

Sermon-Based Small Group Bible Study

The Glorious Church: Cross-Shaped Relationships (Ephesians 5:21–6:4)

Open

Select one of these “ice breakers” to get the conversation going toward the study.

- Who is the most powerful person you have ever met? (Use whatever measure of power you want.)
- What’s your favorite team you’ve ever been on? (Use whatever definition of “team” you want.)
- Do you recall a time when someone whom you did not expect served you? What was that like?

Dig

After reading Ephesians 5:21–6:4 together, discuss these questions.

1. The center of this passage is in 5:21, “reverence for Christ.” What parts of the story of Christ especially provoke awe or reverence for you? How does that shape how you aspire to live?
2. When you think of Christ as the “head” of the church (5:23), what impresses you about Christ in that role? How is he like others who are “head” that we experience? How is he different? How does that difference change how we understand what it means to submit to him?
3. 5:25–27 stress that Christ’s love motivated him to give himself for us to present the church “holy and without blemish.” How does that purpose of Christ’s loving action direct our actions toward one another?
4. In the Bible’s social setting, to honor one’s father and mother (6:2) included supporting them even when they were no longer able to contribute to the family livelihood. How is that particular practice a reflection of the love of Christ?
5. Pastor Jon focused on four verbs in this text: submit, love, obey, nurture (or bring up). Which of these is especially helpful to you as you think about your actions toward others guided by the awesomeness of Christ and pursuing cross-shaped relationships?

Summary: Paul transforms the institution of the Graeco-Roman household by instructing every member to behave toward every other member in light of Christ’s submission and obedience to the Father and love and nurture for his unworthy people. By God’s grace we learn to follow Jesus in infusing every relationship, every interaction with the humble love of a servant, putting others first.

Reflect

Use any of these prompts to encourage group members to apply the text to their own experiences.

- What do you find hard about putting this passage into practice? What do you find rewarding about putting it into practice?
- Pastor Jon contrasted reverence for Christ with viewing relationships as transactions, as exchanges. What would it mean for you to view your work life apart from the transactional? Your friendships? Your family? Other relationships?
- You may have a story of a time when someone served you in Christlikeness and it left a deep impression. Tell about it.

Pray

Invite the group to pray together using any of these suggestions.

- What needs have you heard from others in the group that we can pray about?
- What challenge are you facing right now, and what might it look like to put reverence for the Christ of the cross at the center of your response to that challenge?
- Are there attitudes this text prompts you to repent of? Share if you feel comfortable.