

Good morning! Do you love the Church? Most Christians do---but unfortunately, many Christians don't. Many people have been hurt in church; they've been taken advantage of or have been treated badly. Maybe they have seen some political acting out or heard people say things that discouraged or offended them. I know several people who have and as a result, they don't want to be associated with the Church anymore. They want to be followers of Jesus but they do not want to be part of the church. I know about this because I have sometimes felt that way myself. Does God even care about that? Yes, He does! This morning, let's take a few moments together to consider two passages that can help us to regain some perspective on Jesus and what He thinks about His Church:

Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. He did this to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water, in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty—pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection. **Eph. 5:25b-27**

To him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. **Eph. 3:21**

In these two passages we see that Jesus cares deeply for the Church. Paul begins by saying, "*Christ loved the church and gave his life for it.*" Jesus doesn't love the Church because it is full of people who always (or even usually) do the right thing; after all, we all know that the Church is full of sinners! Paul says that Jesus gave his life for the church in order "to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water, in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty—pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection." Pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection-- does that sound like *your* congregation? The Church we see is not the Church Jesus sees---and He has a better view than we do! In today's second passage we read that the Church is an essential part of God's plan, "throughout all generations forever and ever." In other words, the Church is not just for now but for all eternity. Even though we might get discouraged with the Church, you and I must love and care for it. Why? Because Jesus loves the Church and we must learn to love what Jesus loves. If you've been hurt or discouraged by the Church, don't let that stop you from finding your place in it. Jesus loves the Church...He gave His life for it!