

We Belong to Each Other

Paul, in the first three chapters of Ephesians, explains the great foundation upon which our salvation rests—this is our “calling”—accomplished by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. We will explore these mysteries for all eternity—even the angels stand in utter amazement at the wisdom of God manifest in the Church.

Having laid that theological and spiritual foundation, the Apostle is now eager to explain to us how we live this out, how we respond to this immeasurable, unfathomable love of God. He transitions here with some very interesting language – he says we must live a life “worthy” of the calling we have received. The word worthy can mean “equal to” in the sense of two weights in a balance. Now this is truly a remarkable statement about the Christian lifestyle, that is, it must have a depth, a gravity, a significance, that is equal to the gravity of God’s saving work on our behalf!

Now Paul mentions many things in chapters 4-6 about this “weighty” Christian lifestyle: our honesty, our speech, our sexual morality, our worship, our submission to authority; but it is very instructive to notice what he mentions first of all among the important ethical areas of our lives: our unity in the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-6

¹I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Notice three principles in this text:

1. Church unity must be one of our primary objectives in life. (v.1)

Paul was pleading with them from prison – this was extremely important – to develop, promote, and maintain the unity of the church; because through church unity (a) God is honored, (b) the saints are blessed, and (c) the non-Christians are drawn to the Lord.

2. Church unity will demand radically gracious behavior from us all. (v.2)

Look at these traits in verse 2: humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance. We are going to have to have some help from Headquarters! And this is exactly what God has done: He has given us His Spirit that we may demonstrate these virtues to one another.

3. Church unity is secured by the unity of the Godhead. (vv.3-6)

We are only “maintaining” (v.3) what has been given (vv.4-6). In verses 4-6 we see the word “one” seven times. God has firmly established us as His instruments to carry out the purposes of His will, namely, that all things will be united in Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:10) We are going to be successful! We can’t fail! Hallelujah! The big question for us is how we are going to live this out today and tomorrow, until He comes.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why is church unity so important to God? To the church? To the unchurched world?
- 2) What are the greatest challenges today to church unity?
- 3) What are some things every believer can do to contribute to the unity of the church?
- 4) What are some of the “cheap substitutes” we often offer to God in the place of real unity? Why should we not tolerate those?
- 5) What difference does it make for us to know that our unity in the church is secured by the unity of the Godhead?

Digging Deeper

In studying this lesson, what action steps with what people do you need to implement in the days ahead?

Beyond these specific relationships, what can you do in your home church to promote peace and unity?

Memory Verses

FOR THIS WEEK

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,
Philippians 4:19

Resources

HELPFUL BOOKS

[Life Together](#)

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[Total Church: A Radical](#)

[Reshaping around](#)

[Gospel and Community](#)

by Tim Chester and
Steve Timmis

Serve Each Other

Jesus is making His way to the Cross. What awaits Him is unimaginable...pain, brutality, rejection, betrayal, the cosmic weight of becoming the sin-payment and with that, taking on the totality of His Father's wrath – and all of this, out of love.

Surely at a time like this, His closest friends would be there, rally to support Him and stand with Him. Not so. Instead, two of them, the Son's of Zebedee choose this moment to negotiate a preferred seating arrangement for themselves in glory. Wow. Can you imagine someone being that self-focused, so filled with themselves and their own position, status and security that they are completely unaware of the needs of others? Sure you can. That's you. That's me.

What we see in our text is that Jesus doesn't just condemn us for this, He offers us His life, His grace and the energy of His Spirit to do what is counter to our nature – which is to actually become a servant. Not merely to do acts of service, but to be a servant – to lay down our lives just as Jesus so willingly laid down His life for us.

A Mother's Request: Matthew 20:20-28

²⁰Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." ²²Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." ²³He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."

²⁴And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. ²⁵But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Consider these insights into the text:

1. An expression of self-interest uncovered (v.20-21)

The Mother of James and John ask Jesus to allow them to sit on His right side and His left in His future Kingdom (v.22-23) Jesus denies their request on two accounts:

- Their ignorance (v.22) Neither the mother nor the sons really know what they are asking
- His inability (v.23) Seating arrangements in the Kingdom of heaven will be assigned by the Father not the Son.

2. An example of true greatness revealed (v.24-25)

Jesus used this tense situation to set before us a picture of true greatness:

- Greatness as viewed by the Gentiles (v.25) Greatness to them is the powerful lording over others
- Greatness as viewed by a Kingdom mind (v.25ff)

3. An expectation of servant living required (v.26-28)

- Requires serving, sacrificing for others

Discussion Questions

- 1) What did Jesus have to say about the path to true greatness (Matt. 20:25-26)
- 2) What do you find hardest about this definition of greatness?
- 3) Is there a particular person you find it especially difficult to serve? If so, why?
- 4) What changes must happen in us to take on the nature of a servant?

Resources**BOOK**

[Humility: True Greatness](#)

by C.J. Mahaney

Notes:**Digging Deeper**

What is one tangible step you can take this week to embrace the Jesus life as a servant, "the first among you must be your slave."?

Knowing that your service is meant to build up the body of Christ, is there something you have been uniquely gifted to do that you sense God reawakening you to do?

Forgiving Each Other

If we love God, we must also love our brother and sister. Last week we saw that love demands that we serve each other. This week we observe that love demands total forgiveness of one another.

Read Matthew 18:21-35

The context of this passage is seen in the previous verses. Jesus teaches His disciples that being brothers and sisters in the Kingdom means that we must lovingly confront each other in order to be reconciled. Peter, it seems, realizes that this means that forgiveness will be required—but how often? Jesus gives an amazing answer:

1. The rule of forgiveness is unconditional. (v.21, 22)

Peter thought he was being very gracious to suggest a seven-fold forgiveness. Jesus' answer is startling: not seven, but seventy times seven, which is to say "without limit!" Our forgiveness of others is to be without limit in frequency or in gravity. In Mark 11:25, Jesus said: "And whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." No matter how deeply or how often we've been hurt, we must forgive.

2. The rationale for forgiveness is unassailable. (vv.23–34)

Look at the parable Jesus told. The second servant owed the first servant 100 denarii - probably \$10,000 in today's economy. That's a big debt to cancel. But why must it be canceled? Because the first servant was forgiven a massive debt by the master, 10,000 talents—probably about \$6 billion! The logic of mercy is that those who have received it must give it away. How do we do this? Consider four steps:

- A. **Honestly assess the debt.** Unless you accurately calculate the damage, you don't know how much to forgive. And don't forget to consider how you have also sinned against your debtor.
- B. **Seek agreement.** This is what Matthew 18:15-18 is all about. The best transaction occurs when both parties agree about the nature of the offense. It is true that we should overlook most offenses against us; but most people confront what they should overlook and overlook what they should confront. The standard for confrontation should usually be the spiritual health of the offender and of the Body of Christ and the name of Christ in the community.
- C. **Cancel the debt.** Don't just think about it or pray about it or wait until you feel like it. Do it.
- D. **Burn the note.** When we forgive we drop all future claims against the old debt.

3. The results of unforgiveness are unthinkable. (v.35)

To refuse to forgive is to face the judgment of God without the forgiveness offered in Christ—unthinkable! Look at Matthew 6:14, 15:

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "To be forgiven is such sweetness that honey is tasteless in comparison with it. But there is one thing sweeter still, and that is to forgive."

Discussion Questions

- 1) What is Jesus' rule for the extent of forgiveness (v.21-22)?
- 2) What are the benefits of forgiveness for you? For the debtor? For the church? For others?
- 3) Review the 4 steps described regarding the process of forgiveness.
- 4) How is Christian forgiveness distinctive from all other types of forgiveness?
- 5) Share an experience when you observed forgiveness being offered and it had an impact on you.

Digging Deeper

Is there anyone you know you have not fully forgiven? List what each has done to you. List what you have done against them.

Develop an action plan to be reconciled on all of these issues with all of these people.

Other Resources

BOOK

[Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom](#)

by Nancy Leigh DeMoss

SERMON AUDIO

[Forgiveness and Restoration](#)

by Tim Keller

Notes:

Mutual Accountability

In God's loving plan to redeem sinners, He has called out His Church to live in loving community—to become the new humanity in a world of broken relationships. In our studies we have seen that all believers must join a local church and, in this new community, they must care for each other, serve each other, and forgive each other.

There is something else that believers must do in their churches: we must share responsibility for each other's moral and spiritual lives. In our membership vows at Second Presbyterian we promise to seek to live a godly life (vow 3), and to seek the purity of the whole church (vow 5). Americans, in particular, do not naturally do this. We are perhaps more individualistic than any people on earth; but Jesus clearly commands it.

Read Matthew 18:10-20

We might ask ourselves, "In a large church, how are we supposed to take the responsibility for thousands of people's moral and spiritual lives?" Here is Christ's answer:

1. Lovingly pursue the wandering members you know. (v.10-14)

We are responsible to seek to help gather absentee members of the flock. Notice the profoundly theological motivation for our pursuit of every single member: the Father loves every one of them, He has provided guardian angels for each one, and He rejoices when each stray is brought home.

Since He loves them, we dare not despise them; and, as we pursue His wandering sheep, we must be gentle with them:

- Express genuine affection toward them;
- Ask them questions before giving advice;
- Clearly state your concern;
- Persevere.

2. Lovingly confront the erring members you know. (v. 15-17a)

We are responsible to help correct each other in our sin. None of us can, or should try, to correct everybody; but as we get to know each other in Congregational Communities, in small groups, and on various ministry teams, we can lovingly correct and be corrected by the people we know in the church. Here's how Jesus teaches us to do this: in the case of sin that offends us or endangers a member or the church, spiritually,

- We go privately to the erring brother or sister,
- If he/she does not repent, we bring along one or two others in the family,
- If he/she does not repent, we report the matter to the church (in our case, through the elders).

If these steps fail to effect true repentance, we must continue the process.

3. Lovingly discipline the unrepentant members you know. (v. 17b-20)

We have all seen difficult and extreme cases in families in which a grown child must be threatened with having to leave the house because he will not cease and desist from destructive behavior. Sometimes when this happens, the son will subsequently repent and return to his family. Jesus is saying that the same is true of God's family. (Look also at I Corinthians 5; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14; II John 10,11) Notice these principles in the text:

- We never give up on people – if they no longer are members of the church, we still love and evangelize them. (v. 17b)
- We are given Christ's authority to discipline each other. (v. 18) "Authentic community" is impossible without godly authority.
- We don't do this alone. (v. 19)
- We seek God in prayer. (v. 19)
- Christ is always with us. (v. 20)

In fact, this is all, ultimately, about Christ—His will, His Name, His presence, His joy, His Church. The Church of Christ is a saving community, and every member is responsible to care for his brother and sister.

Discussion Questions

- 1) How do most of us need to change our lives to conform to Matthew 18:10-20
- 2) What are the motives for obeying Matthew 18:10-20?
- 3) Why is Matthew 18 important in our witness to the world around us?
- 4) What is the connection between church discipline and salvation?

Digging Deeper

Is there a person you need to pursue or confront?
Develop a strategy to do so.

Read this Week

[Dealing with Conflict Successfully](#)

by Second Presbyterian Church

Helpful Resources

BOOKS

[Managing Conflict God's Way](#)

by Deborah Smith Pegues

[The Peacemaker](#)

by Ken Sande

[When You Don't Agree](#)

by James Fairfield

[Managing Conflict Creatively](#)

by Donald Palmer

WEB RESOURCES

[Peacemaker Ministries](#)

[Website Resources](#)

by Peacemaker Ministries

[Conflict Resources at Monergism.com](#)

Various Contributors

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

On Valentine's Day we celebrate the love we have for our lovers, friends, families, and classmates. Valentine's Day is a blessed day where receiving and giving love is more natural than on other days but it also exposes a weakness, namely that we realize we are not great at loving others, particularly those who do not love us back, those who are not like us, or those we have nothing in common with. The truth is that because Jesus Christ has loved us freely we are free from living self focused lives and free towards other centered loving. God's love frees us to love others freely, no matter what the return on investment is.

People who have been saved by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ have been freed from keeping score before God and other people so the need for self promotion, self righteousness, self image management, self justification, and the like is dissolved. Rather, we are free to live as we are designed to live- with the Lord at the center of our lives and with others as the recipients of His love through us.

Read Galatians 5:13-14

We must be honest with ourselves: we have misunderstood the love and work of Christ for his people so we have misunderstood the implications for our lives and, thus, we have misrepresented his love to the world- our love is more directed at ourselves, or at least what is comfortable, easy, and familiar to us! But because the work of Christ has set us free we must be a people who love others freely.

1. Christ's work brings freedom from Self-Centered Living (5:13a)

Paul builds on a theme he began in 5:1 (and really in 1:10) by reminding the believer that the work of Christ has set us free and this freedom is living free from a life of keeping score. Paul says, "... do not use your freedom as an opportunity for your flesh..." The word opportunity is a Greek word used in military offenses speaking specifically about where initiatives are launched out. So, literally, our freedom in Christ is a freedom from a life where our living offenses are launched from our selves, for ourselves, and because of ourselves. It is not about us keeping score, being better than others or looking good for everyone around us but rather living true humanity, life as God designed it for His people, with God at the center and not ourselves and others as the recipients of His love through us.

2. Christ's work brings freedom towards other's centered loving (13b-14)

The fact is that true freedom is service, not selfishness. As Paul unpacks how we are to live in the freedom we have from Christ's work he calls us to be other centered in our loving in two distinct categories: loving the People of God and Loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. These opportunities to be other centered in our loving are ongoing, ethical obligations for Christians. (On loving the People of God see Rocky's last sermon) Paul states this explicitly in 14: For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'you should love your neighbor as yourself.' Paul mentions this here in Galatians and again in Romans 13:9 showing the importance of this ethical obligation for those who have found freedom in Christ.

Why is it important to Paul? It is important to him because it was important to Jesus. You see this theme throughout the teaching and life of Jesus but most famously is the parable

of the Good Samaritan we read in Luke 10. Why is loving our neighbor as ourselves important to Paul & Jesus? Because God has always designed his people to love freely towards their neighbors. We first encounter this command explicitly in Leviticus 19:18 but it is implicit in God's word as far back as Genesis 12.

The point? The call to love our neighbors as ourselves is an ancient obligation for the people of God but it has frequently been an ethical standard we fail to meet. Why? Because in our humanity we are instinctively focused on loving ourselves. We enjoy loving those that love us back, or loving others when there is something in it for us, so we don't love our neighbor well. We see the grace of God on display in this passage as God holds out, yet again, the opportunity to find freedom and fullness through living his design for life.

Discussion Questions

- 1) How does a life of "keeping score" push your focus on yourself and weary your spirit? How does the work of Jesus Christ free us from the weight of a self-focused life?
- 2) How has the call for God's people to love their neighbors as themselves been an ancient call? Why should this matter?
- 3) What are the motives for loving God's people and for loving our neighbors as ourselves? How does understanding the work of Christ act as a foundation for us?

Helpful Resources

BOOKS

[Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just](#)

by Timothy Keller

Digging Deeper

When you reach the end of your life, what will your regrets be? Will you regret more loving others as yourself or being too self-focused in your loving?

Serving Our World

With all of the problems we face among our own friends and associates and within the city limits of Memphis, we might ask ourselves why we should concern ourselves with the needs of people we don't know, who live thousands of miles away. If we watch Jesus closely, we begin to get some answers.

Matthew 12:9-21

⁹He went on from there and entered their synagogue. ¹⁰And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. ¹¹He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

¹³Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

¹⁵Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all ¹⁶and ordered them not to make him known. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.

I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

¹⁹He will not quarrel or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;

²⁰a bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,

until he brings justice to victory;
²¹and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

1. Our ministry is to heal broken people. (v.9-16)

Why did Jesus heal this particular man? And why on the Sabbath? (Especially knowing how strongly the clergy opposed such a thing.) Because the man was there, he was in need, and Jesus could help him. We treat our animals this way – why not hurting human beings? If we carefully observe the world we live in, we can see many ways in which we can help people.

2. Our mission grows out of the heart of Jesus. (v. 17-20b)

Under great opposition, Jesus quietly slips away and then instructs His disciples not to broadcast their praises of Him. What does this tell us about Jesus? Isaiah 42 gives us the answer: God prophesied centuries before that His Son would be gentle and humble. The entire Christian mission emanates from this heart.

3. Our mission ends in global justice. (v. 20c-21)

Being very gentle and humble, we might fear that Jesus would never be able to accomplish His mission; but the Bible proclaims a wonderful story—in the end, justice and mercy and salvation will win out, and the nations of the earth will turn to Him. We are guaranteed success!

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why did Jesus withdraw from the crowds in verse 15, and why did He silence His disciples?
- 2) Describe the character of Jesus Christ as given in verses 18 through 21.
- 3) What will the world look like when “he brings justice to victory”?
- 4) What are our biblical motivations for being engaged in the Christian mission around the world?

Helpful Resources**BOOKS**

[Operation World](#)

by Jason Mandryk

[Let the Nations Be Glad](#)

by John Piper

Digging Deeper

Draft a plan for your engagement in the international Christian mission:

1. I will pray for _____ each week.
2. I will give \$_____ [Missionary Name] to world missions annually.
3. I will make myself available to participate in a missions trip.
4. I will offer myself to God for His purposes, whatever that may entail.

On The Chasing Of Chariots

Acts 8:26-39

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. ²⁷ And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” ³⁰ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹ And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” ³⁴ And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

There are two people in the story—a deacon named Philip* and an official in the court of the Ethiopian Queen. Those two people are in two categories which comprise the only two kinds of people in the world - - - one is a Missionary and the other is a Mission Field.

1. The glory of instant obedience.

The angel said, “Get up and go,” so Philip “got up and went.” There is no calculating the devastation of disobedience, and there is no calculating the glory to God as a result of obedience.

2. The necessity of closing.

Close the deal. Engage. Chase down the chariot.

3. The utterance of the Name.

The Ethiopian had just left the festival in Jerusalem and he is studying God’s word. He wanted to hear what he didn’t understand. Philip preached Jesus.

4. The importance of the question – which question?

“What prevents me from being baptized?” ...what prevents me from doing what Jesus commanded? Maybe you. Because you didn’t go. Because you didn’t “close.” Because you didn’t utter the Name. The offense of the Gospel is that Jesus is the only Savior. Will you tell others...for Him?

Discussion Questions

- 1) If we do not view these two categories as airtight black and white compartments, but as two boundaries across a broad spectrum, where would you fall? On a scale of one to ten (one being an absolute Mission Field and 10 being a consistently faithful Missionary) what number would you assign yourself?
- 2) What concrete steps could you take which could move you further toward a ten?
- 3) What did Philip model which could help us make that advance?
- 4) What characteristics about the eunuch made evangelism easier?
- 5) What circumstances would have rendered witnessing harder?
- 6) The man was reading from the Isaiah scroll. What specifics in the passage (vv. 32-33) would be essential for sharing with a potential convert?
- 7) From the starting point in Isaiah Philip proceeded to teach other things from other places as He preached Jesus. What else would you point out to an unbeliever from truths not found in that place in Isaiah?

*There are two Christians named Philip. One is the disciple who became an Apostle and the other is the servant named in Acts 6:5 who waited on tables. There is a consensus that it is this second Philip in view here. Even though the word ‘deacon’ is not mentioned in Acts 6 those seven who waited tables and distributed food among the widows are usually regarded as the first deacons.

Memory Verses

FOR THIS WEEK

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Colossians 3:23-24

Helpful Resources**BOOKS**[A Chance to Die](#)

by Elisabeth Elliott

[Spiritual Secret](#)

by Hudson Taylor

[The Unlisted Legion](#)

by Jock Purves

[George Whitefield](#)

by Arnold Dallimore

Serving Our Workplace

It is such a temptation to separate our spiritual life from our work life. Sometimes we are deliberate about this, but I think that most times we simply forget to bring Jesus into our Monday through Friday. How does embracing the Jesus mission work into the everyday tasks and jobs that fill up our week? What does the Bible have to say about our response to the “bosses” in our lives or, if you are the boss, what does the Bible have to say to you?

Ephesians 6:5–9

⁵ Slaves, 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 servants 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 slave or 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.

Don't let the reference to slaves and masters through you off. Paul was not condoning slavery. He was simply dealing with a cultural reality of the first century (there were an estimated 60 million slaves at the time). This section of Ephesians really begins at 5:21 where Paul writes that we are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. He then goes on to teach how this applies to marriages, to children, to parents, and finally to the context of the first century workplace.

What Is My Mission as an Employee? (v.5-8)

In these verses we see that there is a right behavior (obedience), a right attitude (with fear and trembling), a right commitment (with a sincere heart), a right motive (as you would Christ), and a right diligence (not as eye-service or people-pleasers). Notice too that all of this is centered on Christ as being our ultimate Master or boss. Christ is mentioned in each of the four verses. Paul wants to make it clear that all our work, no matter how mundane, is for the Lord.

What Is My Mission as an Employer? (v.9)

Right away, Paul challenges these earthly masters to have the same mindset as the slaves, “doing the will of God from the heart”. The employer should seek to obey and please the Lord, understanding that Christ is his Master. The employer treats his employees in the same manner that Christ has treated him. He is just and fair, reflecting the character of the ultimate Master.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Of the five ways we are called to respond to our earthly masters, which one is most difficult for you? Why would you say that is?
- 2) What if you have an unfair or harsh boss...how do verses 5- 9 apply to that situation?
- 3) What if your job seems boring or not very significant....how do you apply these verse to your situation?
- 4) As a boss or a teacher, what would you say (according to these verses) that you are doing well? And what might need improvement?
- 5) As a boss or teacher, what are some practical ways to carrying out the command and perspective of verse 9?

Digging Deeper

As an employee or student or employer or teacher, what do think God is asking you to do in the next weeks or months as a response to the study of these verses? What do you need to adjust to get back on the Jesus Mission in your workplace?

Helpful Resources

BOOKS

[Taking your Soul To Work: Overcoming the Nine Deadly Sins of the Workplace](#)

by Stevens and Ung

[Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor](#)

by Ben Witherington III

Making Friends

Abraham Lincoln once said, “A better part of one’s life consists of his friendships.”

The Bible also teaches us that friends are extremely important. Regarding friends, David’s son, Solomon, said:

“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” (Prov. 13:20)

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” (Prov. 17:17)

“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Prov. 18:24)

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” (Prov. 27:6)

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” (Prov. 27:17)

There are many different levels of friendship, but the friendship in our text is one of the most famous in all world history — that of David and Jonathan.

I Samuel 18:1–5

¹As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ²And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father’s house. ³Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. ⁵And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.

Let’s make several important observations from these verses:

1. Real friends are knit together in the soul. (v. 1,2)

Aristotle said, “What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies.” The biblical version of that concept is two souls knit together by God – with a common love for God and a common purpose in life. David and Jonathan were both gifts from God to each other. They didn’t so much make the friendship as they received the friendship from each other and the Lord. We must always be open to soul mates, but also never try to force what only God can accomplish.

2. Real friends are covenantal partners. (v. 3)

We learn in I and II Samuel more of the implications of “covenantal friendship,” but we can look at our own church membership vows and be reminded of our pledge to seek the corporate peace, purity, and unity of the Body of Christ. Our friendships are not merely

the products of our sentiments or affections, but also of our wills and our minds. Our friendships must be built on principle as well as preference.

3. Real friends sacrifice for each other. (v. 4)

Notice that in his friendship with David, Jonathan stripped himself of his robe and his weapons. He divested himself of his claim to the throne out of his love and loyalty to David (cf. 23:17). He risked his life for David (cf. 20:30-33). His love was sweeter than that of a woman! (II Samuel 1:26) All true friendships involve cheerful sacrifice.

4. Real friends make each other successful. (v. 5)

David and Jonathan were “good for each other,” and they took delight in each other’s success.

5. Your real friend is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ!

He is knit to you, in covenant, at great sacrifice to Himself, so that you might be eternally “successful.” How can you be His friend? Think about that.

Discussion Questions

- 1) How can we make ourselves available for real friendships?
- 2) How do you recognize a real friendship when you have one?
- 3) What most often causes the dissolution of good friendships?
- 4) How does our friendship with Jesus affect all other friendships?

Helpful Resources**BOOKS**

[Friends and Friendships](#)

by Jeremy and Mary White

Digging Deeper

- 1) What do you need to do to be a better friend to Jesus?
- 2) What do you need to do to be a better friend to others?

The Indispensable Element

We have seen that “the Jesus mission” involves our relationships in our city, our world, our workplace, our friendships, and (next week) our families. In all these various venues of the Jesus mission, there is an indispensable element we all must have in order to carry out the mission: an intimate knowledge of Jesus Himself.

Mark 8:27–9:1

²⁷ And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸ And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” ³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

¹ And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

Let’s observe three primary ideas in this text:

1. We must know Jesus as the Christ. (8:27-29)

Presented to the disciples in Caesarea Philippi were many choices. Shrines to the gods had been erected there, including an altar to Pan, the great pagan god. We can only intelligently, faithfully devote ourselves to Christ if we renounce all His competitors. Notice that Jesus first asks what others think, but inevitably the question falls upon each one of us, “But who do you say that I am?” Amazingly, Peter comes up with the right answer!

2. We must know Jesus as the crucified Christ. (8:30-33)

We might wonder why Jesus strictly forbids them from telling others about him (just the opposite of His command in Matthew 28:18-20). Scholars speculate about this “messianic secret.” It seems that this command is given because, at this point, they only know Christ without His cross. Look how Peter responded to Jesus’ teaching about His future sufferings (how quickly the “answer man” falls from his exalted position!). Peter rebukes Jesus! Mercy! Jesus then explains to Peter that his theology was actually Satanic, as is the theology of all who try to present Jesus without His substitutionary atoning work on the cross.

3. Jesus must know us as crucified Christians. (8:34-9:1)

Jesus tells us two important things about “crucified Christians”:

- Crucifixion is required. (v.34)
As Amy Carmichael wrote, “Can he have followed far who has no wound nor scar?”
- Crucifixion is rewarded. (v. 35-38)
As Jim Elliot once wrote, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why is it important to study other religions and to dialogue with people who believe them?
- 2) How does Jesus perfectly fit the biblical title “Messiah/Christ”?
- 3) What are some contemporary versions of “cross-less Christianity” that you have heard? Why are they so damaging?
- 4) In what ways do we sometimes try to live as “cross-less Christians”?

Suggested reading:

[What Is A Biblical Christian](#)

by Albert N. Martin

Digging Deeper

- 1) What causes you at times to shrink back in the face of the world’s persecution of Christ and His followers? Have you ever caught yourself being ashamed of the gospel? How can you change that?
- 2) What positive steps can you take to deny yourself and take up your cross?

Serving Our Families

We have seen that “the Jesus mission” involves loving our neighbors in our city, our world, our workplace, loving well in our friendships, and now we see it involves serving our families. In all these various venues of the Jesus mission, there is an indispensable element we all must have in order to carry out the mission: an intimate knowledge of Jesus Himself and his cross-shaped method of living. As we look at our passage during this group we will see that serving our families is no exception to this call for God’s people to be about the Jesus mission in all of life:

Ephesians 5:22–6:4

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband

6:1 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.

Let’s observe two primary ideas in this text:

1. The Jesus Mission in serving families involves wives & husbands who trust God’s design

Paul explicitly states that the way a husband and wife are apart of the Jesus mission in serving families is A) Wives submit to your husbands and B) Husbands love your wives. Paul’s imperative for wives to submit to their husbands is part of a litany of the New Testament that incorporates Colossians 3, 1 Peter 3, Titus 2, among others. Wives submitting to their husbands means for them to respect their authority and to order their life under his headship. When women express frustration over this design, questioning the goodness of God, then we are rebelling against God’s word and falling into the same trap as our first mother Eve while also experiencing the aspect of the curse articulated in Genesis 3:16. While it is the sin in the heart of the wife that leads to the rebellion against God’s design of submitting to her husband it is also the sinful abuse of the design by men who have made the word “authority” a dirty word for many of us. But, regardless, wives are called to submit in all things as the church submits to Christ.

The call for Husbands to love their wives means that husbands should love their wives as Christ loves the church. How did he love the church? Jesus died on the cross to take the curse away from his church. He absorbed the effects of the curse upon and within himself so that we may experience life everlasting. Christ lived as a servant and died as a slave so that the church could be edified, glorified, purified, and holy. Christ lived as a servant and died as a slave so that the church could be presented in splendor, without spot or wrinkle. Jesus absorbed the curse so the church could experience blessing. And Paul says this is how a husband should love his wife. This sort of love for a wife is how a husband serves his family. Paul reinforces this call for a husband to love his wife by using the imagery of a man protection, nourishing, and cherishing his own body saying that in the same way a husband is to love his wife and one tangible manifestation of this love should be the removal of the effects of the curse she experiences in her call to submission. Your wife should welcome your headship because of your love and service.

The authority Paul stands on for his bold proposal is found in Genesis 2 and God's design for the husband and wife and it is summarized in 5:33 where he writes, "each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

2. The Jesus Mission in serving families involves Children & Father's who trust God's design

Paul explicitly states that the way a child and a father are a part of the Jesus Mission in serving families is through A) Children Obeying and B) Fathers raising. Paul's imperative for children to obey their parents is supported by the 10 commandments and is coupled with a reminder of the covenantal blessing of life. Obeying for the children is not a matter of outward conformity of obedience but rather a heart stance where respect, appreciation, dignity, and the worth of your parents and the positions of authority God has given to them.

Father's are called to participate in the Jesus mission through loving their families through raising their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This explicitly means that they are not to provoke their children to anger or use Scripture as a weapon but to model the love of Christ for His Church with their lives so that when they discipline them and instruct them the Father's have already become what they are calling their children to.

It is important to remember that we can only submit because Jesus submitted to the Father's will for Him. We can only truly loved because we were first loved by God who demonstrated His love through sending His son to die for us. We can only truly obey because Jesus was obedient to death, even death on a cross, and we can only raise in the discipline and instruction of the Lord because our Heavenly father discipline's us and instructs us with his word and His work. Being a part of the Jesus mission in serving our families is not self resolve, or trying harder, but being transformed by the word of God so we can live in the shape of God for the glory of God.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why do we struggle to trust God's design for life, marriage, and family? What are competing designs we find ourselves being shaped by?
- 2) How do the metaphors that Paul uses of Christ's relationship to the church bolster his call for wives and husbands to trust God's design in submitting and loving?
- 3) Why is it difficult for husbands to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands?
- 4) What difference does honoring make in the children's obedience of their parents and how does that look in everyday life?
- 5) Why do Fathers provoke their children?

Digging Deeper

- 1) Read through Philippians 2:1-5 and discuss how the realities Paul calls believers to speak to serving our families.
- 2) Memorize Philippians 2:1-5 and talk with your family about how it should make a difference in your relationships.

Suggested reading:[Intimate Allies](#)*by Longman & Allender*[Love & Respect](#)*Dr. Emerson Eggerichs*[Say Goodbye to Whining,
Complaining and Bad
Attitudes in Your Kids](#)*Scott Turnsky &**Joanne Miller*