

## The Well of Living Water: *Part Three*

Light + Life Group Conversation and Study Guide

Based on *Life-Giving Holiness* by Bishop Linda Adams  
in Light + Life Magazine, February 2021



### Part Three: An Inside-Out Approach

This is the third study guide in a series of four. Be sure to download [part one](#), [part two](#) and [part four](#).

Having discussed what holiness is and the ineffectiveness of legalism as a poor substitute for true holiness, we now turn to some words from the FM Articles of Religion and encouragement from Bishop Linda Adams.

The Constitution in our [2019 Book of Discipline](#) declares this Article of Religion:

*¶119 Sanctification is that saving work of God beginning with new life in Christ whereby the Holy Spirit renews His people after the likeness of God, changing them through crisis and process, from one degree of glory to another, and conforming them to the image of Christ.*

*As believers surrender to God in faith and die to self through full consecration, the Holy Spirit fills them with love and purifies them from sin. This sanctifying relationship with God remedies the divided mind, redirects the heart to God, and empowers believers to please and serve God in their daily lives.*

*Thus, God sets His people free to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love their neighbor as themselves.*

Notice that sanctification — that is, being made holy — is part of the saving work of God. This gracious action of God begins with new life in Christ, as the Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer to make us more like God through both crisis and process. In other words, Free Methodists have officially stopped fighting the *either/or* battle between instantaneous or gradual transformation into the image of Christ. We affirm the *both/and* of a life surrendered to God, dead to self through full consecration, and filled with the Holy Spirit — a lifelong relationship that normally involves crisis opportunities for accelerated growth along the way.

Saints (the Bible's term for all who are made holy in Christ) can attest to moments of conviction of sin, repentance, and surrender to God's refining work. Some can testify to dramatic and instantaneous deliverance from harmful addictions, sinful attitudes, or a self-centered orientation. In a moment, they sensed the power of God cleansing and filling them,

and they were forever changed. For some, crisis experiences are like the starter's gun in the marathon of life in the Holy Spirit. For others, the journey of faith may be less punctuated with highs and lows, but it is marked by steady progress and growth in grace.

Notice the fruit of the life of holiness described in this Article of Religion: We are filled with love and purified from sin. God remedies the divided mind, redirects the heart, and empowers believers to please and serve God in their daily lives. Sanctified people are set free to love God with our entire being and to love our neighbors as ourselves. How life-giving!

The New Testament expresses the evidence of the Spirit's presence both in terms of fruit (Galatians 5:22–23) and gifts (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:7–11). We affirm the reality and necessity of both, and long for our churches to be alive to the Spirit so that both are clearly evident. As experienced in the book of Acts and taught throughout the New Testament, God's Spirit has been poured out so that believers can experience His supernatural presence. Spirit-filled believers receive power for worship, witness, proclamation, prayer and service, sometimes accompanied by miracles. Both the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are given to manifest the glory of God.

## Fruit and Gifts of the Spirit!

In the last paragraph of this section, Bishop Linda calls our attention to the “reality and necessity of both” gifts and fruit of the Spirit. What gifts of the Spirit do you see at work in the life of your church? Which are lacking?

In the same way, which fruit of the Spirit is plentiful in your church and which are lacking?

What tends to be the view of the more miraculous gifts of the Spirit (e.g. healing, miracles, signs, prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, words of knowledge, words of wisdom) in your church? Discuss their necessity in the local church.

Some people tend to view the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) as the height that exceeds any gift. Do you hold to this view? Why or why not? Does Scripture hold to such a view? Why or why not?

## Crisis and Process? What is that?

Did you catch those two words – *crisis and process*. What could these two words possibly have to do with holiness? Take a moment and discuss it with your group. What is the connection?

Let's take time to examine four moments of “crisis” that happened in the Scriptures. Look up each passage and describe, in your own words, what the crisis moment is and what changed in the lives of the people who encountered God.

1. Moses meets God (Exodus 3:1–20):

2. Isaiah sees God (Isaiah 6:1–7):

### 3. Zacchaeus meets Jesus (Luke 19:1–10)

### 4. Paul encounters Jesus (Acts 9:1–9)

No doubt these are extraordinary examples of spiritual crisis moments. How does that apply to us today? Can you identify a moment in your own life that can only be described as a spiritual crisis? How did you emerge from that moment changed by the transforming power of the Spirit?

As we consider the idea of *process*, let's hear more from Bishop Linda. Be on the lookout for further descriptions of *crises that lead to holiness*, as well as *the process of holiness*. Highlight or underline key words and phrases that jump out to you.

## Grace for the Whole Journey

Wesleyan theology has been called an optimistic theology. Why? Because we believe in the possibilities of grace to radically change human hearts and lives this side of the grave. God has designed and provided for every step of the transforming journey, as the Holy Spirit interacts with people of free will, graciously leading us along the path until we see God face to face.

We affirm John Wesley's *Ordo Salutis*, or *Way of Salvation*. Wesley taught that God first works in all people through *Prevenient Grace*, preparing hearts to open to God. God's *Convicting Grace* makes us aware of our sin and willing to accept God's remedy. *Justifying Grace* puts us into saving relationship with God through faith in the finished work of Christ; we are converted and assured that we are God's beloved child. John Wesley said of the next phase in the outworking of God's grace, *Sanctifying Grace*, "It is perhaps for this reason that God has raised up the Methodists." God not only desires to make us holy but accomplishes holiness in us as we respond; the evidence of this holiness is pervasive love. Finally, through *Glorifying Grace*, at the moment of death God transforms us into immortality, and we are taken up into the life of God.

One night many years ago, I sat on a rooftop with a Calvinist friend and tussled over theology until the sun came up. I'll never forget his astonishment that I do not share his conviction that we "sin every day in thought, word and deed" and are condemned to repeat that until the day we die. He couldn't fathom the depths of grace that we Wesleyans experience and proclaim. The term "entire sanctification" particularly

tripped him up. Many others have stumbled over that phrase, a bedrock of Wesleyan and Free Methodist theology. My friend and I paged through our Bibles and painted contrasting pictures of the possibilities of holiness in the life of the believer.

Here are a few of the many Scriptures on which our beliefs are based (see Chapter 3, "The Christian Journey," in the [Book of Discipline](#), particularly ¶13108, Sanctification, for more of our biblical foundation):

"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15–16, quoting three occurrences in Leviticus).

"May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this" (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 NRSV).

"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

"Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Words like "entire" and "perfecting" may sound like a claim of immunity from sin or flaws. Wesley and Roberts often clarified that the reality to be experienced is pure motives from a loving heart. Human beings never outgrow the possibility of giving into temptation or exercising errors in judgment, but a life centered in the God who is Love can radiate love, which is the essence of holiness. +

Which words or phrases did you note as meaningful or enlightening? Talk about why they caught your attention. What did they say to you or how did they expand your understanding of holiness?

What questions arose as you read? Is there anything you'd like further clarification on? Talk about those things.

Here are three key points to explore together as a group:

- 1. Optimistic theology for the whole journey of your life.** Bishop Linda points out that “we believe in the possibilities of grace to radically change human hearts and lives this side of the grave.” How well acquainted are you with the possibilities of sin and temptation? What would it be like to lean into the optimism of knowing the possibilities of grace and holiness?
  
- 2. Sanctifying grace accomplishes holiness in us as we respond.** Do you tend to share the opinion of some that when your errors surface you say, “God made me that way”? Did He? Really? What if His purpose is to do a work of grace from the inside out that changes you completely — in an “all things new” kind of way? What role do our responses to God play in this?
  
- 3. Center on God who is Love.** We've learned in the previous study that a rules-based approach to holiness doesn't work. Part of the reason is that we focus on *compliance* and know that we will slip up at some point. It leaves us feeling inadequate and a disappointment to God. How do things change when we focus on God? Do you tend to see God's judgment or love; help or expectations; demands or encouragement? How does holiness become a thing of joy as we focus on the love, help and encouragement of God?

# Light+Life

Holiness happens in *burning bush* moments like that of Moses, and it happens in the day-to-day journey of life — the monumental and the mundane — using everything in our lives to make us more into the image of Christ. Because of the potential in the power of God, and our response of dying to ourselves so He can do a work in us from the inside out, holiness is *entirely* possible.

Let's pray.

Lord God, we bow before You and thank You for calling us to be holy. We ask that You use both moments of crisis and process to make us holy as You are holy. We will do our part — dying to self. Help us to know more and more what that means. We invite you to speak to us — guide us and lead us — reveal to us our roadblocks to surrender and bring us into the full reality of the potential found in your grace.

We pray in Jesus' powerful name. Amen.