

Tell Me About
HOLY LIVING



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The Christian faith may be shared in many ways. However, nothing is as convincing as the life of a person who is totally committed to God. Such a life leaves no doubt about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. It creates in other people a desire to know Christ.

The Bible calls such a total commitment *sanctification*, which means “to be fully surrendered to God” or “to be set apart for God.” Only when you make this full commitment to God can you “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9 NIV).

Of course, sanctification is not simply what you do—it’s what God does. When you consecrate yourself to God completely, his Holy Spirit will bring amazing changes to your life.

I remember when my brother went to an altar of prayer to be sanctified. He had accepted Christ as his Savior. To the best of his ability, he was living a Christian life. However, he had an uncontrollable temper—the kind of explosive temper that expressed itself in angry outbursts of rage, resulting in broken hearts and broken relationships. Sorry for each outburst of anger, he often returned to the altar, seeking God’s forgiveness.

But on this particular night, he did not return to his seat until he had claimed God's promise of entire sanctification. We heard no shouting or ecstatic utterance, just my brother's quiet statement that he believed God would sanctify entirely his spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23).

I saw immediately that my brother's life was changed. It was evident in his attitude and conduct. He still had a temper, but it was controlled by the Holy Spirit. His anger was now directed against violence, injustice, poverty, and evil, not on inflicting pain and shame. His total personality was transformed by the grace of God.

A HOLY LIFE IS SCRIPTURAL

Sanctification is necessary for Christian *discipleship*. Jesus' first disciples had left all to follow him. Jesus said they belonged to him and were no longer of the world (John 17:6). Yet, while he sent them out to serve in ministry (Luke 10:1), they still wrestled with spiritual pride and selfish ambition (Luke 9:46). Therefore, Jesus prayed, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified" (John 17:19). Before ascending to heaven, Jesus ordered them "not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). They were ready to share Christ with the world only after the Holy Spirit had cleansed their motives and morals.

Scripture teaches that sanctification is essential to *unity* in the church. Sanctification is

God's will for every Christian (1 Thess 4:3, 7), and anything less will fracture our relationships with one another. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy... without a spot or wrinkle...so that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25–27).

Sanctification is required for *leadership* in the church. Those selected to serve as church leaders are to be "full of the Spirit" (Acts 6:3). Sanctified leaders do not engage in power plays or political manipulation to achieve personal goals. Through the Holy Spirit controlling the lives of its leaders, God controls the church.

A HOLY LIFE IS PRACTICAL

Today, people are searching for a Christian way of life that is authentic, practical, and real. They wonder whether they can truly experience such a life here and now, or whether it's merely a theoretical ideal. The good news is, God offers such a life to every Christian. It is indeed practical. In fact, it is essential if we are to serve Christ in a world such as ours.

Only the Holy Spirit can cleanse and empower us. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit transformed 120 Christians gathered in an upper room. In that experience, tongues of fire rested on each of them (Acts 2:3). Fire is a symbol of the cleansing, purging, purifying power of the Holy Spirit. John the baptizer had said, "I baptize you with water for repentance...he will baptize you with the Holy

Spirit and fire” (Matt 3:11). While salvation brings forgiveness for sins we have committed, sanctification cleanses the human will, where sin originates.

The cleansing of sanctification does not remove anything that is essentially human. All human emotions remain but are cleansed by the Holy Spirit so that they will be used only for God’s glory (1 Cor 6:19–20). The Holy Spirit’s cleansing removes an inordinate sense of one’s importance, the desire for self-recognition, the compulsion to magnify the faults of others, and selfishness.

Spiritual power is promised to Christ’s followers for the primary purpose of drawing others to Christ and telling them about him. This power comes in the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “You know him, because he abides *with you*, and he will be *in you*” (John 14:17, emphasis added). The Spirit’s power enables us to do God’s will faithfully.

This power enables us to *be* a certain kind of people more than to *do* a certain kind of work. Some Christians hope to receive extraordinary power to heal the sick, to cast out devils, to teach and preach. But God promises every Christian more than that—the power to be like Jesus (Rom 8:9). We are to be holy as he is holy (1 Pet 1:15–16). Jesus believed the impossible, loved the unlovable, and forgave the unforgivable—and we are to be like him! Indeed, we can be like Christ when the Holy Spirit empowers us.

The Holy Spirit gives sanctified people the power to resist any temptation to sin. Sanctified people can overcome temptation, for “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Sanctification does not make sin impossible, but now it becomes possible for us not to sin. The Holy Spirit enables us to discern good from evil, to make right choices, and to live free from sin.

We should say a word about perfection, because this confuses many people. Does sanctification mean that a person is perfect? Is there no more room for learning and growth? While sanctification is an instantaneous experience, it is also a continuous growth in grace (Heb 12:14). So a sanctified Christian says with Paul, I do not consider myself already perfect (Phil 3:12), but “I press on toward the goal to win the prize” (Phil 3:14). The goal is that we may become more and more like Christ in every way (Eph 4:15).

A HOLY LIFE IS AVAILABLE

If you are convinced that you need to pursue godliness, then follow the steps to sanctification outlined in God’s Word:

1. **Surrender.** Totally surrender to God’s will and plan for your life (Rom 12:1–2).
2. **Ask.** As a child of God, ask for the Father’s indwelling Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). The Spirit will reveal truth to you, counsel you

when in doubt, and convict you when you are tempted.

3. **Obey.** Yes, obey all of God's revealed Word, walking in the light of truth as Christ does. Inconsistent conversation and conduct are unacceptable to God. His commandments are not grievous when his Holy Spirit controls us (Acts 5:32).
4. **Believe.** The Holy Spirit is able and willing to do all that God has promised. We cannot cleanse our own human will and empower ourselves to be Christlike. Our best discipline will not enable us to authentically express godliness and live a holy life (Gal 3:2). But we believe, on the authority of God's Word, that the Holy Spirit can do all of these things in our lives.

The inward evidence of sanctification is not some type of ecstatic experience. It is the deep assurance that you have begun a transformation into a life of holiness, into the genuine image of God.

The outward evidence of sanctification is not a life of monastic isolation or an attitude of religious pride. People will see a change in your attitudes. They will notice your unselfishness. They will be blessed by your compassionate response to human need. And they will be drawn to the Lord.

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