



A CHRISTIAN'S POCKET GUIDE TO  
**GROWING IN HOLINESS**







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UNDERSTANDING SANCTIFICATION

J. V. FESKO



CHRISTIAN  
**FOCUS**



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Dedicated

to

Samuel Lee Fesko

whom we never had  
the chance to meet  
face-to-face.









## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a book on sanctification can be a daunting task. Whenever I begin to give thought to my own sanctification in the light of the law of God, I definitely see how far I fall short. But at the same time, I am forever grateful for the gospel of Christ. Were it not for the life-giving verdict in my justification, my sins would eternally stand before me and whisper my unworthiness in my ears. Were it not for my union with Christ and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, I would have no power to live for Christ. Paul's powerful words always impart great comfort to my soul, 'I am crucified with Christ, therefore it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' (Gal. 2:20). So in many ways, to rehearse

these truths as I have written this book has given me great food for thought—food for my at times weak and wearied soul. Apart from Christ, I can do nothing.

I want to thank Willie Mackenzie and Christian Focus for approaching me to write this volume. I also want to thank Nic Lazzareschi for his willingness to read over an early draft and offer helpful corrections and suggestions. Thanks are also due to my parents, Lee and Eren Fesko, who read a draft of the manuscript as well. Thanks for your helpful comments! I owe a world of thanks to my wife and children, Val and Rob. Anneke, thank you for your love and constant encouragement. And thank you for your patience and forgiveness when I fail in my sanctification. The same should be said to you, my lads, Val and Rob. I hope you boys grow up with a passion for holiness and that you find the source of your sanctification in your union with Christ—that you would feed upon Christ through Word and sacrament and that you would constantly commune with him in prayer. I also hope that you find a good example in me. I will consider it my greatest failing in life if I do not manifest the holiness of Christ before you, my precious boys.





This book is dedicated to Samuel Lee, our third child. We never got to meet face-to-face. Life is often a crucible where our kind and merciful covenant Lord forms and molds us so that we reflect more and more of the holy image of his son, Jesus—he sanctifies us through life's trials. In this loss, by his grace, our hope lies firmly in the promise that he is a God to us and to our children



(Acts 2:39), and that though Samuel did not come to us,  
that we will go to him (2 Sam. 12:23).





-  Warning
-  Don't Forget
-  Stop and Think
-  Point of Interest





## INTRODUCTION

When God delivered his people Israel out of bondage from Egypt, he led them into the wilderness, gave them his law, and he told them: 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy' (Lev. 19:2). This call to holiness, purity in word, thought, and deed, is still the calling of God's people. But what many do not know is how to be holy. They have placed their faith in Christ but then struggle with how they should obey him. They struggle with sin, at times make progress, but then fall back into the same sinful patterns again. What many people lack is a proper understanding of how to be holy; or in theological terms, they fail to understand what the Scriptures teach about the doctrine of sanctification.

In this small book, the first chapter defines the doctrine of sanctification. I not only explain what it is, but show

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where the Scriptures teach us about it. In the second chapter, I apply the doctrine of sanctification. So often people do not make the connection between doctrine and practice. The Scriptures know nothing about idle Christians. Rather, as Paul says, sanctified Christians manifest their holiness by ‘faith working through love’ (Gal. 5:6). In the third chapter, I show how attempts have been made to undermine the doctrine of sanctification. In the fourth and final chapter I offer some suggestions for further reading on the doctrine of sanctification, divided into entry-level, advanced, and classic works.

Throughout the book I make use of a set of documents called the Westminster Standards: the Confession, Larger, and Shorter Catechisms. Our primary authority in doctrine and life is Scripture, but throughout the history of the church, God has gifted some with the ability to teach. In this respect, the Westminster Standards offer an excellent summary of the doctrinal teaching of Scripture.



The Westminster Standards were written by a group of theologians who met at Westminster Abbey in London, England from 1643-52. They were originally tasked with revising the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, the doctrinal standards of the Church of England. But they were soon called upon to write a confession and catechisms that would unite the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland in doctrine and worship. The resultant documents were the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, *Larger*, and *Shorter Catechisms*, documents that are still employed by Presbyterian denominations in our own day.