

## LESSON FIVE A LIFE OF HOLINESS

Jesus' teachings were not always well received by those He lived among because they didn't conform to what they believed and practiced. The people of Jesus' day were often very religious, but He tried to get them to understand that it wasn't about being religious or outwardly doing the right thing, but rather, the Christian life is to be characterized by an inward holiness. This thinking is absolutely necessary if we are to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Author and Bible expositor, J. C. Ryle's significant statement about the need for holiness should cause each of us to examine our own lifestyle. He said, "Sound doctrine is useless if it is not accompanied by a holy life. It is worse than useless; it does positive harm."

Holiness in our lives is a joint process with God actively working in us as we responsibly put forth effort on our part. As you will see in our study, there is no easy way to holiness and yet, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, personal holiness must be our personal pursuit.

### **Day One – The Need for Holiness**

1. Holiness is not a word commonly used today. In order to gain a right understanding of the word, write the definition for holy and/or holiness from Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary or from a Greek New Testament dictionary.

a. Based on this definition, do you see any evidence of holiness in your own life? Please explain.

2. What do you learn about holiness from 1 Peter 1:15-16?

3. In order for us to even begin to truly understand what it means to be holy, we must first see ourselves for who we really are. Record what you learn from Romans 3:10-18, 23.

a. The verses above are not for our condemnation, but rather that we might see our great need for a Savior. Read John 3:16-21 and state in your own words what you learn.

4. Record the beautiful promise found in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and write a prayer of thanksgiving unto Him!

We must understand that apart from God, it is impossible to live a life of holiness. It is only in accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior that the Holy Spirit comes and lives within us giving us the power to live a life pleasing to Him. *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”* Titus 3:5

## Day Two — Self Righteousness

There is a great difference between walking in holiness and being religious, therefore we need to understand why Jesus spoke about these things to His disciples.

*Note: Ritual external cleansing to the Pharisees was a symbol of internal purity. It is important to note that many of these observances were traditions that the Pharisees and the elders had instituted themselves so that they might appear righteous before the eyes of the people.*

1. Read Matthew 15:1-20 and answer the following questions.

a. What were the scribes and Pharisees accusing the disciples of according to verse 2?

b. Jesus is not timid when He responds to the Pharisees and scribes. Explain His response in verses 3-7.

c. What did Jesus say about them in verses 8 and 9?

2. Jesus gave a similar teaching in Mark 7:1-23. Please read it and answer the following questions.

a. What word is repeated in verses 2, 15, 18, 23?

b. Look at the 1828 Webster's Dictionary to find the definition of defile and record it below.

c. We may or may not be guilty of the things that the scribes and Pharisees were doing, but we can have the same mind-set that they did. How do the verses in Mark 7:14-20 help you to understand what Jesus was trying to convey to them?

d. According to verses 21-22, what specific things are mentioned that defile us?

3. What applications or lessons do you find for yourself in Mark 7:1-23?

4. We, like the Pharisees, might take offense at Jesus' teaching on this subject. Read the following scriptures and record the insight you gain of what Jesus taught about the deceitfulness of the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9-10

Matthew 12:34b-35

5. What types of things might we practice today that could be compared to attempting to look holy or of being self-righteous?

a. Why do we do these things?

b. How does Micah 6:6-8 help you better understand why Jesus gave the rebuke that He did in Mark 7? What else does He desire from us?

6. Jesus is always so good at getting to the heart of the matter to teach us. Read Luke 18:9-14 and answer the following questions.

a. What type of people did Jesus address according to verse nine?

b. Compare the Pharisee and the tax collector. What do you learn about them?

Pharisee

Tax Collector

c. Record Jesus' conclusion about these men in verse 14.

d. How do the following scriptures help explain the error of the Pharisee's attitude?

Proverbs 16:2, 25

Proverbs 30:12

7. Those who are self-righteous are prideful and self-deceived. The Bible speaks strongly on both subjects. What do you glean from the scriptures below?

Proverbs 16:18

Galatians 6:3

*"Pride must die in you or nothing of heaven can live in you." Andrew Murray*

8. It is always important for us to not just read the teachings of Jesus, but to learn what application there is for us in it. As we conclude this day, read Proverbs 4:23. What application do you find for your life as it relates to today's study?

*The scribes and Pharisees were guilty of trying to look holy and of doing things that outwardly made them appear religious and spiritual to others. Jesus' teachings focused on conversion of the heart rather than on external behaviors. Let us heed the exhortation and rebuke given by Jesus so that we aren't guilty of those same things in our own lives!*

## Day Three — Hypocrisy

1. When Jesus spoke, He was often blunt and to the point, as we read in Mark 7. Looking again at this chapter, what does Jesus specifically say that the Pharisees and scribes are guilty of in verse 6?
  
2. In our attempts to look holy, we may find ourselves guilty of hypocrisy as well. Using the 1828 Webster's dictionary, define hypocrisy.
  
3. Read Matthew 23:1-36 to see some examples of hypocrisy and the ugliness of it by answering the following questions.
  - a. What repeated phrase is said to the hypocrite by Jesus? Write what you think this means. (Hint: vs.13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29)
  
  - b. List the things the hypocrite is guilty of.
  
  - c. Take time to reflect on these verses and on your own life. Are there ways that you too might be guilty of hypocrisy, just like these Pharisees were? Record your thoughts below.

d. Carefully read verses 25-28 and record what important principle or truth Jesus is trying to teach them.

4. Based on what you studied so far, is there an attitude or action in your life that needs to change? Please explain.

5. There are wrong and right motives for desiring to be holy. As you read the following verses, write down what our **motivation** ought to be for holy living.

2 Corinthians 5:9

1 Peter 1:15-17

2 Peter 3:10-12

*“Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without  
which no one will see the Lord.”  
Hebrews 12:14*



## Day Four – Practical Holiness

The subject of holiness was first spoken of by God Himself in the Old Testament in Leviticus 11:44, “...*you shall therefore consecrate yourselves and you shall be holy...*”.

God gave specific instructions to Moses and Aaron concerning holiness for their own lives, as well as instruction for the people. Unfortunately, it was after this that many other manmade rules and rituals developed and were practiced as they thought it would help them to be holy. This is exactly what Jesus was addressing in the verses that we previously studied.

Although we no longer are required to follow the Old Testament law, we still have instructions in the New Testament which we are to appropriate in our own lives as they concern the topic of holiness.

The process whereby we become holy is called sanctification. Sanctification is an ongoing process in which we become more and more like God as we grow in our understanding of His Word and our relationship with Him. In today’s lesson, we will focus on what practical holiness should look like.

1. In John 17:17, Jesus prayed to the Father and said, “*Sanctify them by Your truth.*” How does God’s Word *sanctify* you or help make you grow in holiness? Use the following verses to help you answer this question.

Psalm 119:9-11

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Hebrews 4:12

The Word of God truly transforms us from the inside out. As we study and memorize it, we begin to understand what walking in holiness really means. Our desires change and what we once thought about, did or planned, thankfully is quite different. However, we will still struggle with unholy desires and deeds until the day we die.

2. Holy living should be our goal because it fits our true identity as people of God. We are to be dedicated to living a holy life. As the Holy Spirit does His inward spiritual work, we also have a responsibility and obligation to do our part in sanctification. What practical things do these verses teach us about how to do this?

2 Corinthians 7:1

Ephesians 4:22-32

Colossians 3:12-17

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

a. Which one of the above verses spoke to you the most and why?

b. What is one thing you can do to apply this to your life?

*As we are being sanctified (made holy) we are being separated from our old ways and brought closer to God so that we can become more like Him.*

3. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23. How does this verse help you better understand how the sanctification process works and how it is to affect our lives?

4. Take a few moments to think about your life, what you do, what you look at, what you watch, what you read, etc. Record below the area(s) in your life that still need change.

a. What do you learn from the following verses that you can apply to your life in order to walk in holiness?

Romans 12:1-2

Ephesians 4:22-23

5. As we end this week's lesson, let's do a heart check! Jesus taught well that there is a need for us to pay attention to the cleansing of our hearts. True godliness will be far from us until we realize that to be near to God, we must have a pure heart. Psalm 51:10 says, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."*

Write a prayer to the Lord below expressing your heart. Include those areas that are yet impure in your life and ask Him to help you walk in holiness before Him.

*"Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee."  
Frances Ridley Havergal*



