

The Pursuit of Holiness - Session 12 - Chapters 16-17

Chapter 16: "Holiness in an Unholy World"

Small Group Discussion Questions + Leader Notes**

This chapter highlights the believer's call to pursue holiness while living in a culture that normalizes sin and opposes godliness.

1. Bridges says Christians must pursue holiness in the middle of an unholy world. What are some unique challenges that our cultural environment poses to holiness today?

Leader Notes / Potential Answers:

- Media that normalizes impurity, greed, anger, and selfishness.
- Increasing moral relativism and rejection of biblical authority.
- Pressure to conform socially or professionally.
- Busyness and distraction that weaken spiritual vigilance.
- Bridges emphasizes awareness—not fear—of cultural influence.

2. Why does Bridges warn believers against "drifting" with the culture? What makes drifting easier than standing firm?

Leader Notes:

- Drifting requires no effort—standing firm requires discipline and conviction.
- Cultural currents are subtle and constant.
- Without intentional holiness, we unconsciously adopt worldly values.
- Drifting reveals passive spirituality and weak convictions.

3. What does it mean to be "in the world but not of the world" (John 17:14–16)? How does Jesus model this perfectly?

Potential Answers:

- Being present in the world without being shaped by it.
- Loving sinners without sharing their values.
- Obedience to the Father in a hostile environment.
- Jesus demonstrated holiness without withdrawal or compromise.
- Bridges encourages believers to live missionally and distinctively.

4. How can believers guard their minds and hearts against the unholy influences around them?

Leader Notes: Practical guards might include:

- Scripture meditation
 - Filtering entertainment
 - Guarding social media habits
 - Cultivating Christian friendships
 - Sabbath rest from digital noise
 - Consistent prayer
- Worldliness enters through attention; guarding attention protects holiness.

5. Bridges says worldliness often grows unnoticed. What are subtle signs that a believer is being shaped more by the world than by Scripture?

Potential Answers:

- Redefining sin as “normal” or harmless.
- Decreased sensitivity to conviction.
- Increased desire for comfort or approval.
- Neglect of spiritual disciplines.
- Cynicism or compromise in speech and attitude.
- Encourage grace-filled honesty—not guilt.

6. According to this chapter, how does peer pressure (even among Christians) affect the pursuit of holiness?

Leader Notes:

- “Common Christianity” often sets the bar low.
- Some believers normalize sin by joking about it or excusing it.
- Pressure to fit in can diminish zeal for righteousness.
- Holiness requires courage—sometimes quiet courage—in community.

7. How does the hope of eternity empower believers to remain holy in an unholy world?

Potential Answers:

- The world’s values are temporary; God’s kingdom is eternal.
- The promise of Christ’s return motivates purity (1 John 3:2–3).
- Trials and temptations are temporary; glory is forever.

- Bridges emphasizes heavenly-mindedness as fuel for earthly holiness.

8. What role does Christian community play in helping believers resist worldliness and pursue holiness?

Leader Notes:

- Encourages accountability and mutual exhortation.
- Provides examples of faithful living.
- Helps restore believers who drift (Gal. 6:1–2).
- Community gives courage to resist cultural pressure.
- Encourage participants to consider specific people who help them pursue holiness.

9. Where do you personally feel the pull of the world most strongly? How is the Spirit inviting you to resist that influence?

Potential Answers:

- Entertainment choices
 - Materialism
 - Approval of others
 - Anger or outrage culture
 - Sexual temptation
 - Overwork or productivity obsession
- Encourage honest but not overly detailed sharing.

10. What practical step can you take this week to be holy in the area where the world pressures you most?

Leader Notes: Examples:

- Fasting from media
 - Scripture memory
 - Accountability
 - Avoiding specific environments
 - Practicing Sabbath
 - Setting relational or digital boundaries
- Focus on Spirit-directed, grace-filled obedience.

Chapter 17: "The Joy of Holiness"

Small Group Discussion Questions + Leader Notes**

This chapter emphasizes that holiness is not merely duty—the pursuit of holiness leads to **deep joy, freedom, and satisfaction in God.**

1. Bridges argues that holiness and joy are inseparable. Why does pursuing holiness lead to joy rather than misery or legalism?

Leader Notes / Potential Answers:

- Holiness brings us into deeper fellowship with God.
- Sin promises joy but delivers slavery; holiness frees us.
- Obedience aligns our lives with God's design for flourishing.
- The Spirit produces joy (Gal. 5:22).
- Bridges wants to correct the myth that holiness is joyless.

2. Why do so many people—even Christians—believe that holiness is restrictive rather than liberating?

Leader Notes:

- Cultural narrative: freedom = doing whatever you want.
- Misunderstanding of obedience as arbitrary rule-keeping.
- Failure to see the destructive consequences of sin.
- Lack of experiential joy in holy living.
- Scripture teaches that true freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.

3. How does holiness restore joy in areas of life where sin has robbed it?

Potential Answers:

- Purity restores peace of mind.
- Honesty restores relationships.
- Generosity restores gratitude.
- Forgiveness restores emotional freedom.
- Obedience restores spiritual vitality.
- Bridges emphasizes that joy increases as sin decreases.

4. Bridges writes that joy is both a gift and a fruit. What is the difference, and why do we need both?

Leader Notes:

- Gift = God gives joy through His presence (Ps. 16:11).
- Fruit = joy grows through obedience and walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
- Gift comforts us; fruit shapes us.
- Joy is received *and* cultivated.
- Both protect believers from discouragement.

5. How does unconfessed or tolerated sin steal joy from the Christian life?

Potential Answers:

- Guilt disrupts fellowship with God.
- Shame isolates us from community.
- Sin undermines peace and confidence.
- It weakens spiritual strength and clarity.
- Bridges wants readers to see holiness as joy-protecting.

6. What is the relationship between obedience and joy according to Jesus (John 15:10–11)?

Leader Notes:

- Jesus ties obedience to experiencing His joy.
- Obedience is not joy's enemy—it is joy's pathway.
- Christ's joy becomes ours as we abide in Him.
- Holiness leads to relational closeness, which is the source of joy.

7. How can believers cultivate a joyful attitude *while* pursuing intense or difficult areas of holiness?

Potential Answers:

- Focus on God's promises.
- Remember God's presence.
- Celebrate small victories.
- Keep long-term perspective.
- Practice gratitude.
- Bridges emphasizes rejoicing in God, not in performance.

8. Why is joy a powerful weapon in the battle for holiness?

Leader Notes:

- Joy makes obedience desirable.
- Joy weakens sin's allure.
- Satan's lies are exposed when Christ is more satisfying.
- Joy strengthens endurance (Neh. 8:10).
- Joy testifies that God is better than sin.

9. Where have you recently experienced joy as a result of pursuing holiness? Conversely, where has sin robbed you of joy?

Potential Answers:

- Encourage honest stories of God's faithfulness.
- This question invites reflection and testimony.
- Keep the environment safe and supportive.

10. What is one step you can take this week to pursue holiness *with joy, not just duty*?

Leader Notes:

- Practical ideas: gratitude rituals, worship, Scripture memory, confession, eliminating a joy-stealing habit, celebrating God's goodness.
- Encourage steps that cultivate joy in Jesus, not merely outward compliance.