

09 Feb 2020

**Vital Signs:**  
**A Love For Christ's Bride**

Romans 12:1-21

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,  
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,  
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.  
– CG Mission Statement*

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**Icebreaker:** What brought you to your community group the first time you attended? What kept you coming back?

**Worship:** Ephesians 5:25-29

*(Read aloud three times, spending time in reflection after each, listening for what God's invitation to you might be.)*

<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and **gave himself up for her**, <sup>26</sup>that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup>In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.

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**Bible Passage & Guiding Question** *(The following question is intended to help frame your discussion. Keep it in mind as you read the bible passage and review the sermon summary together.)*

**Bible Passage:** Romans 12:1-21

**Guiding Question:** What invitation is Jesus personally giving to you in the verses of Romans 12?

### **Sermon Summary**

The church is the hope of the world. Though imperfect, we are chosen and redeemed that we might be the embodiment of the Gospel – one flock with one shepherd, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and Christ's bride – all bought with the blood of Jesus. What should this look like for us? What are we meant to be and do?

The church is "godward" – for our good, but ultimately for God's glory. In the midst of busy, often overwhelming lives, here we are given a few precious moments to turn our eyes toward God and experience Him. By joining together and turning toward Jesus, we die further to ourselves that we might take hold of the life that is truly life.

The church is Christ and scripture centered. We gather around the Word (John 1:1) and as we do, we anticipate Grace: Something good is going to happen here – not because of us, but because of God. Jesus deeply loves the church and is utterly devoted to it (Eph 5:25-29). May we love and sacrifice for one another, guarding the peace and purity of the church with the same devotion.

The church is spirit-filled and spirit-empowered. We are created, called and gathered by the Spirit. Because we meet as a church, we are indwelt – filled with the Spirit. As we grow into this, it will feel more and more natural.

The church is confessional. Words and beliefs matter. Our church membership is based on our confession of common belief in the same way that Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt 16:16).

The church is covenantal. A sign that we are growing in our faith is growing affection-for and engagement-with the church. Not only were we called by God's Grace into a covenant relationship with Him; He called us into a covenant relationship with each other as His church. Because of this commitment, our relationships have a sturdiness, strength and security that we wouldn't have apart from Christ.

The church is missional. We aren't passengers on this journey; we are active and on a mission – committed to see lives transformed by the Good News of Christ, renewing Los Angeles for His glory. For as in the early church, the most powerful cause of the growth of our church is through the practical expression of God's love and care.

How might we apply all of this to our lives? (i) Be trusting and trustworthy in confession. We should have the quality of friendships at church where someone (or several someones) deeply knows and understands us. (ii) Live out our chosen-ness and our redemption. We are free. May we experience and know deep in our hearts the sacrifice of Christ and the price He paid for our lives. May this free us from resentment and bitterness. (iii) Form our identity around what the church is called to be – godward, Christ and scripture centered, spirit filled and empowered – so that we might live out in our own lives what the church is called to be.

### Discussion Questions *(It's better to wrestle deeply with a few good questions than to gloss over many.)*

- Discuss how much Jesus loves His bride, the church, based on Ephesians 5:25-29.
    - Read Matthew 16:13-18. Upon what confession does Jesus build His church?
  - What do you love most about Christ's bride, the church? What do you struggle with?
    - How is Jesus the only answer to our struggles with His church?
  - To what does Paul compare the church in verses 4-5?
    - Verse 5 states that "each member belongs to all the others." (NIV) In what way does everyone in the church belong to each other and what is our responsibility toward one another?
    - How do you think one can know what their spiritual gift (verses 6-8) might be?
  - Discuss some of the exhortations in verses 9-21. Which is easiest for you? hardest?
    - Which have you practiced recently? Explain your answer.
    - How is it even possible to practice verses 9-21?
  - Remembering that you are a Christian on a mission, how can you live out your identity in our world?
    - What invitation is Jesus personally giving to you in the verses of Romans 12?
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### What Can We Be Praying For?

Pray that love towards Christ would so overwhelm your heart that you would show genuine love and honor toward one another in the church and world.

### Engage & Experience

Are you using your gifts (Romans 12:6-8) to serve others in the church? How or why not? What can you do to begin using your gifts? If you are unsure what ministry opportunities might match your spiritual gifts, here are some suggestions:

- Discuss it with your group. There may be someone in your group with similar gifts who you can serve alongside.
- Browse the church website for ministry opportunities to try and contact the ministry leader.
- Use your gifts in one of these ways in your group and/or church; welcome, pray, usher, teach, lead, give, feed, visit, mentor, cook, set-up, clean-up, sing, event coordinate, mentor, encourage with words or cards, hold babies.