

August 16, 2020

Speaker: Eric Naus **Series:** Better Together, Reflections on the Nature of the Church

Sermon Title & Passage: “The Church He Loves” – Ephesians 5:25-30

Ephesians 5:22-33 is a passage we often go to for teaching on God’s intention for marriage. Verses 25-30 instruct husbands on how they should love their wives in imitation of Christ. In making his appeal to husbands, the Apostle Paul also gives us a great gift in describing the depth of Christ’s love for his church.

Take a moment to read Ephesians 5:25-30 aloud, and then work through the following questions.

1. According to verse 25, Christ had a specific goal in mind when he went to the cross. He “gave himself up” on the cross “for her” – that is, for the church, his bride. In other words, on the cross, Christ was securing the salvation of a particular group of people, his church. He was atoning for their real sins and ransoming his people for God (see Matt. 1:21, Titus 2:14, Mark 10:45, and Revelation 5:9). How does this idea of “definite atonement” make Christ’s love for us even more astounding and vivid? How does Ephesians 5:25 help us say, with the Apostle Paul, “Christ loved *me* and gave himself up for *me*” (Galatians 2:20)?
2. Verses 26-27 show us the next steps in Christ’s redemptive work for his church. After dying for his church, Christ then “sanctifies” them (makes them holy) and “cleanses” them “by the washing of water with the word” (he washes away their sin when they hear and embrace the word of the gospel - vs. 26). Then, Christ continues to transform his church until the final day of his return when they will be glorious and beautiful, like a bride on her wedding day (vs. 27). What do these verses teach us about the relentless, transforming nature of Christ’s love? How do these verses encourage you in the messy process of your growth in the Lord, especially in those times when you feel discouraged by setbacks?
3. Verses 28-30 make an astonishing claim: just like a husband loves “his own body” when he loves his wife (since they are “one flesh” – see Gen. 2:24), in the same way, Christ loves his own body when he loves us as his church because we are spiritually united to him. We are “members of his body” and he will forever associate himself with us, and nourish and cherish us as his own body. How does this “self-interested” dynamic of Christ’s love for us encourage you when you feel like you’ve let him down, or when you’re afraid he might overlook you?
4. In your opinion, why do we sometimes shy away from reflecting on, and delighting in, Christ’s love for us as his church? How does Ephesians 5:15-30 help us to open our hearts even more to his love? How does Paul’s prayer for the church in Ephesians 3:14-19 relate to the theology seen in our text in Ephesians 5?