

SET APART FOR CHRIST



Joel Beeke

Course SAC

(Complete)

Name: _____ Student ID: _____ Date: _____

Instructions for this course

The reading material for this course is *Holiness* by Joel Beeke, which is included in this study guide. All materials you need to take this course are included in this study guide, except for a Bible and answer sheets.

Before each lesson: pray for God to give a teachable heart and understanding. Begin the lesson by reading the related section in this study guide.



Answer the questions for the corresponding lesson in this study guide.

Use the required answer sheet format, putting your name and course information on each sheet (sample after the Table of Contents). Use any standard note paper (or the answer booklets if provided).

Skip a line between answers.

Always use your own words in your answers.

Try to be as clear and concise as possible.

Please do not rush! Meditate on what God wants you to learn.

Don't go to the next question until completing the current one.

If, and only if, you are taking the course as correspondence study (with written feedback from others):

After completing all the lessons, send the completed answer sheets to your course coordinator.

Only mail your answers sheets, not other materials.

All sent answers are handled confidentially.

Label the envelope's lower left with: student ID, course, and lesson numbers.



Continue taking the course until all lessons are completed.

Two months are allotted for course completion. Extensions may be granted upon request.



Your answer sheets are returned to you after review.

Keep all materials and returned answers together for future reference.

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Sample Answer Sheet

Your name Student ID SAC
Course Lesson Date
number number

Question Answer

skip a line between questions

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SET APART FOR CHRIST

“But 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

Lesson One **Holiness Defined**

A. Introduction

There is a simple yet profound word that occurs nine hundred times in the Bible. You see it first in Genesis, as we are informed how God created heaven and earth. You see it last in the Bible’s final chapter, where we are told about God’s creation of a new heaven and a new earth. One entire book, Leviticus, is devoted to the subject of this word. Yet this word is strangely overlooked today. Though it describes the uniqueness of God and the calling of all His children, it is largely ignored.

This short yet awesome word is *holy*. Among other words, *saint*, *sanctify*, and *sanctification* are obtained from its root. What does *holy*, *holiness* mean? What is the scriptural *call* to holiness? How must holiness be practiced? Why does the church so desperately need holiness in our day?

Let’s divide our subject into five sections:

- 1) What holiness is: Purging misconceptions
- 2) Holiness in Scripture: Set apart
- 3) Holiness in theology: Sanctification
- 4) Holiness in history: The Church’s understanding
- 5) Holiness in practice today: The Church’s and our greatest need.

B. What Holiness Is: Purging Misconceptions

Holy and *holiness* are often misunderstood. To some, the word *holy* seems archaic; they envision “outdated backwardness.” For others, holiness speaks of moralistic legalism; that is, holiness demands a lengthy list of prohibitions. From person to person, group to group, this list will vary, but “a list there shall be” wherever holiness is! For still others, holiness is associated with a negative “holier than thou” attitude. They view it as a despised tool with which some try to implement their own proud superiority. Finally, for some holiness spells unattainable perfection. They view holiness as a discouraging doctrine that addresses nothing but sin and demands complete perfection.

Though there are fragments of truth in certain aspects of these conceptions, all of these ideas miss the true concept of holiness. According to original word usage, holiness in all its forms (that is, when applied to any person, place, occasion, or object) means to be set apart from common secular use for the purpose of being devoted to God.

Holiness means to be set apart. But what does “set apart” mean? Two things. The negative sense of set apart is holiness’ call to separate from sin. The positive sense of set apart is holiness’ call to be separated unto God for His holy use. These two concepts—separation from sin and separation unto God—comprise holiness. When combined, these two concepts make holiness very complete. In fact, holiness covers all of life. Everything, Paul¹ tells us, is to be sanctified: “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1Ti 4:4-5).

The call to holiness is an absolute, exclusive call. God never calls us to give Him “just a piece” of our hearts. The call to holiness is a call for our whole heart: “My son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26). “Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart” (Psa 119:2).

The call to holiness is holistic.² That means our whole life is involved: soul and body, for time and eternity—and in every sphere of life in which we are called to move: in privacy with God, in the confidentiality of our homes, in the competition of occupational work, in the pleasures of social friendship, as well as in Sunday worship. The call to holiness is a seven-day-per-week, 365-day-per-year call. It includes all purity and good; as such, the call to holiness belongs to the core of religious faith and practice.

¹ **Paul** – the apostle Paul, writer of most of the New Testament letters and the apostle to the Gentiles (2Ti 1:11).

² **holistic** – concerned with the whole, rather than analysis or separation into parts.

So you can see how wrong the misconceptions of “backwardness, legalism, and superiority” are as regards holiness. Holiness is never spelled out in Scripture as a pharisaical³ concept with an endless list of do’s and don’ts combined with a self-righteous attitude. Rather, holiness is a whole-life commitment to be set apart to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Holiness is not a list, but a lifestyle. Holiness means to live Godward. Holiness is religion par excellence. It is relationship with God—covenant⁴ relationship to be sure—worked out by grace in faith and practice throughout every sphere of life. This will become crystal clear as we examine Scripture’s concept of holiness.

C. Holiness in Scripture: Set Apart

1. The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, holiness is spoken of primarily in relation to God. “The LORD our God is holy” (Psa 99:9). Holiness is God’s very nature, the very foundation of His being. Thrice holy, intensely holy is the Lord (Isa 6:3). God *is* Holiness. Holiness is God’s permanent crown. It is the “shining of all His perfections,” as the Puritans⁵ used to say. Holiness is the backdrop for all else the Bible declares about God.

The Old Testament concept of divine holiness presents three main truths about God. *First*, it denotes the separateness or “otherness” of God from all His creation. The most common Hebrew word for holy, *qados*, has as its most fundamental meaning to be separate or apart. God is above and beyond all His creation; nothing is like Him. “To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?” (Isa 40:18). “The LORD he is God; there is none else beside him” (Deu 4:35,39; 1Ki 8:60; Isa 45:5-6, 14, 18, 21-22; 46:9; Joel 2:27).

Secondly, it denotes God’s total “apartness” from all that is unclean or evil. God is moral perfection. His holiness is total righteousness and purity (Isa 5:16). His eyes are too pure to accept evil (Hab 1:13).

Thirdly, due to God’s being set apart by nature and from all sin, He is unapproachable by sinners apart from holy sacrifice (Lev 17:11; Heb 9:22). Only with

³ **pharisaical** – pertaining to the Pharisees, an ancient Jewish sect noted for strict obedience to Jewish traditions, and which came to be proud of their religion as compared to others.

⁴ **covenant** – a solemn promise or oath of God to man.

⁵ **Puritans** – name applied to English Protestants of the 16th century who sought to “purify,” or reform, the Church of England under Elizabeth I. They were among the best teachers of Scripture in Church history and had great theological and practical impact on 16th and 17th century England and America. See *A Puritan Theology* from Reformation Heritage Books and “The Story of the Puritans” from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

bloody, life-giving sacrifice can the holy God justly dwell among sinners (for “the wages of sin is death,” Rom 6:23)—and that for Christ’s sake, the Sacrifice that was to come. In and through the coming Messiah, the unique and perfect God of Israel can live among His chosen people: “I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee” (Hos 11:9). This apparent contradiction—Holy One in your midst—is explainable only through Jesus Christ, God’s appointed sacrifice, for the Holy One sees only a perfect Christ when He looks upon His own (*see* Heidelberg Catechism,⁶ Q.60).

From this threefold concept of God as the Holy One, it naturally follows that everything associated with God must also be holy. Hence, God’s instituted sabbath is “a holy sabbath” (Exo 16:23); His home is the “holy heaven” (Psa 20:6); He sits on a “holy throne” (Psa 47:8); Zion is His “holy mountain” (Psa 2:6); His very Name is holy (Exo 20:7). So, too, His church is called to be a “holy assembly” (Exo 12:16); and His covenant people a “holy people.” “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deu 7:6).

Israel, God’s covenant people, is called to holiness by means of holy separation from sin (Deu 7:6), holy devotion to God (Lev 11:44), holy worship of God (*see* most of Leviticus), and inner holiness or cleansing (Lev 16:30; Psa 24:3-4).

2. The New Testament

The New Testament underscores all the Old Testament teaches on holiness. It develops a greater emphasis, however, on the themes of holy Trinity and holy saints. Now holiness is often ascribed to each Person of the Godhead. The God of love is the Holy Father (Joh 17:11); Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God (Mar 1:24; Joh 6:69); and the Spirit of God is named “Holy” ninety-one times!

In terms of saints, the New Testament highlights three themes. *First*, it focuses on the moral dimension of holiness, inward rather than outward holiness. Basic to this is the witness of Jesus Himself, Who as the Son of man lived out a life of complete holiness, for He “committed no sin; nor was any deceit found in his mouth” (1Pe 2:22). He is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26). As a result of His redemptive work,⁷ believers in Him are declared righteous and enter into holiness: “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10).

⁶ **Heidelberg Catechism** (1563) – one of the most influential of the Reformed catechisms. A catechism is a series of questions and answers for use in teaching doctrine.

⁷ **redemptive work** – deliverance of God’s elect from a state of sin into a state of salvation by the means and merit of the ransom paid by Christ on their behalf at the cross of Calvary.

Secondly, the New Testament emphasizes the standard of holiness among believers. Holiness belongs to all true followers of Christ. A common term for all believers is holy ones (*hagioi*), usually translated “saints.” “Saints,” therefore, does not refer to persons who have advanced in holiness, but to the typical believer, who is holy in Christ (1Co 1:30). Holiness is an internal reality for all who are united with Christ. Even though a child of God feels often how unholy he is in himself and would not dare to call himself a “saint,” God views all His elect as holy and saintly in and through the perfect active and passive obedience⁸ of His well-beloved Son. For Christ’s sake, their state is holy before God, and their condition is made holy by the indwelling Spirit.

Thirdly, the New Testament views holiness as transforming the total person: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Th 5:23). Though this “whole holiness” falls beyond the reach of the believer in this life, it nevertheless remains his goal and prayer. He delights to pursue holiness and seeks to “perfect holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1).

Study Questions Lesson One

Holiness Defined

Please read sections A, B, and C before answering these questions.

Very Important Note: We ask you to always use your own words in your answers. The answers to most questions are found in the reading text, but please do not merely quote the text for your answer. Rather, read what the text says, think about the meaning of what it says, and summarize its meaning in your own words for your answer. In this way, you will learn much more than simply a “search, find, quote” method for answering the questions.

What holiness is (B)

1. a. Describe some of the misconceptions about holiness.
b. *Making It Personal* Which of these misconceptions have you had?
2. a. What does the true concept of holiness imply?
b. How is someone set apart negatively?
c. How is someone set apart positively?
3. Describe how holiness is holistic. *Use Psalm 119:2 in your answer.*

⁸ **active and passive obedience** – Christ’s *active* obedience was His perfect fulfillment of the Law during His life on earth. His *passive* obedience was His perfect submission to the will of the Father in His death on the cross.

4. How is biblical holiness different from lists of do's and don'ts with a self-righteous attitude.

Holiness in Scripture (C)

The Old Testament (1)

5.
 - a. In what way is God said to be separate from His creation?
 - b. Why is God unapproachable by sinners?
 - c. What must be provided in order for the holy God to dwell among sinners?
 - d. Why is this necessary?
6.
 - a. What does God see when He looks upon His children?
 - b. *Making It Personal* What is your understanding about why this is so?

The New Testament (2)

7. Describe the moral dimension of holiness.
8.
 - a. Who are "saints"?
 - b. How is holiness an internal reality for saints?
9. What is the meaning of 1 Thessalonians 5:23?

Lesson Two

Holiness in Theology and History

D. Holiness in Theology: Sanctification

With scriptural data in hand, we are able to draw a general theology of holiness. The resulting doctrine is called sanctification. We may organize the nature of sanctification under two subheads.

1. Status conferred by Christ's righteousness

The New Testament informs us that every believer is sanctified in principle by the sacrifice of Christ: "We are sanctified" (Heb 10:10). Christ is our sanctification (1Co 1:30), and the living Church is sanctified (Eph 5:25-26). The believer's status before God is one of sanctity in Christ, even when his character has not yet perfected holiness (1Co 1:2; cf. 1Pe 1:1-2; Heb 2:11; 9:13-14; 10:14, 29; 13:12).

2. Process pursued by Christ's application

Despite a sanctified status, the true Christian has not arrived to a wholly sanctified condition. He must *strive* for holiness (Heb 12:14). Growth in holiness should

follow regeneration⁹ (Eph 1:4; Phi 3:12). Paul prays that the Thessalonians be sanctified wholly as something still to be accomplished (1Th 5:23).

True believer, sanctification is both something you have in Christ before God, and something you must strive for in the strength of Christ. Your state in holiness is given to you; your condition in holiness, you must pursue. Through Christ you are made holy in your standing before God, and through Christ you are called to reflect that standing by being holy in daily life. You are called to be in lifestyle what you already are in principle by grace.

What then must you actually pursue? Three things.

1. *Conformity to the character of God the Father.* God says, “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1Pe 1:16). Seek to reflect your Father in heaven in righteousness, holiness, and honesty. In the Spirit, strive to think God’s thoughts after Him (via His Word), and to live and act as God Himself would have you do.

2. *Conformity to the image of Christ.* Of course you cannot be holy in your strength. All our righteousness is filthy rags (Isa 64:6). Do not aim for conformity to Christ as a condition of salvation, but as a *fruit* of salvation received by faith. Look to Christ for holiness. As John Calvin (1509-1564) would say: Set Christ before you as the mirror of sanctification, and seek grace to mirror yourself in His image. Ask in each situation, “What would Christ think, say, and do?” And then trust Him for holiness. He won’t disappoint you (Jam 1:2-7).

3. *Conformity to the mind of the Spirit.* The Holy Spirit was sent to conform your mind to His mind (1Co 2). He was sent to make sinners holy. Lean hard upon Him. How does the Spirit work holiness? \

First, He shows you your need for holiness through conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Joh 16:8).

Secondly, He plants desire for holiness. His convicting work never leads to despair, but always to sanctification in Christ.

Thirdly, He provides strength to live a holy life. Live by the Spirit, and you will not selfishly seek the desires of your sinful nature (Gal 5:16). Live by the Spirit—that’s the key. And that means to live in obedience to and dependence on the Spirit.

Fourthly, through humble intake of Scripture and exhaling of prayer, the Spirit establishes an ongoing realization that holiness remains necessary a) for being worthy of God and His kingdom (1Th 2:12; Eph 4:1; Col 1:10; Phi 1:27), b) for fitness for service (1Co 9:24-25; Phi 3:13), and c) for striving for personal devotion

⁹ **regeneration** – God’s act of creating spiritual life in a sinner by the Holy Spirit’s power; to be “born again” (Joh 3:3).

of the whole life to God (like the apostle Paul, who writes as a willing “slave”—in short, as a man in love with his God).

There is room for unending growth in sanctification because Christ’s fullness is infinite. Jesus is the bottomless well of salvation. You can’t go to Him too much for holiness, for He is Holiness par excellence. He is it: He lived it; He earned and deserves it; and He sends His Spirit to apply it. “Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:11). After all, isn’t this what holiness is all about? He must increase; I must decrease (Joh 3:30)—that is a short summary of sanctification.

Oh, what a great blessing it is, as we live and walk amid the crowds of this world, to be overwhelmed in our pursuit of sanctification with this truth: “I am nothing. Christ is everything!” Then our prayer shall be: Gracious God, conform us to Thy character, to the image of Christ, to the mind of the Spirit. Help us to see our need for holiness, to desire holiness, to pursue holiness.

E. Holiness in History: The Church’s Understanding

So rich a theme as holiness has yielded a variety of emphases in church history. For the apostolic Church (first century), the essence of holiness was conformity to Christ. Christlike purity was the accented goal. In the patristic Church (that is, early Church Fathers, ~AD 150-300), holiness was largely viewed as withdrawal from the contaminations of society.

1. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox

As the ancient church moved into the medieval era (AD 475-1450), three major Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox perceptions of holiness evolved.

a. *Ascetic*.¹⁰ In this tradition, holiness was pursued by forsaking the world literally (for example, abandoning a job, marriage, worldly goods) and by engaging extensively in prayer vigils, fasting, and self-denial (medieval asceticism is a hardening of the patristic Church’s emphasis). Only those who reached this “high level” of holiness were regarded worthy to be reckoned as saints. Being a “saint” was not for all Christians, but was reserved largely for the ascetics. Hence, a double standard evolved: “saintliness” came to be applied only to the “religious” person (that is, the priest, monk, nun), whereas a “lower attainment” of holiness, necessitated by remaining in the world, was tolerated in the “ordinary” Christian.

The problems with asceticism are many. Briefly, the ascetic forgets that the Christian must remain *in* the world, but not be *of* it. Also, he ignores that the ma-

¹⁰ **Ascetic** – involving extreme denial of worldly comforts for religious benefit.

major problem with the world is his own heart's worldliness, which he brings with him into a monastery setting. Finally, unusual forms of self-denial that serve no worthy purpose in themselves, tend to promote an attitude of salvation by works rather than by grace.

b. *Mystical*. According to the medieval mystics,¹¹ holiness was not to be attained so much by fleeing the world as by rising above it. Holiness could be viewed as a ladder with various stages of spiritual absorption into God, such as purgation,¹² illumination,¹³ and contemplation.

The danger of this view is twofold: Mysticism tends to lose sight of Scripture as the touchstone for all faith and practice, and it is prone to forget the calling of the Christian to be salt in the earth and light on the hill (Mat 5:13-16).

c. *Sacramental*.¹⁴ This form of holiness was available to all, since sanctification was automatically regarded as being imparted when the mass' wafer¹⁵ was lifted by the priest. Regardless of personal lifestyle, anyone who witnessed this event received, according to Roman Catholicism, an "objective fusion of holiness" without any of the struggle involved in the ascetic and mystical views of holiness. The danger here is obvious: The sacrament tends to replace the need for the direct, personal work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a sinner.

2. Protestantism

Classical Protestantism (sixteenth century) was largely a movement away from ascetic, mystical, and sacramental views of holiness to a more biblical perspective.

Martin Luther (1483-1546), for example, successfully tore down the double standard of holiness between "the religious" and "the secular," the clergy and the laity. All believers are called to holiness in equal measure, hence Luther's emphasis on the "priesthood of all believers" (*see* 1Pe 2:9). Holiness is the normal calling for all believers, springing from an inward attitude toward all the affairs of the

¹¹ **mystics** – those who believe in and practice seeking a direct knowledge of and personal experience with God through spiritual union with Him.

¹² **purgation** – the act of cleansing by carrying off all impurity.

¹³ **illumination** – direct subjective revelation from God apart from Scripture. This practice has been greatly abused as individuals fail to discern between impressions by the Spirit and emotions triggered by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

¹⁴ **sacramental** – pertaining to the sacraments, the holy ordinances instituted by Christ. The Bible teaches there are two ordinances instituted by Christ in the New Testament for remembering Him: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Roman Catholic Church erroneously believes its seven sacraments are meritorious for earning God's favor.

¹⁵ **mass' wafer** – the Eucharist, the bread used in the Roman Catholic Church during the Lord's Supper, believed to be transformed into the actual body of Christ.

outside world. Believers must be transformed into godly living by the Word and the Spirit.

While underscoring Luther's emphases, Calvin stressed holiness as a lifestyle of gratitude, which reflected self-discipline and obedience to the moral law as the core of biblical ethics (Calvin's view is reflected in the Heidelberg Catechism, which places a detailed consideration of the law under the heading of "gratitude").

This Calvinian emphasis was continued in the seventeenth century by the Scottish Presbyterians, English Puritans, Dutch Second Reformation theologians, and German Pietists (though a more significant portion of the latter inclined to unbiblical forms of mysticism). These groups also accented the divine will, personally revealed as "leading of the Spirit," and the power to fulfil it in Christ's strength, as a hallmark of holiness. In sum, their concept of holiness may be termed as a merging of the disciplinary and experimental¹⁶ elements that flow out of dependency upon the Word and Spirit.

From time to time, perfectionist views of holiness have also surfaced (for example, Wesley), which generally stress "entire sanctification" by faith through the complete removal of sin and the gift of perfect love. The apostle John contradicts perfectionism plainly in I John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

So long as he is "in this body," the true believer continues to be tempted and at times to fall, growing more sensitive to sin the closer he lives to God. But he will continue to repent and seek forgiveness by grace, ever desiring to be further conformed to Christ's image by the Spirit. Though he detests his lack of holiness, he yearns to practice it.

Study Questions Lesson Two ***Holiness in Theology and History***

Please read sections D and E before answering these questions. Always use your own words, in order to indicate your understanding of what you have read.

Holiness in theology (D)

Status conferred by Christ's merits (1)

1. How is a believer said to be holy now, even though he still sins?

Process pursued by Christ's application (2)

2. Regarding holiness, contrast the believer's state and condition.
3. a. How is the Christian conformed to the character of God the Father?

¹⁶ **experimental** – practical; manifest in experience.

- b. How is the Christian's growth in holiness connected to salvation?
- 4. How does the Holy Spirit support the Christian's growing in holiness?
- 5. a. What is a "short summary" of sanctification?
- b. Explain what this means.

Holiness in history (E)

Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox (1)

- 6. a. Describe the "ascetic" tradition for holiness.
- b. What problems does it have?
- 7. a. Describe the "mystical" tradition for holiness.
- b. What problems does it have?
- 8. a. Describe the "sacramental" tradition for holiness.
- b. What problems does it have?

Protestantism (2)

- 9. Describe what each of the following emphasized regarding holiness.
- a. Luther
- b. Calvin

Lesson Three

Holiness in Practice

F. Holiness in Practice Today:

The Church's and Our Greatest Need

1. Its necessity and motivations

These are at least ten motivations for God's people to pursue holiness.

a. *God has called you to holiness.* "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1Th 4:7). Whatever God calls us to, is necessary. His call itself should motivate us to seek and practice holiness.

b. *Holiness evidences your justification¹⁷ and election.¹⁸* Sanctification is the inevitable outgrowth of justification (1Co 6:11). The two may be distinguished,

¹⁷ **justification** – Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein He pardons all our sins (Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7), and accepts us as righteous in His sight (2Co 5:21) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (Rom 5:19), and received by faith alone (Gal 2:16; Phi

but never separated. In and through Christ, justification gives God's child the title for heaven and the boldness to enter; sanctification gives him the fitness for heaven and the preparation necessary to enjoy it.

Election too is inseparable from holiness: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit" (2Th 2:13). From God's side, election is known first, for it is the cause of our salvation, just as sanctification is the evidence of our salvation. From our side, however, election is known last, for sanctification is the mark of Christ's elect sheep. That's why election is always a comforting doctrine for the Church, for it is the sure resting-ground that explains the grace of God working within them. No wonder our Reformed forebears called election the "comfort of the Church"!

That's also why Calvin so boldly proclaimed that election should discourage none, for the believer receives comfort from it, and the unbeliever is not called to consider it; rather, he is called to repentance.¹⁹ Whoever is discouraged by election, the Reformers so clearly taught us, is falling prey to a satanic misuse of this precious, encouraging doctrine.

c. *Without holiness, all things are defiled.* "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure" (Ti 1:15). Through Christ, God sanctifies His child and makes his prayers and thanksgivings acceptable.

d. *Holiness improves your spiritual health.* As John Flavel (1628-1691) said, "What health is to the heart, holiness is to the soul." Moreover, this spiritual health of holiness God generally works through discipline. Through chastisement, child of God, you are profitably exercised by the Father (Heb 12:11), which results in genuine holiness, without which you cannot see the Lord (v. 14). Through Christ's justifying power, you receive a clean slate before God; through His sanctifying power, a clear conscience. Both are critical for spiritual health.

e. *Holiness fosters assurance.* "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Mat 7:16). All Reformed theologians are agreed that most of the forms of assurance experienced by true believers—especially daily assurance—are reached gradually in the

3:9). (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 32) Also see Free Grace Broadcaster 187, *Justification*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁸ **election** – God having, out of His good pleasure from all eternity, elected [i.e., chosen] some to everlasting life (2Th 2:13), entered into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the state of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer (Rom 5:21). (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 19) See also *Whitefield's Letter to Wesley on Election* by George Whitefield (1714-1770), available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁹ See "What If I'm Not Elect?" by Walter Marshall (1628-1680) and "Repentance" by A. W. Pink (1886-1952), both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

path of sanctification through careful cultivation of God's Word, the means of grace,²⁰ and corresponding obedience.

The way to lose a daily sense of assurance is to daily forego the pursuit of holiness. Believers who live sloppily (i.e., treat sin lightly or neglect daily devotions and study of the Word) or inactively (that is, don't pursue holiness, but assume that nothing can be done in the area of sanctification—as if holiness were something outside of us, except on rare occasions when something very special “happens” inside) are courting a recipe for daily spiritual darkness, deadness, and fruitlessness.

The godly farmer who plows his field, sows seed, fertilizes, and cultivates, is acutely aware that in the final analysis he is utterly dependent on forces outside of himself. He knows he can't cause the seed to germinate, the rain to fall, the sun to shine. But he pursues his task with diligence anyhow, both looking to God for blessing and knowing that if he doesn't fertilize and cultivate the sown seed, his crop will be small at best!

Similarly, the believer who doesn't pursue holiness with diligence will neither have much assurance nor be obeying Peter's call to seek it (2Pe 1:10).

f. *Holiness is essential for effective service to God.* Paul joins sanctification and usefulness together: “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet [fit] for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work” (2Ti 2:21).

g. *Holiness makes you resemble God.* As Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686) notes, “We must try to be like God in sanctity. It is a clear glass in which we can see a face; it is a holy heart in which something of God can be seen.”

h. *The God you love, loves holiness.* Hence the intensity of His discipline! William Gurnall (1617-1679) says it best, “God would not rub so hard if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures. God loves purity so well, He had rather see a hole than a spot in His child's garments.”

i. *Holiness preserves your honesty.* It saves you from much hypocrisy, from resorting to a “Sunday only” Christianity. It gives vitality, purpose, meaning, and direction to daily living.

j. *Holiness fits you for heaven.* “Follow [literally: pursue]...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). As John Owen writes (1616-1683),

²⁰ **means of grace** – instruments that God is pleased to use in order to accomplish salvation and sanctification in the hearts of men: the preaching of the Word, Bible reading and study, prayer, baptism, the Lord's Supper, family worship, singing, and godly fellowship with believers.

There is no imagination wherewith man is more foolish, none so harmful, as this: that persons not purified, not sanctified, not made holy in their life, should afterwards be taken into that state of blessedness which consists in the enjoyment of God. Neither can such persons enjoy God, nor would God be a reward to them. Holiness indeed is perfected in heaven; but the beginning of it is confined to this world without exception. God leads none to heaven but whom He sanctifies on the earth. This living Head will not admit of dead members.

2. Its attainment

How must we pursue holiness? Briefly, here are ten hints for assistance.

a. *Know and treasure Scripture.* This is God's primary road to holiness: the Spirit blessing His Word. Therefore we must read it, understand it, and apply it in our lives. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (Joh 17:17). Memorize Scripture, search it, and seek grace to live it. Let Scripture be your compass to guide you over the waves and storms of life, to teach you how to live holy in an unholy world and with a heart that tends to be tempted away from holiness.

b. *Strive for constant faith in Christ.* Flee often to Christ. Seek to touch the hem of His garment, to be washed from all your impurities (Mat 14:35-36)). Faith in Christ is a powerful motivator for holiness, for faith and the love of sin cannot mix. Be careful, however, not to seek your holiness in your experiences of Christ, but in Christ Himself. As William Gurnall beautifully states,

When you trust in Christ within you, instead of Christ without you, you set Christ against Christ. The bride does well to esteem her husband's picture, but it were ridiculous if she should love it better than himself, much more if she should go to it rather than to him to supply her needs and desires. Yet you act so when you are more fond of Christ's image in your soul than of Him Who painted it there.

c. *If you would grow in holiness, ask always: "What would Christ do?"* Seek grace to do as Paul: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1Co 11:1).

d. *"Breathe after the Spirit,"* writes Thomas Watson. "The Spirit stamps the impression of His own sanctity upon the heart, as the seal prints its likeness upon the wax. The Spirit of God in a man perfumes him with holiness, and makes his heart a map of heaven."

e. *Associate with mentors in holiness* (1Co 11:1). Converse with fellow believers whose godly walk you admire. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise" (Pro 13:20). Association begets assimilation: when you associate with holy people, it encourages and supports your own growth in holiness.

f. *Pray for holiness.* No one is sufficient to bring a clean thing out of an unclean but God (Job 14:4). Hence, pray with David: “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psa 51:10).

g. *Regard yourself as dead to the reign of sin over you, and as alive to God in Christ.* “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11). Seek to grow in the same hatred of sin that God possesses. Recognize that God is worthy of obedience not only as Judge, but especially as loving Father. Say with Joseph in temptation, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9). And believe that Christ is mighty to preserve you alive. You live through union with Him. His righteousness is greater than your unrighteousness. His Saviorhood is greater than your sinnership. Do not despair: you are strong in Him, alive in Him, victorious in Him. Satan may win many skirmishes, but the war is yours; the victory is yours. In Christ, realistic optimism, not negative pessimism, reigns!

h. *Nurture and persevere in personal discipline.* If you “sometimes through weakness fall into sin, [you] must not therefore despair of God’s mercy, nor continue in sin” (Baptism Form). Rather, resolve with Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), “Resolved, never to give over, nor in the least to slacken my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.”²¹

These two things, fighting 1) against sin and 2) lack of success, appear contradictory but are not. The believer recognizes he will often fail, but he seeks to grow in perseverance even through his failures. Failure doesn’t make him quit, but it makes him repent and plod on in the Spirit’s strength. “For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief” (Pro 24:16).

i. *Develop a biblical formula for holy acting.* Here’s one possibility drawn from 1 Corinthians: Does this glorify God (10:31)? Is this consistent with the Lordship of Christ (7:23)? Is this consistent with biblical examples (11:1)? Is this lawful and beneficial for me—physically, spiritually, mentally (6:9-12)? Does this help others positively and not hurt others unnecessarily (10:33; 8:13)? Does this bring me under any enslaving power (6:12)?

j. *Live “present-tense,” total commitment.* Don’t fall prey to the “one-more-time” syndrome. Tomorrow’s obedience is disobedience now. Tomorrow’s holiness is impurity now. Tomorrow’s faith is unbelief now. Aim not to sin at all (1Jo 2:1), asking for divine strength to bring even your very thoughts under the captivity of Christ (2Co 10:5)—for Scripture indicates that our “thought-lives” ulti-

²¹ From “The Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards,” composed in his late teens and early 20s; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

mately determine our character: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro 23:7). An old saying expresses it this way: Sow a thought, reap an act; Sow an act, reap a habit; Sow a habit, reap a character.

Follow Paul’s advice to the Philippians: Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, “think on these things” (4:8). Holiness begins in our minds with a present-tense, total commitment, and works outward to our actions. That’s why we ought to jealously guard what we allow to enter our minds. The material we read, the music we listen to, and the conversations we have all affect our minds and ought to be judged in the context of Philippians 4:8.

3. Its hindrances

Much hinders holiness. Four common problems that we need to be on guard against are these.

a. *Our attitude* toward sin and life itself tends to be more self-centered than God-centered. We are often more concerned about the consequences of sin or victory over sin than about how our sins grieve the heart of God. We must labor to continue to see sin as against God. Positive consequences and victory then become by products of obedience and holiness.

b. We fail when we don’t consciously live with *our priorities* fixed on God’s will. In the words of the Scottish theologian John Brown (1784-1858), “Holiness does not consist in mysterious speculations, enthusiasim, or uncommanded harsh restraints; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills.”

c. *Our progress* is dampened when we misunderstand “living by faith” (Gal 2:20) to imply that no effort toward holiness is commanded of us. Sometimes we even tend to consider human effort sinful or “fleshly.” J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) provides us with an instructive correction here:

Is it wise to proclaim without explanation, as many do, that the holiness of converted people is by faith only, and not at all by personal exertion? Is this according to the proportion of God’s Word? I doubt it. That faith in Christ is the root of all holiness, no well-instructed Christian will ever think of denying. But surely the Scriptures teach us that in following holiness the true Christian needs personal exertion and work as well as faith.

d. We generally tend too much to *avoid the battle* of daily spiritual warfare. No one likes war. The believer tends to blind himself to his enemies—especially to the reality of his own ongoing pollution, which Paul expresses so well in Romans 7:14-25. Hence the remedy of Christian armor (Eph 6:10-20) also tends to be ignored at our peril. True holiness must be pursued against the backdrop of a sharp awareness of indwelling sin, which continues to live in our hearts and to deceive our understanding.

4. Its joy

God intends the Christian life to be one of humble joy, not negative drudgery. The idea that holiness is to be associated with a sad attitude is a tragic distortion of Scripture. In fact, Scripture asserts just the opposite: Only those who walk in holiness experience true joy! Jesus said, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (Joh 15:10-11). Those who are obedient—who are pursuing holiness as a way of life—will know the joy that comes from God: a supreme joy, an ongoing joy, an anticipated joy.

a. The *supreme joy*: fellowship with God. No greater joy can be had than communion with God. “In thy presence is fulness of joy” (Psa 16:11). True joy springs from God as we are enabled to walk in fellowship with Him. When we disfellowship ourselves from God by sin, we need to return to Him with repentant prayer like David: “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation” (Psa 51:12). The three key words Jesus spoke to the thief on the cross represent the chief goal and delight of every child of God: “Thou...with me” (Luk 23:43).

b. The *ongoing joy*: trusting obedience. True holiness obeys God—and obedience always trusts God. It believes that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom 8:28)—even when this can’t be seen. Like faithful workers on Persian carpet, who blindly hand up all colors of strand to the overseer who works out the pattern above them, God’s intimate saints are those who hand Him even the black strands He calls for, knowing that His pattern will be perfect from above, notwithstanding the gnarled mess underneath. Do you too know this profound, childlike trust in believing these words of Jesus: “What I do thou knowest not now: but thou shalt know hereafter” (Joh 13:7)? That is ongoing, stabilizing joy that is above our understanding.

c. The *anticipated joy*: eternal, gracious reward. Jesus was motivated to endure His sufferings by anticipating the joy of His reward (Heb 12:1-2). Believers too may look forward to entering into the joy of their Lord as they pursue lifelong holiness in the strength of Christ. By grace, they may joyously anticipate their eternal acquittal: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mat 25:21, 23). As John Whitlock noted, “Here is the Christian’s way and his end: his way is holiness, his end is happiness.”

5. Conclusion

You too are called to practice holiness. Are you heeding this call? Have you been persuaded that pursuing holiness is worth the price of saying “no” to sin and “yes” to God (Eph 4:22-24)? Do you know the joy of walking in God’s ways (1Jo

1:7)? The joy of experiencing Jesus' easy yoke and light burden (Mat 11:30)? The joy of not belonging to yourself, but belonging to your "faithful Savior, Jesus Christ," Who makes you "sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him"?²²

May it be our prayer: "Lord, grant me to practice holiness today, not out of merit, but out of gratitude—by the grace of the Spirit and through faith in Christ Jesus." ❧

Study Questions Lesson Three ***Holiness in Practice***

Please read the related part of section F before answering the questions for that part. Always use your own words, in order to indicate your understanding.

This lesson is longer than the others. We suggest doing parts of it in separate study sessions; for example, parts 1-2 in one sitting, and parts 3-5 in another.

Its necessity and motivations (1)

1. a. How do we know that God has called us to holiness?
b. Why is this important?
2. a. How are justification and sanctification connected?
b. How does each prepare believers for heaven?
3. How does chastening effect spiritual health and holiness?
4. a. What is meant by the "means of grace"?
b. How does use of the means of grace foster assurance?
5. Explain the loss of assurance using the analogy of the farmer.
6. What does the intensity of God's discipline tell us about holiness?
7. *Making It Personal*
 - a. Of the listed ten motivations for holiness, which one stands out to you as most meaningful?
 - b. Why?

Its attainment (2)

8. a. What is God's primary road to holiness?
b. Why is it primary?
c. How must we use it?
9. How do each of the following support growth in holiness?
 - a. Mentors
 - b. Prayer

²² Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 1.

10. Explain the meaning of Romans 6:11 regarding holiness (section g).
11. How does personal discipline support growth in holiness?
12. *Making It Personal* Several questions for guiding “holy acting” are asked from 1 Corinthians (section i). These help us make good decisions. Of all those listed, which are most helpful to you? Why?
13. Explain the meaning of each of the following (section j).
 - a. 2 Corinthians 10:5
 - b. Proverbs 23:7
 - c. Philippians 4:8

Its hindrances (3)

14. How does self-centeredness hinder holiness?
15. How could a misunderstanding of “living by faith” hinder holiness?
16. a. What is the battle of daily spiritual warfare?
b. What is its remedy?

Its joy (4)

17. a. What is the Christian’s supreme joy?
b. Why is it supreme?
c. How is it lost?
d. How is it recovered after losing it?
18. How does joy spring from John 13:7?
19. *Making It Personal*
 - a. What is the biggest motivator in your life: the world, heaven, or hell?
 - b. How does it motivate you?
 - c. Why is it the biggest motivator?

Conclusion (5)

20. *Making It Personal* You too are called to practice holiness.
 - a. Are you heeding this call?
 - b. Have you been persuaded that pursuing holiness is worth the price of saying “no” to sin and “yes” to God (Eph 4:22-24)?
 - c. Do you know the joy of walking in God’s ways (Mat 16:24)?
 - d. If not, why not? What will you change?
21. *Making It Personal*
 - a. What are the main lessons you have learned during this course?
 - b. What value is this to you?

Thank you for taking this course.
Please contact your course administrator
now for your next course.

*Put into practice the new insights from your study. Re-read
the headings and your notes; then review these main
lessons regularly during the next month.*

Detailed Course Instructions

1. Procedure for Taking the Course

- a. The reading material for this course consists of the reading text printed at the beginning of each lesson of this study guide.
- b. Before beginning to read, please pray for God's enabling to learn spiritually.
- c. Before you begin a lesson, please read the reading text completely.
- d. After reading the text, answer the related questions in this study guide. The lessons in this course are "open book," which often enhances learning by removing unnecessary pressure. In addition, some questions ask for a personal response, where the answer will not be found in the reading material. In this case, we ask only for your honesty and best effort.
- e. The questions are designed to be thought through carefully. Several of the questions are sensitive; they have to do with your heart attitudes. So please do not rush, or you will be defeating the purpose of the course! Answer all of the questions as honestly as you can. The answers are confidential.
- f. Do not go to the next question until you have answered the previous one.

2. Answer pages

Try to be concise and as clear as possible in your answers. Please write or type your answers on regular 8.5 x 11 inch (A4 metric) paper, or on the preprinted answer sheets if provided. Please write clearly and neatly, and if possible print. Note each page with Lesson #, each answer with Question #, and skip a line between questions

3. Supplies

Paper, pen, and Bible are needed to complete your assignments. The King James Version is quoted, but you may use another version if you do not have a KJV.

4. Completion of Assignments

- a. If taking this course with a local coordinator, please follow their instructions.
- b. If you are taking this course as individual independent study (non-graded), save your answer sheets for future reference. (Skip the below instructions 5 & 6).

5. Only if Correspondent Study

- a. Two months are allotted for the completion of this course. You may be granted an extension by contacting your course coordinator.
- b. Mail your answer sheets to your course coordinator after completing all Lessons 1 to 3. Only mail your answer sheets, not this Study Guide. They will be returned to you by regular mail after grading. Please ensure to write your name, student ID, course title, and lesson number on each answer sheet. Please see the sample after the Table of Contents at front. Headings should be in the following format:

Your name student ID course SAC lesson number

6. Written Feedback (only if correspondent study)

Spiritual success is not measured by high grades, but by growth in Christ-likeness to God's glory. Therefore, the motivation in taking the course is to see God change your life. There are no letter or number grades such as "A" or "100" to be earned. The grader will offer comments or suggestions from Scripture in response to your answers. Some answers have no comments because they are correct or personal.