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What holiness **MEANS**





Your charge as a parent is to lead your teens to lead holy, virtuous lives. But in order to know how, first you have to know what holiness looks like—and what it doesn't.

By Dr. Abby Hill

HOLINESS. A topic Christians are quite familiar with. We read about it in the Bible, sing about it in worship, and many a sermon has been crafted on the topic. Yet holiness is not only familiar; it's enduring in the history of Christian thought and life. A beloved traditional hymn, written in the 1800s, tells us to "Take Time to Be Holy" as "the world rushes on." Perhaps the challenge for Christians to lead a holy life in a secular society is not a concept unique to the 21st century.

We tend to think of holiness as being a "God thing," something only He is and that we can never attain in this life. Of course, God is completely holy. Yet, we are missing the other half of holiness—the part about our responsibility as believers to desire and personally seek it.

Holiness and spiritual purity are intertwined. Like holiness, there are ample references in the Bible to purity and, more specifically, to the pureness of heart. In

Matthew 5:8, we are told that those "pure in heart" are blessed. The Psalms (24:4; 51:10), along with many other Scriptures, compel us to seek and maintain a "pure heart." Holiness then, it could be suggested, is the manifestation of purity. Or better yet, spiritual purity leads to holiness.

The coming of Jesus to earth in human form set the way for our path to personal holiness and purity, despite our sinful nature. Second Corinthians 5:21 tells us, "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Just as our salvation is only possible through Jesus' life and sacrifice, our capability to realize holiness is only because of Jesus.

Still, achieving personal holiness seems so elusive in light of our humanness and the draws and distractions of modern life. It's hard to wrap our brain around how we could ever possibly reach such a level of what we consider "spiritual perfection."

Spiritual purity and holiness set us apart from the world while at the same time they connect us to God.

Of course, we know that the only way to holiness is through God's grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But how do we grasp the idea of holiness and apply it in our daily life? It's often helpful, when learning and processing a tough concept, to first understand what it is not. So, let's start here:

- » **Holiness is not about me.** God is the only truly holy One. We are to be holy in order to reflect who God is.
- » **Holiness is not a feeling.** Emotion is a human condition, unreliable and temporary. Holiness is eternal.
- » **Holiness is not perfection.** We can never be perfect in this life, although God will make us perfect in His time.
- » **Holiness is not superiority.** Our only point of reference for holiness is God, not a comparison to others.

To complete our understanding of holiness, let's look at what it is:

- » **Holiness is discipline.** Seeking personal holiness is a decided and intentional response to God's command.
- » **Holiness is testimony.** The outward signs of our commitment to holiness can serve as an example to others.
- » **Holiness is worship.** Holiness is a sacrifice of our own desires as an expression of gratitude and praise to God.

» **Holiness is discernment.** Holiness is a practice in active spiritual wisdom when making choices.

» **Holiness is difference.** Spiritual purity and holiness set us apart from the world while at the same time they connect us to God.

Make a conscious decision that your family will actively seek holy and pure Christian living. Begin by acknowledging the challenges of staying that course in a confused and broken world. Use that knowledge to strengthen your resolve as a family to grow closer to God through choices and decisions that inspire holiness. Here's a prayer to say as a family:

Dear God, thank you for your grace and the opportunity to be holy because you are holy. Thank you for sending Jesus as our perfect example of a pure and holy life. Help each member of our family to accept and embrace their responsibility to seek holiness, and guide us in transforming our intentions of purity into practice. Place in us your purpose, love, and endurance in choosing your will over our own every day. We pray for our hearts and that you will be reflected in our actions, behaviors, and activities, individually and as a family. In Jesus' name, amen.

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