What Is True Biblical Holiness?



Foreword
Biblical Holiness, Set Apart from the World

True holiness is not about following a list of outward rules to look good. It is a whole-life commitment to God that sets a person apart from the world's values, desires, and ways of doing things. At the same time, a holy person stays actively present in the world as salt and light.

God gave the Law of Moses to show people their sin and point them to their need for a Savior. Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled that Law. He also summed up its entire purpose in two simple commands: love God with everything you are, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Legalism works against this. It tries to earn acceptance or holiness through human effort and external rule-keeping. This is one of the world's most subtle traps. It replaces grace with self-justification, a changed heart with outward appearance, and God's Word with man-made traditions.

This essay follows the biblical path from the Law's guidance, through Christ's example, to the disciples' response. It shows that real holiness comes from union with Christ and separation from the world's counterfeits.

Definition of Biblical Holiness

Biblical holiness means being set apart for God. The original Hebrew word (*qadosh*) and Greek word (*hagios*) both mean "separated" or "set apart"—taken out of ordinary, everyday use and devoted to a sacred purpose.

God says, “Be holy, for I am holy” (**Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15-16**). So holiness first reflects who God is: pure, just, merciful, and completely different from sin.

For the believer, holiness has two sides:

- **Positional**: When you trust in Christ, God declares you holy because of what Jesus has done.
- **Progressive**: Day by day, the Holy Spirit is shaping you to become more like Christ.

Holiness is not about isolating yourself from people. It is about separating yourself from the world’s ways of thinking and living—things like pride, greed, sexual immorality, deceit, and putting yourself first.

True holiness produces love, purity, humility, and justice. Anything less is either hypocrisy or a legalistic fake.

The Law of Moses Guiding One to Christ

The Law given through Moses was holy, righteous, and good (**Romans 7:12**). It revealed God’s character and the standard of perfect obedience required for fellowship with Him. Yet the Law was never intended as a ladder of self-righteousness. Paul writes that the Law was “our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith” (**Galatians 3:24**). By demanding perfect compliance and exposing every failure, the Law shut every mouth and made the whole world accountable to God (**Romans 3:19-20**). Sacrifices, washings, and ceremonies pointed forward to a greater reality; the moral commands showed the depth of human inability.

• Thus the Law’s purpose was diagnostic and tutorial: it led the sinner to cry out for the righteousness that only the promised Messiah could supply.

• When the Law is detached from this Christward aim, it becomes a tool of condemnation or of self-justification—the very opposite of its design.

Christ as the Example of Holiness

Jesus Christ perfectly embodies biblical holiness. He fulfilled the Law in every jot and tittle (**Matthew 5:17**), living in unbroken obedience to the Father while remaining fully human. He was “holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners” (**Hebrews 7:26**), yet He ate with tax collectors and sinners, touched the unclean, and walked among the broken. His separation was not physical withdrawal but moral and spiritual distinction: He refused the world’s methods of power, status, and self-preservation. When tempted in the wilderness, He answered with the Word of God; when offered the kingdoms of the world, He chose the cross. In His teaching, He cut through externalism, insisting that murder begins in anger, adultery in lust, and true worship

in spirit and truth. Above all, He distilled the Law into its heart: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind… You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (**Matthew 22:37-40**).

- **In Christ, holiness is revealed as perfect love toward God and costly love toward others**.

The Disciples and the Holiness Path

The disciples show us what the path of holiness looks like when someone follows Christ.

Before the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, they were ordinary men full of fear, selfish ambition, and confusion. After the Spirit filled them, they were set apart to carry the gospel.

Peter is a clear example. He started out self-confident and failed badly. But after Jesus restored him, he was changed. God then taught him that non-Jews (Gentiles) were no longer considered unclean (**Acts 10**).

The early church in the book of Acts stayed devoted to four things: the apostles' teaching, fellowship with one another, sharing meals, and prayer. They shared their possessions and faced persecution instead of simply fitting in with the culture around them.

In his letters, Paul repeatedly tells believers to "**put off**" their old way of life and "**put on**" the new life in Christ. This means practically separating from the world's sexual immorality, greed, and idolatry, while actively growing in love, purity, and humility (**Ephesians 4–5; Colossians 3**).

The disciples did not become holy by inventing stricter rules. They became holy by staying close to Christ, walking in the Spirit, and keeping the two great commands: love God and love your neighbor.

They rejected two extremes:

- Using God's grace as an excuse to keep sinning.
- Adding human traditions and extra rules as requirements for God's acceptance.

Their separation from the world cost them dearly—many suffered and died. Yet that costly life was simply the fruit of being united with their holy Savior.

Conclusion: Biblical Holiness

True holiness means being set apart from the world and fully devoted to God. This is only possible through Christ.

The Law of Moses guided sinners to Him by showing them they could never measure up on their own and pointing them to their need for a substitute. Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly. He modeled true holiness and taught that loving God and loving your neighbor is the heart of all righteousness.

The disciples, changed by the Holy Spirit, walked this path. They lived in costly distinction from the world rather than simply conforming to the culture or trying to earn holiness through stricter rules and self-effort.

Legalism is still one of the world's most subtle deceptions. It offers the outward appearance of holiness while leaving the heart unchanged and the conscience heavy.

The gospel gives a simpler and deeper answer: receive the righteousness of Christ by faith, walk in the Spirit, and love as He loved. Only in this way is a believer truly set apart—holy as the Lord is holy.

