



Holy Available: What If Holiness Is about More Than What We Don't Do?

Gary Thomas

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True Christian faith is a profoundly transformational experience in which every part of our being is marked by God's change and energized by his presence. This transformation takes us far beyond mere sin avoidance to a robust 'full-bodied' holiness in which we make ourselves 'holy available' to God every minute of the day. From Starbucks, to the office, to the soccer fields, to the boardroom, believers have the opportunity to carry the presence of Christ wherever they go.

God offers the reader more than mere forgiveness; he wants to radically change and fill them with his presence, so they can experience an entirely different kind of life based not just on what they do or don't do but on who they are.

Yet while many Christians today profess belief, their Christianity has no pulse. Holy Available is a manifesto of fully alive faith. Gary Thomas issues a compelling call for readers to see with Christ's eyes, feel with Christ's heart, and serve with Christ's hands. We make ourselves available to become 'God oases,' places of spiritual refuge where God can bring the hurting and lost to enjoy his presence and ministry.

Holy Available: What If Holiness Is about More Than What We Don't Do? Details

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Chris "Gunner" McGrath says

I much prefer the new title, "Holy Available: What If Holiness Is about More Than What We Don't Do?" I think that captures the theme of the book better, and certainly is what I got out of the book.

Becky Giovagnoni says

Gary Thomas is one of my favorite authors. He's set the bar really high for himself. I found this book a little less engaging than his others that I've read, but that's not to say I didn't get a lot out of it. I did. I just didn't connect quite as much with the subject matter of this book.

Mark-robyn says

As with other books by Gary Thomas, this is a "must read". An inspiring call for following Jesus in the daily challenges we face in life. If you want to get into closer fellowship with Jesus, this book will help!

Virginia Knowles says

This is Gary's book on what it means to live out being the body of Christ in our world. I wrote my poem "Corpus Christi" as a response to it. You can find it on Gary's web site, www.GaryThomas.com, if you poke around a little bit.

Heather says

This is a great book to remind Christians that just being in church is not enough. One of my favorite images that Gary evokes is that going to church or spending time praying are like a lunch break--they can be used to rest and restore people. But when the relaxing is done, it's time to go back to "work."

What is "work," in this case? It's continually evaluating our inner state and making ourselves available to God. It's learning to see with his eyes, hear with his ears, and be his hands and feet in the world. We can't be arrogant or hateful and be living Christ-centered, transformed lives at the same time.

The other important issue Gary brings up is that Christians often focus far too much on the words "don't" or "shouldn't" and not on the words "do" or "should." Understanding that we have a loving God should inspire us to do the same for others--mere moralism is not enough. We have all failed to do good to other people and to ourselves too many times to judge other people for failing in the same ways.

Something that annoyed me about the book: It seemed that at least once per chapter, the author made a "please don't take this the wrong way" kind of disclaimer. His writing felt defensive to me because of this, as though he had to justify everything.

Overall, though, this book brings some great insights into how Christians should be treating other people on a daily basis, and what it means to do "the will of God" (it doesn't have to mean becoming a pastor or a missionary--it could mean just doing what you enjoy most and allowing God to shine through you in it).

Kendall says

An outline to begin the systematic process of submission to Christ in day-to-day life.
Very good.

Pamela says

Profound

A book to make one think and open one's eyes. A thoughtful and doable path to cooperate with God to allow holy change to come. To become wholly and holy available. A very clear and understandable inspiring read.

Madison says

THOUGHTS

'Twas a really good book. Lots of nuggets. I'm in agreement with his thesis - that transformation occurs we live in surrender to the inner spirit of Christ within us (Gal 2:20) - and I enjoyed his use of both modern day and ancient examples. I would say that this is quite a wordy book - if one were in a rush they could likely get a fair amount out of simply reading through the summaries that Thomas helpfully provides at the end of each chapter. A book that comes to mind as a great complement to this work would be "The Hole in our Holiness" by Keven de Young.

QUOTES

"...church as we define it today is often structured around "discussing" issues, praying about them, and feeling inspired at the thought of them. We need to become like [St.] Francis [the author had mentioned his example of kissing the lepers he once despised], finding ways to en flesh - live out and apply - the stretching truths of our faith." pg. 22

"Evangelicalism has spent the last several decades making the apologetic and historical case for Jesus. We have published books, offered seminars, and filled magazine with the historical claims and compelling intellectual arguments for the Christian faith. Thank God for this important work - but sadly, some of us have neglected the experiential case for the Christian faith, a case that may be even more persuasive with younger generations." pg. 28

"I am in no arguing for anti-intellectualism; our faith is based on the authority of an intellectually accurate

understanding of Scripture. What I am trying to challenge is the sense of “either/or” that often fuels the debate. Why must we choose between good theology and experiential living? They are not competitors but allies... there are two ways to witness: teaching the Word of God and ‘comporting [ourselves] as Christians without arguing or quarrelling with anyone.’” pg. 28

“Rodney Stark: “typically people do not seek a faith; they encounter one through their ties to other people who already accept this faith.” If we don’t stress experience as well as reason, people will never encounter the reality of our faith, because they simply cannot read our minds.”

Ephesians 4:17-10 - “the futility of their thinking”

“I have seen men who don’t practice holiness start preaching nothing but grace - forgetting all about real change and transformation. I have also seen men who are deeply convicted about unrepented sin preach with anger and venom, forgetting all about forgiveness and mercy. Both camps miss totality of God’s grace, because they do it from only one side. They are led into either misunderstanding God’s forgiveness, which exalts “tolerance”: over transformation, or misunderstanding God’s judgment, which leads only to condemnation. Because their souls have grown weak their minds cannot grasp the full reality of grace that pardons and transforms.

What we do affects how we think. There is no getting around this truth. Right living supports right doctrine; vice versa. We desperately need both.” pg. 111

“Teacher must give their minds to God so that God can give his thoughts to the congregation.” pg. 113

“Do we have the same passion [of a disciplined writer such as Hemingway], the same guardedness, the same zeal, to join the Beautiful Fight of cultivating the mind of Christ? Since, in Christ, such a pursuit is possible, how faithfully are we taking advantage of it? Are we so steeped in cultural amusements that we allow ourselves to get lazy?” pg. 117

“It’s not as if I’m called to find out the will of God and then accomplish it in my own strength. On the contrary, not only does God call me; he also equips me, sustains me, and empowers me. Anything less is a Christless Christianity.” pg. 128

“The real danger is not just the sin [he’s highlighting materialistic and sexual sin here], but the fact that the sin has so intoxicated us that we don’t even know we’re intoxicated. This sin inebriation starts to feel normal.” pg. 144

“Jesus said the problem arises not when our hearts become totally blackened but when our hearts become calloused. That’s what stops us from hearing, seeing, and understanding. A callus builds up over time; it doesn’t appear instantaneously.” pg. 145

“The fear of God is what is left of the storm when you have a safe place to watch it right in the middle of it. And so we get an idea of how we feel both hope and fear at the same time. Hope turns fear into a happy trembling and peaceful wonder; and fear takes everything trivial out of hope and makes it serious. The terrors of God make the pleasures of his people intense. The fireside fellowship is all the sweeter when the storm is howling outside the cottage.”

John Piper, pg. 148

“Here’s the well-known trap: temporal pleasures can easily crowd out eternal ones. We are told to let go of

cheap substitutes for the same reason that our parents told us not to eat a bag of potato chips a half hour before dinner. If we want to truly relish genuine spiritual nutrition, we must be willing to grow just a little bit hungry without immediately running toward a sin substitute.” pg. 151

“One of the great dangers of sin is that it keeps us selfishly preoccupied and shut up to the reality of God’s working in and through our lives. Some people become preoccupied with sin by becoming addicted; they get to the point where they can’t think of anything else. They’re not available to be used by God, because their fight is focused on their own plight - will I or won’t I fall? pg. 167

“God didn’t design us to feel captivated by sobriety, chastity, or financial responsibility; he created us to be captivated by him.” pg. 167

“Public ministry.. doesn’t necessarily require a corresponding life... But private ministry is different. Spontaneous, God-directed private ministry doesn’t usually come to me when I’m not spiritually healthy. By “tuning in” to God, God tunes me in to people, bringing them my way.
pg. 170

“One reason it is so essential for my faith to take root in my behavior is so that those who hear about my faith don’t turn away through my lack of example.” pg. 185

“...when I refuse to face the pain of transformation [the beautiful fight], eventually I must endure the misery of my immaturity.” pg. 199

““Not knowing God puts you at the mercy of your passions - and they have no mercy without God.” John Piper, pg. 199

“Perhaps one of the reasons we so feebly bear the mark of Christ’s promised transforming work in our lives is that we refuse to pay such a high price. We want to be delivered from troubles instead of being delivered from our sin.” pg. 207

“...for while God loves the addict, he hates the addiction and would rather have us suffer than remain slaves to anything but him.” pg. 208 (fear of God, humility--> grace, surrender, perseverance, gratitude) pg. 208

“Grace is opposed to earning, not effort... Some people mistake “letting go and letting God” as a call to simply stop trying. But grace doesn’t remove human effort; it focuses it and empowers it.” pg. 224

“Transformation is never about winning his favor but rather about revealing his presence.” pg. 233

Diane says

Useful "how to" book for getting in touch with the Lord in daily life. We probably need more "how to" approaches. This one focuses first on seeing as the Lord sees (our eyes), hearing the Lord in the interruptions of life (our ears), and includes our mouths, minds, hands and feet, and heart. Author Gary Thomas emphatically makes the point that living for Christ is the only thing worth doing, and IT IS NOT EASY. Many memorable quotes from secular and Scripture.

Jt says

good stuff

Jeremy says

I love Thomas' writing, as it is clearly wrought of his life as much as his study. This book was not exactly what I was expecting, as it focused much more on the first half of the title (the beautiful fight) than the latter. He certainly clearly emphasized the seldom realized Truth that it is only by living in God's presence that we are able to fight and win the beautiful fight, but the practical outworking of that living is not a primary focus of this book.

As I work in full-time ministry, I find most often that people are lost on what abiding, living with God, looks like, as it is so often referenced in church but not described. I would recommend readers going to *WITH* by Skye Jethani, followed by *SACRED RHYTHMS* by Ruth Haley Barton before coming to this work, which focuses primarily on growing into the righteousness imputed to us at salvation as we live our lives in His presence.

Eileen says

this book is exciting and mind blowing. never see how relationship with God can be this closer. transformation is radical and God empowering. this is all Christians should seek and run towards daily.

Demetrius Rogers says

Chapters two and seven were my personal favorites. In chapter two, Thomas confronts the church (particularly those that tend to be more doctrinal) with its need of experiencing God. His observations and assessment was, in my opinion, on point. Thomas notes that some are much too suspicious of anything that appears to be "mystical" because of its connection to the Eastern, non-Christian varieties. However, Thomas stresses that we can consider the term in its classical sense – simply connoting direct experience with God (p. 25). He warns in chapter seven that such skepticism can endanger a believer "into falling into a practical atheism" (p. 89). Such language was refreshingly honest from a man I perceive to be speaking from more

doctrinally emphasized circles.

The book had its very strong moments; however it lacked an overall cohesion and felt like it could have been (or come from) several different works.

Dominique says

Deep dive into the doctrine of ascension, and practical encouragement on sanctification. But all for the purposes of being available to be used by God. Thoroughly refreshed by this book!

Todd Miles says

Thomas takes on the pursuit of being transformed into Christ-likeness. His information is good and helpful with great stories from church history and his own life. As usual, he pays close attention to the early church mystics. He has a great chapter on the ascension of Christ and its significance for the spiritual transformation. That chapter could have been extended (perhaps a book length treatment).
