Life Connexion Group Study Notes
A City Set on a Hill
Date: 11 October 2026

Series Overview

In this series, we are exploring what it means to live as people who belong to God. Biblical holiness is not withdrawal from the world or outward religious performance. It is the continuing work of the Holy Spirit by which believers are separated from sin, surrendered to God and conformed to the character of Christ.

The previous studies have considered holiness in suffering and the relationship between spiritual power and purity. This week turns to public holiness: how God forms a people whose faith can be seen in ordinary life, especially when the surrounding culture does not share their convictions.

Introduction

The central truth of Ps Alida's message is that God positions His holy people visibly within cultures so that their lives testify to His righteousness, faithfulness and transforming power. Holiness is personal, but it was never intended to remain private. God does not sanctify believers merely so that they can survive the world. He transforms them so that the world may see something of what He is like.

Daniel is a compelling example. He lived faithfully within foreign and often hostile cultures, served with excellence under pagan kings and remained devoted to God when that devotion became dangerous. His life shows that courageous holiness is not loud or dramatic. It is an established pattern of truth, righteousness, prayer, service and trust in God.

> **God can use you to be a light for Him wherever He has placed you, if you hold firmly to your faith and trust His ability to work through your life.**

Key Scriptures

Philippians 2:14-16
Paul calls believers to live without grumbling or arguing so that they may become blameless and pure children of God within a warped and crooked generation. They are to shine like stars as they hold firmly to the word of life.

> **Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. - Philippians 2:15-16**

Daniel 6
Daniel's enemies examined his conduct but could find no corruption, negligence or dishonesty. When a decree forbade prayer to God, Daniel continued his customary practice of prayer and thanksgiving. God preserved him and the king publicly acknowledged the living God whom Daniel served continually.

> **Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.**
> **- Daniel 6:10**

Matthew 5:13-16
Jesus describes His followers as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt influences what it touches and light dispels darkness. The Church is called to make a visible difference so that people see good works and glorify the Father.

A City Set on a Hill

1. Holiness is designed to be visible

Paul does not tell believers to escape a crooked generation. He tells them to shine within it. Jesus likewise prayed that His disciples would not be taken out of the world, but protected from the evil one (John 17:15). We live within the world as visible witnesses who can introduce others to Jesus and the salvation He provides.
Visible holiness is not self-promotion. It is the character of Christ becoming observable through our attitudes, work, relationships, speech, decisions and treatment of others.

> **Holiness is personal, but it was never intended to remain private.**

2. A crooked generation makes straight lives more visible

Paul describes his own generation as warped and crooked. He does not say that cultural darkness should make the Church angry, fearful or withdrawn. He says to shine. The darkness surrounding the Church is not an excuse for the Church to become dark; it is the environment in which Christian holiness becomes visible.

> **God does not light lamps to hide them from darkness. He lights lamps because darkness exists.**

3. Public holiness will eventually be tested

Daniel's enemies could not find corruption, incompetence or dishonesty in his public service. The only charge they could construct concerned his faithfulness to God. They therefore weaponised his obedience and arranged a law that made his established practice of prayer punishable by death. Daniel's story reminds us that pressure may arise precisely because a believer is living faithfully. When that happens, our established character, habits and loyalties become visible.

The distinguishing characteristics of Daniel

- He distinguished himself through exceptional qualities.
- He was trustworthy, honest and truthful.
- He was neither corrupt nor negligent.
- He was competent and diligent in government affairs.
- He respected the authority placed over him while remaining accountable to the higher authority of God.
- He did not use his position to pursue selfish ends.
- He lived out his faith consistently from day to day.
- He loved God, remained faithful to God and trusted God to use him where he had been placed.
- He served God continually and maintained a disciplined life of prayer and thanksgiving.
- He remained innocent before God and faithful in his responsibilities to the king.

Why did King Darius trust Daniel?
Daniel's rise was highly unusual. He belonged to a conquered people, yet successive kingdoms retained him and entrusted him with increasing authority. King Darius intended to place Daniel over the whole kingdom because he could trust Daniel in a way he could not trust the other leaders. Daniel possessed the character of the God he served: truth and righteousness. His faith made him more faithful in public responsibility, not less.

> **Daniel's influence did not rest merely on his position. It rested on character that had proven trustworthy over time.**

4. Daniel did not become more secretive when faith became costly
Daniel could have closed his windows, stopped praying publicly or suspended his practice for thirty days. Instead, he went home, knelt down and prayed three times a day, giving thanks to God just as he had done before. He was neither flaunting his faith nor hiding it. He simply remained faithful.

> **Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. - Daniel 6:10**

A crisis did not create Daniel's devotion; it revealed it. His public courage was sustained by an established private life with God. Daniel placed God above every human authority and desired fellowship with God more than safety or royal approval.

Daniel also faced a deeper question: did he really believe that God would take care of him? Trust did not mean that he was guaranteed freedom from danger. It meant that he entrusted his life and future to God, even when obedience could cost him everything.

Hold Firmly to the Word of Life

Ps Alida identified the central command for Christians living within rapidly changing cultures: hold firmly to the word of life. We hold firmly not arrogantly, angrily or fearfully, but with steady conviction formed by God's Word and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

- Hold firmly when biblical convictions are unpopular.
- Hold firmly when obedience costs something.
- Hold firmly when friends disagree.
- Hold firmly when society changes.
- Hold firmly when institutions change.
- Hold firmly when compromise appears easier.

While holding firmly to truth, we continue loving people deeply. The Christian posture is not truth versus love; it is truth expressed through love (Ephesians 4:15). We refuse the false choice between compassion and conviction. Jesus embodied both perfectly.

This courage is not merely a personality trait. The Holy Spirit enables believers to obey, speak and endure. Ephesians 6:10-18 calls us to put on the whole armour of God and after doing everything, to stand.

Living as Philippians People

Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). This does not mean disengaging from the world. It means engaging the world according to the principles and person of Jesus Christ. We do not hide our faith. We stand firm in the goodness of God, speak the truth of His Word with boldness and without fear, and live as citizens of His kingdom.

The metaphors of salt and light in Matthew 5:13-16 describe the influence Jesus intends His followers to have. Salt cannot flavour food without making a difference and light cannot dispel darkness while remaining unnoticed. Jesus does not call His people to be silent, passive, hidden or embarrassed. He calls us to engage our culture, live for Him, speak the truth in love and share Him wherever and whenever we can.

A city on a hill is not one person but a community. God intends His Church to become a visible alternative society that demonstrates what human life looks like under the reign of Christ. ARC is called to be the city of God within the city of Bendigo, honouring Him through all that we are, have and do.

Our Mandate: To Know Jesus and Make Him Known

Ps Alida summarised the purpose of every believer plainly: to know Jesus and to make Him known. Wherever God places us, He can use us to bring glory to His name and reveal that He is God. Our lives, words and relationships become part of His mission.

> **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. - Matthew 28:19-20**

The Great Commission is accompanied by the promise of Christ's presence. We are not sent alone. God calls us to speak the truth in love, live uncompromisingly, refuse fear and trust Him to work through us wherever He has placed us.

Four Truths for Faithful Living

Together, these points call us to visible, trustworthy and courageous discipleship. We are to live as citizens of heaven, hold firmly to God's Word, love people deeply and make Jesus known wherever God has placed us.

1. ***Holiness is designed to be visible.***
   Let the character of Christ become observable through everyday attitudes, decisions, relationships and words.

2. ***A crooked generation makes straight lives more visible.***
   Respond to cultural darkness with faithful witness rather than anger, fear, compromise or withdrawal.

3. ***Public holiness will eventually be tested.***
   Form trustworthy character and habits of prayer before pressure comes, then continue to honour God when obedience is costly.

4. ***Daniel did not become more secretive when faith became costly.***
   Neither flaunt nor hide faith. Continue faithfully, hold firmly to God's Word and trust Him with the outcome.

Reflection Questions

1. Where has God placed you to shine at present - at home, at work, among friends, in church or in the wider community?

2. Which characteristic of Daniel most challenges or encourages you, and why?

3. Daniel continued praying “just as he had done before.” What spiritual habits help prepare us to remain faithful when pressure comes?

4. How can our Life Connexion group and the wider Church shine together rather than only as individuals?

5. What is one visible act of faithful witness God may be asking you to take this week?

Scripture Memory Challenge

“Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.”

- Philippians 2:15-16