

Following Jesus in the 21st Century

Study Guide – Part 3: Return to Holiness

Main Truth

God has not called His people merely to avoid sin, but to belong completely to Him. Holiness is a life of wholehearted devotion, separation from the values of this fallen world, and conformity to the character of Christ.

Key Verse:

"Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."

Hebrews 12:14 (NASB)

Key Scriptures

1 Corinthians 10:31 – Glorifying God in every area of life

Ephesians 2:1–3 – The world's system and our former way of life

James 4:4 – Friendship with the world

1 John 2:15–17 – Loving the world versus loving the Father

James 4:7–10 – God's call to repentance

2 Corinthians 6:17–7:1 – Come out and be separate

Hebrews 12:14 – The necessity of holiness

Understanding the Message

1. Secular Is Not the Same as Worldly

Many Christians use these terms interchangeably, but Scripture makes an important distinction.

Secular simply refers to the ordinary activities of everyday life. Work, school, recreation, business, and family responsibilities are not inherently sinful. Every area of life can become an act of worship when lived for God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Worldliness, however, is embracing the values, desires, and priorities of a fallen world that stands opposed to God. It is allowing the world's thinking to shape our hearts rather than God's Word.

The issue is not where we live—but who influences how we live.

2. The World's System Opposes God

The Bible describes the world as a system influenced by Satan and characterized by rebellion against God (Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4).

James warns that friendship with this world is hostility toward God. Worldliness is not simply participating in society; it is becoming comfortable with what God calls evil and allowing sin to dull our love for Christ.

When believers become increasingly comfortable with sin, several things often happen:

- Spiritual growth slows.
- Worship becomes optional.
- God's Word loses its priority.
- Conviction becomes weaker.
- Hearts gradually become hardened.

These changes rarely happen suddenly—they develop little by little.

3. What Is Biblical Holiness?

Holiness is often misunderstood.

It is not merely external behavior.

It is not a denomination.

It is not a style of worship.

It is not man-made rules.

Biblical holiness means being set apart for God.

It is loving Him with an undivided heart.

It is surrendering every area of life to His authority.

It is becoming more like Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Holiness is not simply avoiding sin—it is pursuing God.

4. Holiness Begins with Repentance

James 4 reminds believers that genuine repentance involves humility before God.

Repentance is more than feeling guilty.

It is turning away from sin and turning toward Christ.

God's invitation remains the same:

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

True repentance always leads to restored fellowship with God.

Questions for Reflection

1. How would you explain the difference between something that is secular and something that is worldly?
 2. What influences your thinking more—God's Word or today's culture?
 3. Are there areas of your life where you have become comfortable with attitudes or behaviors that Scripture warns against?
 4. What does living a holy life look like in your home, workplace, school, or community?
 5. Why is holiness impossible apart from a close relationship with Jesus Christ?
 6. What practical step can you take this week to draw nearer to God?
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Personal Application

Take time this week to honestly examine your heart before God.

Ask Him to reveal areas where worldly thinking has influenced your priorities, attitudes, or desires.

Remember that God's call to holiness is not merely a call to leave something behind—it is an invitation to know Him more deeply.

Holiness is the joyful response of a heart that loves Christ above everything else.

Prayer

Father, thank You for calling me to Yourself. Forgive me for the times I have allowed the values of this world to shape my thinking more than Your Word. Create in me a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Teach me to love what You love and to hate what dishonors You. Help me pursue holiness—not through my own strength, but through the transforming work of Your Holy Spirit. May my life bring glory to Jesus in every area. Amen.