

October 6, 2024

20th Sunday after Pentecost

Pastor Prieue

Ephesians 5:21-6:4

How to Love Your Family

Be the “You” Jesus died for you to be, in the role he created you to have.

Our worship theme today announced, “*Followers of Jesus know how to love their families.*” Maybe if you’re a guy like me, still fairly new to fatherhood, you hear that and think, “Wait a second, do I? Do I know how to love my family? Sure, I know that I am supposed to love my family (and I most certainly do, of course) but exactly “how to do it...?” I feel like a must have been sick for that day of class somewhere along the way. Out pop these kids and I didn’t even know how to hold ‘em, much less what and when to feed them all the rest of the stuff to keep them alive. The nurse had to teach me how to change my first diaper. Dads, are you with me--in a little in over our heads here? I know how to do my job at work, I trained for that, but being a husband and father that knows how to love their wife and family, I don’t always know so much about that.

Thankfully, wives and moms seem to know like 4 times more about how to love and take care of a family, I guess just by instinct or baby-sitting class or something. To dads, moms seem to have this all down pat, but then you overhear her talking to another mom, and what do they talk about? This thing called “mom-guilt” where moms agonize about if you could be doing this or that better or so much more of this or maybe if we tried doing this differently and then there’s trying keep up with the house or with a job, and what you’re left with is this pestering and persistent feeling that no matter how much you do, you’re still failing.

If, today, you’re listening as a single person, or a child, maybe you’re wishing you went somewhere else today because you can tell you’re in for the marriage and family sermon. But this applies to you too as you live a godly life now as a single person or as a child of your parents, honoring God’s design for marriage by abstaining from the blessings of marriage until you enter it possibly in the future.

Today in Ephesians 5 and 6, the Apostle Paul sets before us God’s instructions for husband and wives, parents and children, to give followers of Jesus a crash course on ***how to love your family***. 1) **In Lesson #1**, we need to identify where God has placed you in his perfect design of the family and the role he has given you to fulfill.

Paul starts the section this way, “**Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.**” (5:21). It’s an overarching command that applies to all the relationships he’s about to talk about—husband and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. When we apply it to each of those relationships, we realize God is not saying for *everyone* to submit *everyone* else, like masters submitting to servants or parents submitting to children. No that’s problem if a is parent submitting to their child’s will. It’s saying “**submit, one to another,**” submit to the proper counterpart in the relationship God has placed you in: wives to husbands, children to parents, servants to masters.

It makes perfect sense that God would give order to the way these relationships are designed to work. It’s kind of like when two cars pull up to a stop sign at the same time, there’s a rule for how it works. The car on the right has the right of way and the other yields to the order that has been

established. Otherwise, you either crash into each other, or you play that little game where you both wave for each other go, and then you both let off the brake and start going, and then you both slam the break, and then you wave some more and then another car comes and doesn't know what dance you're doing, and traffic comes to a halt. No, it works smoothly when you go according to the right order. Paul lays out for us that order.

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.” (5:22). And there it is! When that that “S” word, “submit” comes after “wives,” it unleashes a whole bunch of resentment and confusion. There's some reasons for that. One reason might be because “submitting” might make you think of a wrestling match where one person wins by making the other tap out and submit. Another reason might be because of the pig-headed way that men have sometimes lorded this over their wives in the past. A third reason is because our world and even a lot of churches are trying to eliminate any difference in the gender roles of men and women. It thinks men and women should do all the same things with no difference. But that's not Biblical!

So why would God say that wives have to submit to their husbands, and not just sometimes, but in everything? We recognized before, somewhat in jest, but also in truth, that sometimes it seems like husbands don't know what they're doing. It's confusing to women, and even to men why this command is the way it is. Women were created in the image of God too, so why does this make it seem like they are inferior?

Let me take you back for a moment into the midst of God designing the perfect world at the beginning. On the first days of creation, God simply spoke the word and set the sun and the moon and the stars in their places to govern the day and the night. He spoke and created all the animals, but then when he gets to the man and woman, he slows down. He forms the man out of the dust and breathes into him the breath of life. Then before he creates Eve, he slows things down even more. He parades all those animals in front of Adam to name them with the purpose of having him realize, “They have mates, but I don't have somebody like me.” No suitable helper was found for Adam and now he knew it. And that's when God completes creation! He makes the Queen for the crown of his creation, the bride for the groom! He makes the suitable helper for the man, the woman made from the man's rib, bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. And God walks her down the aisle and presents her to the man in the first wedding ceremony and they become one flesh, husband and wife.

Now realizing all the glorious pomp and circumstance of the creation of Eve and her wedding to Adam, here's my question. Ladies and gentleman, do you think God was intent on making sure Eve and women forever after got the short end of the stick in this deal, that they'd have to begrudgingly submit to their “bozo husbands”. No, of course not, this was the world's only perfect wedding. This was our loving God designing creation perfectly, and setting the man and woman in their places in the marriage—the head and the helper, two perfectly good roles designed to complement each other and nurture and train their children by carrying out different responsibilities. So **lesson #1** of the crash course helps us identify our role in God's good design.

Lesson #2, we have to recognize our failure to live up to the design. How did we get from that perfection to the world now where either “MEN ARE PIGS” or “GIRLS RULE, AND BOYS DRULE!”. Well, it didn't take long for things to go haywire in the perfect garden. The devil tempts Eve.

She takes the fruit. She gives it to Adam. He follows her lead. He eats it. Then he blames it all on her and the fall into sin is complete. The curse of sin upon creation will now fall on marriage too. To Eve, God says, **“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16).** The New Living Translation gives a pretty good explanation of that, **“You will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.”** Now sin has given birth to a power struggle forever after that is the reason we fail to love our spouses and families properly.

It helps us realize why it is so hard for wives to submit to their husbands, and husbands to love and lead their wives. One abdicates the role he has been given and the other seizes control of a role she hasn't been given. A husband finds out how much responsibility it is to be the leader of his family and he deserts his role and finds something else to do. Either he sits down in his lazy boy, turns on the game, and bosses everyone around, or he works himself into oblivion and becomes a strange guest in his own home.

The wife thinks, “Why should I submit to this, when he’s schluffing or he’s not around, or he doesn’t know what he’s doing?” Maybe rightly so, that she is forced to step up! Or maybe like she wanted all along, now she redefines herself to take the lead. Or you see it between parents and children—children who think their parents were born yesterday and don’t know anything, or parents who give their kids only law or no rules at all, but never both law and gospel in balance. Anyway it happens, whether by the husband or wife, parents or children, the design winds up topsy turvy and the abandonment of that design amounts to rebellion against God. ***Lesson #2, we’ve got to recognize our failures.***

What God does in the face of that failure is ***Lesson #3***. Back in the garden, God came and found Adam and Eve hiding the bushes and promised them the same Savior that Paul is bursting at the seams to tell us about in Eph. 5. He knows the commands are hard, but it’s like he just can’t wait to talk about the one thing that will help. He first starts to let it slip in the section to wives. **“The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.” (Eph 5:23)** Then again, a verse or so later, the relief of the gospel for our failures comes bursting out even in the midst of the command. **“Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless. (Eph 5:25-27).**

Here's the whole power of the text! You, who have faith in Jesus Christ are the church, the ***bride*** of Christ—husbands, wives, parents and children alike. You all get to be the bride on her wedding day, the day every girl dreams of! That might feel strange to you if you’re guy, but all you have to do is either remember or imagine the joy in your heart of watching your bride walk down the aisle to you on the day of your wedding in her beautiful wedding dress, radiant and glowing, without a wrinkle or a blemish. The joy of that moment is the joy Jesus has to present you to himself and to call you his own. That’s the picture of holiness and purity that Jesus has given you because he loved you, gave himself for you, and washed away your sins in baptism!

Lesson #3 is remembering that Jesus died to make us holy and blameless, radiant and pure. And yes, we said before that we need to recognize our failure, but faith can’t stop there. Mark Paustian writes in *More Prepared to Answer*, “You have not lived until you’ve learned to say “Enough!” to the

law that has shown you your guilt and so has done its work.” (131) Ladies, tell that to your mom guilt to silence it the next time it comes pestering. Enough! Devil, didn’t you hear what Jesus said? “Holy and blameless!” You can’t talk to me, I’m in my wedding dress! Today and every day is my wedding day to Christ. Paustian goes on, “You have not lived until you’ve just dismissed the law outright and have sent it away, until you’ve taken hold of Christ and ‘the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.’” (131). Men, tell that to your constant sense of failure and the nagging pressure you feel to perform and provide. “Satan, here this proclamation. I am baptized into Christ.” (God’s Own Child I Gladly Say It). Go away, Devil! You simply have to remember that holy and blameless is what Jesus died to make you.

Now finally here’s the last lesson of the crash course. **#4. Be the “You” Jesus died for you to be, in the role he created you to have.** Look again at those commands that seemed so hard before and see them coming from the lips of the one who loved you enough to give himself for you! **“Wives submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord,”** just like the church submits to her Savior. It’s not meant to be oppressive, it’s meant to be wonderful! **“Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church!”** Love her with unending commitment and sacrifice, for she is your very own flesh, the one God gave to support you. Children, love and obey your parents who have your best interest in mind. Parents, and especially fathers who might have the tendency to go overboard, don’t embitter them, but love and nurture your children in training and instruction of the Lord like the wonderful gifts from God that they are.

Do you realize what happens then? When you are being the “You” that Jesus died for you to be, in the role he created you to have, you are blessing your counterpart, your spouse, your child, in the way Jesus designed. They will be blessed and see again that your role is good and their role is good and respond in service and love. It’s a good design, though on this side of heaven, it’s carried out by the “sinner-saint” - “works in progress” that we are. Until the day when Jesus clothes us in righteousness forever and brings us to his wedding feast, God give us strength and commitment to be the people he died for us to be, in the role he created us to have. Amen.