

# Considering our Ways & Developing Habits of Holiness (pt.2)

Haggai 1

## Introduction

We are continuing in our series based upon **Haggai 1:7** called “**Considering our Ways & Developing Habits of Holiness**”. This study is largely based upon some questions and convictions that the Spirit of God has been putting before me in this past month.

This series has, and will continue to prove itself challenging because it does not shy away from asking the hard questions, and unveiling the issues of the heart.

This series takes aim at five different categories of our lives:

1. Personal/Private Life
2. Family/Home Life
3. Vocational Life
4. Social Life
5. Church Life

Last time we were together we considered our personal and private life. In that message, I asked 6 questions:

1. What do you want more than anything?
2. What do you delight to do when you are alone?
3. What is the state of your prayer-life?
4. What is the state of your Thought-life?
5. How much time have you invested in reading, studying, meditating, and memorizing the Scriptures?
6. What are your habits and what impact do they have on your spiritual life?
  - a. Considered the Area of entertainment
  - b. Considered the Area of eating and drinking
  - c. Considered the Area of clothing, fashion and appearance
  - d. Considered the Area of sleeping and rest habits
  - e. Considered the Area of finance

I believe that there are many “churches” out there who would sack me for preaching a series such as this. They would say, “*He is so unloving*”, or “*what right does he have to pry into my personal life and tell me how to live?*”. Others might say, “*Jesus just wants us to be happy, healthy and comfortable. There’s no need for this kind of Bible-bashing.*” Some might even foolishly say, “*Holiness was for the puritans, we have evolved in our Christian life.*” I know some who would go so far as to call me a “legalist”, and one who is seeking to place on you a yoke of slavery.

At MCCBC you have the unique privilege of sitting under a pastor who is not “living in the ivory towers” who can spend his days studying the Word, and engaging in hours of prayer, evangelism, and visitation.

“Why is this a privilege?” someone will say. Because I live a life just like you. I have a wife to take care of. I have to work hard to survive financially. I have to “make time” for God and the pursuit of holiness. I have to balance the many areas of my life. I struggle with sin on a minute-by-minute basis. I do not have all my “spiritual ducks” in alignment. I am just as prone to wander from the Lord as you are, and I am a long way from the sinless perfection for which I strive.

In other words, this series is as applicable to me as it is to you – because we are the same. I do not descend from the heights of spirituality on a Sunday, preach an impossible message for you to obey, and then mount my high-horse of morality, and ride off into the distance.

I am living in the mud with you. I am stained by the same sins as you. I am often lethargic, rebellious and defeated. Yet I am also passionately pursuing God – His holiness, His righteousness, His power, and His glory. And so, with the Apostle Paul I can truly say, “*Follow me as I follow Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1). I am not asking you to do anything that I myself am not under obligation and mandate from heaven to do.

With that introduction, join me as I preach the second installment of “**Considering our Ways and Developing Habits of Holiness**” and particularly in the area of our **Family/Home Life**.

## Consider your Family/Home Life

By “Family/Home Life” I am referring to that place where you reside, and to the people living there with whom you interact.

Much can be gleaned by looking intently at this area of our life. This is the place we call “home”. These are the people that see us without our masks. The old adage is true, “If you want to know someone, ask their family about them.”

In this category, we want to ask some probing questions to determine whether or not our home/family life is in alignment with the Scriptures, and if it is a place where holiness is promoted and pursued.

To aid us in this endeavor I have organized my questions into smaller categories.

### **SUB-CATEGORY #1 - The Husband/Wife Relationship**

#### **1. Do I love my spouse more than any other human in this world?**

This is the first and most critical question to be asked of all Christian marriages.

#### **2. Have the “two become one” in reality or does there remain an independence?**

*Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

*Mark 10:7-8 ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh.*

The Bible makes it clear that two individuals who enter into the covenant of marriage become one entity. For a married couple to live independent lives- like ships passing in the night- is to deny that truth, and operate with an identity crisis.

#### **3. Does my marriage adequately depict Christ and His church?**

Paul, by the Spirit’s illumination, explains that marriage is a picture, a parable of a greater truth – the relationship between Christ and His church.

A marriage between two believers should illustrate to the church and the world what the gospel is all about.

Paul writes, “*This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband*” (Ephesians 5:32-33).

#### **4. Am I enjoying or enduring my marriage?**

Marriage is not a duty to perform, but a foretaste of heaven on earth.

Solomon writes much about this subject. In one place, he prays for his son and daughter-in-law and says, *“Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love (Proverbs 5:18-19).”*

## **5. Am I experiencing the grace of life as God intended?**

Peter calls marriage the “grace of life.”

*“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).*

When you boil it down, there are only two “special graces” in the Bible- The “grace that leads to eternal life” (Romans 5:21), and the “grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7) which is marriage.

Marriage is a covenant entered into for this physical life only, and is a wondrous gift of God. Only after 9 years of marriage am I beginning to see the great value and blessing associated with the grace of life.

### **SUB-CATEGORY #2 - Husbands**

#### **1. Have I forsaken all others- whether physical or digital- to cleave exclusively to my wife?**

We are not only speaking of extra-marital affairs, but also pornography, improper relationships at work or the gym or on the internet, wandering eyes at the shopping centres, and being unnecessarily absent from the home.

Men, we are living in spiritually and sexually hostile times. The world of immorality, led by the Kingdom of Darkness, has plundered many homes, and continues to mount their attacks against all who would seek to live pure and holy lives.

There is barely an internet page, television station, newspaper edition, or highway billboard that is not designed to arouse both our eyes and sexual organs. Unless the defenses are constantly fortified, and our spiritual man strengthened, we WILL fall into sin.

*Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*

#### **2. Am I lovingly and sacrificially leading my wife as Christ does His church?**

The husband is called to be the leader – make no mistake about it- and he will give an account for his efforts on judgment day.

For some husbands, the call is to reject laziness and start leading their wives.

For other husbands, the call is to lead with love, not in harsh abrasiveness.

In other words, some aren't leading, and some aren't loving, and both is unacceptable in God's economy.

*Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.*

*Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

### **3. Am I washing my wife with the Word of God, teaching and helping her to become holy and without blemish?**

Until recently I believed that it was my wife's responsibility to "wash herself" in the Word, and on one level that is true. Every Christian needs to be personally engaged in the reading and study of God's Word.

However, Paul makes it clear that every Christian husband has a mandate from heaven to lead, teach, admonish, explain, and disciple their wives through the Word.

This does not mean that there must be a rigorous reading plan every morning at 5am per se, but it does require the husband to engage in spiritual discussions, readings, prayer, and direct applications designed to bring growth and holiness to his wife.

This means that the husband must be reading and learning himself if he is to communicate biblically helpful truths to his wife.

*Ephesians 5:26 "that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word."*

### **4. Am I nourishing and cherishing my wife?**

This question is taken from Ephesians 5:25.

To "nourish" is to "bring to maturity, nurture, and bear fruit."

"Cherish" literally means "to keep warm, meet the needs, and to foster with care."

Both of these aspects demand sacrifice, expense, time, and energy.

Practically speaking, this means that you need to talk to your wife, share your heart, help her to develop right thinking patterns, buy electric blankets, clothes, and other comforts. It means that your priority is your wife's needs, not yours.

### **5. Am I providing for her financial needs?**

Paul does not water down his position on this topic. In writing to Timothy, Paul says, *"But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).*

"A man who doesn't work shouldn't eat" says Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

### **6. Am I gentle with her as though she were a fragile vessel?**

Our culture is rearing women to be self-sufficient, independent, and to come out from under the "yoke of home-making". Now we have our women going to war, playing football and rugby, body-building, and enforcing the law as police officers. This is NOT God's plan for women. This has largely come about because men did not treat their wives with care, love, honour and respect.

Scripture is clear – the wife/woman is the "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7) and must be honoured and loved as such. She is a precious ornament, and we are to ensure she remains that way.

### **7. Do I have realistic expectations of her life, work, emotions and support of me?**

Our wives are not our slaves. They are called to respect and submit, but we must be very careful we do not misuse, abuse or manipulate them.

Men, we need to know when our wife will experience her period so that we can be extra supportive, sensitive and bless them especially in this time.

When our wives come home with a boot-full of shopping we must get off the couch and carry them in. Don't sit there like a blob playing your Xbox, or reading the newspaper all-the-while that she is struggling to carry in the groceries.

You don't have to wonder if it's God's will for you to assist your wife in carrying the shopping– it is!

One of the areas that I wrestle with greatly is the difference between our thinking patterns. I often expect my wife to think like me – very logical, methodical, unemotional, and because of this, I often operate with harshness.

As husbands, we must be careful to *“live with our wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman...”* (1 Peter 3:7).

### **8. Am I seeking to understand her and not discredit her ideas or thoughts?**

Oscar Wilde said, *“Woman are meant to be loved, not understood.”*

Although this is pithy, it is completely wrong. God says that the husband is to live with his wife in an understanding way. He needs to know her intimately and minister accordingly.

She doesn't like huntsmen – get rid of them.

She loves chocolate – buy some.

She likes sparkly things – save some money.

She wants to hear you talk and share – don't be cold and distant.

She loves it when you show her you care by writing a little note.

She appreciates spontaneous intimacy – be impulsive.

She wants to be heard, and know that her opinion matters.

She wants you to lead valiantly and love unconditionally.

She loves a picnic – plan one and pack the sandwiches.

Take the time to understand her. Don't idly watch your life and marriage go by without investing in deepening your relationship.

### **9. Am I initiating regular times of intimacy?**

Sex is a gift of God for both pleasure and procreation. As the leader, it is the man's responsibility to ensure that this precious gift forms an integral part of the marriage. The only reason why a couple should not have intercourse is because of a mutually-agreed period of prayer (1 Corinthians 7:5).

*“The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband”* (1 Corinthians 7:3).

### **10. Do I pray for my wife?**

God tells us there is power in prayer. If I want to see changes in my wife, I must be committed to praying for her, and in specific ways. Pray for her growth, submission, spiritual fruitfulness, her needs, fears, and cares.

## 11. Do I humbly resolve conflicts in my marriage?

Again, as a leader, the onus falls on the husband to lovingly and humbly lead the wife out of conflict and into resolution and repentance. This does not mean the man is always right, it means he must always be willing to be wrong, and quietly, sweetly bring unity and reconciliation to the relationship.

### **SUB-CATEGORY #3 - Wives**

#### **1. Is my husband still my knight in shining armour?**

By this question, I am asking if he is still the love of your heart, and the light of your life?

Before you married your husband, you were waiting for your "prince charming", you were eager to find that someone with whom you could share your heart and your life. Along came that man who met the criteria and you were wed.

Has your love for him deepened? Has it blossomed and grown? Is he still at the heart of your heart?

#### **2. Do I honour, revere and respect my husband?**

*"However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).*

Peter also refers to a wife who is "respectful and [of] pure conduct" (1 Peter 3:2).

To "honour, revere, and respect" is to "think highly of, exalt, to treat with great deference."

Your husband has an incredibly difficult task – he must keep himself in order spiritually, he must lead you in love and in the Word, he must oversee all members of his household, and he must give an account one day before the Lord for all of this.

Your honour and respect of him, even when you disagree, will go a long way to preserving joy and longevity in the marriage.

He needs to know you are with him in his decisions. He needs to be assured that you will follow him to the ends of the earth if need be. If he sniffs a hint of disloyalty he will be ruined, discouraged, and unable to lead.

#### **3. Do I willingly submit to my husband's decisions as if he were the Lord?**

*"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22).*

We like to play down this verse and take the sting out of it, but the Bible means what it says. God is not calling the wife to have no intellect or voice, but to operate like Sarah who called Abraham "Lord" and was obedient in all things (1 Peter 3:6).

The world tells women to stand up for their rights, and is opposed to all that looks or sounds like a meek and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4).

For a wife to operate with submission and obedience, she will have to take a stand against her own flesh which wants to rule over her husband, the world which wants to conform her into its image, and the devil who whispers, "did God really say this" into her ears.

#### **4. Do I operate with a gentle and quiet spirit?**

Peter commands the wives/women of his day (and ours) to not be concerned with outward beautification or embellishments, but to let *"your adorning be the hidden*

*person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious" (1 Peter 3:4).*

Again, we find that culture is seeking to create a generation of women who are marked by outward fashions, attitudes of pride, pursuits of power and authority, and communication which is boisterous, rude, and unladylike.

### **5. Am I preoccupied with doing my husband good?**

Proverbs 31:10-31 lists the many virtues of a godly wife. One that is often overlooked is found in verse 12 which says, *"She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life."*

The idea here is that she lives for him.

Every task she performs, every word upon her tongue is for his good. She protects his reputation, she honours him by keeping the home, and she ministers to those in her care. She has earned his trust and respect, and she is entirely focused on being a blessing to him.

### **6. Am I hard-working, disciplined, organized, and pro-active?**

When reading through Proverbs 31 it will not take you long to see that this virtuous woman is TRULY virtuous.

- She takes initiative with wool and flax (v.13)
- She organizes and prepares food for the household (v.14)
- She is an early-riser (v.15)
- She is self-motivated and hard-working (v.16)
- She strengthens her body for the tasks (v.17)
- She is kind and generous (v.20)
- She has provided clothing which is suitable to her household (v.21)
- She is entrepreneurial (v.24)
- She is emotionally strong (v.25)
- She is wise (v.26)
- She is a care-taker and not lazy (v.27)

### **SUB-CATEGORY #4 - Fathers/Mothers/Guardians/Single Parents**

Not being a parent I cannot make comment from experience, but I can ask some questions as a potential parent, and one who has studied these truths out in the word.

#### **1. Do I understand and appreciate the God-given role of parenthood?**

Bringing up children should not be seen as a laborious task or an annoyance – it is a privilege and blessing dispensed to you from the Lord.

*Psalms 127:3-5 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.*

#### **2. Am I bringing up my children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?**

The first and most important role of any parent is discipleship in the home. It is so important that the pastor/elder is disqualified if he fails in this all-important task.

Solomon says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).*

Paul says, "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

It is the priority of every godly parent to rear children who love and fear the Lord.

Too many Christian parents are letting the secular education system bring up their children and then they wonder why their hearts are cold towards Christ and spiritual things.

Paul Washer writes:

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*"Your children will go to public school and they will be trained for somewhere around 15,000 hours in ungodly secular thought. And then they'll go to Sunday school and they'll color a picture of Noah's ark. And you think that's going to stand against the lies that they are being told?"*

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Parents you are charged with a great responsibility. How are you faring?

### **3. Am I actively disciplining my children in love?**

Did you know the Bible speaks more about disciplining your children than it does about loving them!?

Disciplining your children is not a choice, it is a command.

Consider these texts:

*Proverbs 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.*

*Proverbs 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.*

*Proverbs 29:17 Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.*

Do not believe the lie that your children will be ok without any measure of discipline. Stop trying to negotiate, and start using the rod of reproof!

### **4. Am I teaching my children in the ways of the Lord?**

The Israelites were given specific commands with regards to teaching their children about the Lord.

*Deuteronomy 6:4-7 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

In every situation of life a parent is to teach their children about the Lord. In the most joyous occasions as well as the most mundane.

Children must be taught to see the Lord in everything!

### **5. Do I provoke my children to anger or discouragement?**



Paul, on two occasions, warns parents about this matter of provoking children to anger and discouragement (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4).

It seems that what Paul is referring to is operating with injustice, actively seeking to inflict emotional pain upon the child, and manipulating and setting double-standards. All of these vices will cause a child to harbor anger, hatred and discouragement in the heart.

Parents must not operate with favouritism, double-standards, unfair treatment, undeserved penalties. And unfulfilled promises.

All of these will chip away at the heart of a child and produce a noxious attitude which may not manifest itself for many years.

## **6. Am I planning an inheritance for my children?**

Finally, let us consider an area rarely mentioned – inheritance for your posterity.

Scripture indicates that a righteous man (father) will work to make provisions for the generations to follow.

Solomon writes, *A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous (Proverbs 13:22).*

Here we see a father actively planning and preparing for the future.

Are you working toward that end as a parent?

### **SUB-CATEGORY #5 – Children**

Everyone is someone's child. Whether you are a preschooler, school-aged, adolescent, or an adult there are precepts and principles that relate to you as a child of your parents.

#### **1. Am I thankful to God for my parents and my upbringing?**

You may not have been brought up in a Christian home, you may have experienced great abuse and hardship on account of your parents, but can you be thankful that the sovereign God placed you in that household as a child?

Paul commands us to *"give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).*

There are no perfect parents, no perfect homes, but there is a perfect God who has worked in and through your home-life to bring you to Himself.

Praise the Lord for your family!

#### **2. Do I obey my parents?**

Paul command is simple – *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1).*

In the Bible, "children" refer to those who are still under their parent's authority because they are unmarried or dependent.

For the children and teenagers in the room, God has called you to obey your parents. This is not up for negotiation. Failure to do so may result in a shortened life.

The Bible says, *"that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land" (Ephesians 6:3).*

Agur didn't hold back when he spoke of the importance of obeying parents:

*"The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures" (Proverbs 30:17).*

### **3. Do I Honour my Parents?**

This question is not age-specific. You may no longer be under their authority, but you are commanded to honour, respect, love and appreciate them.

Even those harsh, abrasive, unsavoury parents are to be honoured and given their rightful place in your heart and life.

One of the ten commandments is to *"Honor your father and your mother"* (Exodus 20:12).

God said in Leviticus 19:3, *"Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father."*

Do you esteem your parents highly? Are you more inclined to speak evil of them?

### **4. Am I preparing to house, clothe, feed and support my aged parents?**

One thing that astounds me is how many Christians are happy to simply place their aged parents in a home!

Now I understand if there are ongoing medical issues which the children are ill-equipped to handle, but aside from that it is simply wrong!

Paul says, *"But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).*

Even the Pharisees knew that this was their responsibility and they tried to shirk it (Mark 7:9-13).

Long before the pension and homes for elderly people were invented, it was always the responsibility of children to care for their aged parents, and if they couldn't the church would.

*1 Timothy 5:16 "If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows."*

### **SUB-CATEGORY #6 – The Home**

We have already looked at the many relationships within the family, but let me ask some questions about the place you call home – the bricks and mortar.

1. Am I living like this is my final destination? (Question of extravagance)
2. Is my home a sanctified place?
3. Is it filled with prayer?
4. Is the Word of God read there?
5. Are psalms, hymns and spiritual songs sung there?
6. Does purity reside there?
7. What is watched, listened to, talked about?
8. Do the posters, wall-hangings, tapestries bring honour to the Lord?
9. Is my home a place of decency and order?
10. Is my home a place of hospitality?
11. Is there any aspect of my home that I would be ashamed of if it were seen publicly?