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# In Search of Holiness

by David K. Bernard and Loretta A. Bernard

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# Holiness: An Introduction

*Follow peace with all men, and holiness,  
without which no man shall see the Lord  
(Hebrews 12:14).*

**Holiness defined.** Holiness is one of God's basic characteristics. In reference to Him, the word denotes absolute perfection and purity. Only God is holy in Himself. When the word is applied to persons or objects, it refers to what has been separated or set apart unto God. For the Old Testament Hebrews, holiness included both the negative concept of "separation" and the positive concept of "dedication." For born-again Christians it specifically means separation from sin and the world and dedication to God and His will. Since we have received the Holy Spirit of God, we have received power over sin, disease, and the devil (Mark 16:15-18). This power over sin enables us to become witnesses that we have indeed been

born again (Acts 1:8). We are able to say, “God has saved me from sin. He has brought me out of a life of sin.”

**We must pursue holiness in order to see the Lord.** This statement, found in Hebrews 12:14, is as true as John 3:3, which says, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” After the new birth, a conflict arises between the old lifestyle (the way of the flesh) and the new (the way of the Spirit). This battle is a battle for holiness, and by God’s grace we can and must win it.

**The need for separation.** God is holy and commands His people to be like Him (I Peter 1:15-16). Beginning with the sin of Adam and Eve, sin has separated humans from a holy God. By paying the penalty for our sins, Christ has restored the broken fellowship; but if we are to have communion with God, we must separate ourselves from the old life of sin. The choice is either separation from God or separation from sin. There are only two families—the family of God and the family of Satan, who is the god of this world system (I John 3:10; II Corinthians 4:4). There is no neutral ground. These two families are distinct and separate. One is a holy family—a holy priesthood (I Peter 2:9). The other is an unholy family. The call for separation from this unholy world is clear and explicit. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (II Corinthians 6:17).

**A living sacrifice.** “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1-2). Holiness includes a sacrifice of our desires and our will. We must present ourselves in a man-

ner that is acceptable to God. It is our reasonable duty to do so. We should act in a way that is acceptable to God, regardless of the sacrifice.

**Holiness is imparted by the Holy Spirit.** We can only be holy by God's grace. Sanctification, or separation from sin, begins with the hearing of the gospel and continues through faith, repentance, and water baptism in Jesus' name; but it is accomplished primarily by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (I Peter 1:2). Under the new covenant, God does not write His laws on tables of stone. But God always has laws; even in the Garden of Eden He had a law. Today God writes His laws on our hearts through faith by the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 10:15-17). The Holy Spirit imparts holiness to us, transforming us from the inside out.

**Holiness is taught by the Bible.** The Bible does not give specific answers to the countless situations that may face an individual. That is the purpose of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the ministry. The Bible does give basic guidelines that apply to men and women of all cultures, times, and situations. The Bible tells us what God likes and what He dislikes. It teaches us about the practices and attitudes that God accepts and those He expects of His people.

**Holiness is taught by Spirit-filled pastors and teachers.** God has given the church pastors and teachers for the perfecting, or equipping, of the saints so that the church can grow to maturity (Ephesians 4:11-15). Pastors and teachers proclaim and explain God's message so that believers can understand and obey scriptural teaching.

**Holiness is taught directly by the Spirit within us.** Jesus said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy