

“Be Holy For I Am Holy!”

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Synopsis:

- I. Discuss the Mosaic laws concerning clean food (Leviticus 11), clean bodies (Leviticus 12-13), clean clothes (Leviticus 13), clean houses (Leviticus 14), and clean contacts (Leviticus 15) as they related to *holiness* before God under the old covenant and illuminate *holiness* today under the new.

Introduction:

- I. It seems to me as though the biblical word *holy* has been largely misunderstood in the religious world.
 - A. The Scriptures have much to say about *holy* things and *holiness*.
 1. God is *holy*;
 2. Christians are called to be *holy*;
 3. The Sabbath was *holy*;
 4. The priests were to be *holy*;
 5. Many more things are said to be *holy*.
 - B. What exactly does this mean in practical terms?
 1. The English word *holy* has various shades of meaning, many of which are somewhat abstract.
 2. The Hebrew and Greek words which are translated *holy* are not abstract terms.
 3. In both the OT and the NT, they are concrete terms, relatively easy to grasp and understand.
 - C. Our goal in this study is to come to understand the meaning of the terms *holy* and *holiness* in the Scriptures, especially how those terms are used in the book of Leviticus.
- II. Meaning of the Term “*Holy*.”
 - A. *Dictionary.com* lists the following definitions of the English word *holy*:
 1. Adjective.
 - a. Specially recognized as or declared sacred by religious use or authority; consecrated: *holy* ground.
 - b. Dedicated or devoted to the service of God, the church, or religion: a *holy* man.
 - c. Saintly; godly; pious; devout: a *holy* life.
 - d. Having a spiritually pure quality: a *holy* love.
 - e. Entitled to worship or veneration as or as if sacred: a *holy* relic.
 - f. Religious: *holy* rites.
 - g. Inspiring fear, awe, or grave distress: The director, when angry, is a *holy* terror.
 2. Noun – A place of worship; sacred place; sanctuary.

- B. The English word *holy*, then, means to be declared sacred by religious use or authority, or to be devoted to the work of God.

III. The Meaning of the Hebrew Word.

- A. Our word comes from a Hebrew root (*kāḏāsh*) which the *Brown, Driver, Briggs Lexicon (BDB)* says comes from the “poss. orig. idea of *separation, withdrawal*.”
- B. It is variously translated as sanctify, hallow, *holy*, consecrate, prepare, proclaim, dedicate, appoint, purify, defile, unclean, saint, wholly, and sanctuary.
- C. *BDB* goes on to further describe our word:
1. Be set apart, consecrated;
 2. Apartness, sacredness;
 3. Sacred, *holy*; separate from human infirmity, impurity, and sin.
- D. The Hebrew word has the core meaning of “**to be set apart, apartness, separate.**”
- E. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)* says:
1. **Apartness, holiness, sacredness.**
 2. “The meaning ‘to separate’ is favored by many scholars, but the fact that *qdsh* rarely, if ever, occurs in a secular sense makes any positive conclusion in this regard difficult because of the limited evidence on which to base philological comparison.” (*TWOT*)
 3. *Separate* is what the word conveys.
 4. In the OT the word *holy* “is used most frequently to describe **the state of consecration effected by Levitical ritual**. In Exodus 29:21, 37; Exodus 30:29 certain articles used in the Levitical service were consecrated to God and were thus recognized as belonging to the realm of the sacred. Transmission of the state of *holiness* to anything that touched a person or object so consecrated (Exodus 29:37; Exodus 30:29; Lev 6:18 [H 11], 27 [H 20]) does not necessarily imply that a transferable divine energy exists in the “*holy*.” Rather, **it seems that the person or object entered the state of holiness in the sense of becoming subject to cultic restrictions**, as were other *holy* persons or objects, **in order to avoid diffusion of the sacred and the profane.**” (Bold emphasis added, *TWOT*)
- F. In the OT *holy* means to **separate oneself** in some way to avoid mixing the things belonging to God with that which is commonly done among people (profane).
- G. According to *Dictionary.com*, *consecrate* means “to make or declare sacred; **set apart or dedicate to the service of a deity**” or “**to devote or dedicate to some purpose.**” (Bold emphasis added)
1. This agrees with our understanding of *holy*.
 2. *Holy* and *consecrate* have the same meaning: **to set-apart, separate, devote.**
- H. To summarize:
1. The noun *holy* should be understood as “something which is **separate** or set-apart (devoted) for a specific purpose.”
 2. The verb *to make holy* or *to be holy* means “to **separate** something for a particular purpose”

3. The adjective *holy* is something that has been set apart or **separated** for a particular purpose.
 4. The practical, tangible concept of *separation* is at **the core** of the Hebrew word *holy*.
- IV. The Meaning of the Greek Word.
- A. The NT family of cognate forms is found in several grammatical modes more than 275 times.
 1. *Hagiazo* (a verb; found twenty-eight times) is rendered by such terms as “*sanctify*” (Eph. 5:26), “*hallow*” (Matt. 6:9), or “*holy*” (Rev. 22:11).
 2. *Hagiasmos* (noun; ten times) may be “*holiness*” (Heb. 12:14) or “*sanctification*” (Rom. 6:19).
 3. *Hagios* (adjective; 233-234 times) may be rendered “*Holy*” (Acts 2:38), “*saints*” (Phil. 1:1), “*Holy One*” (Mark 1:24), or “*holy*” (Luke 1:35).
 4. *Hagiotes* (noun; two times) is “*holiness*” (Heb. 12:10).
 5. *Hagiosyne* (noun; three times) is found as “*holiness*” (Rom. 1:4).
 - B. In its historical development the basic word form passed through several stages.
 1. Initially *hagios* referred to that which elicited a sense of reverence or awe.
 2. Later it came to signify something cleansed of contamination.
 3. Eventually, the term connoted those who, as a result of their cleansing, have been set aside, as dedicated to the service of God.
 - C. The word in some form is found in every NT book except Galatians, James and 2 & 3 John.
 - D. Thayer defines the word as:
 1. “ἅγιος, (from τό ἄγος religious awe, reverence; ἄζω, ἄζομαι, to venerate, revere, especially the gods, parents [Curtius, § 118]), rare in secular authors; very frequent in the sacred writings; in the Sept. for שׂרִדָּ׃” (6)
 2. #2 in Thayer’s definition list says about the word, “*set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His.*” (7)
 - E. *Holy* in the NT corresponds exactly to its Hebrew equivalent in the OT.
 1. The definition of the word is: “To consecrate, dedicate, or **set apart**, with the implication of a moral character like that of the person or thing to which one is sanctified.”
 2. Saints, or “*holy ones*” (Greek *tous hagious*), were set apart for God.
 3. Indeed, their “*holiness*” meant that God had separated them from this world, and made them a special people for Himself and for His Son Jesus.
 4. O.E. Evans draws several conclusions regarding the use of the word “*saints*” in the NT has a whole (236-237).
 - a. There are 11 of these conclusions.
 - b. Number 6 is: “They are a **separated** community.”

Teaching on *Holiness* in the Old Testament:

I. Old Testament admonitions to *holiness*.

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- A. As we have seen, the core meaning of *holy* in the OT is *to be separate*.
- B. We see from the Hebrew Scriptures that God required His people to separate themselves from profane things -- from things which were common to sinful humanity.
- C. **Genesis 2:1-3** (The Sabbath Day was made *holy* by God).
1. We are first introduced to the concept of *holy* early in Genesis, where we are told that God rested on the seventh day of creation.
 2. Moses then tells us that “*God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.*”
 3. It is not until much later at Mt. Sinai that God commands Israel to “*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*” (Exodus 20:8-10; see also Nehemiah 9:13-14; Ezekiel 20:10-12).
- D. **Exodus 3:1-5** (The place where God is present is *holy*).
1. Moses is told that the spot where God was (in the *burning bush*) was “*holy ground.*”
 2. As a result, Moses was instructed to “*take your sandals off your feet.*”
 3. Why is the ground Moses was standing on to be considered *holy*?
 - a. Perhaps because sandals are not only dirty from the sweat of the feet, but they come in contact with all manner of corruption when one walks on the ground.
 - b. Thus, the sandals are, to some degree, contaminated by filth.
 4. There is another instruction in the Pentateuch regarding the need to bury in the ground all human excrement. (cf. Deuteronomy 23:13-14)
 - a. The reason for burying human waste is that God must not see “*anything indecent*” among them.
 - b. His dwelling place and the place where He walks must be *holy*.
 5. We are told many times in Scripture that the place of God’s presence is *holy*. (cf. Exodus 19:20-23)
 - a. Here, God’s presence on the mountain required that not just anyone could approach his presence.
 - b. Thus, Moses was told to put limits around the mountain, which is to say, to set apart the mountain.
 - c. Violators would be destroyed.
 6. Later the tent of meeting in the wilderness and the place of God’s presence at the temple site in Jerusalem were likewise *holy* places.
 - a. They were set apart and separated from common use.
 - b. Only the authorized priests could enter the *holy place* of the temple, and only the high priest, could enter the *most holy place* of the temple, and that only once a year.
 - c. No one else was permitted to be in these *holy* places – to do so would result in death to the violators.
 7. Why?
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- a. The reason that the place of God's presence is *holy*, or set apart, is that God Himself is *holy*.
 - 1) He is separate from all other beings.
 - 2) Thus, His presence and the place of His presence are separated from common usage.
 8. Furthermore, everything in and around the sanctuary of God was also to be *holy*.
 - a. Many OT passages describe the furniture in the Tabernacle as needing to be *holy*.
 - b. The priests who serve in the Tabernacle needed to be separated as well.
 - c. And the offerings and sacrifices of the Tabernacle and of the temple were all *holy* offerings.
 - d. Anything and everything that was connected with God's presence needed to be separated from all other use to be used exclusively for service to the Almighty.
- E. **Isaiah 43:3** (A common designation for God in the OT was "*the Holy One of Israel*").
1. The God of Israel was characterized by *holiness*.
 2. The Scriptures frequently declare Him to be The *Holy One*.
 3. He is separate and distinct from all other beings, and because of His uniqueness, He is to be honored. (Leviticus 10:3)
 4. The *holiness* or separateness of God is to result in Him being honored.
 - a. When God had led the children of Israel through the Red Sea and had destroyed the Egyptians in that same sea, they sang a song of praise to Him and honored Him:
 - b. "*Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?*" (Exodus 15:11)
 - c. This is the proper response to God – showing respect and reverence, honor and glory to the Mighty One who performs acts of deliverance on our behalf.
 5. This quality of "*holiness*" is expressed by the question, "*Who is like you?*"
 6. It is this uniqueness of *God* - the fact that he is different from all others – of which that *holiness* is a description.
 7. Isaiah had much to say about the *holiness* and uniqueness of God. (cf. Isaiah 6:1-3)
 8. His majestic esteem is unlike anyone else – His glory is superior to that of any other – "*The whole earth is full of his glory!*"
- F. **The Book of Leviticus** (Instructions for *Holy Living*).
1. "'Be *holy*, for I am *holy*' (11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26) could be termed the motto of Leviticus. Certainly '*holy*,' '*clean*,' '*unclean*' and cognate words are among the most common in the book." (Wenham, 18)
 2. "The term '*holy*' and its cognate terms *e.g.*, '*sanctify*,' '*holiness*,' occur 152 times in Leviticus (about 20 percent of the total occurrences in the OT). (Wenham, 18, n. 25)
 3. Because God is *holy* (that is, separate) from all others, the people of God must themselves also be separated from profane things of all sorts.
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4. “*Holiness* characterizes God himself and all that belongs to him: ‘Be *holy*, for I am *holy*’ *Holiness* is intrinsic to God’s character.” (Wenham, 22)
 5. There are a whole set of instructions in **Leviticus 11-22** which outline and detail the manner in which all who belong to God are to be *holy*.
 6. The refrain is repeated throughout these chapters which calls his people to be a separated people:
 - a. “*For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.*” (11:44-45)
 - b. The refrain “*be holy because I am holy*” is repeated in 19:2 and 20:7-8 and 20:26.
 - c. Similar statements of the *holiness* of God and of His people run throughout these chapters (11-22) in Leviticus.
 7. Sometimes called the *Holiness Code* (cf. Weirsbe), Leviticus 11-22 gives instructions for how we are to be a separated people.
 8. God’s people are to set themselves apart from a number of practices of common people.
 9. **Chapter 11** gives instructions about separating from creatures which should not be eaten.
 - a. These animals, birds and fish were created for another purpose, but not for human consumption. (cf. 11:2-8)
 - b. Similarly, verses 9-12 give instructions about which sea creatures can and cannot be eaten.
 - c. And verses 13-23 detail flying creatures which can and cannot be eaten.
 10. **Chapter 12** gives instructions about remaining separated from contact with the sanctuary after childbirth. (cf. 12:4)
 11. **Chapter 13** gives instructions for people who have a rash, swelling, infection, skin disease, sore, an itch, white spots, and mildew in clothing.
 - a. Some of these require a separation (isolation) of the person or thing.
 - b. “Theology, not hygiene, is the reason for this provision. The unclean and the *holy* must not meet (7:20-21; 22:3).” (Wenham, 21)
 12. **Chapter 14** continues with a discussion of “*the law of the leprous persons for the day of his cleansing.*” (v.2)
 - a. Usually the cleansed person needs to bring offerings to present before God, bathe and wash his clothes.
 - b. Then he must remain in isolation for a short trial period before he is permitted full access to the sanctuary.
 13. **Chapter 15** discusses the separations that are necessary in the event of a bodily discharge.
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- a. When men have a discharge of semen, or when women have their monthly discharge, there are particular measures which must be taken to separate oneself from contact with others so that there is no contamination. (cf. 15:32-33)
 - b. Even the objects that come in contact with the discharge are considered unclean. (cf. 15:9)
14. **Chapter 16** contains instructions regarding the *Day of Atonement*.
- a. The High Priest performs a specific ritual task of cleansing himself and his family and then the nation for their sin.
 - b. This is accomplished by offering a specific order of sacrifices and sprinkling of blood on the altar and on the *holy* furniture of the sanctuary.
15. **Chapter 17** resumes the commandments of separation (*holiness*).
- a. First, Israel is taught to bring all the offerings of God to the place of the “*tent of meeting*,” rather than just offering them anywhere as they had done in the past.
 - b. Maintaining *holiness* requires that the blood of an animal not be eaten, because the life of the animal is in the blood.
 - c. God does not permit anyone to eat the blood with the meat of a creature – the blood must be drained before cooking.
16. **Chapter 18** contains detailed instruction on sexual *holiness*.
- a. A long list of specifics about forbidden sexual relationships is given.
 - 1) You cannot have sexual intimacy with your mother, your father’s wife (stepmother), your sister, your niece, your stepsister, your aunt, your daughter-in-law or your brother’s wife.
 - 2) Neither can you do so with a woman and her daughter, nor with that woman’s granddaughters.
 - 3) Nor are you permitted to take your wife’s sister as a rival wife.
 - b. Several other forbidden sexual contacts:
 - 1) During a woman’s monthly flow.
 - 2) Homosexual relationships are forbidden because these are an abomination before God.
 - 3) Sex with an animal is strictly forbidden.
 - 4) The reasons for these restrictions are given to close out the chapter (cf. 18:24-30).
 - c. Committing these sexual perversions caused the land to vomit out the Canaanites upon Israel’s arrival.
 - d. Israel would also be vomited out of the land if they should indulge themselves in these abominations.
17. **Chapter 19** records miscellaneous laws of separation, beginning with the admonition to “*be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy!*”
- a. This separation is not just separation from eating unclean creatures and from illicit sexual contacts.
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- b. The separation of *holiness* reached to every area of their lives.
 - 1) Attitudes about worship practices.
 - 2) How they regarded their neighbor.
 - 3) When they should eat the fruit of newly planted trees.
 - 4) Mourning the dead.
 - 5) How they treat aliens and strangers.
 - c. This attitude toward others begins with the proper respect for our parents and toward *God*. (19:3-4)
 - d. Respect toward *God* is shown by how they handled the sacrifice made to God. (19:5-8)
 - e. Being a “set apart” people also included their harvest – they were to be considerate of others who were less fortunate and leave some behind for them. (19:9-10)
 - f. This consideration to their fellow human extended to every area of their lives.
 - 1) While verse 18 contains the second greatest of all the commandments, “*love your neighbor as yourself*,” the instructions which precede it and follow it elaborate on how they were to love their neighbor as themselves.
 - 2) This chapter also contains a list of “*do not*” instructions. (19:11-18)
 - g. All of these instructions defined just how it was that the Israelites were to treat their neighbors.
 - h. To break any of these commandments was to break the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.
 - i. All of these instructions help us to understand and to clarify what it means to be a separate (*holy*) people.
 - j. To be separate (*holy*) as *God* is separate extends to the way they handled their animals and fields, and to the clothing they wore. (19:19)
 - k. And in the way they were to handle sexual sins. (19:20-22)
 - l. Even the fruit on some of their trees was to be treated as *holy* (separated, not for common use). (19:23-25)
 - m. Being *holy* even reached into their eating habits and worship practices. (19:26-28)
 - n. The practice of the nations who worshiped and served other gods was to:
 - 1) Cut themselves, tattoo themselves and trim, shave and cut their hair in various strange configurations on behalf of their dead.
 - 2) God’s people were to separate themselves (be *holy*) from such despicable practices.
 - o. Again the writer returns to the topic of “loving your neighbor” as he gives additional instructions regarding how you treat your neighbor. (19:29-36)
 - 1) Loving their neighbor included not degrading their daughter, rising out of respect for the elderly, and treating the alien right.
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- 2) Also using honest scales and weights and measures so as to be fair in all their transactions.
- p. Finally, this section is summarized – “*And you shall observe all My statutes and all My rules, and do them: I am the LORD!*” (19:37)
18. **Chapter 20** begins with separation instructions regarding the worship of Molech, (20:2), and mediums and necromancers. (20:6)
- We are reminded again why it is that God’s people are to separate themselves in this way – because *God* Himself has nothing to do with those wicked practices – He is *holy*.
 - “*Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you.*” (20:7-8)
 - The bulk of chapter 20 details the punishments prescribed for various acts of sexual misconduct – what they were to do with the person who violated the separation instructions of sexual relations. (20:9-21)
 - The chapter closes with a strongly worded admonition to diligently keep all of these instructions.
 - “*You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them.*” (20:22-23)
 - God will always reject those people who defy what is good and right, and will spew out all who reject and transgress His laws!
19. **Chapters 21-22** close out this section by giving specific instructions for the priests in their dress, conduct and work as priests, along with some additional miscellaneous instructions concerning separation.

II. Summing Up *Holiness* in the Book of Leviticus – The Need to Make Distinctions.

- A. Living an upright and separate life was not optional for the Israelites.
- The nations who preceded Israel in the Promised Land were “*vomited out*” of the land because they practiced those behaviors from which God commanded His people (the Israelites) to be separate.
 - That kind of behavior resulted in hatred, uncleanness, pain, and death.
 - To be *holy* required the Israelites to be able to make all of these distinctions.
 - “*But I have said to you, ‘You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore **separate** the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall **not make yourselves detestable** by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. **You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.**” (20:24-26)*
- B. “This survey of the use of the terms for *holiness*, cleanness, and uncleanness has demonstrated the importance of these ideas for understanding Leviticus. I have suggested that cleanness is the natural state of most creatures. *Holiness* is a state of grace to which men are called by God, and it is attained through obeying the law and carrying out rituals such as

sacrifice. Uncleanness is a substandard condition to which men descend through bodily processes and sin. Every Israelite had a duty to seek release from uncleanness through washing and sacrifice, because uncleanness was quite incompatible with the *holiness* of the covenant people.” (Wenham, 23)

Teaching on Holiness in the New Testament:

- I. Although not as extensive and detailed as the teaching on *holiness* in the OT, the NT does have a good bit to say about the subject.
- II. The NT teaches basically the same things about *holiness* for the followers of Christ as what the OT authors taught the Patriarchs and Israelites.
 - A. It stands to reason that *God's* opinion about *holiness* hasn't changed.
 - B. We will review and detail some of those statements in the NT made about *holiness* and being *holy*.
- III. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** (Our bodies are said to be “*a temple of the Holy Spirit*”).
 - A. In order to become *holy* as *God* is *holy*, we must put forth some effort to read, study and understand the scriptures that teach what *holiness* is. Using the language of the temple service, Paul writes about how we are to offer our bodies in *holiness* and righteousness to God. (cf. Romans 6:19-22)
 - B. This is our “reasonable service” to offer our bodies to *God*. (Romans 12:1-2)
 - C. And the way we offer our bodies is by submitting to the laws of God in the scriptures which instruct us on the proper way of separating from things that defile and contaminate.
- IV. **2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1** (Separation from things which contaminate).
 - A. In this passage, Paul explicitly invokes OT teaching and exhorts the followers of Christ to separate themselves from that which is unclean.
 - B. “*What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them,’ says the Lord, ‘and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the Lord Almighty. Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*”
 - C. Paul is not making up new rules about how to be *holy*.
 1. He is teaching and alluding to the clear instructions of OT Scripture when he calls all his readers to “*go out from their midst, and be separate.*”
 2. “*Touch no unclean thing*” is clearly referencing the *Holiness Code* from the book of Leviticus.
 3. When Paul writes, “let us **cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion,**” what else can he be talking about but conformity to the laws of *holiness* as found in Leviticus?
- V. **1 Thessalonians 4:1-7** (Sexual *Holiness* and Purity).
 - A. Paul refers again to the teaching about *holiness* in Leviticus when he instructs his readers on the importance of *holiness* in the area of sexual relations.

- B. *“Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, **your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality**; that each one of you know how to control his own body in **holiness and honor**, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one **transgress and wrong his brother** in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. **For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.**”*
- C. Paul notes that *“**this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality.**”*
1. God’s will is clearly presented in Leviticus where he repeats over and over, **“Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”** (cf. Lev. 19:2)
 2. Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 list in detail all of the forbidden sexual relationships – it is God’s will that you avoid these types of relationships.
 3. Our bodies should be controlled in a way that is *holy* and honorable.
- D. When Paul says that *“**that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter,**”* he is likely referring to the sixth commandment, *“**you shall not commit adultery.**”*
- E. And he could also be referring to the ninth commandment as well, *“**You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.**”*
- F. Either to lust after your neighbor’s wife, or to commit adultery with your neighbor’s wife would be to wrong your brother in a sexual matter. (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; compare with Leviticus 18:8)
- VI. **Ephesians 5:1-5** (Another warning about sexual impurity).
- A. *“Therefore **be imitators of God**, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But **sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you**, as is proper among saints. Let there be **no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking**, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that **everyone** who is **sexually immoral or impure**, or who is **covetous** (that is, an idolater), has **no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**”*
- B. In order to be *holy*, we must avoid all appearance of evil such that there is not even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity.
- C. See also Revelation 21:7-8, where those who are called *“the sexually immoral ... will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur.”*
- VII. **1 Peter 1:14-16** (The call to *Be Holy!*).
- A. Just as in Romans 6 Paul contrasted the former lifestyle of those who once were living in ignorance but now are called to offer their bodies as slaves to righteousness leading to *holiness*, Peter makes the same contrasts, and calls on us to be *holy!*
- B. *“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as **he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct**, since it is written, **‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’**”*
- C. The call to be *holy* which was issued in Leviticus 11-22 is re-issued by Peter to the follower of Christ.

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- VIII. **1 Peter 1:22-23** (An example of the kind of *holy* life to which we are called).
- A. Peter goes on to give an example of the kind of *holy* life we have been called to by alluding to the second greatest command which is found in the heart of the *Holiness Code* in the book of Leviticus.
 - B. “*Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.*”
 - C. Peter is possibly making a direct reference to Leviticus 19:18 – “*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD!*”
 - D. This call to love your neighbor as yourself is at the core of living a separated life.
 - E. To be like *God* is to love your fellow human being.
- IX. **Hebrews 12:10-14** (The discipline of *Holiness*).
- A. Living a life separated from the way the world lives life is not always so easy – it is a learned discipline.
 - B. God teaches and trains us in this discipline out of His love for us.
 - C. “*For they [our earthly fathers] disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*”
 - D. The purpose of *God’s* discipline is stated to be so “*that we may share His holiness.*”
 - E. His discipline is not just to knock us down or to keep us from having what we want.
 - F. We need to exercise discipline and be disciplined in order to *be like God*.
 - G. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines *discipline* as “training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character” or “a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity.”
 - H. This is the kind of discipline Hebrews is talking about – *God* wants to train us to walk in his ways in order to perfect our character to be like Him.
 - I. He does this by giving us the instruction in His Word.
 - J. And the instruction for *holy* living and training in *holiness* is that which we have been examining from Leviticus 11-22.
 - K. The inspired author of the book of Hebrews encourages us to “*strive for ... the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*”
 - L. “*Strive*” from a Greek word which means, “pursue, chase; seek after, strive for; drive out or away; practice; follow, run after.”
 - M. In other words, aggressively pursue after setting yourself apart in the things which *God* has commanded – this does not happen passively.
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- N. It can only be accomplished by actively and purposefully seeking God's will and studying and knowing His Word.
- X. **Revelation 22:11** (Admonition to continue in *Holiness*).
- A. As the apostle John nears the end of his apocalyptic vision, he admonishes those who are reading his message to continue in *holiness*.
- B. "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and **the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.**"
- C. It is not enough to just be *holy* – we must work hard to continue in *holy* living at all times or our entire lives.
- XI. "New Testament theology makes full use of the idea of *holiness*. All Christians are *holy*, 'saints' in most English translations Peter urges his readers to make the motto of Leviticus their own: 'Be *holy*, for I am *holy*' (1 Pet. 1:16). The mention of God is a theme that unites the ethics of Old and New Testaments (cf. Matt. 5:48; 1 Cor. 11:1)." (Wenham, 25)

Conclusion:

- I. *Holiness* is a requirement for entrance into the kingdom of Christ.
- A. To "**be holy like God is holy**" means to make the distinctions and separations in your living to be like *God*.
- B. But we don't have to guess about how to be *holy*.
- II. *Holiness* is to be like *God*.
- A. We are not left with a vague notion of what it means to be *holy* like *God is holy*.
- B. The Bible is crystal clear as it informs us of what *God's* will is, and what He wants us to avoid in our walking, talking, dressing, and in our sexuality.
- C. Those who love *God* with all their heart, mind and strength will pursue after the knowledge of *holiness* and walk in all the ways that are right.
- III. Warren Wiersbe does (I believe) a good job of summing up the "*holiness*" lessons of the book of Leviticus in the final chapter of his commentary. (Wiersbe, 177-185)
- A. Our God is a *Holy* God.
- B. God wants His people to be *holy*.
- C. *Holiness* begins at the altar.
- D. *Holiness* involves obedience and discipline.
- E. *Holiness* must be from God and be genuine.
- F. *Holiness* involves priestly mediation.
- G. Lack of *holiness* affects our land.
- H. *Holiness* isn't a private affair.
- I. *Holiness* glorifies the Lord.
- J. *Holiness* means living to please God alone.
- IV. It is not politically correct in our times and culture to "make distinctions."

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- A. When we exercise discrimination in our tastes, speech, actions, choices and preferences, we are called bigots and homophobes, superstitious, ignorant, and close-minded.
 - B. We are regarded as standing in the way of the spread of the kind of love that accepts all and tolerates all kinds of choices and behaviors.
 - C. But God has called us away from all the disgusting habits of the pagans and idol worshipers and all who don't know the true and living God.
 - D. In the OT, God was setting His people apart (making them *holy*) from the nations to be a people unto Himself.
 - E. For this reason, God commanded His people to avoid those things which defile the mind and body.
 - F. That *God* has commanded His people to be set-apart does not mean just in the things we eat.
 - 1. Being set-apart (*holy*) has very much to do with what we think, what we wear, what we do, what we approve of and what we accept.
 - 2. Being *holy* like *God* is *holy* means that we separate ourselves from everything that contaminates soul and spirit.
 - 3. “*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*” (2 Corinthians 7:1)
 - G. Thus, *holiness* is very practical and easy to understand.
 - 1. It means more than just “being like *God*.”
 - 2. It means separating ourselves in all our living to do the things of which He approves.

V. **BE HOLY BECAUSE GOD IS HOLY!**

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