

Understanding Holiness

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Holiness Matters

Text: 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NIV)

Holiness is high the bar of character that God has set for His people. He calls us to be what He is and that is HOLY. God is set apart far above all of His creation. He calls us to be set apart far and away from anything else in our life, only for Him. It is important to understand that holiness still matters. As a matter of fact, the call to holiness is not a request or a suggestion it is a command.

Holiness is one of the most neglected areas of teaching in our times. The Bible teaches that without holiness, no one will see God. **Hebrews 12:14** In our current Christian climate we are so busy learning to live our “best life now” that we do not even realize that God did not call us to be like our original self, but that God calls us to be just like Him.

Without the help of the Holy Spirit, there is no possible way that you and I can live a holy life. Christ’s work on the cross has made us holy, and we have been made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. We are holy because Jesus has made us holy but we have the responsibility to live holy. We have the joyful responsibility to set ourselves apart for God alone and to live in a way that is pleasing to Him.

The purpose of this study is to bring us all the freedom and determination to say yes to Jesus and no to worldliness and sin. At the end of this study the goal is to have a greater love for God and a greater hatred and intolerance for sin in our own lives.

Holiness concerns God’s expectations for Christians in our character, our inner life and in our behavior. Unfortunately, many believers are confused about this central theme of the word of God.

There are three conflicting and unscriptural views that feeling of many.

- Some see holiness as unattainable no matter what we do.
- Some see holiness as a futile attempt to earn the pleasure and blessings of God.
- Others waffle between legalism or a rigid list of do’s and don’ts and a freedom in Christ that refuses to recognize the boundaries of sin and common courtesy.

The extremes of what some call holiness has hurt many people. For years legalism has ruined people’s passion and led to a hopeless discouragement and people try to obey a never ending and moving target of what is holy and what is not. Some have wandered from true faith in Christ because their “freedom” was really an excuse to delve into worldly practices.

Holiness is about growing in godliness or GOD-LIKE-NESS. It is also about discovering God’s high standards in all areas of our life and living it out. The Bible teaches something called principled holiness rather than a cultural or rules-based holiness. God clearly sets out His ideas in His Word.

Principled holiness takes into account the commands of God and applies Biblical principles when commands do not provide clear direction in our current world. For instance, the Bible does not mention pornography by name but does set forth a principle. **Matthew 5:27-28**

Discovering Holiness – 2 Peter 3:3-11, 1 Timothy 6:6

Holiness concerns both God's **character** and His will for all believers in Jesus. Holiness **demands** standards of Christians that are not even a consideration for those who don't know Christ. The Bible mentions 'holiness', one of God's chief attributes, over six hundred times. Because we are called to "be Holy" we must understand, pursue and practice it. For every Christian holiness is not something that we will just stumble into and suddenly realize that we are holy. Holiness is an intentional, purposeful pursuit of being **like** God.

Holiness is not mere imitation. It is not fake it until you make it. It is **allowing** God to mold us into His likeness. **2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 8:29** While many believe that holiness is an impossible standard, the Bible makes it clear that holiness is attainable, desirable, and God's best for us.

Holiness is all about someone who is committed to living for God but takes into account the **reality** of living in a fallen world. God's command to be holy is made with the understanding of the struggles we will face and our own human frailty. **Psalm 103:13-14** All of us struggle with sin and temptation. Some have set such high "legal" standards of perfection that they can never live up to on their own. Others are so caught up in **grace** and freedom and that because their sin is "under the Blood" it will cover whatever they want to do with no responsibility to be like Jesus.

Through principled holiness, the Holy Spirit addresses **every** aspect of our character. He then calls us to obedience as we walk with Jesus. It is important to grasp that this is a daily walk. With God's commands and His principles, we can be victorious over temptation and please God with our thoughts and actions.

Holiness matters just as much today as it ever has. Living a holy life before others serves as a witness for Christ. As people observe our lives, they can see a **tangible** difference in our lives. The Apostle Peter asks us a question. Because we know that we are living in the last days what sort of people ought we to be? This type of living and behavior is crucial in a day when people are talking about and demanding **tolerance**. Tolerance used to be defined as living peacefully with people of different beliefs, lifestyles and practices. Today people define tolerance as **acceptance**.

Living a holy life means that our life shines as an **example** when people will not receive what we have to say. **Matthew 5:16** We can be salt and light without pushing Jesus on people who do not agree with our view or want to hear about Him. A holy lifestyle **confronts** darkness without violence, anger or fear. It leads by example instead of criticism. God calls us to influence our culture with the salt and light of the Gospel and a Godly life. A holy life provides that avenue.

Holiness is not a destination but a road we travel. This concept has been lost on many. We all want immediate and lasting effortless success. Daily we are being made in the image of Christ. We are called to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:46-48 & 48 (AMP)

Perfection is not instant attainment it is continual growth. **Hebrews 10:14 (AMP), James 1:4, Philippians 3:12, Ephesians 5:27**

➤ The Bible approaches holiness in three facets

- 1) Holiness is separation from the evil system of the world. God calls us to come out from among them and to stand apart from them.
- 2) Holiness is purity before the Lord. Purity comes from not being mixed. This has nothing to do with race. It has everything to do with a mixture in our life of the world and Godliness. First of all, the two do not mix. At the very least mixture dilutes the power of God in our lives. At the most it completely corrupts the work of God in our lives.
- 3) Holiness deals with our living a Godly life.

While the Bible was written at a different time and culture than ours, God's principles, commands and expectations still apply. They are timeless and because they are counter-cultural, they will always counter the culture at any point in history.

The Bible has many clear black and white examples of holiness they show us what is light and what is darkness. When there appears to be no clear distinction, there are always principles that we can apply.

While the call to holiness is challenging and difficult if we will follow His Word we will have a victorious journey.