

Real Church – part 4

Things that define Real Church

Opening Scripture: Ephesians 5:25-32

God chose ‘marriage’ to explain the love of Jesus for His Church. He chose the most intimate form of human relationship to give us an idea of how much He loves the church. The church is precious to Him. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. The book of Songs of Solomon speaks prophetically about this love between Christ and the church. Here’s an example:

Song of Solomon 4:9-10 - *You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace. ¹⁰ How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse! How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices!*

That is how Christ loves the church. He even calls the church His bride!

Here are a few things that define real church:

1. Real love

Jesus’ ‘*real church*’ is made up of lovers. We love Him because He loved us first. We are not bound to Jesus in some sort of contractual arrangement, but it is love that binds us to Him. What defines the authentic church is authentic love!

2. Strong Commitment

When Jesus speaks of a ‘bride’, or when we read in Ephesians about ‘marriage’, those are strong words that define the ultimate commitment between a man and a woman. It is the most sacred of covenants. Jesus calls the church His bride and she will not be left at the altar – the bible speaks of a marriage. That is a strong expression of ‘commitment’.

The Bible speaks much about this marriage made in heaven:

Revelation 19:7-9 - *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” ⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ ” and he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”*

Jesus is committed to us and we are to Him. The *real church* doesn’t settle for superficial and casual. No. Her commitment is strong.

3. Compatibility

Being compatible is essential to the success of any relationship. But how could the earthly be compatible with the Heavenly? How could humans ever be compatible with the Eternal, the holy One?

Let us go back to our opening text in **Ephesians 5:31-32**: *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* ³² *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

This passage is a direct quote of Genesis 2:24.

Genesis 2:20-24 - ²⁰ *So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.* ²¹ *And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place.* ²² *Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.* ²³ *And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”* ²⁴ *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

This passage was used by Paul to explain Christ and the church. God looked for a helper for Adam ‘comparable’ to him. There was none, so Eve was created to be like him.

Jesus was not *human* (in eternity) and we were not *holy*. Jesus was heavenly and we were earthly. We were not compatible. However, He became what we are so we could become what He is. We were therefore made to be a people, a church “*glorious, without spot or wrinkle holy and without blemish*” sharing in His likeness.

That is the Real Church: comparable and compatible with Jesus.

- **1 John 4:17** - ... *“as He is, so are we in this world”*
- **2 Corinthians 5:21** - *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”*

We should live in a way that makes us more like Jesus. There are lifestyles and decisions that are not compatible with the character of Jesus.

4. Preparedness

Revelation 19:7 - *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”*

We need to get ready to be that pure, spotless, authentic, *real church* Jesus is coming for. When I think of the preparation of a bride, I think of Esther. She is a type of the church in the Old Testament.

Esther 2:9,12 - ⁹ *Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favour; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then*

seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women.

12b... for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.

Esther is a type of the church in the OT:

- a) Like the church, she is being prepared to meet the King
- b) The preparation takes one year – the era of the church is called “*the acceptable year of the Lord*”
- c) Seven choice maidservants were provided. That is a type of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

Interestingly the Bible speaks about the work of the Holy Spirit in sevens:

- Isaiah 11:2 - 7 operations of the Holy Spirit
- Zechariah 4:1-10 - 7 lamps
- Revelation 4:5 - the 7 Spirits of God

- d) V.12 mentions oils and perfumes – a direct reference to the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The Real Church is being beautified, perfected, prepared to meet Jesus, our Bridegroom. The *real church* works with and welcomes the Holy Spirit to move and to do what He does!

2 Corinthians 3:18 - *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

5. Staying Awake

The Real Church is awake! Authentic followers of Jesus are alert, they watch, they are looking for and hastening His return. At the right time, the Bridegroom will come to carry His Bride away. Jesus will be coming for the *real church*.

Matthew 25:1-10, 13 - What defined 5 of those virgins as the real deal, worth coming for, was the fact that they were ready, they were awake, they were alert at His coming!

Conclusion

5 signs that define the authentic church:

1. Real love
2. Strong commitment
3. Compatibility
4. Preparedness

5. Staying alert