

MEFC Community Group Study Guide
For the Week of January 30th - February 5th

Getting Started

1. Share with the group about a time that you walked into a room, a situation, or space where you felt entirely out of place. What were the circumstances? What did you do? Did you ever have to go back? If so, what adjustments did you make prior to returning (if any)?

Digging Deeper

2. In Hebrews 12:14, we encounter one of the most frequently minimized (and thus forgotten) truths in the New Testament. There is “a holiness without which no one will see the Lord”. What does this mean? Aren’t we saved by grace through faith in Christ *apart* from works (Ephesians 2:8-9)? How does James 2:14-26 speak to this issue? What about the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43)? Does Hebrews 12:14 apply to him?

In 1877, J.C. Ryle (the first Anglican bishop of Liverpool, England) published a book titled: Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots. It is essential reading for the further exploration of a passage like Hebrews 12:14. In the rest of this study guide, we are going to walk through one of the finest passages in Holiness (and possibly of all of 19th century devotional Christian literature). Discuss your reactions / responses to these quotations with your family, or in your community group.

3. “Sanctification...is absolutely necessary in order to train and prepare us for heaven. Most men hope to go to heaven when they die; but few, it may be feared, take the trouble to consider whether they would enjoy heaven if they got there.”
4. “Heaven is essentially a holy place; its inhabitants are all holy; its occupations are all holy. To be really happy in heaven, it is clear and plain that we must be somewhat trained and made ready for heaven while we are on earth. The notion of a purgatory after death, which shall turn sinners into saints, is a lying invention of man, and is nowhere taught in the Bible. We must be saints before we die, if we are to be saints afterwards in glory.”¹
5. “The favourite idea of many, that dying men need nothing except absolution and forgiveness of sins to fit them for their great change, is a profound delusion. We need the work of the Holy Spirit as well as the work of Christ; we need the renewal of the heart as well as the atoning blood; we need to be sanctified as well as to be justified.”
6. “It is common to hear people saying on their death-beds, ‘I only want the Lord to forgive me my sins, and take me to rest.’ But those who say such things forget that the

¹ A brief clarification...Ryle roundly rejected the concept of perfectionism (or the entire sanctification of the believer) in this lifetime prior to one’s death or the return of the Lord. Not only do the other parts of his book make this clear, but so does the New Testament itself (see 1 John 1:8, 10).

rest of heaven would be utterly useless if we had no heart to enjoy it!”

7. “What could an unsanctified man do in heaven, if by any chance he got there? Let that question be fairly looked in the face, and fairly answered. No man can possibly be happy in a place where he is not in his element, and where all around him is not congenial to his tastes, habits, and character.”
8. “When an eagle is happy in an iron cage, when a sheep is happy in the water, when an owl is happy in the blaze of noontday sun, when a fish is happy on the dry land – then, and not til then, will I admit that the unsanctified man could be happy in heaven.”

**Now, walk back through the words of Paul to the Colossian church in Colossians 3:1-4. Review any sermon notes you may have taken as well. What mind-shifts do you need to make? What specific vices do you need to “put away” (3:5-11)? What specific virtues do you need to “put on” (3:12-17)?*