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## EPHESIANS 5:21-25

Ephesians: Recognizing Who You Are in Christ

I'd like you now to turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 5. We're going to look at verses 21-25 together. Let's pray as we start.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I ask that you would be the teacher this morning and use the Holy Spirit to illumine or enlighten us with the meaning of your word so that we can apply it to our lives. Don't just give us head knowledge, but give us the heart knowledge so that we can live our lives in a way that's most pleasing to you. Lord, be honored in our time together now as we look at your word. In Jesus' name, amen.

I often like to share with you the key verse in the passage just to guide your thinking as we're going through. Today the key verse is not in our passage, so I want you to see the verses just before. If you look at Ephesians 5:15 you'll see the key verse from which we're developing a whole train of thought in the book of Ephesians. Ephesians 5:15 is going to be our key verse from which we'll progress as we go on.

Notice in Ephesians 5:15 it says, *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

The idea is here's some wisdom, Paul is saying. I'm going to share with you some wisdom. You want to be wise in your life. The very first thing he tells us in verse 18 is *be filled with the Holy Spirit*. If you want to be wise in your life, skillful and maneuvering life, the very first thing you want to do is be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. I know that some of you, I hope, were practicing being filled this week, continually coming before the Lord every hour, every couple hours. "Lord, fill me up today. Lord, just fill me right now so I can be filled with the Spirit as I continue to live life."

Now if you look at verse 18 notice in the NIV there are four participles. You just have to understand the key verb here is *be filled* and then there are four participles. Usually when we see a participle it ends in 'ing,' but in this passage you'll see in the New International Version a couple of them don't end in 'ing,' but the key verb is *be filled*.

Then it says, *speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit* (that's one). *Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord* (that's the second one). Third one: *always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And fourthly (and this is the one we're going to spend time on today): *Submit* (or submitting) *to one another out of reverence for Christ*.

These are participles falling underneath the verb *be filled with the Spirit*. If you look at this in the ESV version you'll see that each one of those does have the 'ing' at the end, making it a little clearer that these are subservient to your key verb which is to be filled. So if you're going to be filled with the Spirit, here are some examples of that and there are four of them mentioned there.

The one we're going to talk about is the last one in verse 21, *submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*. I think it's helpful to understand the grammar of a passage. Sometimes we lose things in the translation. I'm talking about the Greek grammar.

I want to take you to another passage that's similar to this because I'm going to refer to this passage today. I want you to see there's a similar issue going on in Matthew 28:19-20 because there's one verb here. I underlined them there, but I want you to see there's one verb.

The verb isn't *go*. The verb in that passage is *make disciples*. When Jesus is giving instructions to His disciples about what they're to do, the primary verb is *make disciples* and you're going to do that using three participles. Three ways: you're *going*, you're *baptizing*, and you're *teaching*. Notice *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*. I'm going to come back to that idea in just a moment.

I'm just giving you some grammar in the passage so you see how it all flows in this passage in Ephesians 5 because now he said *be wise*, he said *be filled with the Spirit*, *submitting*, and then he's going to list six different categories of people and he puts an article, 'the,' in front of them.

When we come to verse 22, look at your passage there, in Ephesians 5:22 it doesn't say 'the' in the English because it wouldn't be appropriate, but it stands out in the Greek. It says, *the wives*, and then continues to talk about wives.

Verse 25: *the husbands*. The article is there. In chapter 6:1 – *the children*. Chapter 6:4 – *the fathers*. Chapter 6:5 – *the slaves*. Chapter 6:9 – *the masters*. There's an article in front of each one of those categories of people describing how we can all be wise, we can be filled with the Spirit, and now I'm going to give you examples and apply this to each area of your life. That's what he's saying.

Those are all about family and work. That's where we're going to be spending our time over the next few weeks, taking the scriptures now and applying them to family and to work.

When we look at God and how He created the world, we see there are four institutions that God created. I want you to understand what they are because each one of them has a different sphere of influence.

The first one is the individual, the individual person. We all are individually responsible before God. So young people today, you have a responsibility to come before God yourself, not just through your parents. Husbands, you have a responsibility to go directly to God, not through your wife. What we're saying is we're coming to God as individuals and God has designed a sphere for us, that's number one.

A second institution that God created is the family. That's the first institution He created in the garden there is the family. He gave them instructions. The purpose of the family is to be a laboratory for growth, an evangelism and discipleship center to spread the message of God's word to everyone. That's the purpose of the family. It's not just to have a close family. The purpose of the family is to be that discipleship and evangelism center.

The third institution that God created is the church. The church is to be that other family, God calls it a family, a spiritual family where we are also the evangelism and discipleship center. God is using the church as the vehicle to distribute His message of the gospel today.

The fourth institution we see in the Bible (and there are only four) is government. The purpose of government is to be an oversight; punishing what is evil, rewarding what is good. That is the purpose of government in the scriptures. So we have those four institutions that are very important.

One of the foundational principles that I find important for the church today comes from Matthew 28:19-20. Remember in that passage it says, *and teaching them to obey* (or observe) *everything I have commanded you.*

In the past the church has viewed its purpose to really help individuals become stronger spiritually. So we want every person to be strong spiritually. But I don't think that's enough according to God's word. I am convinced that God would have us as the church also be helping people be strong in their relationships in their lives. Strong as husbands and wives, as parents, strong as coworkers, strong as citizens. We have an obligation I believe as a church not just to help you be strong individually in your personal life but to strengthen you and give you wisdom about how to relate to other people.

That's why in coming to Calvary Chapel Living Hope we call our website Take Jesus Home. The idea is take it home, put it into practice in your roles and relationships in family life. It's not just about you and helping you be strong. It's helping you know how to relate and take the truths of God's word and apply them in other places. I'm convinced that that's the task of the church.

I don't want you to think that we're emphasizing family here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope because Scott Turansky is part of the National Center for Biblical Parenting. That's not why we're doing it. That's convenient, but the reason we're emphasizing family here is because I believe God has mandated the church to value children, to pass the faith on to the next generation, to help parents understand who to work with their children, how to help husbands and wives be strong in their relationships together. It is a mandate that God has given us.

As I go around and teach all over the country, there are more and more churches that are catching that vision or saying, "Yes! We believe that in Matthew 28 when it says *teach them to obey all of the commands* we're talking also about all the things Jesus said regarding marriage and family and work and so on." That's why we're doing what we're doing here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope.

Today we're going to look at a passage about wives and we're going to spend some time talking about each one of these categories over the next several weeks. But before we talk about wives I

want to talk to you who are single or young people today. Because there are two reasons you want to listen up to what we're going to say today. I don't want you to say, "Oh this is about marriage. I don't need to pay attention to this." No. There are two reasons you need to listen to what the Bible has to say about this.

One: because someday you may be married. Not everybody who is single ends up getting married, but if God allows you to get married you're going to want to know what the Bible has to say about wives today and husbands next week. You need to know what God has to say because biblical thinking results in good practice. If you don't have biblical thinking you're going to end up going astray and doing some crazy things. You want to have biblical thinking and so that's important.

The second reason is because maybe you won't get married, but you will be in contact with other people who are married and you'll want to know how to interface and how to talk about such things. Because God has contained in His word the success principles we need for life.

Today we're going to be talking about wives in particular and God has something to say to wives about here's how to make a marriage successful. I want you to know this and so that's why we're headed into this passage.

Before we get into Ephesians 5 I want to make sure you know what the key verse about marriage is in the whole Bible. The key verse about marriage in the Bible is Hebrews 13:4. Hebrews 13:4 says this: *Marriage should be honored by all.*

Marriage should be honored by all. That means it should be respected. That it means it should be valued. Marriage today in our culture has come on hard times with a lot of people having a hard time with marriage in one way or another. The passage here, the key passage is *marriage should be honored by all.* That's a significant thing. God designed the institution of marriage for a lot of good things.

In Genesis 1 and 2 we see that God created Eve as a companion. So marriage fulfills a companionship role. It was not good for man to be alone so He created this beautiful help for him so they could be companions together and so they could enjoy the companionship role of marriage.

In 1 Corinthians 7 we talk about sex in that passage and it's talking there about give sex away to your married partner, to the person you're married to. The idea there is sex is a ministry. I mean I don't think that way, but that's what it is. Sex is a ministry in marriage. That's how God designed it. That that is the place, marriage is the place where sexual needs are satisfied.

In Ephesians 5 we see the integration of marriage in this passage as a way for spiritual needs to be met as God has designed them. So if you're married you just need to know that God's primary discipleship place for you is in your home. God designed the husband/wife relationship to be the primary discipleship relationship so that you're growing and learning together and God's bringing you together and enjoying all of those things. The spiritual growth.

I know we're talking about the ideal here and some of you are in situations where that is very difficult. That's why it's important to look at your part. Whether you're a husband you're going to look at your part, wife you're going to look at your part, and you're going to look for ways to maximize your marriage using the instructions that God gives to us in His word.

With that we go to Ephesians 5:21 where it says, *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*. That is not about wives; that's for everybody. I know we're going into wives, but that's a statement to everybody that he's writing to there. *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*.

Verse 22: *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

Let's define submission. I like this definition of submission that I wrote. I like this definition of submission because it seems to describe what submission really is: an act of faith by which someone gives up their rights in order to serve someone else.

Next week we're going to look at the word for husbands which is the word *love* and surprisingly I think it can be defined in a very similar way. Love could also be defined as an act of faith by which someone gives up their rights in order to serve someone else.

I'm convinced that the two words *submit* and *love*, they're not exactly the same, but there is a part of them that's saying I'm giving up my rights in order to serve someone else. Now I'm not suggesting they're exactly the same, but I'm suggesting that they have enough in common that we can say that when a husband and a wife are filled with the Holy Spirit (that's the context we're in) then you'll see it in the way they relate together.

I think the reason many people react to the word submission in marriage has to do with mistreatment or being taken advantage of. We'll talk about that in just a minute, but now let's just talk about God's design here. Most of us would have no trouble submitting if we knew the other person really loved us. If they were giving up their rights for us we would have no problem giving up our rights for them. It's when someone becomes selfish in the relationship that it makes it hard to submit or to love that person. That's when it becomes difficult.

I think submission just in general is a hard thing. We tend to want independence. We consider that a prize in our culture. Individualism is so important in our culture. Is there anything wrong with a woman being independent? No, there isn't. But if a mindset develops that my rights are more important than sacrificing those rights for my mate then we have a problem. Independence can become the enemy of interdependence that God wants us to have in a relationship together.

In other cultures besides the United States there is a greater sense of community than we experience here. If you ever have a chance to travel to a third world country, in Kenya, for example, there is a greater sense of family. So the family unit is much more important even than in America and certainly the community is important.

In America we emphasize individualism and that individualism sometimes even works against the godliness that God would have for us especially in the marriage relationship. It can lead to the idea that “I’m not going to submit to anyone. No one is going to tell me what to do.” But God has a different plan for the marriage dynamic and what happens.

Submission is a kingdom principle. It’s on that principle that the family operates. It’s on that principle that the government operates and that even Christ operated when He was here on earth in His personal ministry. It’s something that God has commanded us.

God has success principles for marriage. He’s starting here with wives. Next week we’re going to talk about husbands.

The problem is that when someone’s mistreated or something bad happens it makes it very difficult to do your godly role. It’s very difficult to give up your godly rights to serve someone else. And so we end up asking questions. When red flags come up we start saying things like, “What if he’s selfish? What if he mistreats me? What if he misspends our money? What if he isn’t on the same page spiritually?” Well, let’s come back to those challenges in a minute. But don’t let those objections cause you to leave God’s standard that He’s designed for this relationship.

You might find it interesting in verse 22 that the word *submit* is not there. I know it’s in your English Bible, but in the Greek Bible in verse 22 the word *submit* does not exist in the passage. That’s why in some of your versions it’s in italics. Because it’s borrowed from the previous verse.

Verse 22 basically says this: *wives, to your husbands*— implying taking the word out of verse 21, *submitting* to your husbands. So it’s implied there and it’s reasonable to write it in English. But you have to understand it’s not there. And what does that say? It says this idea of wives submitting to their husbands is tied in to this bigger picture that he says of what all of us should be doing and that is offering submission to each other.

I want to make another point here to you husbands because husbands I want you to notice that the command is not to husbands. Sometimes husbands think it’s their job to force their wives to submit. That’s not what this passage is talking about. This is a command to wives and it’s a gift that they give in their relationship.

This passage isn’t about rights. If you want to learn about the rights that a husband or a wife have in their relationships or rights for women or something like that you’re going to find that in other passages, not in this one. This is a passage that’s talking about what makes a marriage work? So we’re looking at what that looks like in a very important way.

The idea of the equal rights movement that we’ve had in America has been actually good for our country in a number of ways because it’s raised the awareness level that sometimes women in the job market are not treated equally with men in the job market who are equally qualified and

so it's done some really good things to raise the awareness of that and bring some equality where that is important.

But sometimes there's an overemphasis on the equal rights so much that it gives the impression that men and women are the same, that there's sameness continually in their relationship. That is partially true. We have to understand that there is some sameness between men and women as we come before God.

Here's a verse that illustrates this. In Galatians 3:28 it says, *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* There's sameness there.

In Ephesians 5 he's not talking about that, he's talking about roles and relationships within the family. But sometimes a reaction (to like the equal rights movement) causes an overreaction and causes some people to miss the truths that God has designed.

See, God designed men differently than women. They are different. They are not the same. God has designed marriage to unite a man and a woman who are different in order to help them understand and grow and be the people that God wants them to be. But they're different. They think differently.

Years ago I was sitting on the bleachers watching a baseball game. One of my kids was playing and the parents are just sitting around and the umpire says, "Staaah." That's what he does for a strike. The lady behind me says, "What was that?" And she said, "He's grunting." Because he didn't say "strike," he says, "staaah."

So I said to her, "You've got to watch his finger because if he points his finger to the dugout then that means a strike and ignore what he says because that's just his statement that it's a strike in this case." She says, "That's a guy thing." That's what she says!

We're all laughing on the bleachers now about the guy thing and so I said, "Well just imagine if we had a woman behind the plate. We'd have a paragraph and we'd never get the job done of playing this game." And again we're laughing about that, just drawing a distinction and recognizing the difference between men and women.

They handle things differently. Men and women are different. If you have any doubts just look at the difference between a barber shop and a beauty parlor. If you go into a barber shop it's quiet. You pick up the magazine, you can read the magazine. If there's a conversation going on we're all talking about the same thing in the barber shop. You go into a beauty parlor, it's very different. You might have three beauticians and you might have three customers in there getting their hair done and then you'd have six conversations. The amazing thing is that some of those ladies are participating in a number of the conversations at the same time. It's very different.

If two guys go fishing they can hang out the whole day, say very little, come home, "Hey honey, how was your fishing trip?" "It was great! I had great fellowship with Bill! We had a great time."

They didn't have to say anything and have great fellowship. It is different. Men are different than women.

Sometimes the same thing happens in a marriage relationship. Husbands do a lot of grunting like the umpire calling the strike and wives wish their husbands would talk more. I think next week when we talk about love we should bring that in because husbands probably should demonstrate their love by talking more to their wives. But there's a big difference between men and women.

I feel a little uncomfortable (and maybe you feel uncomfortable reading this passage) about submission because in our culture submission has some negative connotations. But the reality is God has designed His word for us not to evaluate it and decide whether we want to do it or not, He's designed His word to contain the success principles that we need. Our job is to read what it says, apply it to our lives, and obey it and maybe we'll understand it later. Our job is to do what God wants us to do.

God designed the marriage relationship, He designed each person, the husband and the wife. He knows what makes a marriage relationship successful. There's something about this passage about wives that God knows wives need to hear. And so in giving success principles for marriage he says in verse 22, *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.*

The *as you do to the Lord* is very similar to the previous verse where it says *out of reverence for Christ*. There's this very important principle about relationships in life, that we foster the relationship with someone not because we're going to get some response back from them, because we may not. They may not submit or love in return. Our job is to be involved in that relationship because we're pleasing God. That is our task. To do what God wants us to do.

It's an important principle to remember because there are times when the relationship in marriage is a difficult one, it's hard because the person isn't doing what you want them to do or they're being selfish in one way or another. It's in those particular moments that we must remember that we are doing what God wants us to do in our marriage because we're pleasing God, not because we're getting some reward of pleasure from our mate.

Ray Stedman says, "The great issue for the Christian must never be 'what I want versus what he wants,' but 'what does Christ want me to do? What does He want out of this situation?' The great question must ever be, 'what does Jesus Christ, living in me, expect of this relationship?'"

Another verse that really speaks to everyone, but it just ties in here and is helpful for us to understand because this verse would apply to anyone in a marriage relationship, but it's talking about how we need to give up our own rights again. *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others better than yourselves (or above yourselves), not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset of Christ Jesus.* That's Philippians 2:3-5.

It's important for us to understand what God has for us. There's a sacrifice, there's a giving up, and God is designing that here in the passage as a success principle.

Verse 23 in our passage: *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*

Let's talk about what the word *head* means because some people will take this word *head* and what they'll do to try to make this palatable and understand it is they'll describe the word *head* as source, which is one of the possible meanings. The idea is that it's out of man that woman came and the original source of the woman was man. Just like if you say the head of the stream, that's where the source is and it comes from that.

The same thing some people would say is what they're saying in this passage. But I don't think that's the best translation of this. Let's just take it for what it's saying. We're trying to evaluate the context, not try to make the passage palatable to our culture.

I think that in the context it's talking about authority and responsibility. Submitting and headship seems to fit more in line with this idea of authority than the source idea does. Notice it says here that *Christ is the head of the church*. Paul can't help himself now. He's got to elaborate on that a little bit here to help us understand what he's saying so that we understand him.

What he's really saying is there's two words really that we describe our relationship with Jesus. One of them is *Savior*. He's rescued us. The other is *Lord*, He's the boss. He's using the word *Lord* here. I'm not suggesting that husbands should be bossing their wives around. That would not be loving. We'll talk about that next week. But there's this relationship that exists here that's being talked about. You want to have a successful relationship, wives, you want to take in mind what the Bible has to say about being successful in that relationship.

It's important to not misrepresent this passage. Because some would say that religion puts women down. Maybe some religions do, but Christianity surely doesn't. Christianity elevates women and helps them to experience value in relationships.

When Christ was on earth He surprised people by the way that He talked with a woman or spent time with a woman or engaged with a woman or had a woman come and wash His feet. The others would say, "What are you doing? Don't do this." But Jesus had a very important purpose as He was working with people to treat people with value. And He did that with women as well. Christianity elevates the role of the women in society.

Let's go back to marriage though. We're not just talking about men and women here, we're talking about marriage. I want to tell you some things that submission is not. Just so we understand this.

One, it's not passive. It doesn't mean we just wait around waiting for someone to tell you what to do. Submission can be very active. Secondly, it doesn't mean you're a slave. Remote control, potato chips – that's all for now until later this evening. That kind of relationship is not what we're talking about here. We're not talking about being a slave. It doesn't mean that the husband does all of the important work and the wife doesn't do important work. That's not what it means.

In fact, if we were to take this into military terms we would not see a sergeant and a private kind of relationship. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about in military terms it's two officers equally qualified, equally skilled, equally ranked. But one of them is the leader in this particular case, both having skills and abilities and choosing which ones are going to do what in that situation. That's the kind of picture we're looking at here.

If you look in verse 24 notice the words *in everything* I think again leads some people to misunderstand this word submission because we know that there's an emphasis here on what makes a marriage successful. But the Bible doesn't teach that you submit in everything. We know that there are times when we need to be generally submitting to our governmental leaders. But Peter and John in Acts were called in before the governmental leaders and said, "Don't preach the gospel anymore!" and their response was, "Who should we obey? Do we obey God or do we obey man?" So there are times when you don't just do whatever the husband says. You're evaluating that with an attitude of submission though you may take a stand that that isn't the right thing to do.

One more thing I want to say that submission is not. It's very important here. This passage is not talking about women submitting to men. This passage is talking about a husband and wife relationship. We're only talking about wives. There's nowhere in the Bible you're going to see anything about women must be subservient to men. That would be wrong thinking.

A biblical Christ-centered relationship today can thrive. That's the beautiful thing about marriage. A biblically centered or biblical Christ-centered marriage thrives in today's world. Wives submitting to their own husbands, husbands loving their wives as Jesus loved the church, recognizing together an order in the home. It's God's makeup. Submission is easy for a wife when a husband is being loving and sacrificing himself in that relationship. It's a beautiful thing.

Those are roles that are being described, but it can only be done with God's strength. That's why it's tied into this passage of being filled with the Spirit. It's an example of being wise, of being filled with the Spirit. When we have the Spirit working in our lives it's He who is guiding us and directing us and even empowering us.

Marriage can be the most exciting thing on earth. The closest thing to heaven on earth. People should be able to look at our marriages and see the mystery of Jesus Christ's love for His church. But marriage can also be miserable when one or both people are not doing what God wants them to do. That makes it a challenge. It makes it a difficult experience. It takes work, it takes diligence, it takes effort to invest in a marriage.

Carrie and I will be married thirty-five years in twenty-seven days, eighteen hours, and about five minutes. Thirty-five years we've been married. Gone through a lot of different parts of marriage and what it is. As our children were growing up we decided that we're very different people going in different directions. We wanted to have a unified vision in our relationship.

Over the years we've gone to counselors for our marriage relationship, we've gone to marriage enrichment kinds of things for our relationship. Maybe over the period of time six or seven of

those kinds of events have come into our lives where we've been able to use them to enrich our marriage relationship together.

A few years ago with a counselor we decided we would write a unified purpose statement or vision statement for our relationship together. This is our vision statement that we wrote because you know that Carrie is an author. She writes different kind of books than I write. She writes women's inspirational fiction and I write nonfiction. We could start listing the differences between Carrie and me. But in our vision we pull those things together because Carrie's involved with women, discipling women, and working in women's ministry, and I'm involved in pastoring and leading the church and being a part of the National Center for Biblical Parenting. We could see if we were basing our relationship on common interests that we might even find ourselves growing apart.

But we don't base our relationship based on common interests, we base our relationship on a spiritual relationship of God working our lives. We have a joint vision that talks about that we help people by providing hope, encouragement, and creative strategies that point people to God and to His wisdom for their lives. Calvary Chapel is an opportunity for us to do that. We love Calvary Chapel, we love being here worshiping with you and serving here and being a part of what God is doing because it's part of who we are as people. It's part of what God is doing in our marriage. It's part of what God has created us to be. So we're excited to be a part of that with you.

God has designed marriage for us. We don't look at the fact that oh a lot of people are getting divorced so we're not going to work on it. We don't look at oh some people are having a hard time in their marriage. No. We look at what God has designed. We say we're going to be the people that God wants us to be. I'm going to serve God in my marriage relationship and leave the rest of the results to the Lord and let's go forward and allow Him to do that. That's what we're talking about when it comes to a successful marriage relationship.

Well, this is part one obviously. Next week we'll do part two. So bring your husbands and we'll be happy to talk to them as well.

One of the things that makes this challenging is that when we are in a challenging relationship, when things are difficult, you're not on the same page, or there's conflict or whatever it might be, in those moments it's very important for us to go to the Lord. It's very important for us to run to the Lord, to trust Him for what He wants to do, to call on His name, and invest our hearts in Him.

The next couple of songs are going to really focus on that trusting in the Lord and running to Him and trusting in His name in our lives. Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the power it has to communicate to us, to speak to us, that your heart is transferred to our lives and to our actions. We ask now that you would recommit in our own hearts about the value of marriage, as Hebrews says. But also, Lord, I pray that you would help us understand the importance of serving you in our own lives. Speak to us now as we continue to worship you. In Jesus' name, amen.