



This Sunday we continued our Autumn series in Ephesians and Paul continued to work through the implications of the gospel at ground level - expanding upon 5v1-2 that talk of living a life of Love, like Jesus. He applies this in 3 key areas – marriages, families and workplaces. We spent most of our time thinking about husbands and wives and how this thinking works out in marriage.

We began by thinking again about the big picture Paul presents in Ephesians of a world at war being reconciled by a loving self-giving head, Jesus. We said that that big picture truth ought to impact how we perceive headship and understand what Paul is saying in these verses. We also noted the immediate context of the verse that Paul is describing a Spirit-filled church of mutual submission (v17-21).

Following Jesus changes wives (v21-24)

Paul initially speaks to wives, attempting to help them see the parallel at the heart of marriage that exists between Christ and the Church and husband and wife – he says the wife is to submit to her husband as the church is to submit to Christ. We clarified a number of potential issues or concerns with this, saying that it is not inequality (rather just different roles), oppression (as the bible condemns it), blind obedience (she is foundationally following Jesus) or simply actions (rather it's a heart and attitude thing). We also thought briefly about the kind of questions that ought to spring for those wanting to marry (are future-wives willing to submit? are they looking for someone to whom they could submit?).

Following Jesus changes husbands (v25-33)

2/3 of the passage is for husbands! Paul does not call them to lead, but rather to love (v25, v28 and v33) – Paul is radically redefining what leadership is. The cross is both the model and motivation for our leadership. In v26 we see Jesus dying for and cleansing the church, whilst in v27 we see another marriage outlined as his bride is presented to himself as perfected. Jesus in the gospel once and for all cleanses us and makes us holy, as well as ongoing cleansing and making us holy until we are perfected in him. The husband is also to love his bride as he loves his own body, caring and feeding it. As he becomes one-flesh with his wife so he has a new body. Human Marriage tells a deeper story. As he lovingly leads her, so the world sees something of Christ, as she submits to him, so the world sees something of the church. Again the challenge was of how husbands can love their wives

well and how as – asking what kind of a message does our marriage portray to those watching in? How can we lovingly lead in such a way that our wives holiness is prized and grown?

Following Jesus changes families and workplaces (6v1-9)

We very briefly considered these verses and noted the verb changed from submit to obey (V1 and v5), with children obeying because it brings blessing and slaves obeying because they serve a different master (we noted that the slave/master relationship comes with caveats but there are principles we can take into the workplace today). We noted too the role of parents (and especially dads) are transformed by the gospel – rather than being overly harsh & exasperating their kids they are to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord, as well as masters who are to watch over their slaves in such a way that recognizes they too have a master over them, to whom they are accountable – the Lord Jesus.

Here are just a few questions that might get things going, please feel very free to ignore / adapt for your group:

What do you remember from Ephesians so far? Any key verses?
What was Paul's argument last week
How do 1v10 and 3v10 build into the big storyline of the book?
Summarise what Ephesians so far has taught us about headship?!

v21-24

What does v21 mean? Why are we to do that? What is the relevance of v18 here?
What is his command to wives?
Why does he give that command?
How does that work out with v21?!
What are the challenges to this in marriage?
Any wisdom or examples on this from married people?

v25-33

What does Paul urge husbands to do? Why?
What does this practically look like?
What are the challenges to this in marriage?
Any wisdom or examples on this from married people?

6v1-9

How does the gospel change relationships in the home? Why?
How does the gospel change relationships at work? Why?