

A Mother's Example

05/10/2026

I was reading an article from January 20, 2019 that was celebrating the 350th anniversary of Susanna Wesley's birth. She is known as the "Mother of Methodism" (Holiness Today). She raised John and Charles plus 16 other children. Only ten would grow to adults. Susanna made sure her children received a good education by starting a home school for them. She had her children sing Psalms at the beginning and end of school. She had the older children read a chapter from the Bible and a Psalm in the morning to the younger children. Then, in the afternoon, she had them read a chapter of the New Testament. Then, Mrs. Wesley had her children go to private prayers. As a mother, she wrote letters to her children when they became adults and her letters contained theology to help them to continue to grow in their faith. Susanna Wesley's influence on John and Charles Wesley can't be understated. When both brothers worked hard in evangelism, she would still give instruction and guidance in love on living for Jesus. Some may say Susanna Wesley went too far in the spiritual upbringing of her children. All she was doing was trying to instruct them on how to live in order to please God. This may look like a crime today in our society, but it's not something new. It was done in the Bible times as well.

Let's look at an example of this in 1 Thessalonians 4: 1 – 2 where we read this, '4 Finally then, brothers *and sisters*, we request and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received *instruction* from us as to how you ought to ^[a]walk and please God (just as you actually do ^[b]walk), that you excel *even more*.² For you know what instructions we gave you ^[c]by *the authority of the Lord Jesus*. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)" Paul starts here by giving instruction to the church – walk and please God. This may sound like just a simple phrase, but when we really think about it, it has deep meaning. Susanna Wesley wanted the same for

her children. What does it mean to walk and please God? The song "In the Garden" may give us an answer on that:

And He walks with me and He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known

When we walk with our Lord, it is to be a deep relationship in Christ love. Adam and Eve enjoyed this type of relationship before sin entered the picture. After Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, we read this in Genesis 3: 8 - 9, "Toward evening they heard the Lord God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. The Lord God called to Adam, 'Where are you?' (NLT)" Here is the Lord walking about in the garden in perfect harmony before Adam and Eve sinned, which broke that harmony. They had to hide themselves from God after the sin they had done. Now, that walk with God was destroyed. They would be banished from the garden and no longer enjoy the wonderful walk with the Lord. Now, Paul uses the term "walk" in verse 1 to describe how the church is to walk with God. What changed? Jesus changed everything. Even though we still live in a world cursed by original sin, we can have a close relationship with God because of what Jesus did on the cross by washing our sins away with His blood which allows His Spirit to make room in our hearts to be able to walk with the Lord closely. Now, this is not like how Adam and Eve had it before sin, but we can walk with God through the Spirit now during our journey on this earth. Adam and Eve were able to see God – we'll see Jesus face to face when we get to heaven. So, Paul tells us in verse 2 that we should know the instructions to be able to walk with the Lord because these instructions were given by the authority of Jesus Christ who died for His Church. What are those instructions?

Paul tells us this in 1 Thessalonians 4: 3 – 6, "³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you know how to ^lpossess his own ^lvessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not

in [1]lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ *and* that no one violate the rights and take advantage of his brother *or* sister in the matter, because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you previously and solemnly warned *you*. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

So, Paul starts off here very plainly that the followers of Jesus are to be “sanctified” or to live out the will of God which is for our “sanctification”. To be able to walk with the Lord now as we speak - these instructions from Paul still hold true. Our sanctification is the will of God for us and it’s needed for us to be able to walk with Him through the Holy Spirit. Paul uses the term “sanctification” twice in the Scripture we just read. The Greek term is “hagiasmos” which means “holiness”(Strong’s Concordance). In 1 Peter 1: 15-16, Peter tells us that we must be holy because God is holy. We are to live out this holiness. The Greek term Peter uses is “hagios” which means consecrated acceptable to God – holy (Strong’s Concordance). To put all of this in a nutshell, Paul is telling the Church that it is God’s will that we be holy or acceptable to God. So, there needs to be a moral quality about our lives. Not something that we force on ourselves or on others, which we like to do at times. What Jesus had done on the cross allows us to be able to live a holy life in love for Him instead of forcing ourselves to try to be holy. We need Jesus to be sanctified. His blood washes away that sin that causes us to be unclean. Once we allow Jesus into our heart with the help of grace, He cleanses us of our past sin and then we are set apart for Him to have a loving and growing relationship with our Lord. This is what we were born for. We now try to be set apart with God, but then we start to add other loves in our life and we allow them to replace our first love. Then, we start to place God further down the list of who we love first. We only love God when we need Him. That’s not part of sanctification. Our sanctification should be progressive, not reactionary or regressive. Paul wanted the Church to grow in Christ not to regress in Christ. Since John and Charles Wesley preached, taught, and wrote songs about holiness and being sanctified, I’m guessing very strongly here that Susanna Wesley taught holy living to her children. The evidence seems to be strong here. I like what one commentary states about what Paul stated, “Holiness does not dehumanize us.

Rather it cleanses the carnal nature and empowers us through the Holy Spirit to rise above human weaknesses that would defeat us (Wesley Bible Commentary)".

When you become sanctified through Jesus, you start to learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable (from verse 4). This is a life long event till you die. Our world is always changing and it offers new challenges all the time. Technology is always changing and we must learn how to handle these events in holiness. Remember, we are to be acceptable and holy to God. How we use our smart phones. Is it ok to drink alcohol? Is it ok to vap? Is it ok to wear hardly any clothes when among people because fashions change all the time. Things change, so our sanctification through Jesus should be a progressive sanctification which means to develop and move forward in our love for Jesus which helps us to deal with the changing times. Paul uses an example of the work of sanctification when he tells the Church about controlling their own body in a way that is holy and honorable which means allowing the Holy Spirit to control our thinking about our bodies so we don't lust over things that would bring harm to our relationship with Jesus. Paul tells us plainly in verse 6 that God will punish those who sin. You see, Susanne Wesley only wanted the best for her children and she knew the best meant having a right relationship with the Lord. Sometimes, Parents say they want the best for their children meaning material things. Sometimes, parents have grown up poor and they don't want their children to grow up in the same condition. That's an understandable thought. To Mrs. Wesley, the best she wanted for her children was holy living or her children living out their gift of sanctification from Jesus. This holy upbringing helped John and Charles to live in a pagan England and at one point, God would use them to help spread spiritual revival across England.

Paul would add onto his letter about holiness in 1 Thessalonians 4: 7 – 12, " ⁷ For God has not called us for ^{le}impurity, but in sanctification. ⁸ Therefore, the one who rejects *this* is not rejecting man, but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. ⁹ Now as to the love of the brothers *and* sisters, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰ for indeed you practice it toward all the brothers *and* sisters who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers *and* sisters, to excel *even* more, ¹¹ and to

make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own *business* and work with your hands, just as we instructed you, ¹² so that you will ^lbehave properly toward outsiders and ^lnot be in any need. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com). So, Paul uses stronger terms here when he states that God has not called us for impurity, but in sanctification. Again, we are called to be set apart, consecrated acceptable to God. We are to have a moral quality that is Holy Spirit fed. Paul then states that anyone who rejects this way of life, is rejecting God who gives His Spirit / Holy Spirit to us. We have to stop trying to please our culture, but make it our top priority that we please our Lord in everyway with the help of the Holy Spirit.

You may ask, how do we know if we are living a holy life? One of the main fruits of holy living is how you treat others. Paul tells the Thessalonians that they were taught by God to love one another in verse 9. However, Paul doesn't stop there. He then tells them to excel even more so they can behave properly toward outsiders. We want to live out the gift of sanctification that God has given us through Jesus to love Him more and more, plus to love the people more and more around us. I want you for a moment to think about the people that rub you the wrong way. Ask the Lord to help you to love them. John Wesley lived out this love toward the people around him. There was a large group of people the Church of England was not reaching during John Wesley's early day – the coal miners. It was said Wesley would go and preach to the men at 5 o'clock in the morning when their shift ended. He loved them even though many of them were rough and dirty men. John Wesley wrote in his journal about seeing the tears of the miners making "white gutters" through the coal dust on their checks when they heard the gospel message about Jesus for the first time (AI). John Wesley was living out his sanctification by loving the coal miners through Jesus Christ who gave John the ability to do so. How many of us would be willing to tell dirty and rough coal miners about Jesus at 5 o'clock in the morning? Thank you to all the mothers who have taught the love of Jesus to their children. Let's carry on that teaching to the level where others outside the Church can see the love of Jesus. How are you living out the gift of sanctification from God? Again, think about those who rub

you the wrong way this week and pray that the Lord will help you to love them as Jesus does.

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001.

Wesley Bible Curriculum. Wesleyan Publishing House: Fishers, M-M 2026.