

HOLINESS

Adopted by the General Board in 1977

“Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). *Webster’s Dictionary* defines *holiness* as “the quality or state of being holy; purity or integrity of moral character; freedom from sin; sanctity.”

Since the Lord actually commands His people to become holy because He is holy, the question arises: How does a sinful person receive the holiness of God in order to become as holy as God?

In the Old Testament, God imputed His holiness to the priesthood, commanding them to engrave the words “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” upon a plate of pure gold and to place it upon the “forefront of the mitre” (Exodus 28:36-37). This sign of imputed holiness allowed the priest to come into the presence of God without dying.

Holiness in the New Testament Dispensation

II Corinthians 5:17 states, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” The word *new* is translated from a Greek word that means “sanctified,” carrying the meaning that the person become a spiritual creation of God.

This new creation is accomplished by the new birth of water and the Spirit as described in John 3:5-6: “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Thus in the New Testament, man’s holiness is God’s character inborn into his or her nature by the infilling presence of the Spirit of God.

The birth of the Spirit makes a person a new creature. His old life is exterminated, obliterated, and buried; the power of sin in the flesh is destroyed. In the Old Testament, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” was written across the priest’s mitre; in the New Testament, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” is written on the heart of the “new creature.”

The baptism of the Spirit makes God’s love a blessed reality to the soul, out of which come hope and peace and joy and all other foretastes of heaven. His coming into the heart brings such disclosures of the divine nature, such revelations of mercy and grace, and such exhibitions of infinite affections that the heart feels itself surrounded and bathed in the love of God.

Holiness Demonstrated and Typified in the Personal Life

Old Testament Separation

Holiness is not only an inward presence of God, but it is also reflected in the outward life of the Christian in his or her conduct in this world. Holiness was a demand placed upon the Israelites that had to do with almost every act of their daily performance. For example, an Israelite could not sow different seeds in his vineyard, for to do so was an act of defilement

against Almighty God. (See Deuteronomy 22:9-11.) This command reminded the Israelites that they were different from other people in the world.

The principle of separation unto God was almost a continuous experience for the Israelites: in their working, dressing, eating, and fellowship, they were not to mix with the heathen or to indulge in the customs of heathenistic nations. This command from God was for the purpose of holiness: “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 7:6).

New Testament Teaching

The New Testament is clear and certain about the necessity of holiness. The apostle Paul wrote, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (I Thessalonians 4:3). A Christian who commits an act of fornication or adultery loses his or her sanctification. Thus Paul explained that every Christian “should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence,” which means unbridled sexual desires. It is the Holy Spirit within a human heart that gives a person the assistance he or she needs in restraining the forces of lust.

Another thing taught in this passage is that Christians are to be honest in matters of business and daily duties. Christians are so to practice the highest ideals of principle in monetary matters and social relationships that they will not be a reproach to God or the church.

Holiness in the Character of Man

Scripture references:

(I Samuel 16, 17; Philippians 4:1-9; Romans 12:1-2)

Inward and Outward Holiness

Jesus spoke of the need of both inward and outward holiness when he scourged the scribes and Pharisees: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” (Matthew 23:25).

The apostle Paul wrote, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Corinthians 7:1). This verse reveals the importance of both inner and outward holiness before God.

The apostle Peter also wrote of the need for inner sanctification: “But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (I Peter 3:4). This is the “inner parts” of holiness about which David wrote in Psalm 51:6; it refers to the real person (motives and secretive thoughts) that nobody else sees.

Jesus taught that evil and goodness both emerge from the heart, which is the center of a person’s life. Concerning evil, He said, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23). Thus true holiness is not possible without an inner sanctification of the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Holiness and Modesty

One area of outward holiness is the matter of modesty. Modesty is not confined to dress alone. It also includes conversation and manners. The Bible teaches us, “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5).

The apostle Peter admonished wives about both their behavior and appearance: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price”(I Peter 3:1-4).

The Word of God teaches a distinction between the dress of a woman and a man: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 22:5). The word *abomination* used by God in this verse indicates that this rule will not change through all generations. Christian men are not to wear women’s clothing, and Christian women are not to wear men’s clothing.

Holiness and Make-Up

Today’s Western society reveals a desire for a synthetic appearance; dye for the hair, paint for the face, mascara and liner for the eyes, and other forms of make-up create artificiality rather than reality. These practices of using make-up are not new, for Queen Jezebel, whose very image speaks of rebellion and opposition to all that is godly and Christ-like, used facial paint and other make-up in her vanity to attract the attention of men: “And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out a window” (II Kings 9:30).

The prophet Jeremiah condemned the actions of Israel by describing the nation as a lewd woman: “And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life” (Jeremiah 4:30).

The prophet Ezekiel wrote along the same lines: “And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments” (Ezekiel 23:40).

The New Testament also addresses this matter: “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (I Timothy 2:8-9).

Holiness and Jewelry

The Scriptures teach us that the wearing of ornamental jewelry and expensive, showy clothing is not in harmony with the Christian lifestyle. Paul wrote, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (I Timothy 2:9). Peter’s writings agree: “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel” (I Peter 3:3).

The apostle John described the harlot in Revelation by her attire: “And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication” (Revelation 17:4).

Holiness and Separation

We are entrusted with living in a world made by God but into which mankind’s sinfulness has brought corruption to economic, political, religious, and social institutions. As pilgrims and strangers looking for a city whose builder and maker is God, the people of God are not to follow the fads and fashions of this world. On the contrary, they are to maintain holiness in their personal lifestyle even in a wicked and perverted generation. The Bible tells us, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (I John 2:15-16).

There is some good achieved in bodily exercise while participating in some physical games and activities, but it must be done in a godly atmosphere. For example, the evils associated with competitive sports prohibits Christians from participating in this area.

Separation from worldliness also involves the length of hair for men and women. The apostle Paul wrote, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman is of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering” (I Corinthians 11:1-15).

Holiness and Television Programs

It is very evident that spirituality and holiness are deeply entwined together. The Scriptures teach that carnality is enmity toward God. The use of media must therefore be carefully considered so that we do not take the beautiful truths of God unto areas that will contribute to the downfall of a child of God.

The use of television in the home has become a serious concern to parents, teachers, sociologists, politicians, and religious leaders. Statistically, evidence indicates that the increase in violence, sexual immorality, and destruction of the family is in part caused by the display of these evils on television. We must strive always for a spiritual position in our living, and wisely, the United Pentecostal Church International has warned its members of the evils displayed on

television programs and admonished them not to have television sets in their homes for the sake of their spiritual welfare.

Holiness and Morality

The Bible teaches us that people are saved out of all kinds of sinful backgrounds, but they are not to continue to practice these sins after they become Christians: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

In this verse, the permissive, promiscuous, degenerative sins are clearly outlined as transgressions of the past life of Christians. The born-again person has been washed, sanctified, and justified, and no longer commits fornication, adultery, homosexuality, drunkenness, and all other sins.

We oppose the drinking of alcoholic beverages, either moderately or otherwise. Moreover, since the homosexual lifestyle is condemned in the Bible, we teach and preach against this sin just as we do other sins. Furthermore, the practice of aborting life is a serious violation of the sanctity of life, and the church therefore cannot condone the abortion of children.

Holiness and Physical Education

We are not opposed to physical education; we do not disqualify the possible good of physical exercise. However, since scriptural modesty is commanded in I Timothy 2:9, we stand against unduly exposing the body in public as an important matter to our Christian conscience. And since modesty in dress is taught and practiced in our churches, we cannot approve the integrating of male and female in physical education classes in which scanty clothing, on the gymnasium floor or in the swimming pool or in an outdoor stadium, is required.

When religious freedom is part of the Constitution of the United States and our people do their best to fulfill a scriptural role in behavior, we cannot accept the authoritarian declaration from the federal government program called Title IX that places our moral and scriptural conscience in jeopardy. We therefore strongly advise our pastors, ministers, educators, leaders, members of local churches, and all related believers either to request their children be excused from the physical education program in the school or to insist that their children be allowed to wear modest clothing when participating in the activities in the physical education program. This important position of Christian behavior will help to staunch the flow of nudity, perversion, degeneracy, and immodesty that threatens not only the nation but also the spiritual life of the church.

Note: In accordance with the action of the General Board on October 10, 1995, this position paper on holiness has been condensed.