This means that one of the places God hallows Himself is in His people, His "saints" or "holy ones." The holiness of God should be made evident to the watching world by looking at us.

- 1.) God makes His name holy in us at our **conversion**. This is so because we are converted when we "believe in His *name*" (John 1:12) – for there "is no other *name* under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).
- 2.) God makes His name holy in us at our **baptism**. We are baptized, after all, "in the *name* of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt.28:19).
- 3.) God makes His name holy in us in our **sanctification**. Paul said: ". . .but you were washed. . . you were *sanctified* . . .you were justified *in the name* of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Now that God has placed His name on us through conversion, baptism and sanctification, He is known to be holy whenever we are holy.

What shape should our holiness take? **If** holiness is that which calls us to the highest levels of devotion and dedication i.e., into an intimate and intense relationship of love with our God; **if** holiness is that which separates, sets apart and distinguishes; **if** holiness is that which marks us off as belonging personally and intimately to God; **if** holiness is being set apart by God, to God and for God so that He says to us: "You are Mine" (Lev. 20:26) – **then** all of that carries heavy implications for what we are personally, philosophically, missionally and even methodologically.

It means that we, too, are to be marked by a radical difference from the cosmos. *It means* that we are to say "no" to the world's worldview. *It means* that we are to break out of the world's categories of thinking – its relativism, consumerism, narcissism, pragmatism, humanism and secularism. God is separate and apart, and we are to be the same.

David Wells in his "Foreword" to the book, *Whatever Happened to the Reformation* (pp. xvii-xix) expresses similar concerns. He is describing our postmodern world and its cynical abandonment of truth. Yet he expresses concerns about the ability of the evangelical church, as presently constituted, to meet the challenges of such a world. He

says: “As evangelicalism has emptied itself out theologically, novelty, experimentation, and cultural trendiness have overwhelmed many of the historic, bedrock affirmations that once characterized evangelical faith.”

Responding further to the postmodern abandonment of truth, he says:

This is the cultural context in which the evangelical church finds itself at the beginning of the new millennium. It is a moment that cries out for a countercultural declaration that there is truth, that God has secured that truth in his Word, that it is this Word that he has given to the church for its instruction, nourishment, and encouragement, and that he still intends to use this biblical truth in regeneration and sanctification. This countercultural conviction is far too rare today. For many, the world seems too complex, the church too confused, to think that God still can accomplish his ends through this means. *The church is therefore awash in strategies borrowed from psychology and business that, it is hoped, will make up for the apparent insufficiency of the Word and ensure more success in this postmodern culture.* Today, the issue is not so much the inerrancy of Scripture but its sufficiency and this at the very moment when a robust confidence in its sufficiency is precisely what the church needs to have if it is to live out its life in proclamation and service effectively.

This is a call for our ministry motif to take the shape of “cruciform.” Both the *message* we proclaim and the *manner* in which we proclaim it should honor the cross of Jesus Christ. And the cross is the place where both **holiness** and **love** met and made peace. The demand of holiness for penalty and the desire of love for pardon were both satisfied at the cross. Thus, it is imperative that our ministry motif bring holiness and love together, with holiness resisting conformity to the world system, and love modeling compassion for the world’s people. Holiness protects us from **enculturation** – complete absorption into the culture – and love protects us from **isolation** – complete avoidance of the culture. This is the way of the cross, and ministry cut out of this mold will require much thought, much prayer, much courage. It is much easier to opt for either holiness **or** love rather than holiness **and** love. Learning how to express holiness and love simultaneously rather than holiness or love separately is both complex (it requires careful thought) and costly (it requires great sacrifice).

And none of us should think that holiness and love are at odds with one another. In 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13, Paul makes it very clear that these glorious attributes of the triune Godhead are not only compatible, they are inseparable. To borrow Paul’s verbiage, abounding love leads to blameless holiness!

Keeping our rudder set straight, and doing ministry authentically in a postmodern world is not going to be easy. It will require that we be absolutely loyal and deeply devoted to the **glory** of God, the **truth** of God and the **holiness** of God. What this really means is that we will have to

“Love the Lord (our) God with all (our) heart . . . soul. . . strength, and. . . mind, and (our) neighbor as (ourselves)” (Luke 10:27).