

# Wash Me

by Deborah A. Biddle



*"... that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word," -  
Ephesians 5:26*

Recently, Lloyd and I were leading a married couples Bible study in which he stated that one of his goals over the course our marriage was to love me as Christ loves the church. He said that he wants to give me the Ephesians chapter five kind of love; a love that lives the following verses, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." (Ephesians 5:25-28)

For years I have heard, read and studied this verse. But, it wasn't until I heard him speak it that day that I understood a portion of what it means and what is involved in the act of cleansing me "with the washing of water by the word."

Those who know me well will testify to the fact that I am strong-willed, stiff-necked or as my mother would say, "hard-headed". I have to figure things out for myself, process everything myself, and then after much deliberation, I come into agreement (or not) with another person. I generally don't accept things at face value or because somebody "says so" and I do not, I repeat, do not like the feeling of being forced, pushed or led into a place or direction in which I am not trying to go, no matter how noble the intention.

So imagine my dear husband repeatedly suggesting that we study the Bible together and how he probably perceived my resistance. Let me be clear. It had nothing to do with him and everything to do with my issues and me. I reasoned as follows: "It is never convenient for me." "It takes too long and I already have a lot to do." "I study on my own, so why do I need to study with him?" Of course, I never verbalized these things. I just thought them, acted them out and let my facial expressions and body language speak for me. I failed to realize how blessed I am to have a husband who desires to love and lead me spiritually. Neither did I think about the damage I was doing to Lloyd's self-confidence by rejecting his attempts to lead me spiritually. For years, we tried different ways to connect around the Word of God. You'd think that it would be easy for two Bible-believing, in-church-every-Sunday, immersed-in-ministry, trying-to-walk-in-the-holiness-of-the-Lord types like us. But, it wasn't. And, it was mostly because I wouldn't allow Lloyd to love me in that way.

It has taken some years, but I have finally yielded. I have learned that love doesn't always show up in the nice neat little package that I might expect. I have learned that my husband wants to lead me spiritually and will work hard to do so, if I will simply give him the opportunity. I found out that love gives me what I need and what is best for me, not only what I want. I know that true love gives, sanctifies and cleanses. I am learning day-by-day to receive all of the love that Lloyd is giving me and to give it right back to him. These days, when he invites me to share with him, grow with him and learn with him from the Word of God, my Spirit gently replies, "Wash me!"

Wives, maybe you are like I was or perhaps it is your husband who is resistant to study the Bible or pray with you. Know that you are not alone. Many wives have husbands who are walking with God, but are not providing spiritual leadership in the family. Some husbands have become passive and others sincerely want to provide spiritual leadership, but just don't know how. Here

are a few practical suggestions about how to love and support your husband as the Holy Spirit teaches him to be the leader God has created him to be:

- Assess your situation and understand that your expectations may not be realistic for where you and your husband are right now. It will take prayer and time for your husband to grow in this area. It took years for me.
- Realize that spiritual leadership doesn't always mean couples' or family devotions seven days a week. Remember how I said that love doesn't always show up as we expect it to? Well, neither does spiritual leadership. Never underestimate the power of a godly example such as faithfulness to his wife, resolving conflict biblically or asking forgiveness from his children. If by the life he leads, your husband is pointing you and your children toward Christ, he is leading spiritually.
- Check yourself. You may be the reason your husband isn't leading the way God intended. For example, in my home, it was me. I didn't want to be led spiritually. I was hindering Lloyd's ability to grow as a spiritual leader and contributing to his frustration and insecurity about leading me spiritually. Love your husband enough to trust God to grow him into the leader he was created to be.
- Encourage your husband. Ask him about and find ways to support him spiritually. Let him know that you are praying for him daily and ask him to pray for you. It may mean getting up earlier or staying up later to have quiet time together. For us, a mid-day phone devotional meeting is sometimes what works. Find out what helps him and then do it. Also, express your gratitude for his leadership. Appreciate him for the areas of leadership in which he excels.
- Make sure that you are growing spiritually. You are responsible to grow in your relationship with Christ regardless of your circumstances. 1 Peter 3:1b says, "that even if some [husbands] do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives." Part of your prayer and hope should be that your godly example would gently challenge your husband and encourage him to grow in the Lord.
- Love your husband. 1 Corinthians 13:8 says, "Love never fails." Remember the promise you made to love him through good times and adversity as long as you both shall live.

Finally, be mindful of the fact that it is God who will work in your husband's

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heart. You cannot think or act in such a way that you take the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of your husband. He needs to come to a place of conviction, repentance and humility where he seeks forgiveness and asks God to change his life. I speak from experience here. It was God who worked in my heart to submit to His will and my husband's headship. So pray and ask God to do whatever it takes to change your husband and to change you.