

Becoming Who God Is Forming



Grow In Love | Ephesians 5:21-6:9

Note for small group leaders: This study contains far more material than you'll be able to cover in one session, so please prayerfully choose the themes and questions that best serve the pastoral needs, interests, and make-up of your group.

Mutual Submission

Read: Ephesians 5:18-21 (see also Philippians 2:1-11; Mark 10:42-45; John 13:1-17)

- What words or phrases stand out to you in Ephesians 5:18-21?
- Why is verse 21 so important for understanding the rest of the passage?
- Chris said that mutual submission is not weakness but worship. How do you respond to that?
- In Philippians 2, how does Jesus show us what humility and self-giving love look like?
- Where do you find it hardest to lay down pride, control, or the need to be right?

Marriage

Read: Ephesians 5:21-33 (see also Genesis 1:26-28; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:7). Pastoral note: This passage must never be used to excuse abuse, coercion, intimidation, or control. Christian love protects, honours, and brings life.

- How does beginning with Ephesians 5:21 change the way we read the instructions to wives and husbands?
- What does it mean for a husband to love "as Christ loved the church"? What might that look like practically in a marriage?
- How can/has this passage be misused, and how can we guard against that?

Children & Parents

Read: Ephesians 6:1-4 (see also Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 103:13-14; Proverbs 22:6; Colossians 3:20-21; Matthew 19:13-15)

- What do you notice about the fact that Paul addresses children directly?
- How does this passage affirm the dignity and spiritual significance of children?
- What is the difference between discipline that forms a child and control that crushes a child?
- Why do you think Paul warns parents not to provoke or exasperate their children?
- What might it look like for parents, grandparents, carers, teachers, or church leaders to bring children up "in the training and instruction of the Lord"?



What did you discover about God in this passage?
What did you discover about people in this passage?
How will you commit to obey this passage this week?
With whom will you share what you have learned?



Power, Work & Dignity

Read: Ephesians 6:5-9 (see also Galatians 3:26-28; Colossians 3:22-4:1; James 2:1-9; Philemon 8-21; Micah 6:8)

- Why do we need to be honest about the way passages about slavery have been misused?
- What does Paul say to those with less power? What does he say to those with more power?
- Why is "there is no favouritism with him" such a powerful statement?
- How might this passage speak into workplaces, schools, charities, churches, or leadership structures today?
- What would it look like for Christian employers, managers, leaders, and church members to treat people with dignity and justice?

Women, Men, Gifting & Leadership

Read: Ephesians 5:21 (see also Genesis 1:27; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; Romans 16:1-7; Acts 18:24-26; Galatians 3:28)

- Chris said that the Spirit gifts women and men. Where do we see that in Scripture?
- **With great care**, compare differing views which might exist within your small group concerning women in leadership.
- What examples of women serving, teaching, leading, or witnessing do you notice in the Bible?
- How can churches unintentionally overlook or silence people's gifts?
- How can our group and church better recognise, nurture, and release the gifts God gives?

Practising Mutual Submission

Read: Romans 12:9-18 (see also 1 Peter 5:1-5; James 3:13-18; Matthew 20:25-28)

- Where are you tempted to use power selfishly?
- Where might God be calling you to practise humble service?
- Is there someone you need to listen to more carefully?
- Is there a relationship where you need to apologise, make space, or change how you use influence?
- What would it mean this week to ask someone: "What is it like to be on the other side of me?"

Resisting False Submission

Read: Isaiah 42:1-4 (see also Matthew 12:18-21; Psalm 82:3-4; Luke 4:18-19; John 10:10-11)

- Why is Christian submission not the same as enabling sin or accepting harm?
- How does Jesus treat the bruised, vulnerable, or oppressed?
- What signs might show that "submission" is being twisted into control?
- How can the church become a safer place for people who are being harmed?
- How do we hold together humility, forgiveness, boundaries, justice, and love?



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General Reflections

Chris ended his message by calling the church to grow in love: in marriage, family life, parenting, childhood and youth, workplaces, leadership, and church life. Read: 1 John 4:7-12

- What kind of love does this passage describe?
- Where do you long to see our church grow in love?
- What is one practical step you can take this week to live out Ephesians 5:21?



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