

Legalism vs Holiness

I. Introduction.

- A. What do you think of legalism?
- B. What do you think of holiness?
- C. What do you think the unsaved think of these?

II. Scripture.

A. Definitions.

1. Legalism.

- a. Merriam-Webster—"1: strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code. 2: a legal term or rule."
- b. Scripturally—The exact words: legal, legalism, legalistic, moral, morals, and morality are not directly found in Scripture, but these concepts are strongly taught throughout. For example, "**law**" is found 523 times and the various words for commandments are observed well over 500 times in Scripture. "**Religion**" and "**sect**" are both found 5 times each, but various religious groups are called out for their strict practices and observances well over 100 times (e.g. "**Pharisees**," "**Sadducees**," and Sanhedrin).

2. Holiness.

- a. Merriam-Webster—"1: the quality or state of being holy—used as a title for various high religious dignitaries. 2: sanctification." Merriam-Webster on "**sanctification**"—"1: an act of sanctifying. 2a: the state of being sanctified. 2b: the state of growing in divine grace as a result of Christian commitment after baptism or conversion."
- b. Scripturally—God mentions "**holy**" (611 times) and "**holiness**" (43 times). God defines "**holy**" or "**holiness**" from Hebrew **qodesh** meaning "sacred, sanctity, consecrated, dedicated, hallowed, holiness, holy, saint, and sanctuary." Also, the Greek **hagios** or **hagiotes** means "sacred, physically pure, morally blameless, consecrated, holy, saint, sanctity, and holiness."

B. God's holiness vs man's wickedness.

1. **Rom. 1:4**—"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."
2. **Isa. 6:3**—"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his

- glory." Rev. 4:8—"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, **Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.**"*
3. *Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8—"...be holy, for I am holy."*
 4. *1Ch. 16:29; Psa. 29:2; 96:9—"...worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."*
 5. *2Ch. 20:21—"...should praise the beauty of holiness...Praise the LORD; for His mercy endureth forever."*
 6. *Mal. 2:11—"...profaned the holiness of the LORD which He loved..."*

C. The believer's life of holiness.

1. *Luke 1:74-75—"74...might serve Him without fear, 75In holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life."*
2. *Rom. 6:19—"...now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."*
3. *Rom. 7:6—"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."*
4. *Rom. 2:29—"...the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."*
5. *2Co. 3:6—"Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."*

III. Application.

- A. Can we reconcile legalism and holiness, explain?

- B. Does legalism and holiness look the same and come across ugly to unbelievers?

- C. Where is the line between legalism and holiness, why?

- D. Five practical encouragements when facing moral and social decisions.
 1. Christians should greatly "**delight in the law of God after the inward man**" (**Rom. 7:22**; cf. **Psa. 1:2; Psa. 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 174**), knowing, meditating on, growing in, and exhibiting holiness in our life.

2. Christians should first "***examine yourselves...prove your own selves***" (***2Co. 13:5***; cf. ***1Co. 11:28***; ***Mat. 7:1-6***; ***Luke 6:37-42***) in holy faithful lives, including motives, before engaging others. Don't be a hypocrite, "***first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye***" (***Mat. 7:5***).
 3. Christians should love others enough to humbly share God's Holy Word, with spiritual and wise rationale, and "***meekly restore***" (***Gal. 6:1-4***), not legalistically pridefully judging and tearing down others.
 4. Pray that each moral and social choice you make will make you wholeheartedly holy, and honors, and gives God the most glory (cf. ***1Co. 10:31***; ***Col. 3:17, 23***).
 5. Do not nit pic the unsaved lifestyle (focus on salvation-all sin separates), but stand up for truth and be holy pointing them to Christ. Unbelievers do not have discernment or receive spiritual truths well until Christ (***1Co. 2:14***). They do not appreciate spiritual pearls, and may trample them and you (***Mat. 7:6***).
- E. Further Study (free resources). {*E and F are for reference.*}
1. Camp, Steve. [Stranger to Holiness](#). YouTube Video, 4:26 minutes, 2015. A great worship song regarding our struggle with holiness.
 2. Craft, Darryl. Hard Questions: The Line. Whitesburg Baptist Church, 7/17/2024 (5-pages of [Notes](#); 2-pages of [Resources](#)). Great study of defining legalism and holiness and how to effectively draw the line in making moral decisions in our culture.
 3. Nyberg, Ron. Website: Christian Persecution ([Teacher](#) or [Student Hand Out](#)), 4/29/2023. Provides Christian perspective for living and speaking up regarding a holy and godly life.
 4. Nyberg, Ron. Website: Separate Living ([Teacher](#) or [Student Hand Out](#)), 4/23/2022. Provides commands and compels separate and holy living with practical steps to do so.
 5. Nyberg, Ron. Website: [The Hyper-Grace Movement \(HGM\)](#), 4/14/2022, (or Appendix C from [Galatians: Bewitched or Be Free](#)). Provides 10 reasons God wants to save us from sin, legalism, and conform us to His holiness now (contrary to HGM).
- F. Additional key Scriptures on holiness.
1. ***Rom. 6:22***—"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."
 2. ***2Co. 7:1***—"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."

3. ***Eph. 4:24***—"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."
4. ***1Th. 3:13***—"To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."
5. ***1Th. 4:7***—"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."
6. ***Heb. 12:10, 14***—"For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."