

Following Jesus in the 21st Century

Returning to Holiness – Part 2

Study Guide

Main Scripture

Ephesians 4:17–24

Supporting Scriptures

- Revelation 3:14–22
- Isaiah 6:11–13
- 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1
- James 1:14–15
- Revelation 3:3–4
- Proverbs 1:23–33
- Matthew 11:20–24
- James 4:6–10

Big Idea

Following Jesus always leads a believer away from the spirit of this world and into a life of increasing holiness. Scripture presents worldliness and holiness as two opposing paths that cannot peacefully coexist within the heart of a disciple.

Key Definitions

Worldliness

Worldliness is any affection for, friendship with, conformity to, or participation in the fallen world system that opposes God. It is embracing the world's values, desires, priorities, thinking, or ways rather than God's, allowing the spirit of this age to shape the heart and life instead of the Holy Spirit. Whether expressed through open rebellion or subtle compromise, worldliness draws the heart away from wholehearted devotion to God.

Key Scriptures

- James 4:4
- 1 John 2:15–17
- Romans 12:2
- Ephesians 2:1–3

Holiness

Holiness is full devotion to God. It is a life set apart to Him, in which the heart, mind, desires, and conduct are increasingly brought into harmony with His character and will through the work of the Holy Spirit. It loves what God loves, rejects what opposes Him, and seeks His pleasure above every competing affection.

Key Scriptures

- 1 Peter 1:15–16
- Hebrews 12:14
- Romans 12:1–2
- Ephesians 4:22–24

A Sobering Picture of the Church

Jesus' words to the churches in Revelation reveal that spiritual decline often begins inside the church rather than outside it.

The church at Laodicea had become:

- Spiritually wretched
- Miserable
- Poor
- Blind
- Naked

Yet Christ still stood outside knocking, calling individuals to respond to Him.

Question:

Why is it significant that Jesus addressed individuals ("If anyone hears My voice...") rather than simply the church as a whole?

A Faithful Remnant

Read **Isaiah 6:11–13**

Even during widespread spiritual decline, God always preserves a faithful remnant.

Discussion

- What encourages you about God's promise of a remnant?
- How should that affect believers today?

The Contrast Between Two Ways of Living

Read **2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1**

Paul calls believers to separate themselves from everything that competes with devotion to Christ.

Notice the contrasts:

- Light vs. darkness
- Christ vs. Belial
- Believer vs. unbeliever
- Temple of God vs. idols

Holiness is not isolation from people but separation from sinful values.

What Following Jesus Looks Like

Read **Ephesians 4:17–24**

Paul contrasts the old life with the new life.

The Old Life

The Gentile walk is marked by:

- Futility of mind
- Darkened understanding
- Separation from God
- Hardness of heart
- Spiritual blindness
- Sensual living
- Unrestrained desires
- Greed for impurity

Reflection

How does today's culture encourage these same attitudes?

The New Life

Believers are called to:

- Learn Christ

- Hear Christ
- Be taught by Christ
- Lay aside the old self
- Be renewed in the spirit of the mind
- Put on the new self
- Walk in righteousness
- Walk in holiness

Following Jesus is not merely believing certain truths—it is allowing Him to transform every area of life.

The Source of Temptation

Read **James 1:14–15**

Temptation begins with our own sinful desires—not with Christ.

The Holy Spirit never leads believers toward worldliness.

Question

Why is it important to recognize the true source of temptation?

Christ's Warning to the Church

Read **Revelation 3:3–4**

Jesus warned Sardis to wake up, remember what they had received, obey it, and repent.

Notice that even within Sardis there were a few who had not soiled their garments.

God always knows those who remain faithful.

Two Responses to God's Warnings

Read:

- Proverbs 1:23–33
- Matthew 11:20–24

Throughout Scripture people generally respond in one of two ways:

Harden the Heart

- Ignore conviction
- Reject correction
- Continue in compromise

Humble the Heart

- Repent
 - Submit to God
 - Draw near to Him
 - Pursue holiness
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God's Invitation

Read **James 4:6–10**

James describes the pathway back to God:

- Submit to God.
- Resist the devil.
- Draw near to God.
- Cleanse your hands.
- Purify your hearts.
- Humble yourselves before the Lord.

God opposes pride but gives grace to the humble.

Personal Reflection

1. Are there areas where the world's values have influenced my thinking more than Scripture?
 2. Have I become comfortable with attitudes or practices that once convicted me?
 3. Is my life marked by increasing holiness?
 4. What does wholehearted devotion to God look like in my daily life?
 5. Where is God calling me to repentance today?
 6. Am I pursuing Christ Himself, or simply trying to maintain a religious life?
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Memory Verse

Ephesians 4:22–24 (NASB95)

"...that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

Takeaway

Holiness is not merely avoiding certain sins—it is wholehearted devotion to God that reshapes every part of life. Worldliness, whether obvious or subtle, competes for the heart's affection and slowly dulls spiritual sensitivity. Christ calls His followers to wake up, repent where necessary, and pursue a life that increasingly reflects His character through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.