God is Holy
Chapter 6

Thank goodness chapters 1-5 have helped prepare me for chapter 6 about the holiness (wholeness, completeness, pureness) of God and his wrath toward sin that reflects His holiness. I have experienced Jesus who calls me to come and see how he lives, experienced God who is always good in the midst of my trials, experienced my Father who I can trust to be near, experienced God who is generous and provides all my needs, and experienced God's love that accepted me as His child and gave me His Holy Spirit.

The main ideas of the chapter are:

1. The notion of God as a kind of "teddy bear" is common in the world and in many churches.
2. Though we seldom reflect on it, Jesus spoke a great deal about judgment and wrath.
3. Passion refers to a kind of out of control human anger, whereas pathos refers to an act of care and intention. God's wrath is pathos, not passion.
4. God is essentially holy but not essentially wrathful. Holiness is an attribute of God; wrath is an action of God. (Explore the UMC doctrine of God's wrath").
5. "Love loves unto purity" said by George McDonald, meaning that God's love is so strong that it will burn everything that is not pure, out of His people.
6. We may think we want a more passive God, but in reality we do not.

Suggestion: Move beyond simply reading the scriptures on pages 117-118 and look for the intention and context.

Here is a preview of our discussion questions for Sunday:

1. Chapter 6 addresses two false narratives. Which of these two narratives do you identify most? Why?
2. "To love is to will the good of the other", page 119. What would you say to a friend who wanted to understand how a loving God could be wrathful?
3. "Love loves unto purity", page 123. What thoughts and feelings do you have when you consider that God longs to remove everything that harms you.
4. "God will not violate the choices we make. People may choose to bar God from their life. Thus the doors of hell (separation from God) are locked from the inside", page 125. How is this vision similar or different from your own understanding?
5. The chapter concludes with the important point that we must first trust in God's love and forgiveness (Psalm 23) before we can begin to understand God's holiness (I Corinthians 13:4-8). (Also, consider the words of the Lord's Prayer). What impact have the previous five chapters had in preparing you to understand God's holiness?

(Soul Training on next page)

Soul Training

Reading about the soul training exercise, creating margin in our lives, I imagined driving too fast on a road with no shoulder. I noticed the words, “God never called anyone to marginlessness”, page 130, and “margin and holiness are related to one another in very deep ways “, pages 130-131. I see creating margin as planning ahead as best you can, freeing your schedule when you can, and carefully considering what is added to your schedule. For those who give it a try, we will briefly share in responses to the questions on Page 131.

Selah, pause and think on God this week.

His central point is that God’s wrath is not the opposite of His love. God’s holiness means He is completely good and opposed to everything that destroys the goodness of His creation. His wrath is His opposition to sin and evil because they harm the people He loves. His wrath was poured out on the cross.

Our author encourages us to move away from imagining God has having an unpredictable temper and toward understanding Him as a loving God who cannot be indifferent to the things that hurt us.

God’s holiness does not mean He stops loving us when we sin. Rather, His love moves Him to confront what is wrong and to restore us to the people He created us to be.

Instead of seeing God’s holiness as a reason to fear Him, we can see it as evidence that His love is so good that He wants to free us from everything that separates us from Him.