

# What Does the Bible Say About Holiness?

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Holiness is a word the world has nearly forgotten, and one the church does not say often enough. It sounds old and severe, the concern of monks and hermits rather than ordinary people. But holiness stands at the center of the Christian life. God calls His people holy, commands them to be holy, and warns that without it no one will see Him. So we had better know what it means and how it is to be ours.

## God Is Holy

Holiness begins with God, for He is the measure of it. The angels around His throne cry, *"Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts"* ([Isaiah 6:3](#)). Hannah prayed, *"There is none holy as the LORD"* ([1 Samuel 2:2](#)). He is pure light, with no darkness, no flaw, no sin in Him at all. And because He is holy, He cannot be at peace with evil. When we speak of holiness, we are speaking first of the character of God, and only then of what He asks of us.

## What Holiness Is

The word holy means set apart. A holy thing is one taken out of common use and devoted to God. So to be holy is to be set apart from sin and from the world, and set apart unto God for His purposes. This is why Christians are called saints in the New Testament, which simply means holy ones. It is not a title for a special few who have done great things. It is what every faithful person is, one who has been claimed by God and marked off as His own.

## God's People Are Called to Be Holy

Holiness is not an option for the eager few. It is the calling of every Christian. Peter wrote, *"as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"* ([1 Peter 1:15-16](#)). Holy in all manner of conversation means holy in the whole manner of life, not in one corner of it. Paul said the same, that *"God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness"* ([1 Thessalonians 4:7](#)), and that God chose us *"that we should be holy and without blame before him"* ([Ephesians 1:4](#)). The God who is holy will have a holy people.

## Without Holiness No One Sees God

This is why the matter is so serious. The Hebrew writer puts it plainly: *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"* ([Hebrews 12:14](#)). Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Not the gifted, not the busy, not the religious, not the respectable. Holiness is not an ornament on the Christian life that we may add if we have time. It is the road to the face of God, and there is no other.

## Set Apart From the World

Because holiness means being set apart, it always makes a person different from the world around him. God says, *"come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing"* ([2 Corinthians 6:17](#)). Pure religion is to keep oneself *"unspotted from the world"* ([James 1:27](#)). John warned, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"* ([1 John 2:15](#)), and Paul, *"be not conformed to this world"* ([Romans 12:2](#)). A holiness that looks exactly like the world it lives in is no holiness at all. The set-apart life will always stand out.

## How Holiness Comes, and How We Pursue It

Holiness is both a gift we receive and a work we pursue. We do not make ourselves holy at the start. We are made holy by the blood of Christ, for Paul told the Corinthians, *"ye are washed, but ye are sanctified"* ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#)), and we are *"sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ"* ([Hebrews 10:10](#)). But having been set apart, we are then to live it out. *"let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* ([2 Corinthians 7:1](#)). We are to *"yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness"* ([Romans 6:19](#)). God sets us apart, and then calls us to grow, day by day, into what He has made us.

So do not treat holiness as a word for someone else. It is the calling of every Christian, the road to seeing God, and the steady work of a lifetime. Be set apart. Keep yourself unspotted. Cleanse yourself of what defiles, and reach on toward the likeness of the holy God who claimed you. Follow holiness, for without it no man shall see the Lord.

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*Every Scripture reference in this study links to the King James Version. Open it and read for yourself.*