

# A people who submit

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[ 0 : 00 ] So the question this morning that we're thinking about is, when we're thinking of what in the church is, who do we let lead the church? Who do we let lead the church? Who's leading the way?

Now, I don't know if you've ever been lost before. Maybe you have. Maybe you've been driving and the sat-nav's taken you the wrong way, or before sat-nav, and you've gone the wrong way because you've misread the map.

But when I was younger at a school camp, one of the things that we did on the school camp was we went on a hill walk up Scarfell Pike.

It's the highest mountain in England, but on the particular day that we were going, there was really poor visibility. Even before we'd set off, it was foggy, the clouds were low, and we wondered how we were going to get up there.

However, the teacher who'd been there for 20 years, he did it with a different group of kids every day, every year, walked up Scarfell Pike.

[ 1 : 04 ] He'd been doing it for 20 years, so we knew that he was a safe guide. If we followed him or walked in a line, we'd know the direction to go.

We knew we could trust him to lead us. We knew that if we followed him, he would take us on the right path. We knew that if we let him lead, if we submitted to his way to go up the mountain, we would end up at the top and be able to get back down again.

We trusted him, not because he said he knew the way, but because he could prove that he knew the way. He'd done it before. There are lots of times in life that we have to submit to an authority figure, but the ability to follow them, it comes from trust.

And trust is built, the reason that we trust people to lead us, authority figures, is because of what they've done, what they're like, their track record. That comes from big things, from trusting your boss at work, trusting the government perhaps.

It comes to smaller things. When you book your child on a new swimming class, you have to trust the teachers, the recommendations that this is a good thing that you're putting them in.

[ 2 : 25 ] Trust them that they're going to be the ones that can help your child learn to swim. But when you buy new clothes, you're trusting the brand that those clothes will be good quality, and that's why you buy them.

We trust people to lead us in the decisions that we make. We let people lead us, and based on that is how we trust them. The question then is who is leading the way for the church?

Who is leading the way for the church? In our passage this morning, as we continue our series in thinking what is the church, we have the church described as a bride, with Christ as the bridegroom. Now, of course, some of us will know this passage, and of course it does teach us about human marriage. It teaches what human marriage should look like.

And if we were doing a series on going through the book of Ephesians, we would spend more time thinking about human marriage.

[ 3 : 28 ] However, this morning, we're not doing that. We're considering actually what it means for the church. Because what we learn is that human marriage has an original blueprint.

Human marriage is a copy of something greater that involves every member of the church, not just people who are married. The original blueprint that human marriage points to is that Christ is the bridegroom and the church is the bride.

And so, if the church is the bride of Christ, what does that mean for the church? How does it elevate and deepen our understanding of church?

If the church is the bride of Christ, what does that really mean? And there's just three things that we're going to be considering. The bride submits to Christ. The bride is loved by Christ. And the bride is made holy by Christ. So the first thing, the bride submits to Christ. Submission, the word submission, it is not seen as a positive thing in our world.

[ 4 : 42 ] But it is viewed as something that curtails freedom, that inhibits your autonomy to choose what you want to do, inhibits when you want to do it, and inhibits how you want to do it.

Autonomy, freedom to choose, is king in our modern way of thinking. That is the thing that matters to everyone. But the reality is that even though we all think like that, it is an illusion and it doesn't work.

Because there are people in authority above us that decide things for us all the time. And even things that are good for us. Take an obvious one.

Very simple. Take driving on the left-hand side of the road. If you want to drive, you have to submit to the authorities on that one. And no one actually thinks that that's a bad thing.

No one thinks that's oppressive. No one is saying, this is ridiculous. I just want the freedom to drive wherever I want. On the pavement, on the right-hand side, in people's gardens. What an oppressive regime we live under.

[ 5 : 44 ] That our people, we ask to lead us, are not giving us the freedom to drive wherever we want. It's just awful. That is ridiculous, isn't it? The law there actually is the thing that gives you the freedom to drive safely.

In the UK, it is actually law that gives you freedom. If everybody drove where they wanted, you wouldn't be free to drive safely.

The leaders of this country have led us well in establishing that we all drive on the same side of the road. They've led us well in coming up with a road-highway code. We know that it's good, and so we submit, we follow the lead.

It is not inhibiting, but it frees us to drive safely. Secondly, submission is only bad if the one you have to submit to is not a good leader.

Submission is bad if the one that you have to lead is a tyrant. But submission is a beautiful thing if the one you submit to only has your best interests at heart.

[ 6 : 50 ] And if the one you submit to not only has your best interests at heart, but is perfect and wise and knows what is best for you.

That is why the church submits to Christ. Can submit to Jesus because he is the one who has the church's best interests at heart and knows exactly the wise and perfect thing to do for her.

Verse 23, in our reading this morning, Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the saviour. Verse 23, that's 23.

Verse 24, the church submits to Christ. If you know chapter 1 in Ephesians, Christ is not only the head of the church, but we read he is over all things, that God places all things under Christ's feet and appoints him head over everything.

Just like the illustration I gave earlier, following the school teacher who leads, because we trust he knows the way, we submit to Christ, we follow the path he walks.

[ 8 : 01 ] There are lots of verses in Ephesians where Paul writes to them about how they should walk. In chapter 4, they are to walk in a manner that is worthy of their calling.

In chapter 5, we read that they should walk in love, that they should walk in the light. Living as a follower of Jesus, submitting to him, letting him lead, is about following his walk.

Because Jesus Christ walked in a manner that was worthy of the Son of God. He walked in love and he walked in light because he is the light of the world.

Submitting to Jesus means letting him lead the church, which means follow the way he walks. And notice, this is not an exclusive thing.

It's not a suggestion for just some people. It is for the whole church. One body, many members, every member, must let Jesus lead.

[ 9 : 07 ] He leads the church. It is Jesus who sets the agenda for the church. So that's the first thing. The bride submits to Christ.

The second thing. The bride is loved by Christ. There was a reason that as school kids, we trusted the rambling teacher to get to the top of the mountain.

When the fog had descended, the teacher had walked that path before. The reason the church trusts Jesus, that lets him lead, he's trodden the path.

He's walked it himself. Verse 25. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. It is the love of Christ for his bride.

Giving himself up. That is the reason why we submit. Why we follow his lead willingly. Because that is the heart of Christ for his bride.

[10:03] For his people. He loves them so much that he gave himself up for her willingly. He went through all pain, the suffering, separated from his father as he received God's punishment on himself to save the church.

To save his bride. The church is loved. We are loved more than we could ever dream. It is not a chore to submit to Jesus Christ because of everything he has done and continues to do for his bride.

For us. For you. What makes the love of Jesus so staggering is what is implied in verse 26. Christ gives himself up for the church.

Verse 26. Why? To make her holy. Verse 27. So that she is without stain, wrinkle or blemish. What is implied here is that when Jesus loves the church.

When Jesus loves his bride. When he gives himself up for her. She must be none of those things. Because that is what he is going to make her into.

[11:11] She is none of those things. The love of Jesus. The sacrificial giving of himself. Is not. Is not. Towards a church that is perfect or even lovable.

But is unholy. Full of blemishes, spots, warts, wrinkles and impurity. He loves a people that don't love him and are not following him. They are not letting him lead but they are walking away.

They are cheating on him. With other gods and idols. The bride starts out as unfaithful. Romans 5. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person.

Though for a good person. Someone might possibly dare to die. Verse 8. But God demonstrates his love for us in this. While we were still sinners. Christ died for us.

Jesus doesn't wait for us to love him. And then reciprocate that love. But he loves us. He loves his future bride. When we had no interest. When we didn't submit to him.

[12:15] When we didn't see the way he walked and followed. But we went in the opposite direction. The beautiful thing.

The beautiful thing. When Jesus loves us. Jesus loves us. He gives us the desire. And we do a full 180. We do a full 180. We're walking away from him.

We do a full 180. And let him lead. And walk towards him. Because he wants us to become part of the bride. We can let him lead.

You can let him lead. Because he gave his life up for you. He is not an oppressive tyrant.

Everything he does. Is to bless the church. That is why we let him lead.

Because we can trust him. Because he has given his life up for us. He wants you to turn to him. The bride submits to Christ.

[13:10] The bride is loved by Christ. Thirdly. The bride is made holy. By Christ. So firstly. In our first two points.

We've answered the question from the church's perspective. The church submits to Christ.

Because the church is loved by Christ. But what about the question from the perspective of Jesus.

Why does Jesus die for his bride? Just look with me from verse 26. Jesus loved the church. And gave himself up for her.

Why? Verse 26. To make her holy. To be made holy. Is another way of saying. Which we said with the kids. Is to be sanctified.

Why did Christ die for his bride? To sanctify her. To make her holy. Being made holy. In short. Is to say two things. To be set apart. To be different.

[14:08] And to become more like Jesus. That is Jesus planned for his bride. The removal of all the dirt. The mess. The unholy stain. And pollution of sin. But more than that.

Not only to cancel. And wipe out the negative. But to make the church positively like him. It's not just taking away all the bad stuff. But it is adding the good.

From the inside out. The heart of sin. The heart of the mess. And the dirt. The origin. Are the roots of what's going in inside of us. Only the other week.

I used the illustration of weeding. For those who perhaps missed it. I was doing weeding. A little bit. Not so long ago. But. And to kill the weed. You have to get to the root.

If you just come and. Take the head off a dandelion. Forget it. It's growing back twice. Twice as bad. With deeper roots. You have to pull the whole thing out. Or you can. Spray some weed killer. [15:05] It works as well. But. The point is. You have to get to the root. The root is the problem. If you just dead head it. It's not going to work. Jesus is concerned with the root of sin.

He's. That's the real stain. And the real blemish. That's the. That's where all the stuff that comes out of us. Our sin comes from. Jesus kills the root.

He gets rid of the blemishes. And the stain of sin. And he makes the church holy. Not just on the outside. But the whole of you. Becomes more like him. Your sinful condition.

Is erased. Jesus. Plan. For the church. Is to make her holy. That is why he died. And gave himself for us.

To make us like him. That is why Jesus died. How does Jesus do that? Well we get it in 26.

[16:00] He cleanses her. By the washing with water. Through the word. In other words. He cleanses her by the washing. Here we get an allusion.

To the old testament. It's the washing of the holy spirit. Through the word. We have echoes. Of old testament prophecy. You might have remembered this verse.

From Ezekiel 36. We get this prophecy. Where Ezekiel. Hundreds of years before Jesus. I will sprinkle clean water on you. And you will be clean.

I will cleanse you from all your impurities. And from all your idols. And here we have it. Connected to water. I will give you a new heart. And put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you.

Your heart of stone. And give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you. And move you to follow my decrees. And be careful to keep my laws. Can you see. You can see what this verse means.

[16:54] It's very profound. That to be made clean. To be made holy. By the washing of water. Is to receive the Holy Spirit. Who teaches our hearts. Through the word of God.

The Bible. The good news about Jesus. All that he's done. He applies it to who we are. Without the water. The Holy Spirit. The word means nothing. The Bible is misunderstood.

How to walk like him. Is misunderstood. How to do a full 180. And follow him. Is misunderstood. Without the Holy Spirit. The washing of water.

Like showering a child. After they've been playing in the mud. Jesus showers us with his own spirit. And with his own words. The truth in the Bible. And together they wash. And cleanse.

All the dirt. The sin. The mess. The muck. And they wash down the plughole. Day by day. We're washed. The stains. The blemishes.

[17:50] Are removed. And we become more like Jesus. He dies for us to make us holy. He makes us holy. By cleansing us with the water.

And the word. But there is another niggling question. Why does he do all that? Why does he want us to be holy? Well it comes in verse 27.

This is why. Verse 27. To present her. To himself. As a radiant church. Without stain or wrinkle. Or any other blemish. But holy and blameless. It is the image of the wedding day. On a wedding day. All the guests have already seen the groom.

It's the groom. Who is waiting for his bride to arrive. That is the. There's that anticipation. We were at a wedding of a family member. Not so long ago.

[18:49] And you know that when you go to a wedding. Don't you? The moment that everybody is waiting for. At a wedding. Is when the bride. Walks down the aisle. And is given. To the groom.

The church. Is being prepared. This is why he dies. This is why he dies. To make her holy. The church is being prepared. For that moment with Jesus. When God's people.

Will shine with his glory. Given to them. Jesus is at work. To present her. Back to himself. Made perfect.

A spotless bride. For given to a spotless lamb. The bride is one body. Made holy and blameless. What that really means for us. What that really means for us. As a church. Is that. Each of our individual walks. Following Jesus. They're not really individual walks.

[19:49] Because we make up the bride. Because we're one body. It means that. How you walk. How each of us walk.

As we think. We're doing it individually. Should matter to each one of us. Your holiness. Your godliness. The putting off. Of your old self. Walking in light and love.

It impacts the whole church. Not just you. Which means we care about. Each other's spiritual journey. It matters. Walking. How we walk in love. In humility. How we walk. Considering others. More important than ourselves. How we walk in generosity. How we walk to honour everyone. How we walk prayerfully. And in kindness. And in encouragement. How we walk like Jesus. How we submit to his ways. As his bride. It matters to everyone. Will we be led by Jesus?  
[ 20 : 46 ] Will we allow ourselves. To be led. By the bridegroom. His way is good. It is the best way. It is not oppressive.

Or suffocating. But in giving up. Your autonomy. To him. Frees you to live. A life. Of security. Of peace. Because the one you trust. Always has your best interests. At heart. He can be trusted. To follow. Because he's loved you so much. That he gave himself up. For you. Even when. You were walking. Away from him. He saves you. To make you holy. He makes you holy. So that you're fit. For eternal life. With him. Forever. Submit to Jesus. Walk in love. Walk like him. To love him. And to love one another. To submit to Jesus. Means to live as Jesus. Would have lived. In the life. That he's given you.  
[ 21 : 43 ] That is what submitting to him. Means. It means to live. Like Jesus would. In the life. That he's given. You. That is what he wants. The church to be.

His bride. To be led by him. So that he can present her. On the final day. As holy. And blameless. As a radiant bride. Let me pray. Almighty God. We thank you so much. For the church. We thank you. For Jesus. We thank you. That you have given yourself up. For your bride. We thank you. That you. That you love us. So much. That you gave yourself up. For us. And we thank you. That you're at work. In each of us. Making us. Present. So that we will be. Presentable. And a radiant. Bride. For you. On the last day. We pray. That we would be.  
[ 22 : 43 ] Concerned. With each other's. Walks. Lord. That we would. Let you lead. And that we would. Where we do turn away from you. That we would do a full 180. And turn. To follow you. And so bless us.

We pray. We ask for this. In Jesus name. Amen.