Response
by
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A simple response to David McEwan's question is, Yes, Christlikeness is the only suitable model for holiness in the Twenty-First Century. Yet his formulation of the question raises issues that need to be addressed.

The first is the cultural definition of holiness (or Christlikeness). "Holiness" has been used by some as a cultural label with a definable lifestyle, which is only a slice of American life, including the noble and the prejudicial. Christlikeness is beyond these and brings judgment upon my and every cultural notion of holiness. No one culture's understanding of Christlikeness is transferable to another's because it is only an understanding. No culture can adequately define Christlikeness, because Christlikeness is countercultural. This is not to say that Christ is against culture, but that every culture, including a church's culture, is uncomfortable with Christlikeness. To the Christian Jew, Christ is still a stumbling block. To the Christian Greek, he is still foolishness. Christ is still the rock on which we stumble. He is the rock of offence. But to those who trust God, and not their own understanding of righteousness, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:23). He is our standard of "wisdom, … righteousness,… sanctification and… redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).

A second issue is legalism. This is implied in McEwan's contrast between "Law / obedience" and "faith / trust" and his reference to "the common 'moral-obedient' view of holiness in the West." He requests a "relational holiness." Legalism occurs when obedience is to law as Lord and when somebody tries to use Law to "lord it over" others (Mark 10:42). Legalism is also a form of idolatry. Obedience to law or human authority has become a substitute for personal obedience to God. The biblical model is "trust / obey," rather than either of the options. In Hebrews the opposite of trust is disobedience (Heb. 3:7—4:13). Romans implies that obedience itself is relational: "It is before his own master that one stands or falls;" "Each of us will be accountable to God," and "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom 14:4, 12, 23). The goal of all Christians in all cultures ought to be Christlikeness. Of Christ Hebrews states, "See, I have come to do your will" (Heb. 10:9). Christ's will is to be obedient to the Father's will. Paul's description of Christ is, "He was obedient unto death even death on the cross" (Phil.2:5, R.S.V.).

A third issue is this: "Holiness is … relationship-based and community-shaped." This echoes Wesley's famous dictum, "The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness, but social holiness" (*The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley,* 1: xxii). Holiness occurs in community. It is "while we … have fellowship with one another that the blood of Jesus Christ … cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). An issue is raised contrasting the legalities of law versus "Spirit-led community." Community is not necessarily "Spirit-led." The unwritten laws of community can be more legalistic than the careful consensus of the church. Yet the

legislated can feed legalism. McEwan's question, how can a national consensus reflect international realities, needs careful consideration.

A fourth issue of McEwan's functional model is its Pelagian tendencies. Though "we were created to function (think and act) in harmony with the nature of God," "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). Thus, we no longer "function" as created.

A fifth issue is McEwan's call for biblical principles. Here are some starters:

1. Trust, love, and obey God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (John 14:12-17).
2. Love for Others (John 13:34, etc; Gal 5:22-23.). Avoid any thing that will cause others to stumble (1 Cor 10:23-33).
3. Self-Control (2 Pet 1:5-7).

Susanna Wesley wrote to her son John:

> Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind; that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself (Letter: June 8, 1725).

Anything that thwarts love toward God or neighbor or dampens self-control or the Holy Spirit's control must be avoided.

A sixth issue is that Christlikeness is the supreme New Testament principle. As given to us, it is both individual and social. It is individual: "A disciple… who is fully qualified will be like the teacher" (Luke 6:40. See John 13:12-17). It is social: Jesus prayed, "Keep" and "Sanctify them," so that "they may be one as we are one" and even "perfected into one" (John 17:11, 21-23). In this last passage, the Trinity is the model. Both individual and social models are united in Jesus' example, in which he washed the disciples feet (John 13:15; see 13:1-17). Imitation of Christ was spontaneous at the first moving of Pentecostal love; they had all things in common (Acts 2:44-46). But was difficult to maintain, as is evident in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:32-5:6) and in Paul's rebuke of the Corinthian Church over food denied the hungry, even at the Lord's table, despite his contrary example (1 Cor 11:17-34).

Jesus Christ is counter to every culture in which there are those who have and those who don't have. Christlikeness cannot be reduced to any Christian community's mores. Christlikeness is the goal toward which the Holy Spirit transforms every individual and every community. The restoration of the image is not an attained possessed, whether at initial sanctificiation or any subsequent stage of sanctifying grace. Instead, it is that toward which we are predestined (Rom 8:29), toward which we are being "transformed from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 2:18), toward which God sanctifies us (John 17:17; Rom 6:22; 1 Thess 5:23), and toward which, in some sense, Christians sanctify themselves (1 John 3:3 and 1 Peter 3:15).