

The Best Possible You

SESSION ONE

1 PETER 2:9-12

- ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.
- ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
- ¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you. ¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do what is evil, they will, by observing your good works, glorify God on the day of visitation.

WELCOME

Hey girls! I'm so excited to be spending the next eight weeks of this study with you! But first things first — let's get to know one another. I'll start us off. I'm Amy-Jo. I'm a girls minister from Nashville, Tennessee, and I love technology and drinking coffee. Before we move on, take a few minutes to introduce yourself to the girls in your group.

Press Play

Watch the Session 1 video. As Amy-Jo introduces the study, she shares how “The Best Possible You” is only possible in Christ.

DISCUSS

What did you think about the story of Amy-Jo's makeover from her friend Jenny on school picture day? Have you ever had a bad makeover? If so, share your story.

Do you ever get too engrossed in trying to post the perfect picture on Instagram? Explain.

How can we strive to perfect our hearts and minds as much as we try to create perfect photos?

In what ways can Christ give us a new heart and mind, making us a new creation?

Let's Talk

CULTURE

Our culture plays a significant role in our lives. We need to be aware of the messages it sends so that we can test them against the truth of God's Word. As we begin to discern what is true, we will find our identity in Christ rather than in the latest fad. We'll see that cultural trends are temporary and cannot sustain us.

Have you ever thought about what the best possible you would look like? Think about it: Every morning you get up and work on something to better yourself or get yourself closer to the best possible you.

Do you remember what your New Year's resolutions were? If so, list them here.

Sometimes the resolutions we make have to do with our health or our attitude. Sometimes they have to do with a skill or involve checking a life experience off our list.

Nowadays, we have the added bonus of Pinterest, Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube to help us figure out how to get the best eyebrow shape or the best room decor. You can spend hours finding new ways to use makeup tricks such as contouring, which is like a cheat code for enhancing your facial structure.

How often do you compare yourself to others? Your siblings? Your best friends? To celebrities?

What is the bar by which you judge yourself?

Fill in the blank: If I were _____, then I would be where I want to be.

Our culture has figured out a way for us to get "there," even if it only exists on social media.

When you think of the word *filter*, what are some of the things that come to mind? List them here.

What is your favorite Instagram filter?

Or maybe your favorite Snapchat filter?

Our social media-driven culture has really rewired our thinking on filters. Before the days of Instagram or Snapchat, a filter had a much different definition. Now we primarily use filters on our photos to help with the lighting or in hopes that the coloring of the photo will look better.

But if I look up “filter” in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, I find this definition:

“a device that is used to remove something unwanted from a liquid or gas that passes through it.”¹

So “filter” is one word, but it can have very different definitions. The first definition is something that is applied to a picture or snap to make it look better or different than it would on its own. It is not considered a pure form of the picture, but rather improved upon. There are even some apps (like the Mira app), which allow you to alter your face to remove flaws or change the shape of your features. When someone uses the hashtag *#nofilter*, you know that nothing was added to enhance the photo. It is what it is.

But the use of the word “filter” originated from medieval times where they used a “piece of felt through which liquid is strained.”² Nothing was added to the liquid, but instead items were removed from the liquid.

Before K-cups became all the rage and replaced coffee pots, there was a very necessary piece of uniquely designed cloth that was placed in the upper chamber of the coffee pot. Ground coffee beans were then measured and placed in this “cloth” within the upper chamber. The cloth was known as a coffee filter. It allowed hot water to diffuse through the filter and become coffee without the grit of the bean spilling into the cup. The filter kept the beans out of the cup, but left the yummy caffeinated beverage behind to create coffee-addicts everywhere.

So, the second definition of filters would mean that something is used to remove impurities that we don’t want in the end product.

WHY FILTERS?

So, why all the talk about filters? Because we apply filters and use them in our everyday lives, and they’re not always social media or coffee filters.

More than any other generation before, Generation Z is constantly immersed in 24/7 news ranging from Twitter feeds, Snapchat, Instagram, and

My favorite is rise. It just sounds like there’s no where but up for that photo to go when you put the rise filter over it.

Mine is the bee. It not only makes you look like a bee, but it makes you sound like a bee. And singing “Jesus Loves Me” as a bee is just awesome.





even once in awhile Facebook (you know, so you can see what your mom or dad are posting about you). But with that constant feed comes some interesting dilemmas. Your generation can literally hear from celebrities within seconds of a tweet or a Snapchat story being sent. You can process events as they are happening with the rest of the world. This media engages humanity in virtual friendships with people and experiences they may never meet or go to. Social media has removed barriers globally and has connected us with celebrities and people that we would otherwise know very little about.

The result? We know about Taylor Swift's squad. Some of us follow her life on a daily basis. When we are soaking in those experiences, it's hard not to want that kind of life for ourselves. We want to project a life that seems like we have it all together.

And without even knowing it, we filter our lives through the lens of a celebrity on Twitter, or a group of girls that get the most likes on Insta. And those are the people we look to in order to see how our lives measure up.

KEEPING IT REAL

Let's be real here. In fact, I'm even going to place the "Keep it 100" emoji throughout this study for when I am asking you to dig deep and be honest with yourself. You know what the "Keep it 100" emoji means, right?

KEEP IT 100: To tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. AKA "Keep it Real" or be honest with yourself as well as others.³

My pastor always says, "The first person you lie to is yourself. That's why we need to be in an accountability group—so friends can call you on it when you are not being true to yourself."



What kind of filter do you use for your life (your heart, soul, mind)?

Is it a social filter like in the first definition that creates a faux reality of your life? Wouldn't it be great to have some kind of filter for your heart, soul, mind that could work like a coffee filter and remove the impurities in your life?

IDENTITY IN CHRIST

We must understand who God is and His character of holiness to truly find our identity and value in Him.

Read 1 Peter 1:15-16.

15 But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; **16** for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy.

Underline each time you see the word “holy” mentioned in this passage.

- What are some facts that you can determine already from this passage?
- Holiness is a big deal to God, isn't it? How can you tell?

Circle the phrase that says, “the One who called you.” Then write your area code above it. This part is personal.

God has something specific for you that He has tasked you with, so write your initials above the first “you.”

- How does it impact you to know the Creator of the universe has called you to a task?
- The bigger question is this: Have you heard Him? Do you know that He knows you? And have you answered?

The word *holy* in this passage means “dedicated to God and set apart to the service of God.” As you go about your day, imagine what it would look like to live life through this filter. A filter of knowing you are God's. You are dedicated to Him and your life's purpose is to honor and serve Him.

Let's just try this.

- How would that impact your Friday nights?
- How would that impact your friendships?
- How would that impact the shows you watch?
- How would that impact how you think about dating?
- How would that impact the dreams and goals you have for yourself?

The Greek word for “who called” is *kalesanta*. It literally means “called by name to a task.”

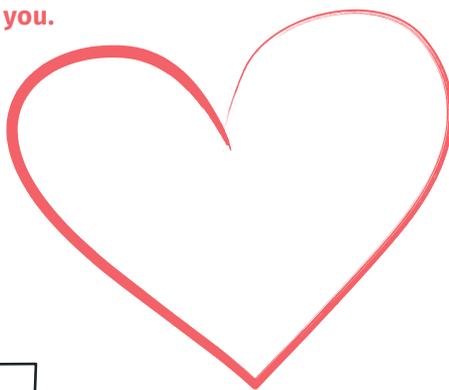
And here's the thing that is amazing with pursuing God's holiness: As He is removing the impurities from our hearts, He is giving us His heart and making us look more and more like Him.

PURITY

Our response to the holiness of God is to reflect His character in living our lives of purity. We pursue holiness so that we might look more like Him.

So, what are some virtues that you want Him to grow in you?

What are some attributes that you long for in your heart? Use the heart drawing below to doodle those words in as a prayer for God to grow those attributes within you.



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10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

11 Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you. **12** Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do what is evil, they will, by observing your good works, glorify God on the day of visitation.

Underline the phrase in verse 9, "the One who called you out of darkness."

Then, write your phone number next to the word *called*. This is personal.

Draw a tombstone next to the word *darkness*.

This is where this gets real. Darkness is not just nighttime here. This means that God called His people out of death and into life with Him. He has called. Have you answered?

Without knowing Christ personally, there is no pursuit of holiness. There is no way you can be holy without God. Notice where the command comes in Scripture to abstain from fleshly desires. Is it before or after God called His people out of the darkness into magnificent light?

It's after. Because it is through Christ and Christ alone that we are able to pursue holiness and fight our fleshly desires.

Underline fleshly desires and draw a flame next to it.

List some desires below that could be good. Could those desires become bad? If so, how?

PASSIONS AND DESIRES

Desire is not a bad thing. We all have desires. It is part of who we are. We always have desires and passions for something. It could be a passion to attain admission into a certain college, or a desire for a relationship. It could also be a passion to use your gifts and talents. Very quickly there is a war that emerges out of our passions and desires.

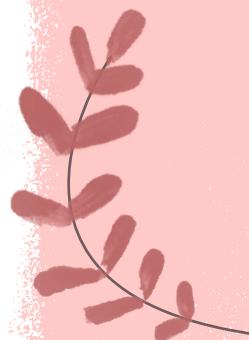
Who will this passion and desire benefit? Is it you? Or is it God? The world is telling you to do whatever you want for your own benefit. It claims that when you do what you want, then you are free. The problem is that the world isn't the one who grants freedom. Freedom only comes through Christ.

Unfortunately, we have complicated personal holiness by trying to manage sin on our own. When constantly striving to do more good deeds than bad or attempting to overcome sin in our own strength, we are trying to be our own savior—we will always fail in this pursuit.

So as you dig into this journey of personal holiness, we will not be showing you how to manage your sin. You won't find a list of "Dos" and "Don'ts."

What you will find is a Christ-centered approach to surrendering your life—your desires, your dreams, your timeline, your plans, your relationships, your sexuality, your purity—to Christ. When you admit your need for Him, your filter changes.

The fight for purity all of a sudden is not just you alone trying to will yourself not to think certain things or look at certain images, or even determining how close to sex you will get, but it becomes a hunger for something entirely different. The hunger of your heart changes from satisfying selfish desires to seeking a relationship with the One who knows you better than you know yourself.



PURSUING HOLINESS

Some friends of mine have shared with me the battle it is for them to pursue personal holiness on their school campuses. They have said that the percentage of girls that are not sexually active is very small. As a result, their choice for personal holiness is anything but personal. It has impacted their whole campus. Thankfully, there is a group of girls that walk in this pursuit together. They encourage one another and when the struggle is real, they remind one another who they are in Christ. This group of girls has a hunger for different things. They hunger for intimacy with Christ.

Now they aren't perfect, but they are pursuing holiness as a Generation Z group of girls, just like you. You are not alone in this journey. Isn't that exciting? You will be joined by girls all over the world who will be doing this study. Take a moment to pray for the other girls discovering God's plan for their personal pursuit of holiness.

NOW WHAT?

As you consider how the truths from Scripture apply to your life, discuss these questions with your group. Be open and honest, and ask God to open your eyes to what He wants to teach you through this session.

What challenges in our culture are we up against that distract us from pursuing holiness in Christ?

Are you trying to manage your sin without Christ? Why is this dangerous?

Discuss the importance of accountability and why we all need fellow believers to help us to stay on track. Who are those people in your life?



What are some things you need to surrender completely to Christ in order to make Him your top priority?

On your own

Find somewhere quiet and relaxing where you can spend time with God thinking about and processing what it means to live a life of holiness. Reflect on this session and what God is teaching you. Take time for some creative processing. You'll be tasked with a process and an adventure to help you think more about what you have been studying as a group.

CREATIVE PROCESS

As we close out this first session, take a moment to draw or write a response or a prayer for yourself (and for your group) in the Instagram-shaped image below as you move into this study together.



CREATIVE ADVENTURE

Use the hashtag **#filteredheart** to accompany your above creation or to share a truth that stuck with you from this session.

PRAYER

Place your hand over your heart and read this Scripture about hearts as your closing prayer:

- 23** Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life. **24** Don't let your mouth speak dishonestly, and don't let your lips talk deviously. **25** Let your eyes look forward; fix your gaze straight ahead. **26** Carefully consider the path for your feet, and all your ways will be established. **27** Don't turn to the right or to the left; keep your feet away from evil.

-PROVERBS 4:23-27