

A black and white photograph of a desk. In the foreground, a laptop keyboard is visible, with keys like 'page up', 'page down', and 'enter' clearly shown. To the left, a dark cup is partially visible. In the background, a hand is resting on the desk. The overall scene is dimly lit, creating a contemplative atmosphere.

WEEK 7 | *EPHESIANS 5:21-6:9*

WHO ARE YOU AT HOME AND WORK?

Being a follower of Jesus is a radical new way of life: walking in the way of love as we model ourselves on Jesus who gave himself up for us (5:1). If we're serious about it, living like that is going to affect everything. It changes the way we look at ourselves, the way we operate in the workplace, and the way we live at home.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

At first glance, some of the instructions Paul gives in this passage (like ‘submitting’) are completely at odds with 21st century culture. And yet if we’re going to be serious about imitating our crucified King, we need to think hard about how we can best show this *crucified-Lord culture* to our world.

So before we dive into this potentially unpopular passage, notice the way Paul concludes in Eph 5:32:

“This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about **Christ and the church.**”

1. Make a note of how he begins it in 5:21. (It’s important enough to write out here).

Now read Ephesians 5:21-6:9, and see how Paul imagines the relationship between Christ and the Church playing out in our daily home and work lives.

2. Given that “Christ and the church” are foremost in Paul’s mind, let’s concentrate on first things first. Carefully re-read Ephesians 5:31-32. Note the progression that occurs when a man marries. How does this progression parallel the mystery of “Christ and the church”? (Filling in the gaps may help).

Husband

Leaves _____ to be _____ with his wife and become _____ with her.

Christ

Leaves _____ to be _____ with his church and become _____ with us.

It’s not a perfect parallel, but it’s enough for Paul to make his point. Just as a man leaves home and is united with his new wife, so Christ has left the Father and become “one flesh” with us, the church. The thought of Christ leaving his Father in Heaven and becoming one with us in our humanity provides a model for every area of our Christian lives.



3. From verse 25, what has Christ done for his bride? (What was the cost?)

What would a husband look like who was doing the same?

4. How does the church respond to this self sacrificing saviour (from verse 24)?

How could a wife model this in her marriage?

5. The Christian distinctive (imitating someone in a power-position who chooses to be self-sacrificial instead) flows over into the relationship between parents and children, and bosses and employees.

How can Christ-likeness be displayed

By parents?

By masters?

How can church-likeness be displayed

By kids?

By slaves?

By masters? (Odd, isn't it?)

It's easy to see why these ideas seem so counter cultural! In rights-based relationships, everything is completely reversed from the Jesus model. Instead, we are called to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (5v21)

GETTING REAL

It sounds too good to be true. If our marriages are going to be models of "Christ and the church," then husbands will be giving themselves up for their wives, and wives will be submitting to their husbands as if they were Christ!

6. Talk about the categories that are most relevant to you (husband, wife, child, master etc.)

What do you need to change to more clearly reflect Christ and his church?

What challenges are you facing?

Sadly, mis-application of this teaching has sometimes been used to justify incidents of bullying and even domestic abuse. Given that the whole goal of Paul's teaching is to promote marriages that give people a glimpse of Jesus and his church, that's a tragedy. If you are a husband who uses this passage to excuse such behaviour, please be aware that our church absolutely rejects such actions or attitudes. Paul is urging you to give yourself for your wife! Especially in cases where there is danger of physical violence, the leadership of MPC give advice that seeks to ensure safety of all parties, and will call for police or other legal assistance where necessary.

Growth Groups don't meet next week because the "Food For Thought" dinner is on Thursday.