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"Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord."

—Hebrews 12:14, NLT.

What comes to mind when you hear the word "holiness"? For most of us, it conjures up all kinds of negative associations related to legalistic rules and behavior.

In this day of public scandal, many are asking important questions such as, "What is biblical holiness?" "Is it important anymore?" In light of these and other pressing concerns it might do us good to revisit the concept.

Let's start by saying that God has called every believer to holiness (see 1 Thess. 4:7). The commonly used Greek word for holiness is *hagios*, and it literally means "to be set apart or separated unto God." Similarly, the Hebrew word for holiness is *kodesh*, and it carries the idea of setting something apart as different or uncommon, not for everyday use.

The word "holy" or one of its derivatives is used more than 425 times in the Old Testament and at least 165 times in the New Testament. It seems God is trying to make a point!

A lifestyle of holiness is a life that is lived as separated unto God, one that is *not* common or like everyone else's. It is one that's different from the lives of worldly people.

It is important to remember that though the word "holiness" is defined as being uncommon and set apart from the world, it does not have the connotation of being weird or irrelevant. Being holy simply means that one does not march to the same beat the world does.

Holiness always begins on the inside of the believer. It is not merely a list of dos and don'ts that Christians must

comply with; rather, it is a byproduct of our relationship with Christ and stems from our position in Him (see Col. 1:22).

Provisional holiness-what Jesus won for us on the cross-is a wonderful reality, but it must be accompanied by a life of practical holiness lived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Practical holiness means we regularly crucify the flesh, deny ourselves and understand the meaning of sacrifice. This makes us different and in the biblical sense, holy.

Our text says we should *work* at living a holy life, that we should pursue it. A lifestyle of holiness can elude us if we are not careful. So work hard in your pursuit of it-great dividends await you.

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