

**Living the Essentials of the Faith: Everywhere, Everyone, At All Times**  
**RAISE – Revelation, Anthropology, Incarnation, Sanctification, Eternity**  
*Sanctification Part 2 –What does Jesus expect from His disciples?*

**Key Concept:** All Christians, with the help of the Holy Spirit, are called to grow into a reflection of the invisible Christ.

**Summary:** The work of the Kingdom is not only to sanctify and reclaim the world for Christ, but also to sanctify the lives and characters of individuals. Sanctification here refers to the process of cooperation with the Holy Spirit that occurs in our response to Jesus and that leads us deeper into conformity with Christ.

St. Athanasius explained the process of sanctification, saying “God became man, so that man might become God.” Jesus came not merely to restore us to sinless humanity, but to advance us even beyond our pre-Fall state. Therefore we affirm that, in God’s plan, the end is better than the beginning. We can not only be freed from sin, but also united to God in an intimacy heralded by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the God-man.

We grow into this intimacy through our work of sanctification, but we are not able to advance this process alone. The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, works with us to enable and empower our efforts to become Christ-like. Moreover, the Spirit abides within those who truly claim Christ as their Lord and Savior. The reception of the Holy Spirit is a miraculous indwelling of God in each of Christ’s followers that, in essence, produces a miniature version of the Incarnation – God and man united in one being.

This indwelling makes us a new creation; it is like a second birth. Yet while this transformation is ontologically dramatic, it is behaviorally gradual. Each follower of Christ has the privilege of participating in this process, and of growing up into this new life by daily choosing to subordinate will and life to that of the Savior.

Sanctification includes, but is not limited to, the removal of sinful behavior and thoughts; it also requires the inclusion of Christ-like behaviors and thoughts. We seek to rise above our natural desires to the super-natural standards that Jesus sets for us. Each Christian must strive to become so similar to Jesus Christ that they, like Paul, might say to others, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

All who aspire to leadership in the church must remember that Kingdom leadership stems not from theological wisdom or emotional affection for God or others, but from likeness to Jesus. One’s Christian leadership ability is proportional to one’s Christ-likeness, and none who are unlike Jesus can help others become like Him. Thus the ordained offices of pastor, elder and deacon are held in special honor and to the highest standards. We affirm that unrepentant sinful behavior, including all sexual activity outside of marriage between one man and one woman, is outside of God’s plan and grounds for exclusion from ordination and leadership<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> But not grounds for exclusion from membership (or salvation). All who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, regardless of their path in the process of sanctification, are welcome in the church’s membership.