

### Discussion Guide

#### Prepare

When you think of the holiness of life, or personal holiness what comes to mind? Share your progress in holiness. What has helped you grow in holiness and what did not? Was there ever a time when you felt like you weren't making any progress? Was your faith stalled or did you discover you were being overly critical of yourself or were being unrealistic about your progress in holiness?

1. *“Fathers, do not exasperate your children, or they will become discouraged.”* Colossians 3:21 The word exasperate means: “being overly severe and critical to the degree you cause your kids to acquire a spirit of sullen resignation and despair.”

Did you grow up in a home that exasperated you or did you grow up in a loving and affirming home? How has it affected your life? Did you repeat the pattern in your own life later or were you able to dismantle that generationally passed down dysfunction?

2. Are you or have you ever been a defensive person? Did you discover what the roots were to your defensiveness? What were they? Have you come to a place in your life where you are able to “repenting sweetly.”
3. *“Though he (Jesus) was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.”* 2 Corinthians 8:9

How are we “rich” by having God as our Father? Do you feel rich? How does the riches of God been experienced in your life and share ways you see it shaping your life?

4. Share a time when God gave you remarkable poise. What went through your mind that gave you the confidence and ability to remain unflappable?
5. *“For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”* (vs. 19)

When you think of “sanctify” what comes to mind? When you discovered what Jesus did for you and how did you respond? Was it a natural response or did it take time for you to make an all-out commitment to God?

6. Pastor Richard shared modern examples of what being sanctified means. Give an example from your own life where you dedicated yourself to something that required you to put limits to your life so you could accomplish that task or goal.
7. When you gave your life to Christ, what were the initial changes that occurred in your life? How is God shaping you today?
8. Pastor Richard said: *“The Promised Land is not Paradise. That is yet to come. But it is a whole lot better than slavery or living out in the dessert.”* Is life with Christ better than the life you had before you knew him? Has the Christian life disappointed you in any way? Did you think life would be easier or you'd be more prosperous than you are at this point in your life? (Don't be afraid to be frankly honest with your response.)

9. Read the passage and respond to it.

*"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."* Philippians 3: 12-14

10. Read: *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."* Hebrews 12:1-2 (12:1-2)

How has "fixing your eye on Jesus" helped your progress in holiness? Give another example of how important focus is. Is it true that you become what you focus on?

11. Reflect on this verse. *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."* I Peter 2:9

12. When you were a kid, did you have a special possession? What was it? How precious was it to you? What do you think about you being God's special possession?

13. Read: *"His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."*

Ephesians 2:15-18

Share the implications of being a new ethnicity in Christ. Has the Church lived up to its calling to be a new ethnicity? Share what you think are the Church's greatest triumphs and worse failures in living up being a new ethnic group in the world.

14. Share the impact that *"for them"* has had on your life.

15. Final thoughts or reflections?

Idea: If your group hasn't gone out to socialize for a while consider having a movie night with popcorn and your favorite snacks and watch the movie: *"Father Stu"* and then afterwards process it together.

Potential Questions to Help You Process the Film:

Who do you relate to in the story? What struggles did you face in your walk with God? What opposition or ridicule did you experience? Has God ever spared your life because he found something worth saving in you? How has the Church nurtured your faith and how has it been an obstacle to your faith?