

THE CHURCH - HIS CHOSEN VEHICLE

Ephesians 5:25-27

1. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR EXAMPLE IN ALL THINGS

- He is our example in every aspect.
- We should set our sights on following His example.
- We should follow His example in all we do and say.
- We should not model our lives on others or on other things, but we should model our lives on Him.
- Our lives should be shaped by His example and as a result we should be changed more and more into His image and example.
- His example can be applied to every aspect of our lives, from marriage to our careers.
- We should even follow His example as it applies to the church.
- The example He set regarding the church should be our guiding light.
- What was important to Him should be important to us.

2. JESUS CHRIST LOVES HIS CHURCH

- **Ephesians 5:25** *'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.'*

- He did not love the church because it was perfect; He loved it because it was imperfect, but redeemable because He would work on her.

Note 2 things:

1. The Lord loves the church.

- The Lord loves His church.
- If the Lord loves the church then who are we to feel any differently?
- That which is important and loved by God should be important and loved by us.
- Just as the Lord embraced the church, so too should we have a deep love and appreciation for the church.
- Does that mean that the church is perfect? No!
- Is everything perfect in marriage? No - but we still love each other!
- The love of the Lord for His church was so great that He considered Himself incomplete without her.

- **Ephesians 1:22-23** *'God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made Him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is His body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with Himself.'*

- Just as in marriage, where we find our completeness in one another.

2. He gave Himself up for her.

- His love for the church was sacrificial.
- He was willing to pay the ultimate price for the church.
- Not only was Christ prepared to live with the weaknesses of the church, He went even further and sacrificed His life for her.
- Just as in marriage, where a husband would be prepared to protect his wife even to the point of dying for her to live.

3. THE CHURCH IS HIS CHOSEN VEHICLE

- The church has and always will be the chosen vehicle of our Saviour.
- That is how He planned it from the start and nothing has changed His plan over the centuries.
- We may consider it a flawed and problematic choice, but it remains His choice.
- He chose the church as His divine vehicle for His body to function within.
- The Church has stood the test of time and still stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration to many despite the passage of time
- No better mechanism has ever been successful, although many have tried.
- You may feel that this is not the best tool that the Lord could have chosen, but that does not change the facts.
- You may look at the church and see its flaws and weaknesses and its failures over time, but that does not change things.
- You may have even been hurt or disappointed by the church and as a result think that you are better without it.
- The truth is that we are never better without God's plan and purpose for our lives and that includes involvement with and in His church.
- You may think you know better, but we can never know better than the Creator.

4. HIS PLAN IS A PROCESS

- ***Ephesians 5:26*** 'so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.'
- This takes place through the agent of His love.
- The church is actually a process and not a destination.
- I have often heard people say that they are so happy to have found a spiritual home and so happy to have found a church where they feel a sense of belonging and connection, but that is just the start.
- Once we become part of the church, we have not arrived, we have begun a process.
- The process involves sanctification.
- Sanctification is the process of advancing in holiness.
- It is the process of the believer being progressively transformed by the Lord into His likeness and into similarity of nature with God.
- Some people would prefer to escape this.
- I once heard someone say: "If you ever find the perfect church, please don't join it, because then it won't be perfect anymore!"
- The truth is that the church is full of people who are not perfect but are part of God's process and plan.
- Don't try and escape it. Embrace it, and let Him have His perfect work in your life.

5. THE END PRODUCT IS SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

- ***Ephesians 5:27*** 'He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault.'
- The end result, or the final outcome will be:
 1. A Glorious Church.
 2. Without spot or wrinkle or any other blemish.
 3. Holy and without fault.
- The end result will be something more wonderful than we could ever have imagined.
- We all want to be part of the 'Glorious Church' that is spoken of.

6. BETTER TOGETHER - THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY!

- God has given us different visions, callings and directions.
- All of these variations of ministry and calling remain a part of His church.
- The purpose of all these dimensions is to serve Him.
- When we unite with them, all together, we can accomplish more than what we could individually.
- We should be united in the purpose of growing and seeing His church and kingdom expanded and strengthened.
- We need to work together like an army.
- The Lord is not going to bring change to our city through one particular church, but through His church as a body, united and committed to His purposes.
- One thing the enemy loves to see is disunity.
- In John 17, Jesus prayed that we would be one!
- We should work together to see this unity unfold.
- The church should always be seen in 3 dimensions:
 1. The local church.
 2. The regional church.
 3. The universal church.
- We are all part of the greater church of Jesus Christ.
- We should all play our part in His church.

7. WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY?

- **A. Have regard for the church.**
- Love the church just as Christ loved the church.
- Hold the church in high esteem.
- Understand that it is God's chosen vehicle.
- **B. Be a part and promote unity.**
- Get involved, get connected and embrace the process.
- Don't sit on the fringes.
- Become an agent for the church.
- Become an ambassador.
- There are 3 things that are hindrances to unity:
 1. Independent Spirits.
 2. Selfishness.
 3. Building our own kingdom exclusively.
- **C. Don't do or say anything to harm the church.**

8. THE POWER OF ONE CHURCH - WHAT CAN I DO?

- What can we do to promote His church and the unity within it?
 1. Pray - prayer has the power to bring unity.
 2. Help where you can - assist those who are in need.
 3. Let us come together to fight our common enemy.
- Let us seek after and promote unity.
- **How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! ...For there the LORD commanded the blessing - Life forevermore.' Psalm 133,**
- 4. Put aside your own agenda and ideas about how things should work.
- 5. Encourage others to join in so that we can see a great harvest.

