

Let me ask you a question: If you were to describe yourselves in one word, what would that word be? I would use two words; anxious but hopeful! I remember a book called *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and it was a best seller. It's author, Stephen Covey; guaranteed that his book would supply readers with everything they needed to enjoy powerful and effective living. Included in the book are chapters on leadership, life management and relationships, all centred on the belief that old habits can be discarded and replaced by new and effective habits. Covey lists seven effective habits: Initiative, creativity, productivity, empathy, interdependence, valuing differences and consistency. Covey assures his readers that if they exhibit these seven habits in their lives, they will be able to describe themselves in one word: *Effective!*

Of course, Covey and other writers of self-help books always base their theories on perfect people managing to live perfect lives, but life isn't like that. If you want to read a book on effective living, then try the Bible, for scripture want us to be able to define ourselves with two words: *Christ-like*. Jesus Christ was *Holy*. He was God's Son which means He can be accurately described as Holy. Jesus as God's Son was fully human and fully God, which means He was separate and different. So, if we are to be Christ-like, can we define ourselves as Holy? I don't know about you, but I know I can't describe myself as holy!

Yet if we read 1 Peter 1: 15 to 16 it's clear that we are called to holy lives: ***Instead be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy***. Scripture says *Be holy because I am holy*. Why are we called to be Holy? Because God is Holy and we are made in His image! Then the question then becomes *How can I know if I'm holy or not?* Stephen Covey gave us his seven habits of highly effective people so let's look at the habits of holy people. This will help us to determine the areas of our life that we need to consider strengthening by developing ***Holy Habits***.

Habit number one: *Holy people understand scripture as the guide for their daily lives.*

Psalm 1 teaches: *Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His word they meditate day and night.* Holy people love God's word. They base their lives on the scriptures and the Bible's teaching is a part of them. They know that the word of God gives wisdom, guidance, comfort, strength and daily support. The study and application of the scriptures is a habit with holy people. ***Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another, with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*** Col 3.16.

Habit number two: *Holy people daily seek God in prayer.* If our lives are to be identified as holy then we should be people of prayer. Prayer is our means of communicating with our God, and this is how we develop a relationship with our creator and Father God. Prayer is the well of life for the Christian for without prayer our spiritual lives become dry. The Church should be a house of prayer because if the church neglects it's prayer life; it becomes dry and it loses contact with God. And if we as individuals or as a church lose contact with God, we lose direction. We should be people of prayer because a life of prayer leads to a life of holiness.

Habit number three: *Holy people are devoted to following Christ no matter what.*

Holy people realise that being a witnessing Christian is not always easy. It's a challenging and difficult way to live, but we try to live likes this out of our devotion to Jesus Christ. Paul writes in 2 Timothy: *Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal.* The Apostles Timothy, Paul, Andrew and Peter all suffered to the point of death. Christians will endure hardships because we know what Christ went through, and we're told we have to willing to do the same. Christ said we must pick up our cross and follow Him.

We know that in Christ alone is our eternal reward and devotion to Christ comes from a desire to identify with Him, which will lead to eternal life through Him. Unconditional devotion to Christ is a habit with holy people.

Habit number four: *Holy people live each day guided by the Holy Spirit.* To live by the Spirit means that our lives provide evidence that defines someone who is open and alive to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: *The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* A life defined by these gifts is a life defined by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Holy people follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit even when it is contrary to their own plans.

An example of people giving up their plans for God can be found in Acts 16. Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to continue. So, they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia begging him: *Come over to Macedonia and help us.* After Paul had the vision, they left at once for Macedonia; concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel there. And from Paul's preaching in Macedonia, the Gospel was spread into Greece and Europe. If Paul had not followed the Holy Spirit, the Gospel would have never come to us. Being open to, and following the leading of the Holy Spirit is a habit with holy people.

Habit number five: *Holy people are accountable to God's house and his people.* **Hebrews 10.25: *Do not to give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.*** Paul says that the church is like a body which we are all members of. How can the body benefit from an arm that is missing?

The church should be a habit for Christians, and there's an old and true saying that you only get out what you put in so find a way to get involved. Find an area of church activity that suits you and be faithful to it. Faithfulness to God's house is a habit with holy people!

Habit number six: *Holy people are obedient in separating themselves from the spirit of the world.* A holy life is one that's been sanctified for God's service, and it's a life that puts self to death, and seeks to be pure and acceptable to God. We live in an age of godlessness where people are more concerned with the immediate than the eternal. The Spirit of this world is an impure spirit of selfishness. Separation from the spirit of the world is a habit with holy people.

Habit number seven: *Holy people seek to serve the Church, out of thanksgiving to God, so use your gifts to serve God and the Church.* Consider the words of 2 Corinthians 9: 12 to 13. *This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, people will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ.* Each of us has been gifted in one way or another. Some offer hospitality, some are gifted in welcoming, some encourage others, some are leaders and some are servants. The list could go on but the point is that holy people pray and try to discern what spiritual gifts they've been gifted with, then they seek to put those gifts to use within the church. Why? Not for their own glory but so that *people will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ.*

Without being willing to serve God in His church, our confession is hollow. God did not give us spiritual gifts so we could enjoy having them, but so that we could enjoy using them. Service to the body of Christ is a habit of holy people.

If God did not intend us to be holy people, He would not have commanded us to be so. The fact that He gave the command is an indication that He has made it possible. Part of living holy lives is developing habits in our lives that are holy. But if we try to develop these habits through our own strength we will fail. Only with Christ in our lives and the power of the Holy Spirit living within us, can holiness become a reality for us. If we are sincere in our desire to read our bibles, pray, live in the Spirit, and meet and encourage one another and try to serve the body of Christ with thanksgiving, then God will help us. We will be blessed by God and we will lead lives which are Holy and pleasing to God.

As our scripture reminds us this morning: *Be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy. Be holy because God is holy.*

(1676 words)