

This Great Mystery

Ephesians and the Secret God Kept for Ages

Session 9. This Great Mystery

Reading: Ephesians 5:21-33

Part One

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The group discovers that verse 21 governs the whole passage, that the husband's charge is crucifixion-shaped rather than throne-shaped, and that the mystery they sealed a guess about in session 1 is Christ and the Church.

Catholic Touchstone

Marriage is a living sign of the union of Christ and his Church: the union is the original, every marriage since Eden is the image, and the Church herself is the bride Christ loved and gave himself up for.

This is the night the letter has been building toward, and the night your group has been waiting for since they sealed their guesses eight sessions ago. The passage is also the one they have most likely heard misused, so this session does two things at once: it opens the envelope and resolves the mystery thread honestly, and it faces the hardest modern reading of this text at full strength instead of tiptoeing around it. Trust the text. Paul is harder on the husband than any critic is, and the grammar of verse 21 does more work than any defensive speech you could give. Bring the sealed guesses with you. Do not forget them; there is no session 9 without them.

What You Need to Know

The sentence does not start where the paragraph break is

In Greek, Ephesians 5:18-21 is one flowing sentence: be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, singing, giving thanks, being subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Mutual subjection is the last in a chain of things that Spirit-filled worship produces. Then comes the detail your group will find striking: in the earliest and best manuscripts, verse 22 has no verb of its own. It borrows its verb from verse 21. You literally cannot read the instruction to wives without reading the instruction to everyone first. Many Bibles print a heading between verse 21 and verse 22 that the grammar does not have. Tonight the group removes it.

Household codes, and how Paul's is different

Instructions on managing a household, covering wife, children, and slaves, were a standard topic in the ancient world; Aristotle treats the subject in Book I of the *Politics*. Paul's version is recognizably in that genre and startlingly unlike it. He addresses wives, children, and slaves directly as moral agents making a free response to Christ, not as property being managed. He grounds every relation in the Lord. And he gives the husband a model no Greek moralist imagined: a crucified man. Do not oversell this into 'Paul the modern egalitarian'; he was a first-century man writing to first-century households. But the pressure he puts on the powerful party is his own, and it runs against the grain of the genre.

Mystērion, sacramentum, and honest latitude

In verse 32 Paul calls the Genesis one-flesh union a great *mystērion* in reference to Christ and the Church. St. Jerome's Latin, the Vulgate, rendered the word *sacramentum*, which is where the phrase 'great sacrament' entered Western ears. Be honest with the group here: this one word does not by itself prove that marriage is one of the seven sacraments, and the Church does not rest her teaching on a translation choice. Her teaching rests on the whole reality this passage describes: Christ's spousal self-gift, signified and made present in the marriage of the baptized (CCC 1617). Say it that way and the claim is stronger, not weaker, because it survives the objection.

Pastoral care: this text has real wounds attached to it

Assume someone in the room has heard this passage quoted to excuse control or cruelty, in their own home or someone else's. Name that possibility gently and early, and let the text itself do the correcting: nothing in these verses authorizes a husband to enforce anything, and the only exercise of headship Paul describes is giving himself up. Say plainly, once, that the Church condemns domination and abuse, and that no one is ever asked to submit to violence; a person in danger needs safety and help, not a Bible verse used against them. Then move on without dwelling. You are not delivering a lecture on abuse; you are refusing to leave a landmine unmarked.

The envelope

Bring the sealed guesses from session 1. The opening is built into Build question 6, after the group has read verse 32 but before you discuss it. Handle the guesses with honor: every guess gets read aloud by its own author, nobody's guess gets corrected or graded, and near-misses get celebrated. Eight sessions of waiting have earned this moment some ceremony. Do not rush it.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The Lord as Bridegroom of Israel

Paul did not invent the marriage of God and his people. The prophets speak it constantly: in Hosea 2:19-20 the Lord betroths Israel to himself forever, in righteousness and steadfast love; in Isaiah 62:5 the Lord rejoices over Zion as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride. Paul's move is to say that this ancient betrothal has a name and a wedding day: Christ and the Church.

Ezekiel 16 behind verses 26 and 27

Ephesians 5:26-27, where Christ washes the Church with water, cleanses her, and presents her in splendor, closely tracks Ezekiel 16:8-14, where the Lord finds Jerusalem, bathes her with water, clothes and adorns her, and her renown goes forth because of the splendor he had bestowed. The Bridegroom who washed and beautified his bride in Ezekiel is doing it again, and the washing of water with the word is a baptism echo your group is primed for after sessions 7 and 8.

The first wedding, read again

The live discovery sends the group to Genesis 2:21-24, which Paul quotes in verse 31. The details reward slow reading: the man sleeps, his side is opened, and from the opened side of the sleeping man God builds the bride. The Fathers could not read that scene without seeing Calvary, and tonight your group gets the chance to make that connection themselves before you confirm it.

Voices of the Church

Read these aloud where they land. Each is either a direct citation or an honest summary, labelled as such.

St. John Chrysostom, d. 407

Preaching on this very passage, Chrysostom turns to the husbands and, in substance, tells them: you have heard the measure asked of your wife; now hear the measure asked of you. Love her as Christ loved the Church, which means: even if you must lay down your life for her, do not refuse. Christ won a bride who had turned her back on him, and he won her not with threats or fear but by giving himself. A household governed by fear is not a Christian household; a wife is not a servant but your own body, and no one ever hated his own flesh.

Homilies on Ephesians, Homily 20. Summary of St. John Chrysostom's teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. This lands hardest on anyone tempted to hear the passage as a license: the Church's greatest preacher read it, sixteen centuries ago, as a demand for the husband's death to self.

St. Augustine of Hippo, d. 430

Augustine teaches that as Eve was drawn from the side of Adam while he slept, so the Church is born from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death on the cross. When the soldier's lance opened his side and blood and water flowed out, Augustine sees the sacraments by which the Church lives flowing from her Bridegroom's opened heart. The first wedding in Eden was a prophecy acted out in flesh: the new Adam sleeps, and from his wounded side God builds the new Eve.

Tractates on the Gospel of John, in substance. Summary of St. Augustine of Hippo's teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. For a group that has just read Genesis 2 with their own eyes, this voice confirms what several of them will already be half-seeing, and it turns the crucifix on the wall into a wedding portrait.

St. John Paul II, d. 2005

St. John Paul II reads this passage with verse 21 as its governing key. The subjection Paul describes, he teaches in substance, is mutual: a reciprocal self-gift lived out of reverence for Christ, and this mutual subjection is an innovation of the Gospel, something the ancient world did not have. The husband's headship is real only as self-gift, modeled on the Christ who gave himself up, and it excludes every kind of domination by which the wife would become a servant of her husband. Wherever this text has been used to justify control, it has been used against its own words.

Mulieris Dignitatem 24. Summary of St. John Paul II's teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. This gives the group the Church's own modern reading, from a canonized pope, and closes the door on the fear that Catholicism quietly wants the abusive reading to be true.

Catechism Connection

The Catechism says

CCC 766. The Church is born above all from Christ's total self-giving on the cross, signified by the blood and water that flowed from his opened side, as Eve came from the side of the sleeping Adam.

CCC 796. The unity of Christ and the Church, head and body, also means they are Bridegroom and bride: a nuptial union prepared by the prophets, announced by John the Baptist, and called a great mystery by Paul.

CCC 1616. Paul understands marriage in light of Christ's spousal love: husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, and this is the great mystery of Christ's covenant with her.

CCC 1617. The whole Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Baptism, the nuptial bath, precedes the wedding feast, and marriage between the baptized is a true sign, a sacrament, of the

covenant of Christ and the Church.

Thread Watch

Thread Watch

The mystery (resolve). Tonight this thread lands. Planted in session 1, partially defined in session 5 at 3:6, it resolves at 5:32: the mystery is the union of Christ and the Church, and marriage was its acted prophecy from Eden onward. Open the sealed guesses at Build question 6, after reading verse 32 aloud. Trace the arc explicitly: 1:9-10, 3:3-6, 5:32.

Head and body (develop). Planted in session 2, this thread reaches its deepest register tonight: the head and body language turns out to be bridal, one flesh, one body. When Q4 sends them back to 1:22-23 and 4:15-16, let them say out loud what the head does in this letter: fills, nourishes, gives growth. Never rules by force.

The walk (develop). Verse 21 hangs grammatically on the Spirit-filled walk of 5:15-20. The household section is not a new topic; it is where the walk goes when it comes home. Name this briefly at Q1.

In Christ, in him, in the Beloved (develop). The phrase 'out of reverence for Christ' in verse 21 and 'as to the Lord' in verse 22 put the whole household inside the letter's great preposition. Marriage, in this passage, happens in Christ or it is not being described at all.

Objection Bench

Leader only. Do not raise these unless someone in the room does.

Doesn't 'the husband is the head of the wife' contradict Galatians 3:28, where there is neither male nor female?

Galatians 3:28 concerns standing before God in baptism: equal dignity, equal inheritance, one in Christ. Ephesians 5 concerns how two baptized equals give themselves to each other. Paul wrote both; he saw no contradiction because difference of gift is not difference of worth. The Church holds both texts at full strength.

Wasn't this just the standard Greco-Roman household code with a Christian veneer?

It is the genre, transformed. The standard codes addressed the male householder about managing his subordinates. Paul addresses wives, children, and slaves directly as free moral agents, grounds every relation 'in the Lord,' and gives the husband a model of headship no pagan moralist proposed: a man dying for his bride. The frame is familiar; what he pours into it is not.

Does verse 32 prove marriage is a sacrament, since the Latin says *sacramentum*?

Not from the one word, and be honest about that. The Vulgate's *sacramentum* translates *mystērion*, and the Church does not rest the sacramentality of marriage on a translation. She rests it on what the passage describes: the marriage of the baptized really signifies and shares in the union of Christ and the Church (CCC 1617). Concede the small point, keep the large one.

Session Goals

1. Establish from the grammar of 5:18-22 that verse 21 governs the whole passage and that verse 22 cannot be read apart from it.

2. Trace the husband's charge through verses 25-30 and name its shape: crucifixion, cleansing, nourishing, never enforcement.
3. Send the group to Genesis 2:21-24 and let them discover the bride built from the opened side of the sleeping man.
4. Open the sealed guesses with ceremony and resolve the mystery thread honestly against 1:9-10, 3:3-6, and 5:32.
5. Face the strongest modern objection to this passage at full strength and answer it from the text itself.
6. Land the study-long payoff: the Church is the bride Christ died for, and they are members of that body.

Time Note

Planned for 75 to 90 minutes

Roughly: Win 10 minutes, reading 8, Build questions 1 to 4 about 22 minutes, the Genesis discovery 8, the envelope and questions 6 to 7 about 15 (do not rush this), the steelman chain and question 9 about 15, question 10 and Send about 8, Live It and closing prayer 5. That fills 90; for a 75-minute room apply the cuts in order.

If you are running long, cut in this order.

1. Drop the Dig Deeper on John 19:34 at question 5; Augustine's voice on the Take-Home carries the same content.
2. Compress question 4 into a thirty-second leader note delivered inside question 3's answer, since sessions 2 and 6 already built that ground.
3. Fold question 9 into the steelman response at question 8, since the response already covers the wife's free agency.
4. Ask only the first Win question.
5. Never cut question 6. The envelope is the session.

Part Two

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Pray together

Father, before the foundation of the world you chose us in Christ, and for eight weeks you have let us walk through this letter toward a secret you kept for ages. Tonight, send your Holy Spirit to open the word to us as we open what we sealed. Give us honest minds for the hard verses and soft hearts for the beautiful ones, and let us see your Son as he is: the Bridegroom who loved us and gave himself up for us. We ask it through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win

Open questions. No wrong answers. Let everyone speak before you move on.

W1. Think of the best wedding you have ever been to. What made it good?

W2. When you hear the word 'submit,' what is your honest gut reaction, one word or one sentence?

The second question will surface tension. Welcome it and do not defuse it; tonight's text will do that work better than you can. If someone says 'that word makes my skin crawl,' thank them for the honesty and promise the group you are going to look at what Paul actually wrote, all of it.

Read

Read aloud

Read Ephesians 5:21-33 aloud twice. First pass: three readers, verses 21-24, 25-30, and 31-33. Second pass: one strong reader straight through while the group listens for every word or idea that repeats. Before reading, say only this: notice where the passage spends most of its words.

Build

Numbered inductive questions. Ask, wait, let the group work the text. The ANSWER boxes are for you to share after the discussion, not before it.

The sentence that governs

1. Most Bibles print a heading between verse 21 and verse 22, but headings are the editor's, not Paul's. Look back at 5:18-21. Where does this sentence actually begin, and what is 'be subject to one another' attached to?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The sentence begins at 'be filled with the Spirit' in verse 18, and everything after it describes what Spirit-filled people overflow into: addressing one another in psalms, singing, giving thanks, and being subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Mutual subjection is not a new topic; it is the last fruit of the Spirit-filled walk we traced in session 8. And here is the detail worth savoring: in the earliest manuscripts, verse 22 has no verb of its own. It borrows 'be subject' from verse 21. You cannot even read the instruction to wives without reading the instruction to everyone first. Verse 21 governs the entire passage, and the paragraph break that

hides this is one the grammar does not have.

2. Now weigh the passage. Roughly how many verses address the wife, and how many address the husband? And what, exactly, is each one asked to do?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The wife gets about three verses, 22 to 24, and is asked to be subject to her husband 'as to the Lord,' with verse 33 adding that she should respect him. The husband gets roughly nine, 25 to 33, and is asked to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, to nourish and cherish her as his own body. The weight of the passage falls on the husband, and the demand on him is stranger and heavier. Notice also what is absent: no verse tells the husband to rule, to lead, to decide, or to enforce anything. The passage never once gives him authority over her obedience; it gives him a cross.

Crucifixion-shaped

3. Walk slowly through verses 25 to 27. What did Christ actually do for the Church in these verses? List the verbs, and then say what shape they make.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

He loved her, he gave himself up for her, he sanctified her, he cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, and he will present her to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle. The shape is the cross and the font: the husband's model is a man dying and a bride being bathed. 'Gave himself up' is the same language as 5:2, which we read last session: Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. The only exercise of headship this passage describes is self-donation. Headship here spends itself; it does not spend the other person.

4. 'Head' and 'body' are old friends in this letter. Where have we met them before, and in those passages, what does the head actually do for the body?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

In 1:22-23, Christ is head over all things for the church, which is his body, his fullness; the headship there is for her benefit. In 4:15-16, the whole body grows from the head, joined and knit together, upbuilding itself in love; the head there is the source of the body's nourishment and growth. So when verse 23 says the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the Church, this letter has already defined its terms. Head, in Ephesians, means the one from whom life and growth flow. Anyone importing 'boss' into verse 23 is importing it from outside the letter.

Dig Deeper

Notice 'his body' in verse 23 becomes 'his flesh' territory by verses 28 to 31. Paul is steering the head and body thread toward Genesis before he ever quotes it.

The first wedding

Live discovery

Split into pairs. Find the source of the words quoted in Ephesians 5:31, and read the scene that leads up to that verse, starting a few verses earlier. Come back ready to report anything in the scene that suddenly looks different in the light of verses 25 to 30.

Let them find it. Genesis 2:21-24

5. Verse 31 is a quotation; Paul is reaching back for something. Find where it comes from, and read the whole scene around it. What details of that scene jump out at you now, tonight, after everything this passage has said?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The quotation is Genesis 2:24, the first wedding. And the scene is astonishing read from inside Ephesians 5: the man sleeps a God-given sleep, his side is opened, and from his opened side God builds the bride, then presents her to him. A sleeping man, an opened side, a bride built from it and brought to him in splendor. Paul quotes the first marriage and says it was always about Christ and the Church. Let the group make the connection to the cross themselves if they can; many will.

Dig Deeper

Read John 19:34. The new Adam sleeps the sleep of death, a soldier opens his side, and blood and water flow out. The Fathers saw the new Eve, the Church, born from the opened side of the sleeping Christ: the font and the chalice flowing from his heart.

The envelope

6. Now read verse 32 aloud, just that one verse. Then stop, because it is time. Eight weeks ago each of you wrote one sentence and sealed it: what is the mystery Paul keeps talking about? The envelope comes out now. Each person reads their own guess aloud, in their own voice, no commentary and no grading. When every guess has been heard, set them all next to Paul's answer and tell me: how close did this room get, and how has the word 'mystery' grown since chapter 1?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Paul's answer: 'This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.' Now trace the arc the group has lived through. In 1:9-10 the mystery was God's plan to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. In 3:3-6 it sharpened: the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, partakers of the promise. And now, at 5:32, it reaches its most intimate register: the mystery is a marriage. All along, the mystery has been union, God joining what was separated: heaven and earth, Jew and Gentile, and now, in the deepest image human language has, Christ and the Church as bridegroom and bride, one flesh, one body. Honor the near-misses out loud: anyone who wrote 'Jesus,' 'God's plan,' 'the Church,' 'unity,' or anything about God bringing people together grabbed a real thread of it. Nobody guessing in week one could have known the mystery would turn out to be a wedding, and that is rather the point: it is better than what any of us sealed.

7. Look hard at the direction verse 32 points. Is Paul saying that Christ and the Church are like a marriage, or that marriage is like Christ and the Church? Which one is the original and which is the image, and what difference does that make?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 and says it refers to Christ and the Church. The direction is startling: the union of Christ and the Church is the original, purposed before the foundation of the world (1:4), and every human marriage since Eden is the image, the sign, the acted prophecy of it. Marriage does not explain the gospel; the gospel explains marriage, and always did. One honest footnote worth giving: the old Latin Bible translated *mystērion* here as *sacramentum*, and while that one word does not by itself prove marriage is a sacrament, the Church does teach that marriage between the baptized really signifies and shares in this union of Christ and the Church. The teaching rests on the reality the whole passage describes, not on a translation choice, and it is stronger for being argued that way.

The hard reading, faced

8. Before we go further, we owe this passage's critics their best shot, because some of us walked in here carrying their argument. Let me make it as strong as I can, and then let us answer it from the text, not from embarrassment.

Build then press

The strongest form of the objection. Here is the case at full strength. Verse 21 is window dressing. In the entire passage Paul never once tells husbands to submit to their wives; he tells wives to submit and husbands to love, and 'head' is hierarchy language no matter how tenderly you read it. This is a first-century household code, the same genre Aristotle wrote, with Jesus language poured over the top, and it has been quoted for two thousand years to keep women small and to keep abused wives in dangerous homes. Pastors have told battered women to go home and submit, and they had this chapter open when they said it. The honest reading is that Paul baptized patriarchy, and the loving thing is to admit it and set the passage aside.

Answering from the text. Take it point by point, from the text. First, verse 21 cannot be window dressing, because in the earliest manuscripts verse 22 has no verb at all: it grammatically depends on 'be subject to one another.' The wives' verse cannot even be read without the everyone verse. Second, look where the asymmetry actually runs: the model held up to the husband is a crucified man, and the only exercises of headship the passage describes are giving himself up, washing, nourishing, cherishing. Not one verse authorizes him to enforce, decide, or demand; a husband quoting this chapter to control his wife is contradicting the only instructions it gives him, and St. John Chrysostom was preaching exactly that in the fourth century: win her by love, never by fear, even at the cost of your life. Third, set Paul beside the genre he is accused of copying: the pagan codes addressed the householder about managing his property, while Paul addresses wives as free moral agents making their own response 'as to the Lord,' which is not patriarchy preserved but patriarchy quietly detonated from inside. Fourth, the misuse is real, and we do not deny it; we let the text convict it. A man wielding Ephesians 5 as a weapon has been using this passage against its own words, and the Church has said so at the highest level: St. John Paul II taught that the subjection here is mutual, calls that mutuality the Gospel's own innovation, and states that the husband's headship excludes every form of domination. The answer to the abuse of this text is not less Ephesians 5. It is all of it.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The objection fails at the grammar, at the content of the husband's charge, at the comparison with the genre, and at the Church's own stated reading. But receive its moral core with respect: the misuse it describes has

really happened, and this group should be the kind of Catholics who can say that plainly. The passage rightly read is the misuser's fiercest judge.

9. Now be fair to the whole text. What is the wife actually asked for, what does 'as the church is subject to Christ' make of it, and, going back to verse 21, who in this room is exempt from the posture Paul describes?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

She is asked for a free response, 'as to the Lord': a trusting, willing reception of a love that is supposed to look like Calvary, modeled on the Church before Christ, and the Church before Christ is not servile or crushed; she is loved into splendor, active, glorious, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Whatever verse 22 means, it cannot mean less dignity than this letter has spent eight sessions giving the Church. And per verse 21, no one is exempt: mutual deference out of reverence for Christ is the ordinary posture of every Spirit-filled Christian, single, married, ordained. One more honest note: the Church commands the mutual self-gift, not a particular household arrangement. How a couple orders chores, money, and decisions is theirs to work out in Christ; Ephesians 5 is not a schedule, it is a cross, held out to both of them.

The bride

10. Step all the way back, over nine sessions. If the Church is the bride of verses 25 to 27, washed, nourished, destined to be presented in splendor, what does that make of your own relationship to her, flaws, scandals, boring homilies and all?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

It makes the Church something no institution could be: the bride Christ died for, and verse 30 says we are members of his body, so we are not assessing her from outside; we are cells of her. Loving the Church is not naivety about her members' sins, including ours; it is siding with the Bridegroom, who sees every spot and wrinkle more clearly than her sharpest critic and is still washing her, still nourishing her, still unwilling to trade her for a better one. The washing of water in verse 26 is our baptism thread from sessions 7 and 8 coming home: we were bathed into this bride. The mystery kept for ages turns out to be a wedding, and everyone in this room is already inside it.

Send

Open questions. Let these land in silence if they need to.

S1. The mystery turned out to be a union you are already inside. What would change about an ordinary Tuesday if you actually believed the Church is a bride being loved into splendor, and you are part of her?

S2. Verse 21 belongs to everyone, married or not. Where in your life right now is God asking you for the kind of deference that costs something?

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Once this week, read Ephesians 5:25-27 slowly and put your own name where the Church is: Christ loved *me* and gave himself up for *me*, to sanctify *me*, to present *me* in splendor. Sit with it for five unhurried minutes.
2. Practice verse 21 in secret: pick one person you find genuinely hard to defer to, and do one deliberate, unannounced act of service for them before we meet again. Tell no one.
3. At Mass this Sunday, as you walk up to receive Communion, remember verse 30: we are members of his body. Receive as the bride receiving the Bridegroom who gave himself up for her.
4. If you are married or seriously dating: have one honest conversation this week about what 'gave himself up for her' would concretely look like in your relationship this month. If you are single: pray for one married couple you know, by name, every day this week.

Scripture Memory

Ephesians 5:32

"This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."

Ephesians 5:32

Closing Prayer

Pray together

Lord Jesus Christ, Bridegroom of the Church, we sealed our guesses and you kept your secret until tonight: the mystery hidden for ages is a wedding, and we are inside it. Thank you for loving the Church and giving yourself up for her; thank you that the water that washed her washed us. Teach the married among us to love with your cross, teach all of us to defer to one another out of reverence for you, and bring your whole bride, spotless and radiant, to the feast you have prepared. To you be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Part Three

Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in this session, in order. Print this page and keep it in front of you.

Primary text

- **Ephesians 5:21-33** read twice; second pass listening for repeated words

Within Ephesians

- **Ephesians 5:18-21** the governing sentence, Q1
- **Ephesians 5:1-2** 'gave himself up for us,' echoed at 5:25
- **Ephesians 1:22-23** head and body, Q4
- **Ephesians 4:15-16** the head as source of growth, Q4
- **Ephesians 1:9-10** the mystery arc, Q6
- **Ephesians 3:3-6** the mystery arc, Q6
- **Ephesians 1:4** chosen before the foundation of the world, Q7

Discovery

- **Genesis 2:21-24** the first wedding; quoted at 5:31

Dig Deeper and background

- **John 19:34** the opened side; Dig Deeper at Q5
- **Ezekiel 16:8-14** the Lord washes and adorns his bride; behind 5:26-27
- **Hosea 2:19-20** the Lord betroths Israel forever
- **Isaiah 62:5** as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride
- **Revelation 19:7** the marriage of the Lamb; where the mystery is heading

Terms

- **mystērion.** God's secret plan, hidden for ages and now unveiled in Christ
- **sacramentum.** the Vulgate's Latin rendering of *mystērion* at 5:32
- **kephalē.** head; in Ephesians, the source of the body's life, nourishment, and growth

Catechism

- CCC 766. the Church born from the opened side of Christ
- CCC 796. Christ and the Church as Bridegroom and bride
- CCC 1616. Paul reads marriage in light of Christ's spousal love
- CCC 1617. baptism the nuptial bath; marriage of the baptized a true sacrament