

Jesus Loves The Church

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[0:00] Ephesians 5.21, we are going to read until the end of the chapter. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church, for we are members of his body.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church.

[1:27] However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

It was 31 years ago this spring that we began worshiping together on the Lord's Day at the Bremen High School, and it was within that first year that we started a study on what the Bible says about the church.

We spent some 30 weeks on the church, and at the end of that time, we constituted as a church with 23 initial members.

Some of those have moved away. Eight of them have moved on to heaven, and only 11 initial members are with us yet today.

They're the ones with the stars on the bottoms of their shoes. And if you want to know what we believe about the church, you can ask them. I'm sure they could recall every one of those 30 messages that I preached.

[2:34] Now, see Dick Bills afterwards if you have any questions about those messages. I can't even recall them all myself, and I preach them. We need to be reminded, don't we, about the things of God's word.

And so I believe that a study on the church is long overdue at Grace Fellowship Church, if not for you, then at least for me. There are, however, other pressing concerns and reasons for doing so. Over the past 31 years, we have seen a general shift in the attitude towards the church, not only from the world where we might expect to see that, a world that once viewed the church with some honor and respect, but now views the church with contempt and ridicule and even with signs of growing persecution.

But not just from the world, but even from within the church, the house of God themselves. We've seen different ideas and attitudes toward the church.

Some professing Christians have simply given up on the church. Now, they still believe in Christ and the Bible and all of that, they'll say, but they're through with the organized church.

[3:55] Do you know people like that? I would dare say you do. Maybe they got burned in a church. You know what I mean by that, not literally, but they were sadly mistreated in a church, and they have never recovered from that.

It is sad to see, but it happens, doesn't it? Maybe they could no longer stand the hypocrisy and worldliness of the church. But for one reason or another, they've largely given up on the church, and so Christ's baby has gone out with the bathwater for them.

Others have not totally tossed in the towel, but are only loosely affiliated with a church. Maybe they do not see or appreciate the importance of the church.

They think they're okay without it. This week, I spoke with the father of a youth worker, sort of a youth pastor, who told me that his son went out visiting members of his youth group who have gone off to college, and he went to visit them on college campuses.

And what he found was that they've quit going to church. Now, these were professing Christian young people. And what he found is what surveys have noted as a common trend, that young people growing up in the churches and making professions of faith go off to college, quit going to church, and very often do not return to church after college, but only later in life, after they're married and maybe have children and want to see their children brought up in the church.

[5:32] Very common. Very common. One of our sister churches began an annual conference for young adults called Building Tomorrow's Church in order that our young people might come to appreciate the importance of commitment to a local church.

And we've profited from that conference. But it's in the milieu of this kind of a mess of people's loose attitudes toward the church that they've sought to fill a void.

Some simply no longer have time for the church in their busy lives. And if the choice is between the church and their activities, the church often gets the short end of the stick.

Some float in and out of churches with no commitment, no accountability, no service to the church, treating churches more like a restaurant. What can I get from this place?

Others have been trying to reinvent the church over the past 31 years, to come up with a new and improved idea of the church, to make it more appealing to more people, to make it all-inclusive where no repentance of sin is required.

[6:47] One thing is certain, that the role of the church in the life of the ordinary Christian has known better days in our country. Faithful churchmanship is increasingly rare in our day.

Now this is the current environment in which we live, and its thoughts and attitudes are contagious. So where shall we turn? What latest book on church growth or latest seminar on how to do church? No, not to them. In Scripture, the church is often called the church of God. God's church. So it seems only right, doesn't it, that when we want to be taught about the church, we come to God's word, to be taught about God's church.

It's His institution. So to the Bible we go to hear what the inventor of the church has to say on the matter. We not only want to think right thoughts about the church, but we want to have a right attitude and right behavior towards the church.

And I could not think of any better place to begin than by looking at Jesus' love for the church. If ever I need an attitude adjustment toward the church, I believe that Jesus' love for the church is the place to start.

[8:20] It has tremendous implications for our attitude and treatment of the church. So turn with me to Ephesians 5. It's a familiar passage.

Nearly every marriage and the family seminar will eventually get to this text. It's a text often preached at weddings that sets forth the responsibilities of husbands and wives and their relationship with each other.

And yet, no less than six times in this passage, we read of the church. The church, the church, the church. And that struck me again this week as I poured over these verses.

Indeed, the husband-wife relationship is said to be comparable or comparable to the relationship of Christ and his church. That the human marriage is to be the reflection and to mirror out the divine marriage of Christ and his bride, the church.

So we're going to turn to these familiar verses on marriage, but not so much this morning for help in our marriages, though that will follow by course.

[9:32] But to ask, what do these verses teach us about Jesus Christ and his church? And the first thing this morning is that Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Christ loved the church. Notice Ephesians 5, 25. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Now, don't get nervous that the past tense is used, that Jesus loved or Christ loved the church, as if that's to infer that he no longer loves the church.

Not at all. The love of Jesus for the church is eternal. It is changeless. It is unfailing love. And yet the past tense is used here because it's focusing our attention upon the greatest demonstration of

his love for the church.

And it was when the Lord Jesus gave himself up for her. There on the cross, he made the ultimate sacrifice of love. So think of what the eternal Son of God gave up.

[10 : 51] From eternity, he rested in the bosom of the Father, in the most intimate of fellowship with his Heavenly Father, under his perpetual delight in his Son, a face-to-face, unbroken relationship.

Before the worlds were even created, there was this wonderful fellowship within the Trinity that the Son of God enjoyed for all eternity. God's full glory was shining out from him in that perfect place where all was light and all was right, where he was worshipped by angels, and then later also worshipped by the spirits of just men who had been made perfect.

But he said goodbye to it all. And he left behind such glories that were his in heaven. And he came into this world, a world of sin and darkness and suffering and pain, where men no longer saw any glory in him, where men misunderstood him.

They hated him. They abused him and eventually nailed him to a cross of torture. And there he suffered not only the worst that man could do, but he suffered the eternal wrath of God due to sin. And we come to such a reality and we say, I want to know one thing. Why? Why did he do that? Why did he leave his throne in heaven and come to this world and suffer in that way?

[12 : 20] And our text says, because he loved the church. Christ loved the church. That's why he gave himself up for her.

The church was the object of such love in our Savior. And when she was defiled and polluted and condemned in her sin, standing there before a holy God, deserving his eternal wrath and condemnation, Jesus stepped in and gave himself up for her.

And he took her humanity. And he came into this world and took not only a human body, but a human soul. And he lived out his life in the same kind of rough and tumble sin, dark world that you and I live in, never once breaking one of his father's commands.

And then he took our sins, the sins of his church, upon himself. And he said to God, punish me and pardon her. Punish me.

Give me what she has coming and let her go free. He loved the church that much to give himself up for her, to be her Savior.

[13 : 44] It was his life for hers so that Paul can say to those elders at the church of Ephesus, you be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Wow. What love. That's why he came. That's why he gave himself up. So great his love. If love can be measured in terms of what is given up for the beloved, then we see the greatness of Christ's love for the church that he would give himself up for her.

There was nothing more he could give than himself. There was nothing less that could be given in order to save her.

Well, Ephesians 5, 26, and 27 go on to say that he gave himself up in love for his church. Why? In order to make her holy.

That means to set her apart. The most basic idea is to set her apart to God. No longer to live for herself, but for him who died.

[14 : 58] He set her apart. By his blood, he purchased men for God. He purchased his bride for God to make her holy.

Cleansing her. Oh yes, she was dirty. The pollution. The guilt of sin. But he cleansed her from all of that. How? By the washing with water through the word.

Remember Jesus says to the Father, praying for his church, sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth. And there is this washing that takes place of the church through the word of God, cleansing, pointing them to the Savior.

By his blood, we are cleansed from every sin. And notice, and to present her to himself as a radiant church. Why did he do this? To present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Here's the ultimate purpose for which Christ in love gave himself up for his church. To present her to himself this radiant, holy, blameless church.

[16 : 11] This refers to the bride in the marriage customs of the day when the bride would be presented to the bridegroom. And there she was, resplendent in beauty, to be presented to the bridegroom.

And so in this case, this points us forward to Christ's return when the bride will be glorified together with the bridegroom.

resplendent in his glory. At that wedding feast of the Lamb, you can read of her beauty. In Revelation 21, 2, John sees the church coming down out of heaven from God as prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband.

You see, she's been prepared for her husband. And so this text points forward. This is why Jesus gave himself up for his bride.

For all the many shortcomings of the church here and now, how different she will appear then without the slightest blemish or stain of sin, nothing to detract from her beauty, only that which magnifies it, her attractive holiness and blamelessness.

[17 : 33] sinlessness. And all of this is the work of Christ in beautifying his church. This is why in love he gave himself up for her, to present her to himself as a radiant church.

How different from the rags to riches story of Cinderella. Kids, you know that fairy tale, how it begins with despised Cinderella in her ashes and rags.

And when it's announced that the prince is holding a ball and was planning to choose a wife from among the young ladies attending, everyone started to beautify themselves.

But Cinderella was beautified by, bing, this fairy godmother suddenly appearing. And she's the one who prepared to present her to the prince.

She turns her rags into a beautifully jeweled gown and provides for her glass slippers, a golden carriage, horses and footmen, all to present her to the prince or to the prince in a way that would wow him and make him want to choose her.

[18 : 47] But in the real story, the real flesh and blood story of a real world, Jesus the prince is the one who performs the makeover.

The church was helpless. The church was unable to do anything by her own power to make herself beautiful. So he cleanses the filthy church from her sins.

He removes all the ugliness of sin and makes her all glorious within and without so that even he himself is enthralled with her beauty.

And he did it. by giving himself up for her. We sing, from heaven, he came and sought her to be his holy bride.

With his own blood, he bought her. And for her life, he died. So he gives his own blood to cleanse her from sin. He gives his own righteousness to cover her with beauty.

[19 : 47] He gives his own spirit and word to purify her so that all of her beauty she owes to him. And he presents her to himself.

Isn't that different from Cinderella? He presents her to himself as a radiant church, a glorious bride. He is the one, you see, who's able to keep her from falling and to present her before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

And why? Because Christ loved the church. Now, the great implication for this in our lives should be clear. Our good friend Earl Blackburn wrote a book recently, and the title of his book makes the application obvious.

Jesus loves the church and so should you. Pretty simple, isn't it? Jesus loves the church and so should you.

[20 : 54] Can't argue with the first part after we've read Ephesians 5. Can't argue with the second part if we've understood what we've read. The church is the special object of Christ's love.

He regards it as the apple of his eye. You know that phrase, don't you? The object of his eternal delight. He rejoices over her with singing.

Well, then, if you are any lover of Jesus, you should be a lover of his church as well. Does he love the church? Can I do any less?

If for no other reason I should love it because he does. Beyond my highest joys, I prize her heavenly ways, her sweet communion, solemn vows, her hymns of love and praise.

Do you love the church? Are its people your people? Do you love their fellowship? Do you stay afterwards in fellowship with them? It's such an encouragement. It says, these are my people.

[22 : 01] These are the bride of Christ, the treasure of his heart. And I love them as well. Is its worship your delight? Is its service your joy?

But you say, John, haven't you noticed the problems of the church? Haven't you seen her spots and wrinkles? Yes, it was that church that Jesus loved. He hasn't given up on her.

He knows how to get spots and wrinkles out. And if Jesus loves the church, then it carries powerful implication for the church's place in our hearts and lives.

Jesus loves the church, and so should you. Now, the second thing we see in this text is that Christ is united with his church in the most intimate, unbreakable union.

He's united with his church in the most intimate, unbreakable union. Verse 31 is a quote from Genesis chapter 2.

[23:04] For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. Amazing that two could become one, that two could be put into a bond and a union that would make two become one.

A mysterious, amazing, thing. And verse 32 says, this is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church. So the union between a husband and wife points to the ultimate union of the heavenly bridegroom with his bride, the church.

Christ and his church are so united that the two become one. men, in a union reflected in the marriage of man and woman, but even more intimate and more profound.

Now what happens when two are joined together into one in marriage? Well, they share everything now, don't they? It's now what's yours is mine and what's mine is yours as well.

so it was in my marriage with my wife. All my possessions became hers and all of her possessions became mine. And so her Ford Mustang became mine and my three-speed bicycle became hers.

[24:34] Isn't it great men to marry up in life? We are beneficiaries all of our lives, you see, because everything that's hers is now mine.

How did that happen? It happened when we stood together before God and God united us in marriage. He says the two are now one. And that's just a picture of the real marriage between Jesus and his bride, the church.

When they were united, let me tell you, the church married up, way up. and what belonged to Christ became hers and what was hers became his.

All her sins became Christ's and he bore them to the cross and took the punishment for them. And all of his righteousness became hers and it presented her faultless before the throne of God. and the church's debts and liabilities became his and he paid them and his riches became ours and we enjoy them. The church is married to the king of kings and lord of lords.

[25:51] The church is married to the sovereign of the universe. If that's not marrying up, if that's not from rags to riches, What is? So everything that's his is ours.

We just sang that. Jesus and all in him is mine. That's what the church sings to him. Jesus and all in him is mine.

Alive in him my living head. I'm in him and so united with him all that's his is mine. And the rest of the New Testament reflects this union in the way that it refers to the church as being in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The church is in God the Father the church is in Jesus Christ.

There's that union. We sing of it. But she on earth hath union with God the three in one. The church is in union with Christ and the Holy Spirit and God the Father.

[26:56] 1 Thessalonians Judea which are in Christ Jesus. That's the signature language of Paul for union with Christ.

For a man a woman boy or girl to be in Christ is to be joined to Christ. And so the church is stated as being in Christ.

So when you think of Christ you must think of his church for he's married to her forever. And when you think of the church you must think of Christ her bridegroom.

The two are one and cannot be separated. Whatever happens to the picture on earth in terms of it should not be separated what God is joining as for this union it cannot be separated.

They're bound together eternally in a most intimate unbreakable union. can no more be separated than head and body can be for they're united.

[28:05] Now again the implications are powerful for us. Here is Jesus' commitment to his bride to the church. What does that say about our commitment to the church?

If Jesus is committed to the church does it carry nothing of implication for our commitment to the church? To give up on the church is to give up on the bride forever united to Jesus Christ.

Does your attitude toward the church reflect this awesome truth that she is the bride of Christ forever? And do you treat the church in a manner worthy of Christ's bride?

Oh don't give up on her. There's one that has loved her and does love her and will love her to the end. The third thing we see in the passage is that this union is further described in this statement in that the church is the body of Christ of which he is the head and savior.

Church is the body of Christ of which he is the head and savior. Chapter 5 and verse 23.

[29:23] For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. His body of which he is the savior.

So just as there is a union between head and body they make up one whole person so Christ is the head the church is the body they are united and make up one whole and he is the savior of that body.

And then in verse 28 and the body who loves wife loves himself after all no one ever hated his own body but he feeds and cares for it just as Christ does the church for we are members of his body. Now this passage and others are teaching us that when a man marries a woman she becomes a part of him. It has to be that way if the two are now one right? So she is a part of him.

We sometimes speak of that lightly as our better half don't we? Head and body that imagery is here used. The husband is the head and the wife is the body.

[30:39] And so he is to love her as being his own body. I don't believe it's saying here I think it's inferred and we'll see that he is to love her in the same way that he loves his own body.

That's inferred. But it's saying more than that he's saying he is to love her because she is his body and no one ever hates his own body but nourishes and cherishes it. So he must love her as his own body.

Remember he's united to her. She is part of him. And so he is to love her as being his own body and no one ever hated his own body but feeds and cares for it.

And how? Isn't that true? Didn't you do that this week? Didn't you do that even this morning?

Looking after your body. We tenderly care for our own bodies.

We look after their every need and even often their every desire. So when my body is hungry I give it something to eat. And when it's sick and tired I lie down and I give it rest and sleep.

[31:53] And when it's cold I put on a sweater or a coat or pull up a blanket. We constantly even unthinkingly looking after the body to see to it that it has all it needs and much more.

Husbands are to so love your wives as your own bodies. After all no one ever hated his own body but he feeds and cares for it just as Christ does the church for we are members of his body.

Now there we learn something about Christ and the church. Here's where we see that Christ's love for the church at Calvary didn't end there but it goes on. Yes he loved the church but here's where we see it's an ongoing love for the church.

He is present tense feeding and caring for his body the church. Though he's in heaven there's never a moment when his eye is not upon her.

He's not anticipating her needs and ministering to those needs indeed to each individual member of his body not just the church as a whole but it says each member of the body he feeds and cares for it.

[33:06] How does he do that? Well one way he does it is he gives pastors and teachers to feed them the word of God Ephesians 4. In the ministry of the word the bridegroom comes speaking to his bride.

I ask you have you not heard the bridegroom's voice in the ministry of his word? And he's come with a word that has encouraged you a word that's built!

you up. It was a word in season. Jesus comes to meet with his bride through the preaching of the world. He's feeding her. He's nourishing her.

He gives men as gifts to his church for her growth and protection and spiritual stability and well-being. He gives them under shepherds to watch over his blood bought bride, to protect them, to warn them of dangers, to teach them to obey all of Christ commands, to rule over them in love, to serve them, to recover them when straying, to urge them on toward Christ and encourage them with his promises.

Never forget that this is the work of the unseen Christ towards his bride. He feeds her. He does. What a glorious transformation of what the world looks on and says, oh, there's a bunch of people meeting in that building today.

[34:27] No, Jesus is coming to feed his bride. Yes, he feeds and cares for her and we see his ongoing love and concern for his church in many ways.

He now lives for her as the sovereign ruler over all things. Ephesians 1 tells us that God raised Jesus up from the dead and he exalted him and seated him at his right hand in heaven and God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church which is his body the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

How does he care for the church? By ruling over everything and seeing to it that everything serves the interest of his church.

He's put every authority and power and government under Christ's feet. to what end? That there might not be any devilish power any governmental power that can thwart his purposes for his church.

He's ruling Jesus the bridegroom is ruling over everything for the advantage the very best of his church. He loves her.

[35 : 45] He's caring for her you see. And then he poured out the Holy Spirit upon the church in Acts 1 and 2. What a gift for his church.

How he's nourishing and cherishing the church. You're going to need the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life here. And he pours out the Spirit upon his church.

We couldn't take the first step in the Christian life without the Holy Spirit. And so he gives to the church his Spirit, the Holy Spirit. He gives spiritual gifts to each member in the church for the overall good of the body.

He adds to the church those who are being saved. Come tonight and hear the testimony of three and how God added them to the church. He's spiritually present with his churches as they gather in his name.

Revelation 1 in that vision, John sees that form which is Christ. And where is he? He's walking among the golden candlesticks. The churches.

[36 : 53] Yes, he's present with his people as they gather together to worship him. He takes in a unique concern for each one of his churches.

churches. And so you read he sent a letter to this local church and to that local church. And there in Revelation he sends them to seven different churches. Real churches.

And he praised them for what they had going right and he rebuked them for what was going wrong.

Do you know Jesus could write up a letter to us? It's not necessary. We have the full scripture.

But he knows everything that he would praise and he knows everything that he would say now Grace Fellowship Church you need to give attention to this and this. You see he's intimately involved with his church.

Not just at Calvary but today as well. So the church is Christ's body and he cares for it. Can we do any less? The church is his.

[37 : 52] I think it's simple but we need to just realize that. Jesus says I will build your church? My church. I will build my church.

It's his institution. He thought of it. He founded it. It's his church of which he is the builder. I will build my church. She is his bride of whom he is the bridegroom who bought her with his own blood.

She is his body of which he is the head. She is his building of which he's the chief cornerstone. She is his temple in which he dwells by his spirit.

She is his vineyard that he tends. His field, the planting of the Lord, which he makes to grow and to be productive. He is his family, his household of which he is the firstborn son of honor.

The church is his. And what is his can be of no small concern to us. Can it? His name, his kingdom, his will, his day, his law, his glory, his worship, his word, his church.

[39 : 12] It's his. We can't be indifferent to that which is of such concern to our Lord Jesus. We can't remain aloof from that which he is united to.

I dare say, if you are drawing near to Jesus the head, you are drawing near to the church his body. They're not separate, folks.

They're together. There was no decapitation. He is head of the church. And if you're going to say, I'm drawing closer to Jesus, you will be drawing closer to his church.

It's his body. We cannot toss the leftovers of our time and life to that which he gave his life's blood to purchase, to redeem, that which is front and center concern to our Lord Jesus.

Jesus. Well, to sum up, would not every Christian here say that one of the greatest privileges of all is to belong to the bride of Christ, to be a part of the bride of Christ, to know that he loved me and gave himself up for me, to be the object of his saving work, the object of his constant care, to be a

member of his body, to be part of the bride that he so tenderly feeds and cherishes.

[40 : 45] Well, then let it lead us to pray and to work for the growth and advancement of Christ's church and God's glory. lost person, if you love Jesus, you would love the church too.

It's his bride. And I just want to ask, is something not wrong with this picture that Jesus loves the church and you don't? Is something not wrong with that?

Well, then go to him and confess it's wrong. It is wrong. And just own it and say, Lord, I've been ignoring you and your bride. Forgive me.

Take me. Save me. Make me a part of your bride. What can we say to convince you of what a wonderful thing it is to be a part of the bride of Christ?

Who can explain the peace and joy that we have in being united to Jesus Christ forever? To know that in the day of death, in the day of judgment, he'll still be by our side.

[41 : 50] He'll be representing us there, clothed us with his righteousness, presenting us faultless before the throne. What's that worth? What's it worth?

It's worth everything. Give yourself up to this Savior. Give yourself up to this bride group. Don't just take our word for it.

Taste and see for yourself how gracious the Lord is. He's more gracious than you know. He's more gracious than we can tell. And if you go to him, he will forgive you.

He'll cleanse you of your sins. He'll make you a part of his bride forever. He'll receive you with open arms and he will beautify you by his sin cleansing power and word and spirit.

Why not come to him today even right now? Husbands and wives, we've been bumping up against this thing all morning, haven't we?

[42 : 49] That the bigger relationship is to be reflected in our marriages. That ups the ante on every one of our marriages.

Why is marriage so important? Well, many reasons could be given, but here's the highest. Because God wants to have stages on which he demonstrates this glorious relationship between Jesus and his bride, the church.

Let your marriage be one of those stages. Present it to God. Cry for his grace. What will it mean? Husbands, you work that out from the passage.

Wives, what will that mean? Work that out from the passage. May it be that others looking in on our marriages will say, you know, there's something about his love for her that is like Jesus' love for the church.

You know, there's something about her sweet submission to him that's like the church's sweet submission to the head Christ. Let's aim for his glory in the church.

[43 : 56] Our hymnody is rich in songs about the church. Let's take our hymn books and sing as our response. If Jesus loves the church, I love thy church, O God.

Number 280. 280. And you have reason to sing your thanks and love to Christ for his kingdom, for his church.

Let's stand and do so. And number 280, we'll sing it to the more familiar tune. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that when we were wallowing in our sin and filth, you were not turned off against us, but you left heaven to come and rescue us.

You saw us plunged in deep distress. You flew to our relief. For us, you bore the painful cross and carried all our grief. How can we ever thank you enough that we belong to that precious blood-bought bride, that we are your body, joined to you, not only in time, but for eternity.

[45 : 11] That we know that when you died on the cross, it was for our sins you died, and we know that you now live for us, and that Jesus and all in him is mine.

Thank you for such contentment and peace and joy in believing. Forgive us for our lowly thoughts of the church.

Forgive us for our wrong attitudes and behavior towards her. Continue to open up your heart for her to us, and bring our thoughts and attitudes and behavior in line with your own.

We pray through the power of your Holy Spirit, make this place a place where Jesus is glorified in his church. Make our marriages places that shine out something of the wonder of this relationship that we have with you, and draw sinners who have not yet tasted just how good your love is.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.