**Read These Bible Passages**:

**1 Peter 1:13-16**

**1 Peter 1: 17-23**

**Focus on This Theme**:

 What does it mean to be holy? Some people might think you have to become a nun at a convent who wears a habit draped over their head, or even be an exact replica of the evangelical Billy Graham, or a missionary who walks barefoot through the city of Calcutta like Mother Teresa. All of these people are godly but this is not the only blueprint on how to be holy (what a relief). Instead, the apostle Peter maps out a twelve-step program on how to be more holy for the average believer. So sorry to burst your bubble, folks but Alcoholics Anonymous was not the first one to come up with a twelve-step program.

Today in 1 Peter 1:13-23 Peter addresses this letter to the Christians, the ones that have confessed with their mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and believed in their heart that God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9). This message was not written for the unbeliever. So in order to apply these twelve-steps to your own life, there is one major requirement upfront that cannot be ignored. Salvation!

Moving on, today we will place these thirteen verses from Peter on top of the surgical table, so we can maneuver our scalpel in the appropriate places to see truth a little more vividly. Be prepared to slowly dissect each verse with your class. The objective is to carefully bring to their attention the twelve steps that Peter has strategically laid out before us, so we can start modeling a holier lifestyle.

The reason I selected the picture above is because I saw this photograph as an excellent foreshadow of what to expect from this lesson. The man in the picture represents a modern-day Peter who assumes the role of the mature Christian. He is helping the younger Christian by preparing his feet to walk the twelve-steps we are about to learn together!

**INTRODUCTION**:

 Ahoy there Matey! Are you adventurers ready to set sail with your captain as we launch out to sea and explore the treasured history of one of my favorite books in the bible? The last thirteen weeks we have camped out in Old Testament scripture drinking and growing from the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. Not that there is anything wrong with learning from the Old Testament, but after spending a considerable amount of time there, my heart longs to study from the letters that bleed the name of Jesus on every page. I crave to be inspired by Yeshua’s dedicated servants that are leaving their life behind, to follow Him. We pick up today in 1 Peter chapter one and will continue our tour for the next twelve weeks until we end up on the last pages of 2 Peter. This fall we will receive great insight and wisdom from a man who starts out being famous for denying Christ three times before the rooster crowed, but then transformed into a man that requests to be crucified upside-down because Peter considered it to be disrespectful to perish the same way his Savior did. Pretty amazing metamorphosis, wouldn’t you say?

Peter, like all of us, was a diamond in the rough. It took the work of Christ to not only redeem this gem but to transform him from the inside-out. Earlier I mentioned that First Peter is one of my favorite books in the whole bible. The reason why is because of the actual author himself, the apostle Peter. Out of all the disciples I can relate to him the most. Why? Because he was an average guy who talked A LOT, his words got him into trouble, he spoke before he thought it out, he loved the Lord with a great passion, he had the desire to follow Christ, and no matter how hard he tried at times he would fail or make a wrong choice. I love that the bible does not try to pacify any of its characters in attempt to hide their faults so their image would be grossly perfected for all to read. Instead we get a platter full of sinful people who are just like us! Peter had been through a lot of refining by the Refiners fire. By the time Peter writes his two epistles (1 and 2 Peter), he is full of wisdom and ready to share with a pastoral heart. Peter was the obvious spokesman for the twelve apostles and was part of the inner circle (Peter, James, and John). We can find Peter’s eyewitness account in the gospel of Mark, and the special relationship that Peter had with Jesus is also recorded for us to take a peek in Matthew 16 and John 21.

**BIBLE PASSAGE # 1**  (The first six steps are highlighted in a different color)

**1 Peter 1:13-16**

13Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

**Activity for your class:**

1. Get a hold of 12 index cards.
2. On one side of the index card write one of the 12 steps, until they are all written down on each card.
3. On the other side of the index card, number each step accordingly (ex: Step One, Step Two, Step Three, etc...)
4. Hand out the twelve cards to twelve random people in your class.
5. As you teach on the steps, ask your class, “Ok, who has step one?” Then have them read what step one is…. They would read back to the class, “Prepare your mind for action.” Then you teach step one.
6. This will keep your audience engaged and keep the participants listening for when they will be called on.
7. I also encourage you to create a handout that will have a “fill in the blank” of the twelve steps. Email your handout to your campus pastor and they will provide you with multiple copies for your classroom.

**Step One**:

Prepare your mind for action (vs. 13 NIV)

A prepared mind is one that is strong, composed, cool, and ready for action. The King James Version says “gird up the loins of your mind.” Peter is urging the saints to have a “girded” mind. The girding up of the mind is an interesting figure of speech. In eastern lands, people wore long, flowing robes (so basically the men wore dresses). When they wanted to walk fast or with a minimum of hindrance, they would tie the robe up around their waist and belt (see Exodus 12:11). In this case they would gird up their loins. But what does Peter mean when he says “gird up the loins of your mind” or “prepare your mind for action?” As you go out into the world, you are to avoid panic and distraction. Do not allow your mind to be distracted by the lies and temptation of the enemy, which are shot at you all day long. In time of persecution, there is always a tendency to become rattled and confused. Instead set your mind on Christ. Ephesians 6:10-11 says: “Finally be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s scheme.” As Paul continues the letter in Ephesians he advises us how to put on the full armor of God, so we can be prepared for action and not confused. There is even one piece of armor that is mentioned in Ephesians 6:17 that can be used for protecting the mind, which is the Helmet of Salvation. Without salvation, we are free game to the attacks of Satan. So not only do we have to prepare our minds, but we also need to protect our minds as well.

**ILLUSTRATION:**

 I remember the first bible study I wrote, I had decided to teach it to a small group of women in my neighborhood. It was clear to me from the beginning that there was a much darker force that had a different plan for this class. Every week like clockwork on the day that I would teach these ladies, things would inevitably go wrong. I would either receive a devastating call right before we would gather to learn, or a fight would break out between my husband and me**.** Some way or another I would be robbed of peace and sound mind right before teaching the word of God.

The Lord began to show me that I need to prepare my mind for action throughout each week and also pray for the women who attended my class because they were being attacked equally as bad. As I started to apply this truth, the enemy struck harder. One of the days that I was scheduled to teach (on spiritual warfare of all subjects) half the class called to cancel, aggravating things were piling up at work, and the battle was beginning to rage. I could feel my flesh bubbling inside and I would try to stay in front of the Lord in prayer. Before leaving to go teach that day, my husband gave me a “Truth talk” which means he was reminding me of the real battle that was going on above our heads and to go out and fight the good fight by leading these women. I hugged and kissed him goodbye and within five minutes I walked back into the house with mascara dripping down my cheeks as I sobbed in his arms.

“What happened,” he asked with deep concern.

With big, puffy, wet eyes I looked up at him and said, “I was pulling out of the garage...”

“Uh-huh,” he said with great anticipation.

“…and well I…. I backed into your car with my car!”

I will never forget the response my husband said to me. He pulled me close to his chest while holding both of my shoulders with his hands. He looked deep into my eyes and said,

“Holly, what did I just tell you before you walked out of this house? That doesn’t change; the devil just upped the ante. I don’t care about the damage, or what it will cost. You dry up your eyes and pull yourself together and go teach that class.”

I’ll tell you what:I don’t know if my God-fearing man had ever looked more handsome than in that moment! I turned myself around, dried my eyes, and prepared my mind for action!

**Step Two:**

Be Self-Controlled (vs. 13 NIV)

Ah, the virtue of self-control! This is one on the list that I would personally not mind leaving off. If I can just be honest, there is nothing easy about being self-controlled in a country where out-of-control is idolized and taught from a young age through television, magazines, radio, billboards, friends, and the Kardashians. I do not have to stray very far from my spirit to recognize that there is rebellion within myself when it comes to self-control. To exercise self-control means to “discipline yourselves.” Discipline requires work and dedication. Just like an Olympian disciplines their body, so should we discipline ourselves. Proverb 25:28 says, “Like a city whose walls are broken down, is a man who lacks self-control.”

**LIFE APPLICATION:**

 When you have eaten until your heart’s content and then the waiter stops by and tempts you with that delicious platter of desserts, do you practice self-control? Or what about when the garbage is piling up, the kitchen is a mess, and you notice your husband is on the couch with a remote in his hand, do you practice self-control? When God has clearly asked you to not quit your position and then you are offered a new job with higher pay, do you practice self-control?

I want to challenge you this week to pray and ask the Lord to convict you throughout the day when He is asking you to practice self-control. Then jot down on a piece of paper the outcome. I think you will be surprised at what you find. At the end of the week, bring your piece of paper to a trustworthy friend and discuss it with them. This is a good exercise that will shed light in this area for you.

**Step Three**:

Be Hopeful (vs. 13 NIV)

Our hope is clearly based on God’s faithfulness and comes by trusting in Christ (Psalm 62:5). Our day-to-day experiences and hardships are sometimes overwhelming; unless we can see that God’s purpose is to bring about continual growth in us, we may despair. The hope we need is well expressed in Jeremiah 29:11-12: “‘For I know the plans I have for you’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a HOPE. In those days when you pray, I will listen.”

Let’s consider the devastating story of Job. No one person could ever prepare themselves for what he experienced. In one fell swoop he lost all of his investments; five hundred oxen, five hundred donkeys, seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels. That is one heck of a day on Wall Street, wouldn’t you say? If that wasn’t bad enough, chapter one of the book of Job concludes with him finding out that his seven sons and three daughters have been killed. By chapter two the poor man is plagued with dreadful boils and while scraping his skin with broken pottery, his wife is urging him to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). Anybody feel inspired up to this point? I mean let’s face it; I don’t think there is a soul in this class (or world) who is dreaming about living a life like Job. I have never heard someone say,

“I wish my life was like the life of Job.” In fact, I can hardly get people to turn with me to the book of Job without someone fearing that this is a “sign” from God that He is about to prepare them for suffering. Yet hang in there with me because I want to point out a remarkable thing Job says in 13:15,

“Though He slay me, yet will I HOPE in him.” If I was standing in front of you, I would have to slowly repeat this verse again! This is incredible; Job takes hope to a whole new level. So we may not want to duplicate his life, but we surly want to duplicate his response.

**Step Four:**

Be Obedient (vs. 14 NIV)

**ILLUSTRATION:**

As an adolescent, it would be safe to say that I was not an obedient child. Hard to admit now, but I was the child that if told to do something, I would most likely do the complete opposite. I did not like to be under authority and go along with the rules. From an early age, my father warned my sister and me to never ride on the back of a motorcycle. He would tell us of the dangers and forbid his prized possessions to take that risk. My sister only needed to hear that once and she would obey. I, on the other hand, jumped on the back of the first motorcycle invitation. When I got off the bike, I was not paying attention and backed my calf muscle into the exhaust pipe. Now just in case you are unaware, let me inform you that Hades is not as hot as that pipe! So not only was the pain excruciating but now I had branded a perfectly round two inch circle into my leg. To cover up my “sin,” I began to wear those awful tube-socks that we used to wear in the late 80’s. Except one day my sock fell below the burn and my dad knew exactly what that was because he had seen it happen before.

“Hey Holly, what’s that on the back of your leg?” He asked with his eyebrow raised.

“Oh, I burnt my leg on my friend’s heater in their house.” I replied completely caught off guard.

With that “look” in his eye he said with sternness, “young lady, it is the summer-time in Houston! No one is operating their heaters right now!” BUSTED!

**Proverbs 10:13** says, “*Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod (or exhaust pipe) is for the back of him who lacks judgment.”* How appropriate!

Obedience is a key essential to being holy. This is an area that kept the Israelites wandering in the desert for forty years because they would not obey the Lord. We should not live in the same manner as we lived before we were saved. Be free from the past and depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to help you overcome evil desires and obey God!

**Step Five**:

Do not conform (vs. 14 NIV)

“Do not conform to the evil desire you had when you lived in ignorance” (vs. 14). What Peter means by “ignorance” is when you were an unbeliever and you lived in darkness and did not know the truths of God. Now that you are in Christ, you are a new creation and the old has gone (2 Cor 5:17).

The solution is given to us in Romans 12:2- “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world (ignorance), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

**Step Six**:

Be holy in ALL you do (vs. 15 NIV)

I love the reason God gives to us in this verse, as to why we should be holy in everything we do. He says, “Be holy, because I am holy.” Could you imagine if you gave that same reasoning to your children? “Be a clean-freak, because I am a clean-freak.” Not sure it would go over as well.

What jumps out at me the most in this verse is that Peter warns us to be holy in everything. Do not be a Christian who plays “holy” on Sunday and then Monday roles around and your evil twin comes out to play.

**BIBLE PASSAGE #2** (The last six steps are highlighted in a different color)

**1 Peter 1: 17-23**

17Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. 18For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

22Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%201:17-25&version=NIV1984#fen-NIV1984-30381a)] 23For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

**Step Seven:**

Pray to the Father (vs.17 NIV)

I remember one time a woman said to me that she does not ask the Lord for things on her behalf, that she saw prayer as only a “help-line” for other people’s need. That could not be any further from the truth. In Hebrews 4:16 we are told to “come boldly to the thrown of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” I believe if we did not come boldly and cast our own burdens, questions, and desires before the Lord then we are missing out on true intimacy with Him.

I talk to the Lord all day long. I ask Him to help me find things, or to remind me when I am supposed to leave for a meeting. I even ask Him to open up a parking spot for me in the front row and I can’t tell you how many times He does it. It happens so often that I almost feel like God is showing off for me!

Ladies and gentlemen if you are not talking with God on a regular basis, you are missing out. The mystery of prayer is an awesome privilege.

**ILLUSRATION:**

For this next illustration, you will need to bring your laptop, i-Pad, or use church equipment to play a funny video on how people view prayer. The reason this clip is so funnyis because there is truth in each character. We might even be able to see ourselves in one, possibly two of the skits. This skit is less than five minutes.

<http://skitguys.com/videos/item/the-skinny-on-prayer>

**Step Eight**

Live with a Reverent Fear (vs.17 NIV)

**Psalm 25:14** says, “*The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He shall show them His covenant.”* Isn’t that marvelous? If you fear the Lord, He will share his secrets with you. You only share your secrets with somebody who is intimate with you; a person whom you trust.

To have a reverent fear of God means that in your heart and mind you know that God is so powerful and holy that you would not dare run away from Him, but instead you would run to Him. Fearing God is not another requirement, it is the way you come to Jesus. You come reverently, humbly, and without any presumption that He owes you anything or that you deserve something. We should tremble in His presence that He would so graciously receive us.

**Step Nine:**

Through Him, Believe in God (vs. 21 NIV)

**John 14:6-** “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.”*

The only way to know the Father is through His son Jesus. If you want a relationship with God, you have to accept His Son. Jesus does not merely show the way, He is the way. The Lord Jesus is not just one of many ways. He is the only way. The way to God is not by church attendance, good behavior, saving the trees, your parents sprinkled water over your head at birth, you got an “A” on your exam, or you fast occasionally; the only actual requirement comes through Christ alone. I have heard on so many occasions from people, that all religions have some sort of good in them. Hence, all their followers will end up in heaven. But Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through me.”

**Step Ten:**

Have Faith (vs. 21 NIV)

What is Faith? Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)

In Luke Chapter 8, there was a woman in a large crowd that was following Jesus. Her faith led her to grab hold of Jesus’ cloak. If only her fingers could just touch Him, she believed that she would be healed from a twelve year battle of uncontrollable bleeding. The moment her skin grazed the edge of His cloak, her bleeding stopped and she was immediately healed.

“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When everyone denied it, Peter said,

“Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.”

But Jesus said, “I know that power has gone out from me.”

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at His feet.

In front of the whole crowd the woman explained why she touched Him and how she was instantly healed. Jesus said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you, go in peace.”

The woman in this story has displayed great faith. She placed her faith in Jesus and knew that He was Jehovah-Rophe, the God who heals. What makes her faith so pleasing to Jesus is that she also recognizes her need for intimate contact with Him. If she could just be in connection to Him, only then she would be healed.

**LIFE APPLICATION**:

Ask your class these simple questions:

1. Do you counsel with the Lord before making a decision?
2. Do you worry while you wait for God to answer?
3. Do you act upon the answer that God gives you and not look back?

If you answered yes on all three, then you are operating in faith. Keep it up, beloved!

**Step Eleven**:

Love your Brothers and Sisters (vs.22 NIV)

Where do you think that Peter got this advice? You guessed it; out of the mouth of Christ, Himself! Do you remember in John chapter 21 when Jesus asks Peter repeatedly if he loved Him? You could almost hear annoyance out of Peter by the third time he repeats the answer to his Rabboni. Yet Jesus gets his point across and tells Peter that “if he loves Him, then he must feed His sheep.” Who are His sheep? You guessed it again; our very own brothers and sisters in Christ.

This step is pretty easy, yet difficult at the same time! In Matthew chapter 23, Jesus was asked which commandment was the most important and He replied in verse 37, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” In order to truly love other Christians, you have to love God first. You see when you love God like Peter did with all your heart, soul, and mind, the Lord will then fill you up so that your cup-of-love spills over and splashes onto others.

**Step Twelve**:

Love one another (vs.22 NIV)

Our last step in the program goes hand and hand with step eleven. Not only are we to love other Christians, but we are to also love ALL people. Love, because He loves!

**CONCLUSION:**

Today we went over a lot of steps for preparation on how to live a holier life. As you can see this is not something that will come naturally to us. These steps will have to be honed and intentionally weaved into our everyday living. It’s just like everything in life, folks---in order to see results you have to persevere. Although unlike success, health, and Olympic gold medals, working with God to become more holy is the most important thing you will ever do. So saddle up your horses, we’ve got a trail to blaze.