

**April 18, 2021 Dennis Gallaher**  
**Creating Community Series: Spots and Wrinkles**

**Ephesians 5:25-27** *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ 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.*

Paul was tearing down cultural norms at the time by laying down this principle - love your wives as Christ loved the church. How did Jesus love the church? By leaving His world and entering into ours, sanctifying her, cleansing her - to set apart as a holy thing. Why? so that He might present to Himself the church - without spot or wrinkle but that the church would be holy and blameless. What began as instruction to men becomes a revelation of Jesus' relationship with His church. It is the practical, everyday instruction on how to live out intimacy with God and intimacy with others.

*"Without spot."* Spots refer to sin. Sin is the refusal to allow Jesus to serve and to satisfy us as members of His body. Jesus left everything because He loved the church and gave all up for her. He is there to minister and care for us by taking away our spots.

The spots and the wrinkles are big in the world today. Our freedoms have become bondage to sin. The norm today is to judge and condemn one another. Why? because we get our eyes off the prize of the upward call of Christ - to present ourselves before Jesus!

**Philippians 3:14** *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Pause... and ask yourself... What is your true relationship with Jesus and His church right now? Is intimacy with God and the community of the saints valuable above all else? Are you deceived - mixing a little lie with the truth? Deception is a tool of the enemy to get us off the mark as God's people. The serpent deceived Eve with a little bit of a lie mixed with truth.

Many Christians believe they can serve Jesus without the commitment to the church of Jesus Christ. All fellowship is destroyed because of sin. Adam and Eve hide from each other and from God with no repentance and only blame toward another. God asked them where they were? God is asking the same today... "Where are you?" Even when we come into the church, we can hide. The Holy Spirit is asking each of us... where are you?

Now continue... God's ultimate goal is to present to Himself the church and all her glory.

**Revelation 19:6-9** *Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let's rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has prepared herself." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are the true words of God.*

What we do here matters there! It matters how we approach God's bride! The goal of God for His church is glory; the reality for many is spots.

So... 1) Get your eyes on the proper goal. 2) Start investing in your retirement home of eternity by putting your energy into heavenly rewards. 3) We cannot experience the abundant life that Jesus is calling without investing in relationships.

There is a difference between knowing the Lord and being a friend of God. Friends spend time together. Friends are not a bother to each other. We tend to build walls that protect us from real relationships that can hurt and that can bless. We then create a shallow life around us and therefore a distant relationship with God. We cannot be close to God and not love the things that God loves. When we love God, we will be attracted to the things that God loves and He loves His church! Don't criticize the bride of Christ.

We will wander around and look for camaraderie as it is not good to be alone. We will look for those like us. Forsaking the fellowship of the bride will always bring about disaster. At some point, ask yourself, what am I doing? Fellowship should happen with the church of Jesus Christ even though we minister to the world with spots and wrinkles. Yet, the church today does not seem to want to be separated from the world. But God's call is to come out and be separate.

**2 Corinthians 6:17-18** *Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty.*

Are we praying that the Lord will shake the church, us, out of our sleep and despondency? It is necessary to be with the church because when we break fellowship with the church, we break fellowship with God. God's call is to enjoy freedom from sin and wrinkles and it begins by being a friend of God and loving what God loves, His church, His community, spots and wrinkles included.

There are two groups of people from **Matthew 22** - Parable of the Wedding Garment. 1) The people proud of their individuality, despising the church, and unwilling to enter. 2) The people looking a mess, with spots and wrinkles, and not worthy of entering. Jesus gives His coat and blood to cleanse us so that we can enter in.

Take Jesus' hand and accept what Jesus did for you! Let Jesus deal with the spots and wrinkles. The church is open to all.

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Are you hiding from God in your approach to church or lack of approach to church?

How does our freedom in Christ become bondage to sin?

How does our approach to the bride of Christ affect us today?

How would you explain the importance of the church to another believer that does not prioritize the church?