

Series So Far: The Holiness of the Church

Over the past five weeks, we have been discovering God's vision for a holy Church. Each study has built upon the last, revealing how God is calling, shaping and preparing His people to reflect His character and fulfil His purposes in the world.

Week 24 – Called Out, Set Apart: The Holy Assembly: God calls a holy people out of darkness and into His Kingdom.

Week 25 – Christ Loves a Holy Bride: Christ loves, cleanses and prepares His Bride.

Week 26 – Built Together as God's Dwelling: God builds believers together into His dwelling place

Week 27 – One Body, Many Members, One Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit unites every member with a unique place and purpose within Christ's Body.

Week 28 – Love: The Bond of Perfect Holiness: Love is the visible expression of genuine holiness and the bond that unites God's holy people.

God is calling a holy people, preparing a holy Bride, building a holy dwelling place and forming one Body through the work of the Holy Spirit.

This week Bishop Nicholas brings these truths together with one central theme: love. Holiness without love becomes empty religion, while genuine love always reflects the holy character of Christ.

Love: The Bond of Perfect Holiness

One of the most beautiful pictures of the Church in Scripture is that of a bride being lovingly prepared for her wedding day. In Ephesians 5, Paul compares Christ's love for the Church to the love of a husband for his wife. Christ gave Himself for His Bride so that He might sanctify her, cleanse her by the washing of the Word and present her to Himself as a radiant Church without spot, wrinkle or blemish. This is not simply a picture of marriage; it is a picture of God's desire for His people. Christ is actively preparing His Church for His return.

Bishop Nicholas reminded us that Christ is not returning for a divided, compromised or indifferent Church. He is returning for a people who have been transformed by His love and who reflect His holy character. The call to holiness is therefore not about striving to earn God's acceptance, but responding to the love already demonstrated through Christ's sacrifice.

Throughout the series we have seen that holiness begins with God. He is holy, He calls His people to holiness and He provides everything necessary for that transformation. This week we discover that love is the bond that holds all of this together. Holiness without love quickly becomes legalism. Love without holiness loses its distinctiveness. God's desire is that His people reflect both His holiness and His love in every area of life.

Holiness Begins Within

One of Bishop Nicholas' strongest themes throughout both services was that genuine holiness begins with an inward transformation before it is ever seen in outward behaviour.

The world often measures spirituality by appearances. People may look religious, speak religious language or participate in church activities while their hearts remain unchanged. Bishop Nicholas challenged the Church to examine not what people see on the outside, but what God sees within.

True holiness is not produced by external appearance, denominational traditions or religious performance. It is the work of Christ transforming the heart from the inside out. When Christ changes a person's heart, that inward transformation naturally becomes visible in the way they speak, treat others, make decisions and live each day.

As Bishop Nicholas simply stated: "*Holiness is a reflection of Christ in you.*"

This echoes the teaching we have already explored throughout this series. God is not simply modifying behaviour; He is conforming His people into the likeness of His Son. As we surrender ourselves to Christ, the Holy Spirit continues His sanctifying work, producing lives that increasingly reflect Jesus.

What Holiness Is Not

Bishop Nicholas also challenged several common misunderstandings about holiness. Throughout history, many people have associated holiness with outward appearance or religious practices. While these things may have value in certain contexts, they are never the source of holiness.

Holiness is not determined by the clothes we wear, the denomination we belong to, the position we hold in the church or the public image we project. Neither is holiness measured by raising our hands in worship, using Christian language or simply attending church each week.

Jesus repeatedly challenged the religious leaders of His day because they focused on outward appearance while neglecting the condition of their hearts. Likewise, we are challenged to examine whether our public profession of faith matches our private walk with God.

Scripture makes it clear that God is not looking for people who appear holy. He is seeking worshippers who worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). Genuine holiness is consistent. It is seen not only during church services, but also in our homes, workplaces, conversations and relationships.

As followers of Christ, our greatest desire should not be simply to look different from the world, but to be different because Christ lives within us.

Love: The Visible Evidence of Holiness

If genuine holiness begins within, it will inevitably be seen in the way we live. Bishop Nicholas reminded us that the greatest evidence of a transformed life is not religious activity but Christ-like love.

Throughout the New Testament, love is consistently presented as the distinguishing mark of God's people. Jesus taught that the world would recognise His disciples not by their knowledge, their position or even their spiritual gifts, but by their love for one another.

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
John 13:35

Paul writes in that above all virtues we are to put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”
Colossians 3:14

Love is the bond that holds every other virtue together. Patience without love becomes obligation. Truth without love becomes harshness. Holiness without love becomes legalism. But when God's love fills our hearts, every aspect of our Christian life begins to reflect His character.

Christ demonstrated this love by giving Himself completely for His Church. His sacrificial love becomes both the model and the motivation for our own lives. As we grow in our relationship with Christ, His love begins to shape our attitudes, our words and our relationships with others.

Living as Christ's Holy Bride

Throughout this series we have repeatedly returned to the picture of the Church as Christ's Bride. Paul's picture of the church is that this is not merely symbolic language but a living reality. Christ is actively preparing His people for the day when He will return.

This preparation involves far more than outward obedience. Christ desires a people whose hearts belong completely to Him. Holiness is not simply avoiding sin; it is living each day in loving devotion and faithful obedience to the One who first loved us.

This also means that holiness is demonstrated in ordinary, everyday life. It is reflected in our integrity when no one is watching, our humility when we are misunderstood, our forgiveness when we are hurt and our compassion toward those around us.

Every conversation, every decision and every relationship becomes an opportunity to reflect the character of Christ.

Holiness is not something we simply practise on Sundays. It is the daily outworking of Christ's life within us.

Growing in Holiness Through God's Word

Another important emphasis throughout Bishop Nicholas' messages was the central place of God's Word in the life of every believer.

God's Word is not simply information to be studied but truth that transforms our hearts and renews our minds. As we consistently read, meditate on and obey Scripture, the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to reveal Christ more clearly, expose areas that need transformation and lead us into greater maturity.

Throughout this series we have seen that sanctification is God's work within us. Yet God invites us to participate in that work by remaining close to Him through prayer, repentance and His Word.

The Scriptures provide both direction and discernment. They help us recognise truth, guard us from deception and continually point us back to Christ. As we allow God's Word to shape our thinking, our values increasingly reflect His Kingdom rather than the values of the world.

Examples of Holy Living

The lives of Enoch, Moses, Job and Joseph provide powerful examples of genuine holiness. Enoch walked faithfully with God in a generation marked by corruption. Moses chose obedience despite enormous responsibility. Job remained faithful through suffering and loss. Joseph maintained his integrity even when no one was watching and despite repeated injustice.

Although their circumstances were very different, they shared one common characteristic: each chose faithfulness to God above personal comfort, popularity or convenience. Their lives remind us that holiness has always been expressed through ordinary people who consistently trusted and obeyed God. They were not perfect individuals, but they were people whose hearts were surrendered to the Lord.

In the same way, God continues to call ordinary believers today to faithfully reflect His character wherever He has placed them.

As we continue to surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit, remain grounded in God's Word and love one another as Christ has loved us, we become the kind of Church that reflects His glory to the world.

Discussion Questions

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1. Bishop Nicholas reminded us that **"Holiness is a reflection of Christ in you."** What do you think he meant by this statement? In what practical ways can others recognise Christ through our daily lives?
2. Bishop Nicholas reminded us that holiness is demonstrated in everyday life—not only in church, but also in our homes, workplaces and relationships. Which area of everyday life do you find most challenging when it comes to reflecting Christ's holiness? Why?
3. Colossians 3:14 tells us to "put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Why do you think love is described as the "bond of perfect holiness"? How does genuine love help us grow in holiness and strengthen the Body of Christ?
4. Looking back over the past five weeks, what has been the greatest lesson God has been teaching you about holiness? Has there been one message, Scripture or challenge that has particularly impacted your walk with Christ?
5. If someone observed your life for one week, what evidence would they see that Christ is transforming you?

This Week's Challenge

This week, spend time reading the following:

- Colossians 3:12–17
- Ephesians 5:25–27
- 1 Peter 1:13–16

Choose one practical way to demonstrate Christ's love this week through an intentional act of kindness, forgiveness, encouragement or service.

Scripture Memory Challenge

**"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."
Colossians 3:14 (NIV)**