



LIFE CONNEXION GROUP STUDY NOTES
SERIES 2

Holiness and Sanctification

The Holiness of the Church

June to September 2026

“To present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

EPHESIANS 5:27 NIV

SERIES OVERVIEW

Holiness and Sanctification

The Holiness of the Church

JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 2026

A study of how God is forming a holy people—His Church—to reflect His character, carry His presence and participate together in His mission.

KEY SERIES SCRIPTURE

“To present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

Ephesians 5:27 NIV

SERIES 2

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Throughout Scripture, God has always desired a people who belong to Him. While holiness begins with God's own nature and extends to the individual believer, the Bible also teaches that the Church itself is called to be holy. The Church is not merely an organisation, a building or a weekly gathering. The Church is God's holy assembly — a people called out of darkness and set apart for His purposes.

Pastor Melissa reminded us that the New Testament word for Church is *ekklesia*, meaning "the called-out ones." The Church is the community of people who have responded to God's call through Jesus Christ. We do not simply attend church; we are the Church. God has called us out of sin, out of darkness, out of the kingdom of this world and into fellowship with Christ and participation in His Kingdom.

The foundation of the Church's holiness is not human perfection but divine ownership. The biblical concept of holiness means being set apart, consecrated and devoted exclusively to God. Just as the vessels in the Temple were considered holy because they belonged to God, the Church is holy because it belongs to God. The Church exists for God's purposes and glory, not its own.

The Apostle Peter describes the Church as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Peter 2:9).

This reveals the unique identity of God's people. Unlike earthly nations defined by geography, ethnicity, language or culture, the Church is made up of people from every tribe, nation and language who have been united through Christ. Through His blood, Jesus has created one new people belonging to God.

Pastor Melissa highlighted that the Church is both a holy nation and a royal priesthood. As a holy nation, the Church lives under the rule of King Jesus, follows God's Word as its law, embraces the culture of Heaven and carries God's Kingdom into the world. As a royal priesthood, believers are called to minister to God, represent God to people and intercede before God on behalf of others.

Acts 2 shows believers devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, prayer, worship and generosity. They shared their lives together, cared for one another and lived in such a way that God's presence was evident among them.

Pastor Melissa also explained that a holy church is marked by certain visible characteristics. A holy assembly pursues God's presence above programs, values holiness rather than compromise, practises prayer and intercession, honours God's truth above personal opinions and remains connected to the body of Christ. It serves the world while remaining distinct from it.

The Church is called to be in the world but not of the world. Holiness does not mean isolation from society. Rather, it means belonging so completely to God that His life flows through us into the world around us. We are called out of darkness so that we may bring the light of Christ to others.

The message concluded with a powerful reminder that the Church is holy by calling, holy by union with Christ and holy through the ongoing work of sanctification. We do not become holy by trying harder. Instead, we embrace what Christ has already accomplished through His death and resurrection.

As we submit ourselves to Him, the Holy Spirit continues His work of transforming the Church into the holy people God has called us to be.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."

— 1 Peter 2:9

Key Takeaways

- The Church is not merely something we attend; believers collectively are the Church.
- The word *ekklesia* means "the called-out ones."
- Holiness means being set apart and belonging exclusively to God.
- The Church is holy because it belongs to God.
- The Church is a holy nation made up of people from every tribe, language and nation.
- The Church is a royal priesthood called to minister to God, represent God to people and intercede for others.
- God's Kingdom transcends earthly political and cultural divisions.
- A holy assembly pursues God's presence above programs and activities.
- Truth must govern experience, rather than experience determining truth.
- Kingdom culture is visible through integrity, holiness, love, purity, compassion and generosity.
- The Church is called to be distinct from the world while remaining engaged with it.
- The Church is holy by calling, holy by union with Christ and holy through ongoing sanctification.

Discussion Questions

1. What stood out to you most from the description of the Church as "the called-out ones"? How does this change the way you think about being part of the Church?
2. Peter describes the Church as a "holy nation" and a "royal priesthood." What responsibilities and privileges come with these identities?
3. The message stated that the Church loses power when it becomes people-centred rather than Christ-centred. What are some practical ways we can keep Christ at the centre of our church life?
4. What are some visible signs that a church is functioning as a holy assembly according to the teaching from Acts 2 and 1 Peter 2?
5. How can our home group better reflect the characteristics of a holy assembly?
6. What practical step can you take this week to help build up Christ's Church and live out your calling as part of God's holy nation?

Throughout Scripture, God often uses the picture of marriage to describe His relationship with His people. In Ephesians 5:25–27, the Apostle Paul reveals one of the most beautiful truths in the Bible: Christ loves the Church as a bridegroom loves his bride. This is not merely a metaphor about affection; it is a picture of sacrificial love, covenant commitment, holiness, transformation and eternal hope.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. – Ephesians 5:25-27

Pastor Jerome reminded us that Christ did not simply choose a bride who was already perfect and beautiful. He loved us while we were still sinners. Through His death on the cross, Jesus paid the ultimate bride price with His own blood, purchasing for Himself a people who would belong to Him forever. His love was demonstrated not merely through words but through sacrifice. As Scripture declares: "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

The message highlighted that righteousness is the believer's garment. Before salvation, humanity was clothed in sin, shame and guilt. Yet through Christ, believers are clothed with the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness. God no longer sees us through the lens of our failures but through the finished work of Christ. Because of Jesus, we stand accepted, forgiven and declared righteous before God.

Pastor Jerome also emphasised that Christ's love is sanctifying. Salvation is not merely forgiveness; it is transformation. Jesus saves us as we are, but He refuses to leave us as we are. Through the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ continually cleanses, renews and transforms His people into His likeness. The Holy Spirit produces godly character within believers, including self-control, patience, gentleness, kindness and perseverance.

The message further explored the healing nature of Christ's love. In a world filled with loneliness, brokenness and uncertainty, Christ's love brings comfort, security and restoration. Knowing that we are deeply loved and valued by God provides strength and hope in every season of life. Christ not only forgives our wounds; He heals them and draws us closer to Himself.

An important aspect of Christ's love is His discipline. Hebrews 12 reminds us that the Lord disciplines those He loves. God's correction is never rejection; it is evidence of His fatherly care. Through conviction, correction and guidance, Christ lovingly shapes His people into a holy bride prepared for His return.

The message concluded with the glorious hope of Christ's return. Scripture teaches that history is moving toward a great wedding feast—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. One day Christ will present to Himself a radiant Church without stain, wrinkle or blemish. Every act of sanctification, every work of the Holy Spirit and every step of obedience is preparing God's people for that day. Believers live with the confident hope that Christ is coming again for His bride.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy." — Ephesians 5:25–26

Key Takeaways

- Christ loves the Church with a sacrificial and covenantal love.
 - Jesus paid the ultimate bride price through His death on the cross.
 - Believers are clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
 - Salvation is both forgiveness and transformation.
 - The Word of God and the Holy Spirit continually sanctify believers.
 - Christ's love brings healing, comfort and security.
 - God's discipline is evidence of His love and commitment to our growth.
 - The Church is the Bride of Christ and is being prepared for His return.
 - Our value and identity are found in Christ, not in our past failures.
 - Every believer has been purchased at great cost and belongs to God.
 - The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is the future hope of every believer.
 - Christ is preparing a radiant, holy and blameless Church for eternity.
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Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Jerome described righteousness as a garment that believers wear. What does this teach us about our identity in Christ?
2. Why is it important to understand that God's discipline is an expression of His love rather than His rejection?
3. The message reminded us that we were purchased with a great price. How should this truth influence the way we view ourselves and other believers?
4. What encouragement do you draw from the promise that one day Christ will present His Church as a radiant bride without stain, wrinkle or blemish?
5. How can our home group better reflect the love, holiness and unity that Christ desires for His Bride?
6. What is one practical step you can take this week to submit more fully to Christ's sanctifying work in your life?

As we continue exploring the holiness of the Church, Pastor Alida reminded us that sanctification is not only personal but also corporate. God is not simply forming individual believers in isolation; He is building His people together into a holy dwelling place for His Spirit.

Last week, we reflected on the Church as a holy assembly — a people called out, set apart and belonging to God. This week, the focus moved further into the truth that the Church is also God's dwelling place. We are not merely gathered around God's presence; by the Holy Spirit, God dwells among us and within us.

Ephesians 2:19–22 describes believers as members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

- Ephesians 2: 19-22 NIV

In Christ, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. This means that the Church is not a loose collection of individuals, but a spiritual house being carefully built together by God.

Pastor Alida highlighted that Christ is the foundation and cornerstone of the Church. Everything must be aligned to Him. The Church is not built on human wisdom, personal preference, personality, culture or popularity. It is built on Christ, held together by Christ and grows into holiness through Christ.

The message also reminded us that believers are like living stones being built into a spiritual house. This process can sometimes be uncomfortable. Stones must be shaped, fitted and joined together. In the same way, God uses community, commitment, accountability and love to shape us into maturity. Holiness is preserved not by isolation, but by covenant belonging.

Pastor Alida also explained the corporate indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 3:16–17, Paul teaches that the gathered Church is God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells among His people. This means the Church is sacred. Division, pride, preference and compromise are not small matters because they damage the very temple God is building.

“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.”

- 1 Corinthians 3: 16-17

Each believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit and is called to honour God with their body, choices and life. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, but the third Person of the Trinity — co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. He guides, comforts, convicts, empowers and transforms believers.

Pentecost marked the beginning of the Spirit-filled life of the Church. The Holy Spirit was poured out to empower believers for witness, worship, holiness and mission. Through the Holy Spirit, God continues to form His people into a living witness of His Kingdom in the world.

Pastor Alida also encouraged the Church to read 1 Corinthians 12 and prayerfully consider where they see themselves within the body of Christ. Paul reminds us that the Church is one body with many parts and each part has a God-given purpose. The gifts and abilities God has placed within each believer are not merely for personal fulfilment, but for the strengthening, encouragement and building up of the Church. As those planted in this local church community, we are invited to ask where God may be calling us to serve, contribute and use what He has entrusted to us.

Alida shared the image of a vessel being filled. If the lid remains on, only a few drops can enter. But when the lid is removed and broken, the vessel can be filled to overflowing. In the same way, believers are invited to remain open to the Holy Spirit so that God can continue to fill, transform and overflow through us into the lives of others.

God is building His Church into a holy dwelling place. Our part is to stay close to Christ, remain open to the Spirit, stay connected to the body and allow God to shape us together for His glory.

“And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.”

— Ephesians 2:22

Key Takeaways

- Sanctification is not only individual; it is also corporate.
- God is building His people together into a holy dwelling place.
- The Church is God’s temple, and His Spirit dwells among His people.
- Christ is the foundation and chief cornerstone of the Church.
- The Church must be aligned to Christ, not personal preference or worldly values.
- Believers are living stones being shaped and fitted together.
- Holiness is preserved through covenant belonging, not isolation.
- Division, pride and compromise damage the unity and holiness of God’s temple.
- The Holy Spirit dwells within individual believers and among the gathered Church.
- The Holy Spirit guides, comforts, convicts, empowers and transforms.
- Spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit are given for the building up of the Church.
- Every believer has gifts and abilities that are needed within the body of Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 12 reminds us that the Church is one body with many parts.
- Every believer has gifts and abilities that are needed within the body of Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 12 reminds us that the Church is one body with many parts.
- A healthy church makes room for the Holy Spirit while maintaining peace, order and discernment.
- God calls every believer to remain open to the ongoing filling and work of the Holy Spirit.

Discussion Questions

1. What stood out to you most from the image of believers being “built together” as God’s dwelling place?
2. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit dwells both within individual believers and among the gathered Church?
3. Pastor Alida used the image of a vessel with a lid. Are there areas where we might unintentionally “put the lid on” and limit the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
4. What spiritual fruit or spiritual gift do you sense God wants to grow or strengthen in you for the benefit of the Church?
5. What is one practical step you can take this week to stay close to Christ, connected to the body and open to the Holy Spirit?

This Week’s Challenge

Read 1 Corinthians 12 and ask the Holy Spirit - “Where do I see myself in the body of Christ, and how can I use what You have given me to build up the Church?”

Series So Far: The Holiness of the Church

Over the past four weeks, we've been discovering that God's plan for holiness is much bigger than individual believers. He is forming a holy people who reflect His character and display His Kingdom to 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.

Our journey so far has shown us that holiness is personal, relational and corporate. God is not only making holy individuals—He is forming a holy Church.

One Body, Many Members, One Holy Spirit

Over the past month we have seen God progressively reveal His vision for a holy Church. He has called a holy people out of darkness, Christ is lovingly preparing His holy Bride, the Holy Spirit is building believers together into God's dwelling place and now we discover that every believer has a unique place and purpose within Christ's Body. Holiness is not only about becoming more like Christ as individuals; it is about becoming the people God has designed us to be together.

This week, Pastor Heather brought these truths together by reminding us that sanctification is never simply an individual journey. God calls us into one body where every believer has a unique place, purpose and contribution. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are joined together as the Body of Christ.

The key passage for this message is 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 using the message translation, where Paul compares the Church to the human body. Just as the body has many different parts working together, the Church consists of many different people with different gifts, personalities and callings.

Although we are diverse, we are united by one Spirit and belong to one Body under Christ. Paul reminds us that every believer has been placed into the Body by God Himself. Our place is not accidental, nor is it determined by status, ability or visibility. God has carefully arranged each member exactly where He desires them to be. Every gift, every ministry and every act of service contributes to the health and growth of the whole Church.

Pastor Heather highlighted that comparison has no place in the Body of Christ. The foot should not envy the hand, nor should the eye dismiss the ear. Likewise, believers are not called to compete with one another or compare their gifts. Instead, we recognise that every member is valuable because every member belongs to Christ. The seemingly hidden or less visible ministries are often among the most essential for the life of the Church.

The scripture also teaches that the Body is designed for mutual care. When one member suffers, the whole Body suffers. When one member is honoured, everyone rejoices together. This reflects the love, compassion and unity that should characterise the people of God.

Pastor Heather reminded us that we cannot fully live out our calling in isolation. An isolated believer is disconnected from the very environment God has designed for spiritual growth. The Church is where believers are encouraged, equipped, restored and strengthened to fulfil God's purposes together.

The Holy Spirit is central to this unity. Although there are many gifts, there is only one Spirit. Every gift originates from Him and is given for the benefit of the whole Body. Spiritual gifts are not given for personal recognition but to strengthen Christ's Church and glorify Him.

Drawing from the example of Jesus calling His disciples, Pastor Heather observed that Jesus chose ordinary people—fishermen, tradesmen and a tax collector—to follow Him. They were not selected because they were the most impressive, but because Christ called them. In the same way, God delights in using ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary purposes through His Spirit.

Pastor Heather concluded by reminding us that no believer is insignificant in God's Kingdom. Every member of the Body has been given a unique role, and every gift contributes to the health and mission of the Church. Our calling is not to compare ourselves with others, but to faithfully serve where God has placed us. As each member fulfils their God-given purpose, the Body grows stronger, the Church is built up, and Christ is glorified.

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."
— 1 Corinthians 12:27

Key Takeaways

- There is one Body of Christ and one Holy Spirit.
- God intentionally places every believer within the Body.
- Every member has equal value, regardless of visibility or role.
- Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the whole Church.
- Comparison and competition weaken the unity of the Body.
- The Church is designed for mutual care, encouragement and restoration.
- We grow best in Christian community rather than isolation.
- Jesus calls ordinary people and equips them for extraordinary purposes.
- The Word of God and the Holy Spirit work together to transform believers.
- Every believer has a unique place and purpose within Christ's Body.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul teaches that when one member suffers, every member suffers and when one is honoured, everyone rejoices. What are some practical ways we can live this out within our church and home group?
2. Pastor Heather said that an isolated believer can never fully function as God intended. Why is Christian community essential for spiritual growth and sanctification?
3. What is one practical step you can take this week to strengthen the unity of Christ's Body?
4. Last week, Pastor Alida encouraged us to read 1 Corinthians 12 and consider where we see ourselves within the Body of Christ. What gifts, abilities, experiences or passions has God given you that could strengthen His Church where He has planted you?
5. Romans 12:2 teaches that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. How does regular time in God's Word help shape the way we think, make decisions and live as part of Christ's Body?

This Week's Challenge

Read 1 Corinthians 12 again during the week.

Ask the Holy Spirit: where have You placed me within Your Body, and how can I faithfully use the gifts You have given me to build up Your Church?

Write down one practical opportunity to serve, encourage or strengthen someone in the Body of Christ this week.

Scripture Memory Challenge

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

1 Corinthians 12:27

Message Text: 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31: MSG

¹²⁻¹³ You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which *he* has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—his Spirit—where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves—labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free—are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive.

¹⁴⁻¹⁸ I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, "I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don't belong to this body," would that make it so? If Ear said, "I'm not beautiful like Eye, transparent and expressive; I don't deserve a place on the head," would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.

¹⁹⁻²⁴ But I also want you to think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a *part* of. An enormous eye or a gigantic hand wouldn't be a body, but a monster. What we have is one body with many parts, each its proper size and in its proper place. No part is important on its own. Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, "Get lost; I don't need you"? Or, Head telling Foot, "You're fired; your job has been phased out"? As a matter of fact, in practice it works the other way—the "lower" the part, the more basic, and therefore necessary. You can live without an eye, for instance, but not without a stomach. When it's a part of your own body you are concerned with, it makes *no* difference whether the part is visible or clothed, higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons. If anything, you have more concern for the lower parts than the higher. If you had to choose, wouldn't you prefer good digestion to full-bodied hair?

²⁵⁻²⁶ The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

²⁷⁻³¹ You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything. You're familiar with some of the parts that God has formed in his church, which is his "body":

apostles
prophets
teachers
miracle workers
healers
helpers
organizers
those who pray in tongues.

But it's obvious by now, isn't it, that Christ's church is a complete Body and not a gigantic, unidimensional Part? It's not all Apostle, not all Prophet, not all Miracle Worker, not all Healer, not all Prayer in Tongues, not all Interpreter of Tongues. And yet some of you keep competing for so-called "important" parts.

But now I want to lay out a far better way for you.

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)**

Series So Far: The Holiness of the Church

In this series of The Holiness of the Church, 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.

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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 & 29 – Love: The Bond of Perfect Holiness: Love is the visible expression of genuine holiness and the bond that unites God's holy people. God's holiness gives love its purity and God's love gives holiness its beauty.

Throughout this series we have discovered that God is calling a holy people, preparing a holy Bride, building His dwelling place and forming one Body through the work of the Holy Spirit.

This week we continue that theme by exploring how God's holiness and God's love are perfectly united in the person of Jesus Christ and what that means for us as His disciples.

Love: The Bond of Perfect Holiness

When many people hear the word *holiness*, they picture distance, severity or impossible standards. At the same time, love is often defined by our culture as accepting every belief, behaviour and lifestyle without question. Scripture presents a very different picture. Holiness and love are not opposing qualities within God; they are perfectly united in His character and beautifully revealed through Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the perfect example of holy love. Although He was completely without sin, sinners were drawn to Him. Children ran into His arms, the broken found hope in His presence and those rejected by society discovered grace. Jesus never compromised God's truth, yet He never withheld God's love. His holiness exposed sin while His love invited people into forgiveness, healing and transformation.

This is seen beautifully in the account of Zacchaeus. Rather than condemning the tax collector, Jesus chose to enter his home and share a meal with him. That act of grace led Zacchaeus to repentance and a transformed life. Christ's holy love did not overlook sin; it changed the sinner. Throughout His ministry, Jesus consistently demonstrated that genuine holiness is not cold, distant or condemning. It is love expressed through truth, grace and restoration.

The perfect harmony of holiness and love is seen most clearly at the Cross. God's holiness required that sin be judged because He is perfectly just. At the same time, His love desired that sinners be rescued rather than condemned. Through Christ's sacrificial death, justice and mercy met together. God did not abandon His holiness in order to love us, nor did He withhold His love because of His holiness. Instead, both were perfectly satisfied in Jesus Christ.

The Cross reminds us that holiness without love becomes legalism, while love without holiness becomes compromise. Jesus demonstrated that genuine holiness and genuine love are never separated. They are perfectly united in His life, His ministry and ultimately His sacrifice for humanity.

Because of what Christ has done for us, we are called to love as He first loved us. Biblical love is far more than an emotion or a feeling; it is a deliberate decision. The Apostle Paul reminds believers to "put on love" (Colossians 3:14), just as we choose to clothe ourselves each day. We choose patience instead of irritation, forgiveness instead of resentment, kindness instead of harshness and humility instead of pride. Christian love gives because Christ first gave, forgives because Christ first forgave, and serves because Christ first served. Our feelings may change, but Christ-like love remains steadfast because it is grounded in God's unchanging character.

Jesus illustrated this truth in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21–35). Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who sinned against him. Surely forgiving seven times would be generous. Jesus replied, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times," before telling a story that revealed the heart of God.

A servant owed his master an enormous debt—far more than he could ever repay. Moved with compassion, the master cancelled the debt completely and set him free. Yet almost immediately, that same servant found a fellow servant who owed him a comparatively small amount. Instead of extending the same mercy he had received, he demanded immediate payment and had the man thrown into prison.

When the master heard what had happened, he was deeply grieved. The servant who had received such incredible grace had refused to show that same grace to another. Through this parable, Jesus teaches that those who have been forgiven an immeasurable debt by God are called to freely forgive others. Love is not measured by how we treat those who are easy to love, but by how we respond to those who have hurt us. Forgiveness reflects the mercy we ourselves have received through Christ. Paul brings these truths together in Colossians 3:14:

"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

The Greek word translated "binds together" is *syndesmos*, a word used to describe the ligaments of the human body. Ligaments are rarely noticed until they are damaged, yet they are essential. They connect bones, provide strength and stability, and enable the body to move as one. Without healthy ligaments, even the strongest muscles and healthiest bones cannot function together effectively.

Paul deliberately uses this picture because love performs the same role within the Body of Christ. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and forgiveness are all essential Christian virtues, but without love they become disconnected. Knowledge can become pride. Truth can become harsh. Service can become obligation. Even holiness can become cold and legalistic.

Love is the ligament that holds every Christian virtue together. It gives purpose to our service, grace to our truth, humility to our leadership and compassion to our correction. Love does not replace holiness; rather, it enables holiness to be expressed in a way that reflects the heart of Christ. When love binds together every part of the Body, the Church functions as God intended—united in purpose, growing in maturity and displaying the beauty of Christ to the world.

As followers of Jesus, we are invited to reflect His character in every area of life. Before speaking, responding or making a decision, we can pause and ask two simple questions: Is this holy? Is this loving?

These questions help us avoid two common dangers. Holiness without love becomes legalism. Love without holiness becomes compromise. Jesus never chose between holiness and love—He perfectly embodied both. As we allow the Holy Spirit to shape our hearts, our lives will increasingly reflect the purity of God's holiness and the beauty of His love. In doing so, we become living witnesses to the transforming power of the Gospel.

Love does not replace holiness; it enables holiness to be expressed in a way that reflects the heart of Christ.

Key Takeaways

- Holiness and love are perfectly united in the character of God.
- Jesus is the perfect example of holy love, demonstrating both grace and truth in every relationship.
- True holiness does not push sinners away; it lovingly calls them to repentance and restoration.
- Biblical love is a decision, not an emotion. We choose to love as Christ first loved us.
- Those who have received God's forgiveness are called to freely forgive others.
- Before responding or making a decision, ask yourself: Is this holy? Is this loving?
- Holiness without love becomes legalism, while love without holiness becomes compromise.
- Just as ligaments hold the human body together, love holds the Body of Christ together in unity and maturity.
- Our love for one another is the visible evidence that we belong to Christ (John 13:35).
- The Church is called to be recognised not only for what it believes, but for how it loves.
- Holiness has a face and the face of holiness is love.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think our culture often separates love and holiness? How does Jesus challenge this view?
2. Why were sinners drawn to Jesus even though He never compromised God's holiness? What can the Church learn from His example?
3. Read Matthew 18:21–35. What does the parable teach us about the relationship between receiving God's forgiveness and extending forgiveness to others? Why do you think forgiveness can sometimes be so difficult?
4. Why does Paul describe love as the "bond" that holds every virtue together (Colossians 3:14)? What happens when love is missing from a church?
5. Read John 13:34–35. Why do you think Jesus chose love—not knowledge, gifts or ministry—as the defining mark of His disciples? How might this shape the way we relate to one another as a church?
6. How could asking "Is this holy?" and "Is this loving?" change the way we respond to difficult situations as individuals and as a church?

This Week's Challenge

Each day this week, pause before responding to a challenging situation or making an important decision and ask yourself - Is this holy? Is this loving?

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you respond in a way that reflects both the truth and the love of Christ.

Scripture Memory Challenge

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

Series So Far: The Holiness of the Church

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Week 30 & 31 – Holiness and Church Discipline: God disciplines those He loves and His Church is called to lovingly restore those who wander from His ways.

Last week we considered how God's discipline flows from His love and is one of the ways He shapes us into the likeness of Christ. This week Pastor Samuel helps us understand how that same love is expressed within the Church. It is God's gracious means of restoring His people, protecting His Church and preserving His holiness.

Holiness and Church Discipline

When people hear the phrase *church discipline*, many immediately think of judgement or exclusion. Pastor Samuel reminded us that Scripture presents something very different. God's purpose has always been to redeem, reconcile and restore His people. These three truths form the heart of every act of biblical discipline.

Throughout Scripture, God never corrects His children simply to expose their failures. He corrects them because He desires restored relationship. Just as a loving parent refuses to leave a child walking towards danger, our Heavenly Father lovingly intervenes when sin begins to draw us away from Him.

Pastor Samuel reminded us that the primary purpose of the Church is not simply friendship or fellowship, valuable though those things are. We gather first to know God, to grow in His Word and to help one another become more like Christ. Genuine Christian fellowship is built upon a shared commitment to knowing God and serving Him together.

Because God desires a holy people, sin cannot simply be ignored. Sin damages our relationship with God, harms our fellowship with others and, if left unaddressed, gradually shapes the culture of the Church. Pastor Samuel reminded us that "what we tolerate today can become tomorrow's tradition." Holiness rarely disappears suddenly; it fades gradually whenever God's standards are quietly lowered.

Jesus gave His Church a clear pattern for restoring believers who fall into sin (Matthew 18:15–20).

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

The first step is always private and personal. If a brother or sister sins, we lovingly speak with them ourselves. If they listen, the relationship has been restored. If they refuse, one or two mature believers become involved. Only if there is continued refusal does the wider leadership become involved.

This pattern reveals God's heart. Discipline is never intended to embarrass someone publicly. It begins quietly, personally and graciously, always seeking restoration before anything else. Pastor Samuel also reminded us that love covers a multitude of sins, but it never covers up sin. Genuine love does not ignore behaviour that damages someone's relationship with Christ. Instead, love has the courage to speak truth with humility because it desires the other person's good.

The Apostle Paul gives a similar warning in 1 Corinthians 5, explaining that “a little leaven leavens the whole lump.” When sin is continually ignored or excused, it eventually influences the whole community. Yet even Paul's instruction was never motivated by revenge or condemnation. His desire was always that people would ultimately be saved and restored to fellowship with Christ.

Pastor Samuel described the Church as a spiritual family rather than a courtroom. A courtroom seeks conviction; a family seeks restoration. The goal is never humiliation, but healing. Like a surgeon who cuts in order to remove disease and restore health, biblical discipline may be painful for a time, but its purpose is always healing rather than harm.

The message concluded by reminding us that Christians were never intended to live isolated lives. Throughout the New Testament believers are pictured as one Body, growing together, encouraging one another and helping each other remain faithful to Christ. Accountability is not a prison but a greenhouse where holiness grows. As we humbly receive correction and extend grace to others, the Church increasingly reflects both the holiness and the love of Jesus Christ.

Key Takeaways

- God's purpose is always to redeem, reconcile and restore His people.
- Church discipline is an expression of love, not rejection.
- Holiness cannot flourish where sin is continually ignored.
- Jesus established a gracious process for restoring believers (Matthew 18:15–20).
- Love covers sin by bringing restoration, but it never hides or excuses sin.
- Accountability protects both individual believers and the whole Church.
- The Church is a family seeking restoration, not a courtroom seeking condemnation.
- Humility allows correction to produce spiritual growth.
- Holiness grows best within committed Christian community.

Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Samuel spoke about the three purposes behind God's discipline: redemption, reconciliation and restoration. How does that challenge the way our culture often views correction or accountability?
2. Why is accountability difficult in today's culture? What fears or misunderstandings often prevent Christians from lovingly correcting or receiving correction?
3. The Church is described as a family rather than a courtroom. What characteristics would you expect to find in a healthy spiritual family?
4. Imagine every believer practised Matthew 18 faithfully. How do you think our churches would look different?

This Week's Challenge

Read Matthew 18:15–20 throughout this week.

Ask God to cultivate a heart that is both humble enough to receive correction and loving enough to gently restore others. Pray that your words and actions would always reflect Christ's desire to redeem, reconcile and restore.

Scripture Memory Challenge

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over."

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Last week we considered how God's discipline flows from His love and is one of the ways He shapes us into the likeness of Christ. This week Pastor Samuel helps us understand how that same love is expressed within the Church. Biblical discipline is never about punishment, embarrassment or rejection. It is God's gracious means of restoring His people, protecting His Church and preserving His holiness.

Holiness and Church Discipline (Part 2)

When people hear the phrase *church discipline*, many immediately think of judgement or exclusion. Pastor Samuel reminded us that Scripture presents something very different. God's purpose has always been to redeem, reconcile and restore His people. These three truths form the heart of every act of biblical discipline.

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Week 30 & 31 – Holiness and Church Discipline: God disciplines those He loves and His Church is called to lovingly restore those who wander from His ways.

Week 32 – A Holy People at the Lord's Table: Communion calls God's people to remember Christ's sacrifice, examine their hearts and approach His table with faith, repentance, gratitude, reverence and expectation.

This week Ps Samuel concludes our teaching on church discipline by considering the particular responsibility carried by those who lead God's people. From there, he turns our attention to the Lord's Table and challenges us to rediscover communion as more than a familiar weekly practice.

Holiness and Church Discipline

Over the past two weeks we have considered the heart of biblical discipline: redemption, reconciliation and restoration. Ps Samuel concluded this teaching by applying these same principles specifically to those who lead the Church.

Scripture holds leaders to a high standard because leadership carries influence and influence carries responsibility. Church leadership is not presented in Scripture as a privilege or position of importance, but as a stewardship entrusted by Christ. Jesus remains the true Shepherd of His Church; pastors and leaders are stewards of people for whom Christ gave His life.

This is why character matters so deeply in Christian leadership. Ps Samuel pointed to the qualifications for leadership given in Scripture—being above reproach, faithful, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable and gentle, among others. Significantly, most of these qualifications concern character rather than gifting. As Ps Samuel expressed it, “Character is more important than gift.”

When a leader does fall into sin, however, the purpose of biblical discipline remains the same as it does for every believer: to redeem, reconcile and restore. Leaders should neither receive harsher treatment because of personal dislike nor softer treatment because of their position. There must be truth, accountability, repentance and appropriate restoration. Where wrongdoing also breaks the law, repentance before God does not remove responsibility for earthly consequences.

This brings our study of church discipline back to where it began: God's desire is for a holy people. Accountability within the Church—including accountability for its leaders—is ultimately about protecting the holiness of Christ's Body and helping God's people remain faithful to Him.

A Holy People at the Lord's Table

Having concluded his teaching on discipline, Ps Samuel turned to another important expression of the holiness of the Church: communion.

Because communion is celebrated regularly, it can easily become something familiar—bread is taken, the cup is received and we move on without deeply considering what we are doing. Yet Paul presents the Lord's Supper as something far more profound. Communion is remembrance, proclamation, participation, celebration of grace and a solemn call to holiness. Ps Samuel encouraged us therefore to approach the Lord's Table with faith, repentance, gratitude, reverence and expectation.

Communion is holy because it belongs to Christ. Jesus Himself instituted the meal, taking bread and saying, *"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me,"* and taking the cup as the new covenant in His blood. The holiness of the table therefore begins with the holiness of its Host.

As Ps Samuel put it: "The table is not ordinary bread for ordinary people, living ordinary lives. It is an extraordinary grace for a people called to extraordinary holiness."

The Lord's Table takes us back to Calvary. Jesus is our Passover Lamb, whose body was broken and whose blood was poured out for us. Yet communion does not only look backwards. It reminds us that Christ has died, Christ is risen and Christ will come again. It points backward to the cross, upward to the risen Christ and forward to His return. Ps Samuel described this beautifully: "Every communion service stands with one foot at Calvary and the other foot in eternity."

Communion is also more than a mental exercise of remembering Jesus. Paul describes it as a participation in Christ. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit we are drawn again into fellowship with our risen Lord. The Spirit reminds us of Christ's sacrifice, convicts us of sin, strengthens our faith, renews our assurance and deepens our love for Christ. This is why we can come to communion with expectation rather than simply going through a familiar routine.

But this holy encounter also calls us to self-examination. Paul tells each believer to examine themselves before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. This does not mean waiting until we consider ourselves worthy. None of us comes to Christ on the basis of our own worthiness. Rather, we honestly ask whether there is unconfessed sin, spiritual coldness, unforgiveness, bitterness or broken relationship that God is calling us to address.

"So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world."

1 Corinthians 11: 27 – 32

The instruction is not examine yourself and stay away, but examine yourself and then eat. We recognise our need, repent and receive again the grace Christ has made available to us. This brings us straight back to the three truths we have been learning through church discipline: redemption, reconciliation and restoration.

Ps Samuel summarised the heart of this teaching in one simple statement:

“The table welcomes repentant sinners, not careless hearts.”

We do not approach communion because we have lived perfectly. We approach because Christ has died for us. We come humbly, remembering His grace, allowing the Holy Spirit to search us and responding wherever He calls us to repentance. In doing so, communion becomes not merely something we do each Sunday, but a regular invitation to return our hearts to Christ and remember the extraordinary grace by which His holy people live.

Key Takeaways

- Communion was instituted by Jesus and belongs to Him.
- The holiness of the Lord's Table flows from the holiness of Christ, its Host.
- Communion is remembrance, proclamation, covenant, participation, celebration and a call to holiness.
- We approach communion with faith, repentance, gratitude, reverence and expectation.
- Communion looks backward to Christ's sacrifice, upward to the risen Christ and forward to His return.
- Through the Holy Spirit, communion becomes more than remembering Jesus; it is an opportunity for living fellowship with Him.
- Self-examination is not intended to keep repentant believers away from the table but to bring us honestly before Christ.
- Communion challenges us to examine both our relationship with God and our relationships with one another.
- The Lord's Table welcomes repentant sinners, not careless hearts.
- Communion should never become so familiar that we lose our wonder at the grace of Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Ps Samuel described communion as more than a symbol or weekly ritual. What difference would it make if we approached communion each week expecting to encounter Christ and receive from the Holy Spirit?
2. Ps Samuel said, “Every communion service stands with one foot at Calvary and the other foot in eternity.” How might our experience of communion change if we saw it not only as remembering Jesus’ death, but also as celebrating our future with Him?
3. Paul tells us to examine ourselves before taking communion. How can we practise genuine self-examination without falling into condemnation or believing that we must make ourselves “worthy” before coming to Christ?
4. What might change in our church if we regularly approached communion with all five of these attitudes: faith, repentance, gratitude, reverence and expectation?

This Week's Challenge

The next time you receive communion, resist the temptation to move through it automatically. Before taking the bread and cup, deliberately pause and consider five words:

Faith – Repentance – Gratitude – Reverence – Expectation

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything that needs to be confessed, forgiven or reconciled. Remember what Christ has done for you, thank Him for His grace, and approach His table expecting Him to minister to you.

For those who feel comfortable doing so, consider setting aside a quiet time during the week to share communion at home and intentionally reflect on Christ's sacrifice.

Scripture Memory Challenge

“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”
1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV)

Authority that Guards Holiness

Over the past several weeks, we have been exploring what it means to be a holy people.

Together, we have discovered that holiness is far more than personal behaviour or outward appearance. God calls His people out of darkness and into His Kingdom. He loves and prepares His Bride, builds believers together as His dwelling place, unites us as one Body through the Holy Spirit, teaches us that love is the bond of perfect holiness, restores us through loving discipline and invites us to gather at His table with faith, repentance, gratitude, reverence and expectation.

Throughout this series, one truth has become increasingly clear: holiness is not an individual journey. It is something God works out within His people, His Church.

This week's message builds naturally on that foundation by exploring the role of spiritual authority within God's holy community.

Pastor Samuel presented five key principles that help us understand God's purpose for leadership within the Church:

- Spiritual authority originates with God.
- Spiritual authority exists to watch over souls.
- Spiritual authority protects holiness.
- Spiritual authority corrects in order to restore.
- Submission is not blind obedience.

In a culture that often associates authority with power, control or position, Scripture presents a very different picture. Biblical leadership is rooted in stewardship, accountability and service. God establishes spiritual authority not to dominate His people, but to protect, guide and mature them as they grow in holiness.

The foundation of spiritual authority begins with God Himself. Hebrews 13:17 reminds believers to have confidence in their leaders because they keep watch over them and will one day give an account to God.

“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”

Scripture repeatedly describes spiritual leaders as shepherds who have been entrusted with the care of God's people. Their authority is never presented as ownership, but as stewardship.

Likewise, in Acts 20:28, Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that the Holy Spirit has appointed them as overseers to care for the Church that Christ purchased with His own blood.

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

- **Spiritual authority originates with God**

Pastor Samuel's first point was that spiritual authority originates with God. Leadership within the Church is not ultimately about titles, positions or human appointment. True spiritual authority begins with the calling and appointment of the Holy Spirit. However, this does not mean that leaders possess unquestionable authority. Every leader remains accountable to Scripture, to the Holy Spirit and ultimately to Christ, who is the Chief Shepherd of the Church.

The shepherd does not own the sheep. He answers to the One who bought them with His own blood.

- **Spiritual authority exists to watch over souls**

The role of a shepherd is not to control people but to care for them. The biblical image of a shepherd is one of vigilance, attentiveness and genuine concern. A shepherd notices when someone begins to drift. A shepherd recognises spiritual danger and encourages growth. Leadership, therefore, begins not with the question, Who must obey me? but with the question, whom has God entrusted to my care?

Pastor Samuel acknowledged that correction can sometimes feel uncomfortable, but loving correction is not interference. Rather, it is often evidence that someone is genuinely invested in our spiritual growth. He challenged us not to automatically interpret pastoral concern as an attempt to control us but to recognise that godly leadership seeks our growth in Christ.

- **Spiritual authority protects holiness**

The third point was that spiritual authority protects holiness. Holiness does not simply happen automatically. It must be taught, cultivated, protected and preserved within the life of the Church. This is why God establishes spiritual oversight within His covenant community. Without it, confusion and disorder quickly take hold. Holiness flourishes when believers live in authentic Christian community under the guidance of godly leadership.

- **Spiritual authority corrects in order to restore**

The fourth point reminded us that spiritual authority corrects in order to restore. Once again, Pastor Samuel brought us back to the three principles we have been studying over the past several weeks: redemption, reconciliation and restoration.

Redemption restores our relationship with God. Reconciliation restores our relationships with one another. Restoration seeks to see people healed, strengthened and re-established within the community of faith.

Biblical correction is never intended to shame, punish, embarrass or control. Its purpose is always to restore people to healthy relationships with God and with one another. As he reminded us, the goal of church discipline is not to win an argument but to gain a brother or sister in Christ.

- **Submission is not blind obedience**

Finally, Pastor Samuel addressed an important misunderstanding by teaching that submission is not blind obedience. Christian submission does not require us to stop thinking, stop asking questions or stop exercising discernment. Rather, it reflects a teachable spirit, a willingness to cooperate and a readiness to receive legitimate, godly spiritual guidance. At the same time, all authority must remain subject to Scripture because only God possesses absolute authority.

Submission does not mean switching off discernment. It means refusing to make independence your highest value.

Pastor Samuel concluded with a powerful reminder that captures the heart of biblical leadership: "Godly authority does not stand over the Church to control it. It kneels beneath Christ to guard what He purchased with His own blood."

As believers, we are called to be both faithful leaders and faithful followers. Whether we lead in our homes, our workplaces, our ministries or our church, we are called to reflect the character of Christ. Holiness is not maintained through control, power or position. It is cultivated through servant-hearted leadership that honours Christ, protects His people and points others toward Him.

Key Takeaways

- God calls communities, not just individuals, into holiness.
- Spiritual authority originates with God and is entrusted by the Holy Spirit.
- Church leaders are stewards, not owners, of God's people.
- The Church belongs to Christ because He purchased it with His own blood.
- Spiritual authority exists to protect, guide and mature believers in holiness.
- Godly leadership watches over souls rather than controlling people.
- Biblical correction aims for redemption, reconciliation and restoration.
- Christian submission requires a teachable spirit but never demands blind obedience.
- Scripture remains the ultimate authority for both leaders and believers.
- Healthy leadership reflects the servant-hearted character of Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Samuel said that God doesn't simply call individuals to holiness; He calls communities into holiness. Why do you think God designed spiritual growth to happen within a community rather than in isolation?
2. What is the difference between loving pastoral care and controlling leadership? How can we recognise the difference?
3. Pastor Samuel said, "Submission does not mean switching off discernment." Why do you think both submission and discernment are necessary for a healthy church?
4. Have you ever experienced correction that helped you grow spiritually? What made that correction helpful rather than hurtful?
5. What does a teachable spirit look like in everyday Christian life?

This Week's Challenge

Take a few moments this week to reflect on the people God has placed in positions of spiritual influence in your life.
Pray for your pastors, church leaders, ministry leaders and those who faithfully shepherd others.

Then ask yourself these two questions:

- Am I teachable?
- Am I helping to build a healthy, Christ-centred community?

Scripture Memory Challenge

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”
Acts 20:28

A Holy Church in a Corrupt World

Throughout this series, we have discovered that holiness is not simply an individual pursuit. God is forming a holy people—united in Christ, shaped by love, restored through grace and growing together in maturity—who reflect the character of Christ both within the Church and before the world.

This week, Ps Jerome takes that truth beyond the walls of the Church and asks what it means to be a holy Church in a corrupt world.

We have not been called out of darkness simply to remain together where it is comfortable. God has made us holy so that His light might shine through us into the places where it is needed most.

“You are called to be a light in the darkness.”

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

1 Peter 2:9

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”^[a] Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky

Philippians 2:14–15

Peter describes God's people as a *chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and God's special people*. But these titles come with a purpose: that we might proclaim the praises of the One who called us out of darkness and into His marvellous light. Holiness is therefore not about separating ourselves from the world and avoiding everyone who does not know Christ. We are set apart for God so that we can represent Him within the world.

Noah gives us a powerful example of what this looks like. He lived in a generation characterised by increasing wickedness, yet he chose righteousness. He did not allow the standards of the culture around him to determine the standard of his own life. Holiness requires integrity—the willingness to stand where God calls us to stand even when others choose differently.

The same challenge remains for us today. The values of the culture around us will not always align with the Word of God. We therefore need to continually ask ourselves what is shaping our beliefs, decisions, speech and behaviour.

As we were challenged in the message: “that people are doing it does not make it right. We have a standard which is God's Word.”

Yet being a holy Church does not mean being a perfect Church. Ps Jerome compared gathering for church with taking a car for a service. We come together because God's Word continues to examine, repair, reshape and mature us.

We are not people claiming to have reached perfection; we are people allowing God to continually transform us into who He has called us to be.

This transformation should become visible. Holiness is demonstrated not only by what we refuse to participate in, but through how we live, love, serve, speak and forgive.

Our character can sometimes communicate Christ more powerfully than our words. People notice how Christians treat others, respond to offence, handle difficulty and care for those around them.

Joseph and Daniel both demonstrated this kind of integrity. Joseph refused to compromise even when doing what was right came at great personal cost. Daniel determined in his heart that he would remain faithful to God despite living within a culture that did not share his convictions. Their circumstances were different, but the principle was the same: faithfulness to God was not negotiable.

But holiness is not demonstrated through conviction alone. It must also be seen in our relationships with one another.

We are called to live different, to love different, to serve different, to forgive different.

When believers love one another, forgive one another, serve together and remain united, the world sees something different. A church may preach holiness yet fail to demonstrate it if its people treat one another without love. Our life together should make the character of Christ visible.

Our greatest evangelistic message then is not only what we say about Christ, but how Christ has transformed the way we live together.

This brings holiness and evangelism together. God has not placed His Church within a broken world simply to condemn it or withdraw from it. He has placed us here to shine. That begins close to home—with our families, neighbours, workplaces and communities—and extends wherever God gives us influence.

Our words matter, but so do our actions. A smile, an encouraging word, an act of kindness, forgiveness offered when it is difficult, or simply taking time to care for someone can reveal something of Christ.

We are called to speak truth, but to speak the truth in love, creating a community in which people encounter both God's holiness and His grace.

Ps Jerome concluded by challenging us to find practical ways to shine. Even something as ordinary as our social media can become a platform through which someone encounters Jesus.

We cannot influence the world for Christ while hiding the light He has placed within us.

The question for us, then, is not simply “How do we remain holy in a corrupt world?” but also: How can the holiness, love and transforming power of Christ become visible through us to the world around us?

Key Takeaways

- God calls His people out of darkness so that they can shine His light in the world.
- Holiness means being set apart for God while remaining present and purposeful in the world.
- God's Word—not the surrounding culture—is the standard by which we live.
- A holy Church is not a perfect Church, but a people continually being transformed by God.
- Integrity means remaining faithful to God even when faithfulness is difficult or costly.
- Holiness is visible through our character, love, service, forgiveness and relationships.
- The way Christians live together can itself become a powerful witness to Christ.
- Evangelism begins close to home and extends into every place God has given us influence.
- We are called not merely to speak about the light, but to be light.

Discussion Questions

1. How can Christians remain distinct from the values of the world without becoming disconnected from the people we are called to reach?
2. “That people are doing it does not make it right.” How do we recognise when our thinking has gradually been shaped more by the culture around us than by God's Word?
3. Noah, Joseph and Daniel each remained faithful to God in difficult environments. What can we learn from them about developing the courage to stand firm?
4. Our greatest evangelistic message is not only what we say about Christ, but how Christ has transformed the way we live together. What could this look like practically for us as a church community?

This Week's Challenge

This week, intentionally look for one place where God has already positioned you to shine—your family, neighbourhood, workplace, friendship circle, community or even social media and ask:

“How can someone see something of Jesus through me here?”

Then choose one simple action: encourage someone, forgive, serve, share your faith, invite someone to church, post something that points to Christ, or demonstrate His love in a practical way.

Scripture Memory Challenge

“Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.”

Philippians 2:14–15

Introduction

Throughout this series, we have discovered that holiness is not simply an individual pursuit. God is forming a holy people—united in Christ, shaped by love, restored through grace and growing together in maturity—who reflect the character of Christ both within the Church and before the world.

In recent weeks, we have considered what it means to be a holy Church in a corrupt world: a people set apart for God, yet present and purposeful in the places where He has called us to shine. This week, Ps Melissa brings the focus to our life together. If holiness is to become visible through the Church, then our unity must also be holy—centered on Christ, governed by truth and expressed through Christlike character.

Ps Melissa developed this message through eleven key points. These points form the structure of this week's notes.

Unity Without Compromise

Unity is precious, but Scripture never presents unity as an absolute good independent of truth, holiness and Christ. The question is not merely whether people are united, but around whom, around what and for what purpose.

At Babel, humanity displayed remarkable unity, yet it was unity without submission to God. Agreement can exist in error, rebellion or compromise. Christian unity is different: it is redeemed people standing together in Christ, under the truth, through the Holy Spirit and for the glory of God.

Ephesians 4:1–6 shows that biblical unity begins with God's work, is sustained through Christlike character and is bounded by truth. Unity is not the absence of disagreement; it is the presence and lordship of Christ governing how we respond to disagreement.

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

- Ephesians 4:1–6

1. Unity Begins With Our Calling

Paul first urges believers to live a life worthy of the calling they have received. In Ephesians 1–3, he has already explained who they are: chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed with the Holy Spirit, made alive with Christ, reconciled into one body and made God's dwelling.

Their conduct must now correspond with that calling—like a glove fitting the hand.

The Church does not manufacture spiritual unity. Christ has already created one new humanity and believers are called to live consistently with what He has done. When unity is strained, our first question should therefore not be, "Why can't that person get along with me?" but, "Am I walking worthy of my calling?" Unity begins with personal discipleship.

2. Unity Requires Christlike Character

Paul identifies four qualities necessary for Christian unity: humility, gentleness, patience and bearing with one another in love. Many apparent “theological” conflicts are actually character problems wearing theological clothes—pride, insecurity, stubbornness or an unwillingness to listen.

Humility

Christian humility does not mean believing we are worthless. It means refusing to make ourselves the centre. Pride asks, “Why have they not recognised me?” Humility asks, “How can I serve?” Pride protects position; humility protects relationship. Where everyone insists on being important, unity becomes impossible.

Gentleness

Gentleness is not weakness; it is strength brought under control. A mature believer can hold strong convictions without becoming harsh. We must learn to distinguish strength from aggression, boldness from arrogance, discernment from suspicion and correction from humiliation. Truth does not become more truthful because we shout it.

Patience

Patience carries the idea of being “long-tempered”—the opposite of having a short fuse. Christian community requires patience because sanctification is a process. We are living with people God is still changing and they are living with us while God is still changing us. We must not demand finished product behaviour from people who are still under construction.

Bearing With One Another in Love

This means enduring, making allowances for one another and extending grace to imperfect people. It does not mean tolerating serious sin indefinitely. Some matters need to be confronted, some forgiven and some simply overlooked. Spiritual maturity can distinguish between genuine sin or error and something that is merely a personal dislike or preference.

“It is to one’s glory to overlook an offence.”

Proverbs 19:11

3. Unity Is Created by the Holy Spirit

Paul says to keep, guard and preserve the unity of the Spirit. This is not unity of personality, politics, culture, institution or denomination; it is unity produced by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who gives prophecy, tongues, healing and miracles also produces love, patience, gentleness, humility, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Spiritual gifts do not excuse relational immaturity. We must not be charismatic in gifting while remaining carnal in relationships. The gifts are given by grace; developing Christlike character requires our willing cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

4. Unity Requires Intentional Effort

Unity requires intentional maintenance because relationships experience misunderstandings, disappointed expectations, personality clashes, cultural differences and offence. The enemy exploits these moments because a divided church is a weakened church.

Sometimes spiritual warfare looks like refusing to gossip, making the phone call, asking forgiveness, declining to repeat an offence, or choosing reconciliation over vindication.

“Sometimes the greatest victory over the enemy is two believers refusing to become enemies.”

5. Peace Is the Bond That Holds Unity Together

Peace is the bond—the connective tissue—that holds unity together. Biblical peace is not the absence of conflict but shalom: wholeness, wellbeing and rightly ordered relationships. Jesus calls us to be peacemakers, not merely peacekeepers. Peacekeeping may avoid the problem; peacemaking addresses it in truth and love so genuine reconciliation can occur.

When conflict arises, we can inflame it, broadcast it, recruit supporters, withdraw and punish by silence—or move towards reconciliation.

Peacemakers do not pretend there is no fire; they refuse to pour petrol on it.

Rather than seeking only people who agree with us, maturity listens to different perspectives so our understanding can grow.

6. Unity Does Not Mean Uniformity

One body contains many different parts. Unity does not require the same personality, culture, generation, ministry style or preference.

Difference, properly ordered, enriches unity.

Uniformity says, “Become like me.” Biblical unity says, “Let us become like Christ.”

“Unity does not require everybody to sing the same note. Harmony requires different notes submitted to the same song.”

7. Unity Has Doctrinal Boundaries

Ephesians 4 grounds unity in theological reality: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all.

Paul does not solve doctrinal difference by eliminating doctrine.

Biblical truth creates the boundaries within which Christian unity becomes meaningful. Truth without love becomes brutality; love without truth becomes sentimentality. Biblical unity requires both.

8. One Lord: Christ Is the Centre of Unity

The Church does not ultimately unite around a preacher, denomination, political ideology, ethnic identity, worship style or social program. We unite around Jesus Christ as Lord.

Whenever loyalty to personalities becomes stronger than loyalty to Christ, factionalism follows.

Healthy leaders build people around Christ and say, “Follow me as I follow Christ.”

9. One Faith: Unity Cannot Require Abandoning Truth

We cannot sacrifice the lordship and identity of Christ, the gospel, the authority of God’s revelation, salvation by grace, the resurrection or the holiness of God simply to preserve outward agreement.

Agreement that requires theological surrender is not Christian unity.

10. Not Every Disagreement Justifies Division

At the same time, not every theological disagreement carries equal weight. Primary doctrines—such as the Trinity, the deity and humanity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, salvation through Christ and the apostolic gospel—are essential.

Secondary matters, including baptismal practice, church government, aspects of spiritual gifts and eschatology, are important but do not necessarily place another believer outside the Christian faith. Tertiary matters are preferences such as music, service times, dress, programs and ministry methods. Maturity keeps major things major and minor things minor.

11. Unity Must Be Grounded in Holiness

Christian unity must also be grounded in holiness. Unity cannot mean celebrating behaviour Scripture calls us to forsake. This does not mean isolating ourselves from people who do not know Christ.

Jesus welcomed sinners without redefining sin. He combined radical welcome with radical holiness: grace opened the door and truth showed the way forward.

The Church must do the same.

“A unity that requires us to abandon holiness may produce crowds, but it cannot produce the Church Christ is coming back for”

The Eleven Key Points

1. Unity begins with our calling: our conduct should match the identity and calling Christ has already given us.
2. Unity requires Christlike character: humility, gentleness, patience and loving forbearance protect our life together.
3. Unity is created by the Holy Spirit: believers do not manufacture it; we are called to guard what He has created.
4. Unity requires intentional effort: reconciliation, forgiveness and refusing gossip are often acts of spiritual warfare.
5. Peace is the bond that holds unity together: peacemaking addresses conflict in truth and love rather than avoiding it.
6. Unity does not mean uniformity: different people and expressions can form one body when all are submitted to Christ.
7. Unity has doctrinal boundaries: biblical truth gives Christian unity its meaning and shape.
8. One Lord—Christ is the centre of unity: the Church is not built around personalities, factions or preferences.
9. One faith—unity cannot require abandoning truth: outward agreement must never come at the cost of the gospel.
10. Not every disagreement justifies division: maturity distinguishes primary doctrines, secondary differences and tertiary preferences.
11. Unity must be grounded in holiness: the Church is called to hold radical welcome and radical holiness together.

Discussion Questions

1. Which of the four qualities in Ephesians 4:2—humility, gentleness, patience or bearing with one another in love—do you find most challenging, and why?
2. What is the difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking? What might moving towards reconciliation look like in a real relationship?
3. What practical habits could help us remain centred on Christ rather than personalities, factions or preferences?
4. Ps Melissa reminded us that we are living with people God is still changing—and they are living with us while God is still changing us. How should this shape the way we respond to one another’s weaknesses?

This Week's Challenge

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one relationship in which you can actively protect unity this week.

Choose one concrete response: refuse to repeat gossip, listen to a different perspective, overlook a minor offence, make a phone call, apologise, forgive or begin a truthful and loving conversation aimed at reconciliation.

Scripture Memory Challenge

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”

- Ephesians 4:3

Introduction

Throughout this series, we have discovered that holiness is not simply an individual pursuit. God is forming a holy people—united in Christ, shaped by love, grounded in truth and continually transformed by His Spirit.

Last week, in Unity Without Compromise, we explored how genuine Christian unity must remain centred on Christ and grounded in truth. Unity does not require us to abandon biblical conviction; rather, holiness calls us to walk together in love while remaining faithful to God's Word.

This week builds naturally upon that foundation as we consider what keeps the Church both grounded in truth and spiritually alive. We are called to be a people of the Word and the Spirit—devoted to Scripture, dependent upon prayer and responsive to the Holy Spirit.

A People of the Word and Spirit

"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

- Acts 6: 1-7

As the early Church grew, it faced a practical problem. Some widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food, creating the potential for resentment and division. The apostles took the situation seriously, but they also recognised that responding to the need could not come at the expense of their primary calling. They appointed people who were full of the Spirit and wisdom to oversee the practical ministry, while declaring:

"We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

Acts 6:4

The result was significant: *the word of God spread* and the number of disciples increased rapidly. Word, prayer, Spirit, wisdom and practical service were not competing priorities. Together, they strengthened the Church and enabled its mission to continue.

One of the great tensions within the modern Church is the tendency to believe we must choose between being **biblically grounded** and **spiritually alive**. Yet Scripture never presents these as opposing alternatives. The early Church was simultaneously centred on the Word, saturated in prayer, filled with the Spirit, grounded in doctrine and active in the supernatural.

The Church does not need less Word to have more Spirit, nor does it need less Spirit to have more Word.

We need the Word illuminated by the Spirit and the Spirit's work governed by the Word. Without the Word, spiritual experiences can become disconnected from biblical truth. Without the Spirit, our knowledge of Scripture can remain information without producing spiritual vitality and power.

We see this balance throughout the book of Acts. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the believers, yet Peter immediately stood and proclaimed the Scriptures. The Spirit empowered the preaching of the Word, and the Word explained what the Spirit was doing. The new believers then devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Pentecost did not replace Scripture; the Spirit empowered God's people to understand, proclaim and demonstrate it.

This relationship between the Word and the Spirit is also seen throughout Scripture. Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, promising His disciples:

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

John 16:13

The Holy Spirit does not lead us away from God's truth; He guides us into it. Paul similarly teaches that it is through the Spirit that the things of God are revealed to us:

“These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”

1 Corinthians 2:10

The Spirit who inspired Scripture is the same Spirit who helps us understand and apply its truth. The Word gives us a foundation for discernment, while the Holy Spirit brings understanding, revelation and power to live according to that Word.

Jesus Himself promised in John 16:13 that when the Spirit of truth came, He would guide His people into truth. The Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture is the same Spirit who helps us understand and live it. This means spiritual experiences, impressions and prophetic words should never be accepted simply because someone says, “*God told me.*” They must be discerned and measured against God's Word.

Acts 6 also teaches us something important about calling and priorities. The apostles did not consider caring for widows unimportant—in fact, they established an organised ministry to ensure the need was properly met. But they understood that not every good thing was *their* thing.

Not every good thing is your thing.

There will always be worthwhile needs, opportunities and responsibilities competing for our attention. The challenge is recognising what God has specifically entrusted to us and remaining faithful to it. When everything becomes a priority, our God-given calling can eventually cease to be our priority.

For the apostles, protecting their calling meant remaining devoted to prayer and the Word. These were not occasional activities squeezed around ministry; they were the foundation from which ministry flowed.

The same principle applies to every believer. We cannot continually give spiritually from somewhere we are not continually being filled. Our public Christian life is strengthened by what happens privately as we read Scripture, pray and spend time in God's presence.

The public power of ministry is usually born in the private discipline of prayer and the Word.

Prayer itself is not simply preparation for doing something more spiritual. Prayer is ministry. It expresses our dependence upon God in a culture that continually tells us we should be able to manage everything ourselves. God invites us instead to come to Him as His children and depend upon Him.

Prayer also makes us attentive to what the Holy Spirit may be doing around us. When we regularly commune with God, we become more sensitive to His prompting—perhaps to encourage someone, begin a conversation, pray for a person or respond to a need we otherwise might have walked past.

The Word and prayer therefore work beautifully together:

The Word gives us something to say. Prayer gives us the spiritual power and dependence with which to say it.

This is the kind of Church we are called to become: people who know God's Word and people who know God's presence. We do not have to choose between truth and spiritual vitality. We can love Scripture, seek sound doctrine, pray expectantly, welcome the work of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to empower us to live and proclaim what God's Word says.

A holy Church needs both.

The challenge is therefore not simply to ask, “**Do I know God's Word?**” or “**Am I spiritually alive?**” but:

Am I becoming a person whose life is increasingly shaped by God's Word, dependent upon prayer and responsive to His Spirit?

Key Takeaways

- The Church was never intended to choose between the Word and the Spirit.
- God's Word gives the Church doctrinal stability; the Holy Spirit brings spiritual vitality and power.
- The Spirit who inspired Scripture also illuminates Scripture and helps us understand and live it.
- Spiritual experiences and impressions should be discerned according to God's Word.
- Not every good opportunity is necessarily our God-given assignment.
- Devotion to Scripture and prayer must be a priority rather than something fitted around everything else.
- Prayer is not merely preparation for ministry—prayer is ministry.
- Our public spiritual life is strengthened through private devotion to God.
- The Word gives us something to say; prayer gives us the dependence and spiritual power with which to say it.
- A mature Church is biblically grounded, prayerful and Spirit-filled.

Discussion Questions

1. "The public power of ministry is usually born in the private discipline of prayer and the Word." How does our private spiritual life affect what we are able to offer others?
2. Ps Samuel said, "Prayer is ministry." How might viewing prayer this way change the place we give it in our lives?
3. What are some practical ways we can become more consistent in Scripture and prayer without allowing them to become simply another task on our to-do list?
4. How can we create a church culture where people are encouraged both to know Scripture for themselves and to expect God to speak and work through His Spirit?
5. Acts 6:7 shows that when the Church maintained these priorities, the Word of God spread and the number of disciples increased. What might this teach us about the relationship between our spiritual foundations and our effectiveness in reaching others?

This Week's Challenge

This week, intentionally create space for **both the Word and prayer** each day.

As you read Scripture, ask:

What is God teaching me through His Word?

Then spend time in prayer and ask:

Holy Spirit, how do You want me to respond to what I have read? Who do You want me to encourage, serve or speak to today?

Write down anything that particularly stands out and return to it throughout the week.

The goal is not simply to **read more** or **pray more**, but to develop a life in which Scripture, prayer and responsiveness to the Holy Spirit increasingly belong together.

Scripture Memory Challenge

"We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

- Acts 6:4 (NIV)

Introduction

Throughout this series, we have discovered that holiness is not simply an individual pursuit. God is forming a holy people—united in Christ, shaped by love, grounded in truth and continually transformed by His Spirit.

Last week, in A People of the Word and Spirit, we considered how a mature Church must remain biblically grounded and spiritually alive. The Word, prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit are not competing priorities; together they strengthen the Church and enable its mission.

This week, Ps Samuel brings together two themes: Preparing a Dwelling Place and A Holy Church That Multiplies. God desires not merely to visit His people, but to dwell among and within them. Our response is to consider our ways, reorder our priorities and accept our place as living stones in the house He is building.

Preparing a Dwelling Place for Glory & A Holy Church That Multiplies

“This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured,’ says the Lord.”

Haggai 1:7–8 (NIV)

The God of Scripture is not distant or silent. He comes searching for people, reveals Himself and invites relationship. From Genesis to Revelation, we see His consistent desire to dwell with those He has created:

- In Eden, God walked with Adam and Eve.
- In the wilderness, He instructed Israel to build a sanctuary so He could dwell among them (Exodus 25:8).
- In Jesus, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).
- Through the Holy Spirit, God now makes His home within believers.
- In the new creation, “God’s dwelling place is now among the people” (Revelation 21:3).

God is not primarily looking for a crowd to impress. He is preparing a dwelling to inhabit.

The biblical language of God dwelling with His people carries the sense of settling, remaining and abiding. His presence is not meant to be a passing moment at a service. God is forming a people in whom His character is visible and through whom His presence can be made known.

Haggai spoke to a people who had returned from exile with permission to rebuild the temple. They began well, but opposition brought discouragement and the work stopped. Their own houses, livelihoods and comfort gradually became more important, while God’s house remained unfinished.

The unfinished temple exposed more than a building problem; it revealed disordered priorities. That is why God repeatedly said, “Consider your ways.” The same danger remains today. Career, business, property, entertainment and family schedules can occupy the centre of our lives while God receives whatever is left over.

Jesus gives the right order in Matthew 6:33: seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. Haggai's challenge invites honest examination of our calendars, budgets, ambitions and habits. It is not a call to neglect ordinary responsibilities, but to ensure that God's kingdom is no longer treated as an afterthought.

Revival begins when God's priorities move from the margins of our lives back to the centre.

Revival is not merely something we ask God to send. It also requires a people willing to ask, "Lord, what must change among us?" Scripture frequently connects divine visitation with human preparation: Israel consecrated themselves before Sinai; Joshua told the people to consecrate themselves before crossing the Jordan; and the disciples waited together in prayer before Pentecost.

There is no formula by which human effort can force God to act—He remains sovereign. Yet Scripture calls His people to become spiritually ready for what He desires to do. This preparation includes repentance, reconciliation, prayer, obedience, consecration, hunger, faith, doctrinal integrity and expectation.

Ps Samuel used the picture of rain. Rain is a blessing, but where no channels have been prepared it can cause erosion and destruction. In the same way, asking for blessing without preparing to steward it can leave us unable to carry what God gives.

Before God changes the atmosphere around us, He often confronts the conditions within us.

This calls for corporate as well as personal examination. Where have we tolerated compromise? Where have relationships fractured? Where has prayer lost its passion, evangelism disappeared, professionalism replaced spiritual power, or activity replaced obedience? A preparing Church asks God not only to send revival, but also to reveal what may be standing in its way.

Haggai 1:8 contains three direct commands: go, bring and build. God promised His presence, but His people still had a responsibility to obey. Prayer is essential, yet prayer is not an excuse for inactivity. God's grace calls us into responsive partnership with Him.

Paul writes, "For we are co-workers in God's service" (1 Corinthians 3:9). Nehemiah provides the same picture: he mourned and prayed over Jerusalem's broken walls, then called the people to rise and build. Spiritual burden must become practical responsibility.

Spiritual burden becomes practical responsibility.

It is right to pray for revival, souls, stronger families, young people and community transformation. But we must also ask: Who will disciple the new believers? Who will evangelise? Who will teach families, mentor young people and serve the community? The Church prepares for multiplication when people are ready to receive, nurture and equip those whom God brings.

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 2:5 (NIV)

God is not only building a physical place; He is building people together into a spiritual house. Every believer is a living stone with a place and a purpose. Some build through evangelism, intercession, teaching, generosity, administration, pastoral care, hospitality, worship or discipling younger believers.

The question is not whether every believer performs the same function. The question is whether every living stone accepts responsibility for the house. Each person should ask:

| Which part of God's house am I helping to build?

Acts 9:31 describes a Church that enjoyed peace, was strengthened, lived in the fear of the Lord and was encouraged by the Holy Spirit—and it increased in numbers. Healthy multiplication is not merely drawing a crowd. It flows from a holy Church being built up, walking in reverence, depending on the Spirit and faithfully participating in God's mission.

| Revival is prayed down on our knees, but it must also be built out with our hands.

Key Takeaways

- God has always desired to dwell with His people and make His presence known through them.
- God is preparing a dwelling to inhabit, not merely gathering a crowd to impress.
- Opposition and discouragement can quietly shift our priorities and leave God's work unfinished.
- To "consider our ways" is to examine what our time, energy and resources reveal about what we value.
- Preparing for God's presence includes repentance, reconciliation, prayer, obedience and consecration.
- Grace does not make us passive; it enables us to participate in what God is building.
- Every believer is a living stone with a place of service and responsibility in God's house.
- A holy Church multiplies as prayer becomes participation and spiritual burden becomes practical action.

Discussion Questions

1. If someone examined only your calendar, energy and resources, what might they conclude about your priorities? Is there one area God may be asking you to reorder?
2. "Before God changes the atmosphere around us, He often confronts the conditions within us." What personal or corporate condition might God be inviting us to address?
3. Ps Samuel said, "Grace does not produce passivity. Grace produces participation." Where could one of your prayers become a practical act of obedience?
4. As a living stone, which part of God's house are you currently helping to build? Where might your gifts meet a need in the Church or community?
5. Acts 9:31 connects peace, spiritual strengthening, reverence for God, the Spirit's encouragement and multiplication. How do these foundations contribute to healthy Church growth?

This Week's Challenge

Set aside time this week to prayerfully 'consider your ways.' Review your calendar, commitments and use of resources and ask:

Lord, what part of Your house are You asking me to help build?

Identify one priority, then take one practical step before your next life connexions group meeting. This might mean beginning a conversation about Jesus, offering to serve, encouraging or mentoring someone, pursuing reconciliation, joining others in prayer or establishing accountability in an area where you want to grow.

The goal is not activity for its own sake, but obedient participation in what God is already building.

Scripture Memory Challenge

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood."

1 Peter 2:5 (NIV)

CONTINUE THE CONNEXION

Grow in faith. Live it together.

Thank you for journeying through *The Holiness of the Church*.

May these studies continue to shape us as a holy people who reflect Christ's character, carry His presence and participate in His mission together.

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