

# What is Sanctification and How Does it Work?

To sanctify an object means to wash, cleanse, consecrate or set it aside for a special purpose.

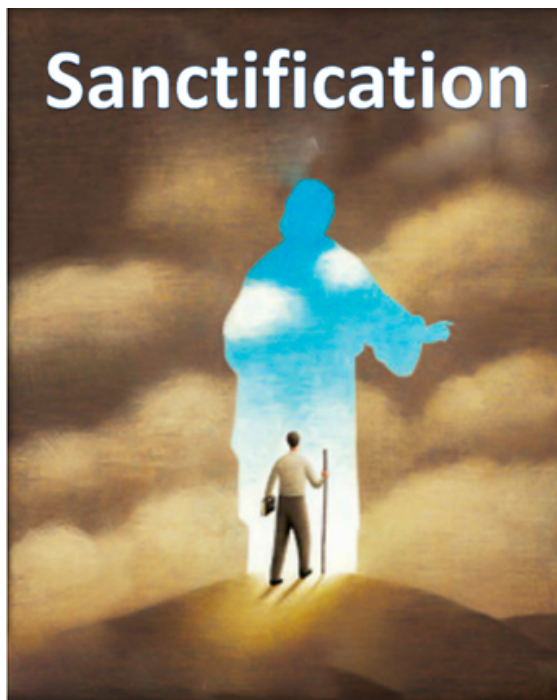
Sanctification is a Christian teaching about how God transforms a person, making them fit for a holy purpose. Sanctification includes a change of heart, a desire to love God and other people. It includes a change of mind, seeing the world from an honest perspective.



## Defining Sanctification

Sanctification is God's gracious work that enables Christians to follow God's moral code, to love Him, to love their neighbors and to love even their enemies as themselves.

1. **Sanctification is God's gracious work.** [Ephesians 2:8; Galatians 3:1-3:16-18]
2. **Sanctification is supernatural.** [Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 3:20; 2 Cor. 12:9-10]
3. **Sanctification is a process.** [Philippians 3:12-14; Romans 7:15; 2 Cor. 12:7-10]
4. **Sanctification results in good works.** [James 1:27; Ephesians 2:10]
5. **Sanctification looks like Jesus.** [Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 11:1; Ephesians 4:20-24; 2 Cor. 4:6]



## How Does Sanctification Work?

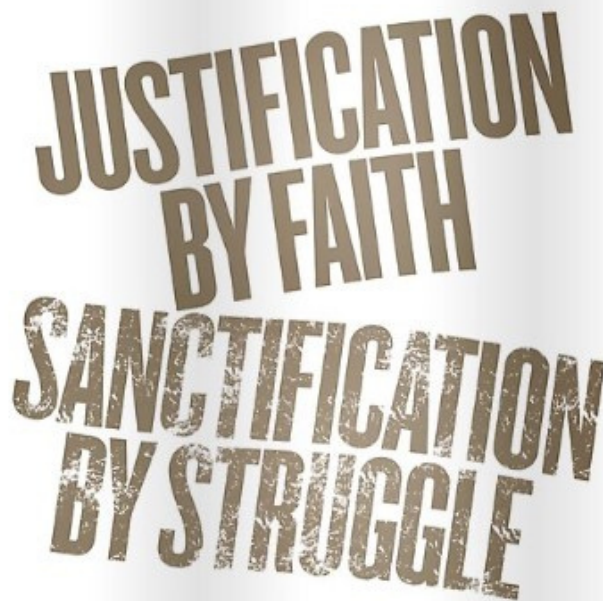
1. **In sanctification, human beings participate in God's work. God sanctifies Christians and human beings participate, struggle, fight, work and act.** [1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 5:21; Rom. 8:12-13, 12:9-10; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:16-23; Col. 3:5-14; Phil. 2:12-13]
2. **As its heart, sanctification is a process of self-denial and gospel renewal. It is a process of dying and rising, of self-discipline and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.** [2 Cor. 4:11]
3. **God has provided a plan for sanctification. God has promised to work through human effort and activities designed to discipline the heart.** [Col. 2:16-23, 3:16; 1 Cor. 10:16]. **Through God's sanctifying work, Christians begin to imitate Jesus and reveal characteristics consistent with His.** [Eph. 5:1; 1 Cor 11:1; Gal 5:22-26]

## What Sanctification is Not

1. Sanctification is not perfection. [1 John 1:8-2:2; Romans 8]
2. Sanctification is not natural. [Gal. 5:22-26; Ephesians 3:20; 2 Cor. 12:9-10]
3. Sanctification is not a path to earn God's love. [John 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 2:4; Matt. 9:10-13,21:31; Luke 15:2]

## Sanctification vs. Justification

To understand sanctification, it's helpful to distinguish it from another important teaching, justification. Justification and sanctification are both Christian teachings related to salvation. They both are part of the good news of Jesus Christ. Both justification and sanctification are God's gracious gifts, received by faith. But there are also three important differences.



JUSTIFICATION  
BY FAITH  
SANCTIFICATION  
BY STRUGGLE

1. **Justification is legal; sanctification is transformational.** Justification is the opposite of condemnation. It's a change in status from being guilty before God to being called righteous, holy or perfect. **[Romans 8:1 & 7:4]** Unlike justification, sanctification is transformational. It isn't a change in status but an actual change in the human condition.
2. **Justification happens all at once; sanctification happens over a lifetime.** As a change in status, justification is immediate, final, and complete. This why Paul described a Christian as having "been justified" in the same way that Christ died "once for all" **[Romans 5:1,6:10]**.
3. **Jesus' work is the grounds for justification; Jesus' life is the pattern for sanctification.** By faith a person embraces Jesus as their legal representative before God, meaning that Christ's work counts as their own and Christ's death counts as their own. **[Romans 5:12-21]** In sanctification, Jesus' life is a pattern to follow. **[Eph. 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 11:1]**

## Conclusion

Sanctification is God's beautiful, transforming work in the life of His people. It's the transforming presence and power of the Holy Spirit and offered as a gift to anyone who desires it **[Luke 11:13]**.