



Family and Work Relationships (Ephesians 6:1-9)

I. INTRO

- A. The gospel of Jesus Christ changes everything. Here's what happens:
1. Our hearts are awakened to the beauty and supreme sacrifice of what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross.
 2. We repent of missing the mark and we are ushered into the presence of God.
 3. Christ's righteousness is imputed (think credited) to us and we are legally declared not guilty of our sins (justification).
 4. And then we are adopted into the family of God! With all the rights and privileges.
- B. ****As a result, our obedience is a worshipful response to what God has done – not a means to earn God's favor.**
- C. This is what Paul's letter to the Ephesians is about. The gospel begins with an awakened heart and then works it way out into our behaviors.
- D. Last week we spoke of how the gospel affects both married – and that.
- E. But that's not all the book of Ephesians is about...
1. Paul is writing to one of the first multi-cultural, multi-ethnic churches.
 2. We see this clearly in chapter 2:
"For he himself [Jesus] is our peace, who has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall¹ of hostility¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." --Ephesians 2:14-16
- F. By way of further review, as we move from chapter five into chapter six there are three important concepts to keep in mind:

¹ Could also be a reference to the separation of the "Court of the Gentiles" in the Temple.

1. We are to imitate God by walking mutual submission to one another (5:1, 21ff) and, like the Trinity, we are to honor and defer to one another. We also learned that, also like the Trinity, husbands and wives have distinct roles and the way to complement one another in marriage, for the health and enrichment of the whole relationship, is for each spouse to live into those roles.
2. We are to be regularly and consistently be filled with the Holy Spirit (5:18). A scholar named Gordon Fee studied all the passages in the NT where Paul wrote about the Holy Spirit – and he wrote a book about it. The title of the book? *God's Empowering Presence*² – this is, a synopsis of what Gordon Fee learned about the Holy Spirit – the HS is God's empowering presence. That's why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit regularly.
3. Finally we saw that, human marriage points to the ultimate marriage between God and His people (5:32).

G. This week we will look at family and work relationships:

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. ⁵ Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. ⁹ Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.” --Ephesians 6:1-9

II. BODY

A. With that said, we have three points from our passage for us to consider today:

- 1. Jesus and your family**
- 2. Jesus and your work**
- 3. Seeing Jesus as the True Son and the ultimate, non-oppressive Master**

² Gordon Fee. *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Baker Academic; Reprint 2009.

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B. What we discover is that Jesus Christ is Lord of every area of life – marriage, family, and work.

C. We will look at them one at a time:

1. **Jesus and your family (vs. 1-4).**

a. *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” --Ephesians 6:1-4*

b. Something for children to do and something for parents to do.

c. Paul addresses the children first –

1) *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” (v. 1)*

(Notice that Paul addresses the children in the letter. It must have been the expectation that the children would present when Paul’s letter was read.)

a) V. 1 seems to address the younger children while v. 2 seems to address older children. The Greek word for “children” means child

b) The word for obey is the same Greek word that is used to speak about obeying the Lord.

2) *“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” (v. 2)*

a) While certainly younger children are called to honor their parents, this verse seems to expand it to adulthood. Notice, it’s not about obedience (in this verse) it’s about honor. (The word comes from the same word we get our English word time from.)

b) The 10 commandments do not say to obey, but honor.

i. As an adult we do not continue always obey but Paul is saying we must always find a way to honor.

ii. Some people have experienced much disappointment (all children experience some disappointment).

- iii. Treat your parents – or, the memory of your parents with respect.
 - Ask, What did I get from them that was good?
 - And forgive them – or else they are still in control of you.
 - iv. Do it for your own children’s sake. It is likely they will treat you like you treated your parents.
 - v. It will affect your quality of life. If this is ignored it can create havoc in your life
- d. Then Paul addresses the fathers specifically and says, *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*
- 1) Here’s the big picture: We are to, first and foremost, treat our children the way that God treats us. Tim Kimmel wrote an excellent and very practical book entitled, *Grace Based Parenting* where this concept is the thesis statement for the whole book.
 - a) So, what is grace based parenting? Grace-based parenting means parenting in a way that is consistent with the grace of God revealed in the gospel, but more than that it means raising our kids as an overflow of our personal grasp and delight in grace.
 - b) If we are to treat our children as God treats us then we will need to parent with the gospel and from the gospel that we might make the gospel attractive to them.
 - 2) Concerning not provoking our children, it is good for us to know that in ancient times fathers owned their child.
 - a) They could do anything they wanted with them – even kill them. So, in the secular households there was not always a lot of kindness or empathy. It was more of a “show ‘em who’s the boss” kind of mentality.
 - b) Then Paul comes along and says don’t provoke, or exasperate (NIV), or infuriate your children. It’s a revolutionary approach.

- 3) "Parents" is plural yet Paul specifically address the fathers. Fathers are responsible for what happens in the family – but Paul could also know that it's the father's who are the more likely to do this.
- 4) Don't make your children perpetually angry. There are two ways of doing that...
 - a) To over discipline our children will make children perpetually angry. Over discipline makes children fearful.
 - b) To under discipline our children will make children perpetually angry. Under discipline makes children sensitive to entitlement.
 - c) How do we live in the appropriate biblical tension?
 - i. Shepherd the heart more than the behavior – which requires listening to them.
 - ii. Model mutual submission, honoring, and preferring. Let them know they have a voice.
 - iii. Linda and I: 1) Tenderhearted before God and man, and 2) a learner.

2. Jesus and your work (vs. 5-9)

a. Addressing Paul's Use of "Bondservants" and "Masters"

- 1) This passage contains very uncomfortable language. We must ask the question: "Why doesn't Paul speak out against slavery in this passage?" This is an ongoing critique of the Christian faith in our culture. I will try to provide some context...
- 2) Virtually every house in the Roman Empire was touched in some way by slavery. It has been estimated that there were as many as 60 million slaves spread throughout the Roman Empire. And during the 1st century, it is thought that about 80% of Rome's population consisted of slaves in both lowly as well as prestigious positions.
- 3) One of the ways to gain some upward mobility for those outside the Roman establishment was for people to sell themselves into slavery. Freedom was supposed to come after seven years (Jacob and Laban?) and Roman citizenship could then be granted.

- 4) So, slavery was a dominant institution in the Roman Empire. Everyone in Ephesus would have been very anxious to hear Paul's thoughts on this matter.
- 5) How could the early Christians hope to topple such an entrenched system of dehumanization?
- 6) While the NT authors didn't explicitly call for a straight-up empire-wide abolishment of slavery, they did weaken it in a number of ways:
 - a) The New Testament explicitly denounces slave trading. Paul calls "enslavers" "lawless and rebellious" in 1 Timothy 1:9-10. (If antebellum³ slavery had come to terms with this passage, slavery would have been quickly abolished in the U.S.)
 - b) The New Testament urges slaves to gain their freedom whenever possible. Paul writes, "Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so...do not become slaves of men" -- 1 Corinthians 7:21, 23 (NIV)
 - c) The New Testament repeatedly affirms the worth, dignity, and equality of all people.
 - i. We can contrast that with Aristotle (2nd century BC), who, in his book *Politics* ⁴, argued against the equality of all persons. According to him, women and slaves were to be seen as second class.
 - ii. The Bible strongly disagrees. In the first chapter of Gen (1:27) we see that all people are created in the image of God.
 - iii. Paul, in his stern letter to the Galatians, writes, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" --Galatians 3:28; (c.f. 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:11).
 - d) Here is how Jesus announced His ministry:

³ I.e., existing before the Civil War.

⁴ Aristotle. *Politics*, 1254b.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” --Luke 4:18

- 7) The NT authors repeatedly attacked the moral foundations of slavery.
 - a) One theologian has put it this way: “Thus, the worm was already in the wood for altering social structures.”⁵ Another likened it to yeast, saying “Christ-like living has a gradual leavening effect on society.”⁶
 - b) The earliest Christians were a subversive, revolutionary, new community united by Christ — We are to be a people who model transcending racial, social, and sexual barriers.
- b. V. 6 gets to the heart of this section: We are to engage in our work, all work, **“as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”**
 - 1) Steady regard to the Lord Jesus Christ will make us faithful and sincere in every station, not grudgingly or by constraint, but from a principle of loving God first and then to the concerns of our work environment – wherever that is.
 - 2) We need a biblical view of work. Your current work is a calling from God. It may not be your ultimate calling but it is your present calling.
 - a) In creation God brings order out of chaos – that, in a nutshell is a biblical view of work -- whether it’s cleaning toilets or building a rocket.
 - b) There is no menial work – all work is a calling of God.
 - 3) 2 application points:
 - a) Don’t look down on anyone’s work. Treat everyone with dignity.

⁵ Paul Copan. *Is God a Moral Monster?* Baker: 2011.

⁶ Jonathan Hill. *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us?* InterVarsity 2005: 176.

- b) Appreciate the work you are doing. All work is your current calling from God. (No such thing as retirement, just reassignment.)
- 4) Two outcomes:
 - a) It's liberating – Your environment will no longer control you.
 - b) It's practical -- If we work primarily for the heavenly Boss all the other bosses will eventually want us to work for them.
- c. As soon as people became Christians in in the first century and began, with the help of the apostles teaching, to think through the theological implications for every area of life they became very different from the people around them.

III. CONCLUSION

A. See Jesus as the True Son and the ultimate, non-oppressive Master.

B. Jesus as the true Son.

1. See Jesus Christ as the true Son who lost the love of His heavenly Father, so that our sins could be forgiven and we could be brought into His family – so that we could have God as our heavenly Father.
2. When we know God is our heavenly, and as a father and how loved we are – and at such a great cost, once we see this (which is what Eph 1 is all about) we will have great confidence and assurance of the Father's love.
3. Then we will be more responsive and less reactive and better able to neither over-control nor under-control our children.
4. And as we grow into adulthood we won't need or want our parent's approval too much or be bitter that we didn't get what we wanted. Because we've got God's approval.
5. The ultimate Son lost the love of the ultimate Father so we could share in the love of the ultimate Father. Now we can love our children and our parents rightly -- with God's love.

C. The same thing for work. **Jesus is the ultimate, non-oppressive Master.**

1. If we know who we are in Christ then we have a growing clarity that we work for Him.
2. We are to work for God as a delight – we are to serve God and serve the people around us. Then we're no longer slaves but we are liberated.

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3. The ultimate Master became a slave so that we, who are slaves, can be free.
4. Now we can, from the inside out, live our lives with our family and fully engage at our workplace as we should. Jesus changes everything. The gospel changes everything.