

**Husband, Love Your Wife, Part 2**

**Ephesians 5:25-33**

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Well, I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me again to Ephesians 5 as we continue our journey through the husband's responsibility to his wife. I should make one clarifying note. Last Sunday in preparation for our taking the Lord's Table together, I sort of backed away from this passage a little bit, but in the bulletin, I called it part two of the husband's responsibility to his wife, or as I've called it, "Husband, Love your Wife." This week, I decided to change that. Last week's message will just be a sort of special message called "The Bride of Christ" from this passage. And today, as you see in your bulletin, this is part two, for those of you who care and who track that sort of thing so you're not confused.

This week, I read an article written from the *Pew Research Center* in January of this year entitled "Women, Men, and the New Economics of Marriage." This is what the authors of that article wrote, "These days, Americans are more likely than in the past to cohabit, divorce, marry late, or not marry at all. There has been a marked decline in the share of Americans who are currently married. Among U.S. born thirty-to-forty-four years old, sixty percent were married in 2007 compared with eighty-four percent in 1970." So, in roughly forty years, the percentage of young adults age thirty-to-forty-four in the U.S. who are married went from eighty-four percent in 1970 to sixty percent in 2007.

The article goes on to explain that even for those who do marry, there have been remarkable changes. Listen to the authors again, "The institution of marriage has undergone significant changes in recent decades as women have outpaced men in education and earnings growth. These unequal gains have been accompanied by gender role reversals (gender role reversals). These role reversals have become evident when it comes to who makes decisions in a given family."

In a separate article, again by the *Pew Research Center*, they write, "To explore decision-making in the typical American home, a *Pew Research Center* survey asked men and women living in couples which one generally makes the decisions in four familiar areas

of domestic life. Who decides what you to do together on the weekend? Who manages the household finances? Who makes the decisions on big purchases for the home? And number four, who most often decides what to watch on television? (I don't know why that's really that important. I guess sole control of the remote is at stake there.) The survey finds that in forty-three percent of all couples, forty-three percent, it's the woman who makes decisions in more areas than the man. By contrast, men make more of the decisions in only about twenty-five percent of all couples. And about three in ten couples split decision-making responsibilities equally."

Now, it's my guess that some of those statistics are probably a little skewed because I'm guessing that there were probably men in that survey like myself who simply defer to their wives in some of those areas because they genuinely don't care. But to whatever extent that survey's conclusions, which are that there's this role reversal going on in which women are taking a greater leadership role in the home, to whatever extent that conclusion is true, it runs contrary to what the Bible teaches the home is to be like. We've already discovered in our study of Ephesians 5 that the husband is the head of the wife, not ought to be, but is by both divine created order going all the way back to Genesis as well as in the redemptive order that's unfolded in Ephesians 5. So, men, we are leaders, like it or not, but that doesn't mean simply because we've been given that responsibility and role that we are good leaders. In Ephesians 5 we are learning what godly leadership toward our wives should look like.

Let me read for you again this remarkable passage from the pen of a brilliant man, but inspired by our Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul, to write these words. So ultimately, this is the Lord Himself speaking to us. Ephesians 5, beginning in verse 25,

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ [that is, Messiah] also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL

BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband.”

Now don't forget the flow of the apostle Paul's thought here in this passage. Back in verse 18, he commanded us to allow the Spirit of God to fill us with a rich understanding of His word so that we could walk in our lives in biblical wisdom. Back in verse 15, we're admonished to do that. Then in verses 19 to 21, Paul explained the primary consequences of being under the Spirit's influence and the third consequence that he mentions is in verse 21. It is a heart of submission to those who are in human authority. If you're under the influence of the Spirit, if your mind is saturated with the Word of God, then you submit yourself gladly to the human authorities that God has placed over you.

Beginning in Ephesians 5:22 running all the way through 6:9, Paul gives us three examples of submission to human authority. First, there is that of wives to husbands - that's the rest of chapter 5; beginning in chapter 6, children to parents; and then slaves to masters. So, the focus of this entire section then is on submission to authority. That means initially the real focus of chapter 5, the responsibilities of husbands and wives, is on the submission of the wife to her husband. That's the real focus, but Paul says everything he wants to say about that in three verses, verses 22 to 24. He spends the rest of the chapter, nine verses, making sure that as men we know that although we are the God-appointed leaders in our homes, we are not free to decide what that leadership is like. In fact, for Christian husbands, leadership should look the same in every home. It is to be leadership whose chief quality, whose chief characteristic is love. Husbands, we are required by our Lord Jesus Christ to love our wives as He Himself loves the church. That's the standard.

We saw, first of all in this passage, the command itself. Verse 25 begins very simply, “Husbands, love your wives...” It's an imperative. It's a command. A couple of weeks ago, we noted several implications that come out of the fact that this is a straightforward command to us. It means no husband is exempt from this directive for any reason. It means every Christian husband has the capacity by the grace of God to do this. And it means that love, true Biblical love, begins and is sustained not by emotions but by an act of the will because this is a command, love your wife.

Now the key points to be made about the husband's love flow out of the context here. It's the example of Jesus Christ. So, after we saw the command itself, in the following verses we noted that Paul begins to illustrate that love, and he does so in two pictures. So, we saw the command itself, at the beginning of verse 25, and then, beginning of the middle of verse 25, we saw or began to see the two pictures to help us see what it looks like. The first picture is Christ's treatment of the church, Christ's treatment of His believers, the church. And the second picture is our own treatment of our bodies.

Now two weeks ago, we started to look at the first picture, Christ's treatment of His church. The love that Christ shows His church is a model, husbands, for us in how we are to respond to our wives. And Paul here identifies two qualities of Jesus' love for His church that we are to copy. First, our love for our wives must be sacrificial love. It must be sacrificial love. We must put her needs before our own. Look at verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as [or in this way] Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...." [He sacrificed Himself for His church. You and I are to sacrifice our own needs for first meeting the needs of our wives.]

Today we come to the second quality of Jesus' love for the church that we're to copy. Not only must our love be sacrificial love, but secondly our love must be sanctifying love. As we look at Christ's treatment of the church, we see that His love was a sanctifying love and ours must be as well.

Now as we flow through the rest of this passage, let me just warn you that Paul intentionally sort of flips back and forth, he switches back and forth between marriage and husbands and wives, and Christians and our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. He's making both points. So, at times during my message today and the next couple of weeks, you're going to ask yourself, "Is this passage about Christians and their relationship to Christ, or is this passage about husbands and wives? Who's he talking to?" The answer is both. So be prepared for that as we work our way through it.

Now our love, like Christ's love for the church, husbands, is to be a sanctifying love. Our love must compel us to pursue the spiritual progress of our wives. Look at verses 26 and 27 again,

so that [He gave Himself so that] He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to

Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

Now to really understand what Paul's doing here, you have to get the flow of his thought. Back up to verse 25, "Christ loved the church [that is, all of those who would believe in Him; He loved the church] and He gave Himself up for her [literally, He died for the church]." [That's the idea. Then, verse 26, He] "cleansed (the church) by the washing of water with the word." Now there's a lot of debate about verse 26 and the relationship between the two words "cleanse" and "sanctify."

But it seems to me that the *New American Standard* translators here have captured best both what is in Greek, and we see it here in English. The participle "having cleansed" probably comes before the main verb "sanctify" in time. In other words, let me put it this way. The cleansing here is a reference to the spiritual reality that happened at the moment of your salvation, "having cleansed you." He died for you and then there was a moment in your life when you came to understand your sin, you came to understand who Jesus Christ was, you repented of your sins, you embraced Him as Lord and Savior. At that moment, you were cleansed.

It's the same thing that's described in Acts 15:9 where Luke writes, "God cleansed their hearts by faith." When you believed and responded to the truth, God cleansed your heart. Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us ... by the washing of regeneration [of new life] ...." This spiritual cleansing then occurs at the moment of salvation, and it's profoundly pictured in the rite of baptism. That's why I think he mentions water here. It's not water that produces this change in us. Notice the change is produced by the word, by the Word of God. So, Paul then here is referring to the spiritual cleansing that occurred to us at the moment of salvation as the Spirit of God used the Word of God to give our souls a bath as it were, to make us new. So, Christ died, that happened in the past. At some point in life, we were cleansed. That's the moment of salvation.

And what was His purpose? Why did He give Himself for us? Why did He cleanse us? "... so that He might sanctify her...." Having cleansed us at the moment of salvation, Christ then sets out to sanctify us. Notice this was His purpose for giving Himself up. Verse 26, "He gave Himself up for her, so that [for this purpose] He might sanctify her...." Listen carefully. You and I have embraced, and the American church as a whole

has embraced, a very shallow form of Christianity, and it tends to be very self-focused. It's all about me.

Notice here in this passage Christ did not give Himself up in death for you just to purchase your forgiveness. He did that. There is forgiveness that comes through the death of Christ, but His aim was much greater than that. It wasn't just to give you forgiveness. It wasn't even just to declare you right before Him in justification. It was that He might sanctify you, that He might actually make you really and personally holy. That's His goal.

Now look at that word "sanctify," "that He might sanctify." The word literally means to set apart. It's the Greek form of a Hebrew word that's used often in the Old Testament. And in both the Old and the New Testaments, this word "sanctify" has two main senses. The first sense is to consecrate or to set something apart from common use to sacred use, to set something apart for God's service. It could be a thing. Vessels, pots, and pans in the Old Testament sacrificial system were set apart for, from common, ordinary use for and devoted to God and for His use.

That has happened to us. Positionally, we are regarded as holy at salvation. We are set apart, separated from the world, and wholly devoted to God's use. You can see that here in Ephesians. Go back to Ephesians 1:1. This is where Paul begins, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus...." Notice that, "to the saints who are at Ephesus" the holy ones, the sanctified ones. That's a description of all Christians. We are saints already. Every believer in Jesus Christ is a saint in the sense that we have been set apart to sacred use, for God's use. We now belong to Him.

I have in, (and I've used this illustration before but uh, it's one that stands out to me and hopefully it'll help you). I have in my possession at home my grandfather's railroad watch. He worked on the railroad down in Mobile for many years, and I was given that watch. Well, when he used it, it was a matter of everyday use. He kept it in his pocket. When he went to work, it was there with him, and he used it constantly. It was a sort of common, everyday thing that he owned. When I received it, my grandfather's now dead and my dad passed it along, or my dad's family passed it along to me - I now have sanctified it. I have set it apart from everyday use. I don't carry it around with me. I have it sitting on my mantle in a little case. I've sanctified it. I've set it apart to a devoted, special use. That's what God has done with you, Christian. At the moment of salvation,

you were set apart unto God. You were sanctified. So you'll see that use in the New Testament. It'll say that we were sanctified or we have been sanctified. That's talking about that consecration unto God. We've been set apart for Him.

But there's a second sense of this word "sanctify," and it means not to set something apart from ordinary use to sacred use, but it means to actually make something holy, to purify it, to render it clean in a moral sense, and that's the use that he has in mind here in Ephesians 5:26. Now we studied this in detail, this process, when we were going through Ephesians 4 so I won't belabor it here, but let me just give you the big picture again. This work of sanctifying us is a work God does within us. Practically, He is making us holy in an ongoing process. He is purifying our souls, cleansing our souls, conforming us more to the image of His Son. Theologians call this process sanctification, the process of being made progressively more holy.

Let me give you a definition that's my own favorite definition. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace by which His Spirit continually delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God and enables him more and more to die to sin and to live unto righteousness. It's a process by which you have a decreasing pattern of sin in your life and an increasing pattern of obedience and righteousness. That's the work that's happening in your heart.

Now again, let me give you a bigger picture. At the moment of salvation, if we could go back to the moment you came to a true knowledge of Jesus Christ, who He was, and you repented of your sins, you embraced Him as Lord and Savior - if we could go back to that moment in time and somehow slice it up, there were a number of events that happened simultaneously. But if we could break them apart logically, they would look like this. As you heard the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news that God had sent His Son to forgive sins and that if you would repent and believe, you could be a part of that - when you heard that message, God was, in that message, drawing you to Himself, and here's what happened.

The first thing that happened in your soul was what theologians call regeneration, regeneration. It's described in metaphors like birth. It was like a new spiritual birth. It's described, and our Lord uses that image in John 3. It's described like a new creation. It's like God made you all over again in your soul. That's how it's described in 2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he's [what?] a new creation...." It's described

in Ephesians 2 as a resurrection. You were dead in trespasses and sins, Paul says, spiritually dead to God, but God made you alive. He resurrected you from the dead. He gave you spiritual life.

And here in Ephesians 5:26, it's likened to cleansing. It's like God gave your soul a bath. It's implanting a new nature in you, making you a new spiritual person who can relate to God. You were at one time dead to God. You didn't know Him. You knew about Him. You could open the Bible and read it and you could understand some of the things that were there, but there was no real relationship to your Creator. But at that moment, you had new life. We saw that clearly back in Ephesians 2.

That regeneration, that new life is followed immediately by God giving you two wonderful gifts, the gift of faith and the gift of repentance. Remember back in Ephesians 2 we discovered by faith,

... by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of ourselves [but] *it* [that is, the total package of salvation including faith] *is* a gift of God; not ... of works, lest any man should boast.

So, He brings you to life. He gives you faith and repentance. And then in response to your faith, He declares you right with Him. Paul says we are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, all of those things at a moment in time.

Now let me just stop here and say that undoubtedly in a congregation this size, there are people here this morning who have never experienced that. You have never been willing to turn from your sinful rebellion against God and His Word and His works and bow your knee to His Son whom He sent for the forgiveness of your sins. If you will do that, then all of those wonderful realities I've just described will happen to your soul in a moment in time. That's God's promise. It's promised in the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament. It's promised in the New Testament as well.

As wonderful as all of that is that happened to you at the moment of salvation, and if you're a Christian, it did happen to you at the moment of salvation. As wonderful as all that is, it didn't remove all the sin from us because that new person that we have become is incarcerated in unredeemed humanness. There is a part of us that remains unredeemed. Its beachhead is our bodies. Our bodies are not redeemed. We don't have our new bodies.



And so we have two problems. We have still the presence of sin and we have the lack of positive holiness even though we're believers. Sanctification then is the process that delivers us from the power of sin in our lives and renews us in God's image.

Regeneration is spiritual birth. Sanctification is spiritual growth. We've been raised from spiritual death but, like Lazarus, we still have the grave clothes of the old life still hanging off of us. And from the very moment you were saved and throughout the rest of this life - listen carefully - the main priority that Jesus Christ has in your life is to make you progressively more like Him in your moral character. He wants our moral characters to resemble His own. That has always been His chief concern for His church.

In fact, go back to John 17. When we studied sanctification a little more a few months ago, we looked at this passage, but let me just remind you. John 17. This is our Lord's prayer the night before His death. I love this passage because it just opens up His heart to us, this whole chapter. But notice what He prays for His disciples, the eleven. Judas has now left Him so it's just the eleven. And then He also later prays these same things on behalf of those who would believe in Him through the apostles' words, that's us. So, He prays this for every true believer. Verse 17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." I want you, Father [as He prays], I want you to make them progressively more holy like Yourself, more like Me, and I want you to do it by means of the truth; Your word is truth. There He tells us how we're made progressively more and more holy. The primary means God uses is His Word. So Christ wants us all to be personally holy and He gave Himself to ensure this. And He accomplishes it day after day in our lives through the application of His Word.

But the question is why. Why does Christ want us to be holy? Well, there are a number of reasons given in the New Testament, but go back to Ephesians 5 because the reason He gives us here is really remarkable. Verse 27, "Christ gave Himself for us ... that He might sanctify us (verse 27) ... that [literally "so that" or "in order that," here's why He wants to sanctify us] He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."

Here, the church, that is, those who have genuinely believed in Jesus Christ, are described as a beautiful, young bride. Verse 27 says He will "present to Himself the church in all her glory." That same Greek word is used in Luke 7 of the fine clothing worn in a king's court. The picture here is of a bride who has beautifully dressed herself, who is in

magnificent clothing and is covered with sparkling, beautiful jewelry prepared for her wedding.

In fact, go back to Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel 16. There, through Ezekiel, God describes what He did to Israel - how He married Israel, made her His bride, and what He did in that marriage. Ezekiel 16, notice speaking metaphorically here what God did to prepare Israel for their wedding. Verse 9 of Ezekiel 16,

“... I bathed you with water ... washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, and I put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. I put a ring in your nostril, [and] earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you,’ declares the Lord God.”

That’s God’s description of what He did in preparing Israel to be His bride. And then He goes on to describe her utter failure and His discipline. But what He describes here in Ezekiel that He did for Israel, the New Testament tells us Christ, His Son, has done for His church, for His own people. He has adorned us like that.

Now go back to Ephesians 5. Notice specifically what he says - you “present ... the church [to Himself] in all her glory, having no spot...” That, literally the Greek word there for “spot” speaks of a stain or blemish on the skin. Metaphorically here of course, it’s speaking of no stain on the character, not one. “Or wrinkle.” That’s a good translation. It’s the word that simply means a wrinkle, pucker or fold of the skin. Metaphorically, it means that the church, when she’s presented to Christ, will have no signs of aging. She will be in perpetual youth. “Or any such thing,” there will be nothing in any individual Christian or in the church as a whole on that day that would be an imperfection of any kind. This describes the unsurpassed beauty of Christ’s bride, the church.

John Stott writes, “On earth, the church is often in rags and tatters, stained and ugly, despised and persecuted. But one day, she will be seen for what she is, nothing less than the bride of Christ.”

Now just so it’s clear that all those metaphors about weddings and beauty are spiritual beauty, notice Paul finishes verse 27 by leaving all those metaphors and speaking plainly. Jesus wants the church, that means all of us collectively who believe in Him, and individually, that means you, Christian, if you truly belong to Jesus Christ, He wants you, verse 27, to be “holy and blameless.” The word “holy” is a word familiar in both the Old and the New Testaments. It’s a reflection of God’s utter uniqueness. We are to be unique in our characters as God is. Not God – He will always be God, and we will always be human. But in our moral characters, we are to reflect His uniqueness. “And blameless,” the total absence of any moral defect.

This was the Father’s purpose in eternity past when He chose a bride for His Son. Go back to the first chapter of Ephesians, verse 4. Here, verse 4 speaks of sovereign election in eternity past and notice what was in the mind of God. Paul writes, “He [that is, the Father] chose us [that is, those who would believe in His Son] in Him [that is, Christ] before the foundation of the world [i.e. in eternity past, why?] in order that we would be [here are our words]) holy and blameless before Him.” When God chose us in eternity past, His end goal was that we would be holy and blameless. And in Ephesians 5, Paul says that’s exactly what will happen. But it wasn’t true in eternity past when He chose us. It certainly wasn’t true on the day He saved us, on the day we were made new in Christ. And it’s not even true today. As I stand here, as you sit there, we are in the process, Christian, of being made holy but we are still sinners.

So, when does this happen? When will we be presented like this? Well, notice the phrase that begins verse 27, “that He might present to Himself...” The Greek verb that’s translated “present” there is usually used by Paul to speak of the second coming, of Christ’s return to earth. So this presentation is in the future when He returns for us. First John 3:2, the apostle John puts it like this, “Beloved, now are we the children of God (it’s already a reality), and it has not yet appeared what we will be. But we know that when He appears (that is, when Christ appears), we will be like Him for we will see Him just as He is.” So that’s when He will present us to Himself in perfection, when He returns. When He appears, He will in a moment finish the work that He’s been doing in our lives here in the world, and we will be perfect.

This beautiful image really grows out of the marriage customs of the first century, particularly the Jewish marriage customs of the first century. As we learned last week, it began, really the marriage contract began with a formalization of the contract. In the presence of witnesses, the man and the woman who were going to be engaged or betrothed to one another agreed to the terms of the marriage. There was a public ceremony of that agreement, but that ceremony only initiated something similar to our engagement but much more serious. It was a period of time called the “kiddushin.” From the day that betrothal period began, that man and woman were legally man and wife. They still lived separately. They were not allowed to consummate the marriage, but they were legally man and wife. Usually the “kiddushin” in this betrothal period lasted long enough to complete the arrangements for the wedding and only that long. And then when everything was set, the date for the wedding and for the feast was finally established.

That brought the second part of the Jewish wedding, the “chuppah” the wedding and the wedding feast. The bride and groom were to prepare themselves. And the groom then, having bathed himself and anointed himself and put on all of the perfumes and the good smelling stuff would go with his friends and family marching in procession through the streets of the town. Usually, it was after dark and there were torches and there was singing and dancing and a party and festival atmosphere as they made their way through the town to the bride’s house. When they got to the bride’s house, she had also prepared herself, was ready for the wedding, and she would join the procession. And together, bride and groom and all of their family and friends would march back to the groom’s house for the wedding feast.

That’s the background of Ephesians 5:26-27. The church has been betrothed to Christ. His dowry was His own life. We now live in the period of the “kiddushin.” So the wedding is coming, but it has not yet occurred. Now is the time for us as the bride to prepare ourselves. But in this case, we don’t prepare ourselves for the wedding; our Lord does. Notice back in Ephesians 5 we’re told that Christ presents us to Himself. He is preparing us. We can’t sanctify ourselves. We can’t make ourselves holy. Christ Himself does it through His Word and through our obedience to His Word. And when He’s done, and here’s the really good news. When he’s done, all of us individually and the church corporately will have no moral or spiritual stain whatsoever.

Now all of that was to make one point. Paul’s point relative to marriage is this. Men, listen carefully. Our love for our wives is to be like Christ’s love for His church. It’s to be

a sanctifying love. Our greatest concern must be for our wives' spiritual well-being just as that was Christ's chief concern for His bride. As William Hendriksen the commentator writes, "Husbands should love their wives for what they are, and they should also love them sufficiently to help them become what they should be." Your greatest concern as a husband should be that your wife has experienced true regeneration, that she truly knows Christ, that she knows God through His Son. You should pray to that end, and you should live a consistent Christian life before her for that purpose. Your second greatest concern, husband, should be her spiritual progress, that she is growing in moral likeness to Jesus Christ.

Let me just ask you. Do you love your wife with a sanctifying love? Is her relationship to Jesus Christ better than if you were not in her life? You say, "How can I do that? How can I demonstrate a sanctifying love in my marriage like Christ demonstrates toward us as His bride?" Well, let me give you a couple of very practical suggestions. How can you demonstrate sanctifying love towards your wife, husband?

Number one, it begins by pursuing sanctification yourself. You must pursue personal holiness yourself. You cannot lead where you have never been. Do you love Jesus Christ more than you love your job? Do you love Jesus Christ more than you love your hobbies? Do you love Jesus Christ more than you love anything else? And is that commitment clear both to you and to your wife? Does your wife know that you spend regular personal time in the Word of God and in prayer? Does your wife see you trying to change so that you can bring your life and your family into conformity to the Word of God? Does she see that genuine pursuit of God in your life? Don't expect to lead her into that sanctifying work of God if you're not pursuing it yourself.

Number two, the second practical suggestion: we must do nothing that would expose her to sin and temptation. We must do nothing that would expose her to sin and the temptation to sin. By the way, let me just talk to those of you who are not married. This starts even before marriage. You single ladies, if some guy you're dating says he loves you, but he's trying perpetually to get you to violate the Word of God by having sex with him before marriage, that's not true biblical love. That's nothing but unbridled lust. He doesn't love you. He loves himself.

And husbands, let me talk to those of us who are married. We must never do anything that would promote or encourage our wives to sin. You say, 'How do I do that?' Well, be

careful what you read. Be careful of the influences that you bring into your life, into your wife's life and into the home. What do you read? What books do you bring in, what magazines? What television programs do you watch? What movies do you watch? What do you laugh at? What influences are you bringing into your life and the life of your family that are not a sanctifying influence? Don't bring into your life or the lives of those for whom you're responsible those things that are not sanctifying.

A subtle form of encouraging our wives to sin, and I'm speaking only hypothetically here, is being so stubborn or so unkind or so hurtful that we drive them either toward sinful anger or toward bitterness or toward despair. Our chief goal must be our wife's holiness. We must not expose them to sinful influences. Men, our love for our wives is to be a sanctifying love.

There's a third very practical way that we can have a love that sanctifies. We must be the spiritual leaders of our homes. That's our responsibility, men. Like it or not, God has throughout the Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, put us in charge of this spiritual responsibility within our homes. Husbands, you and I should be the ones who put the priority on the corporate worship of God's people. Our wives shouldn't have to beg us or plead with us to get us to come. We should be leading a regular time with our wives and families studying the Bible and praying together. You say, "I just don't know how to do it. I've thought about it. I feel guilty for not doing it. I just don't know how." Well, listen. Go to the bookstore, and we may be out because of the first service, but go to the bookstore and get a little booklet by Don Whitney called "Family Worship." It's not brain surgery. Okay, you don't have to be a pastor or a theologian to do something to be a positive spiritual influence on your wife and children.

Tragically, in many Christian homes, the wife is the spiritual leader. And what's really tragic about that is what happens when that's true? What happens, what message do the children, especially the boys, get when the wife is the spiritual leader? They wrongly learn that the church and spiritual things are primarily for women. Real men don't do those things. Listen. If your sons grow up thinking that about spiritual things, you will have cast a slur on the character of Jesus Christ, the most manly Man who ever lived. We must be the spiritual leaders of our wives.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14, you remember in that passage where he's talking about the confusion that was happening in the church and there was speaking in tongues, and as it

turns out there were women speaking out in the corporate worship asking questions of the elders. Now there's an appropriate place for questions of spiritual leaders, before or after the service or even, even when we have Q and A's and things like that. But in this case, they were adding to the confusion by speaking out in the service and asking questions. And Paul says don't do that; instead, ask your husband at home. Now what's the implication of that statement by Paul? The implication is that your husband will know or if he doesn't know, he'll find out.

One writer says: "A man might not be a vocational theologian, but in his home he must be the resident theologian." Our love for our wives must be a sanctifying love where we are the spiritual leader, and we're directing our wives and our family's hearts toward their Creator and Redeemer. Let me just ask you. Is your wife more like Jesus Christ because she's married to you?

Now, let me leave husbands for a moment for which all of you husbands are grateful and let me talk about Christians in general because in these verses there is a reminder that your life and mine is part of a much bigger plan than just enjoying your family and building your career. You realize that? You're not here for that reason. There's something much bigger going on. What's happening in your life right now is part of a comprehensive plan. In eternity past, the Father gave you to His Son. The Son set His love upon you, and as a result of that, He entered human history. And in 30 A.D., He gave Himself up for you, He died for you, at the cross and was raised again the third day. Now fast forward to your lifetime. At some point in your lifetime, the Father Himself called you through the gospel to Himself. The Lord cleansed your heart. He made you spiritually alive through the message of the gospel applied to your heart by the Spirit.

And beginning at that point and through the rest of your life here, He has one major goal. It's not about what career you have. It's not about where, whether you succeed or don't succeed. It's not about how much money you have, how many toys you die with. It's about none of that. He has one great mission in your life and that is to progressively, faithfully sanctify you. And someday, He will come, or you will enter His presence through death, and then the process will be complete. And at that moment, He will finish what He began here imperfectly, and you will be in perfection, no spots, absolutely blameless, the spitting image morally of Jesus Christ. Why? Why is He doing that? Listen carefully. Because you and every other true Christian are part of the Father's eternal love gift to His Son, a bride, a redeemed humanity who will spend eternity praising Him. So

Christian, don't lose heart. Christ is still at work in you. He is not done yet. When He chose you in eternity past, He chose you to be holy and blameless, and He will accomplish that. Someday, you will be absolutely perfect with not a spot or a blemish or a wrinkle on your soul. Lloyd-Jones puts it like this,

“Dare I put it like this?” he writes. “The beauty specialist will have put His final touch to the church. The massaging will have been so perfect that there will not be a single wrinkle left. She will look young and in the bloom of youth with color in her cheeks, with her skin perfect without any spots or wrinkles. And she will remain like that forever and ever.”

Christian, that's you. Don't stop fighting. Don't give up hope. Someday, He will present you to Himself like that.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You so much for Your Word. What an incredible encouragement it is to us who are so sinful, who are so prone to failure, to know that You are working in us, You will continue that work in us and someday, when we stand in Your presence, we will be the spitting moral image of Your Son. Thank You, O God, for such grace.

Give us the commitment, the resolve to pursue that relentlessly in this life - to, as Jonathan Edwards wrote, never to stop, not to slack in our fight with our corruption however unsuccessful we may appear to be because You are moving us relentlessly to that goal.

And Father, I pray for us as husbands. Help us to take to heart what Paul has, how he has applied this truth to us. Lord, may we be a sanctifying influence in the lives of our wives. Father, may we be like Christ in that way as well. Help us to be the spiritual leaders. Help us however awkwardly, however imperfectly, to demonstrate at least our desire to do and be what You've called us to do and to be. Lord, help us to be men. Help us to be spiritual men like Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.