

## American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont MI 49412 231-924-4050 [www.americandecency.org](http://www.americandecency.org)  
Encouraging Christians to guard their heart June 2021

### What's Growing in your Garden?

By: Lisa Van Houten



One of my favorite pastimes is gardening. I love to see flowerbeds burst forth with blooms; I plant my seemingly lifeless dahlia tubers and then wait months to be rewarded with magnificent flowers; I rejoice when I see bean sprouts break through the soil and little yellow blossoms appear on my tomato plants, knowing that soon I'll enjoy the fruit of my labors. During these weeks of long summer days when the sun rises early and sets late in the evening, in my spare time you'll often find me in my vegetable and flower gardens waging a seemingly never-ending war with weeds. As I write this, I'm looking at one flowerbed that I neglected last year. The weed, Creeping Charlie, crept in and in the busyness of life

I never took the time to rip it out. Now, the whole bed is infested with that miserable weed as it covers and chokes out the perennials planted there.

I often think how much sin is like a weed. It's far easier to stop its effect if it's ripped out before it has a chance to take root and spread. Creeping Charlie is so invasive that leaving behind just one fragment of the plant can reproduce another. If we let sin creep into our hearts and minds it, too, grows and spreads until it chokes our spiritual life. *"For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."* Galatians 6:8

Battling sin in our lives is part of the pursuit of holiness. As Christians we are to root out sin and live distinctively from the world. "Be holy, for I am holy" God tells us. (I Peter 1:16) Yet "holiness" has become a dirty word to many Christians. **Christians' lives often**

**mirror those of our secular neighbors rather than the Image of God we are called to reflect.** Many American Christians are addicted to the world's entertainment, are consumed with laying up treasures on earth, and treat Sundays as "fun days" rather than the Lord's Day. We live in an age when "the church is emulating the world, where it is no longer distinguishable from our pleasure-oriented culture" Pastor Allistair Begg writes.

We pursue worldliness and shun holiness – instead of the other way around. The pursuit of holiness seems old-fashioned to the modern church. In a podcast I heard recently, a listener asked the question: "Is it hypocritical for my pastor to watch adulterous affairs on Netflix and oppose them in church?" Shouldn't the answer be obvious? Yet to many Christians, it's not. And, of course, that applies to all Christians, not just pastors. Are we conforming to the Word or to the

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world?

**Holiness is not legalism.**

It doesn't just apply to sexual sin, our use of media, and our outward behavior. "Holiness is a matter of the heart and not merely a matter of conduct," writes famed theologian D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. "It is not only a person's deeds that count but their desires." Striving for holiness means striving to have the mind of Christ in all of our thoughts, actions, desires, relationships.

We cannot straddle the fence. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). As author Tim Challies reminds us: *There is a stark contrast here between two opposing options: We can love the world, or we can love God, but we cannot love both. We can follow and obey the world, or we can follow and obey God, but we cannot serve two*

*masters. Only one will own our heart, only one can claim our ultimate allegiance. That choice lies before us. ... To love the world is to value what unbelievers value, to foster ungodly desires and attitudes, to indulge in what is delightful to those who refuse to delight in God.*

*Those who love the world naturally succumb to worldliness. Worldliness is a failure to renew our minds by the Word of God so we can live in a manner pleasing to God. It is the failure to think and live in distinctly godly ways. It is the failure to become who God has called us to be through the gospel.*

Just as with my garden, holiness must be cultivated and worldliness rooted out – the two can't co-exist. As Challies also writes: "while godliness requires tenacity, worldliness takes only apathy. Whereas we can easily coast into worldliness, we will not attain the least godliness without persistence." It's an ongoing battle against the weeds in our life trying to choke out our love for Christ. And it's a daily nurturing

of the good seed which God has planted in our lives by being faithful in prayer, devotions, and living in communion with the Lord.

May John Owens plea be ours as well: "On Christ's glory I would fix all my thoughts and desires, and the more I see of the glory of Christ, the more the painted beauties of this world will wither in my eyes and I will be more and more crucified to this world."

***"Holiness and serious Christian living are not popular in this world, but they are our duty, required by God. God's demand that our lives be holy is not a stifling and burdensome requirement of His people. It is the gracious and loving call of God to His children to share in His holiness. In obeying, we show ourselves to be like our Father, who Himself is holy."***

[Thoughts for personal / family worship on I Peter 1, from Family Worship Bible Guide.]



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