

# Living as God's Glory

## Wk 6 (11/16) Handout – Ephesians 5:21-6:24 “Unity in the Household”

### Summary

In Chapters 1-3, Paul paints a grand picture of God's eternal plans and efforts to redeem his creation. Christ is the centerpiece of the celebration and the church emerges as the centerpiece of his ongoing efforts. It is in the church that God has vested the power of the Spirit. It is the church that demonstrates that power at work by living distinctively Spirit-filled lives. It was God who created unity between Jews and Gentiles and it is the church that maintains that unity. The message of God's new united humanity alive within his body, the church, is the message that Paul carries to the world.

Chapters 4-6 extend the celebration of God's work into specific areas of life. In each section, Paul exhorts the readers to live distinctive lives. The model for life that Paul instructs the Ephesians to live is God. He calls on the church to imitate God in unity, in love, and in holiness. He uses the relationship of Christ and the church as the model for both husband-wife and master-slave relationships. In all aspects of life, God's people are challenged to live a life that demonstrates the power of the Spirit as a testimony of the truth of God's message.

### **(5:21-6:24) Unity in the Household**

- Many Bible translations place Eph 5:21 as the closing verse of the previous section instead of the opening verse of household section. Grammatically the verse clearly belongs with the section that follows because it provides the main verb for 5:22. Contextually, 5:21 is the thematic introduction for the entire section. “Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ,” is the main idea followed by specific discussions concerning husband-wife, parent-child, slave-master. Within each of the sub-sections, Paul follows an ethical formula that motivates proper behavior using a variety of theological warrants or reasons. Look for the pattern of “do this FOR/BECAUSE some theological reason” kind of structures. It is important to recognize that in all three sub-sections Paul addresses both members of each relationship. Imagine how unusual it would be for children, slaves, women to be addressed directly.

### **(5:21-33) Husbands & Wives**

The model for the husband/wife relationship is the relationship between Christ and the church. The church yields to Christ and Christ loves and sacrifices for the betterment of the church. It is interesting to note that much more time is spent on husbands than on wives. To gain a better understanding of this model explore the following questions.

- Make a list of all the things husbands & wives are instructed to do in these verses.

Husbands	Wives	Christ & Church

- Add to the list all the things mentioned about how Christ treated and showed his love to the church.
- Look back over chapters 1-3, what else is mentioned about what Christ has done for the church in these chapters?

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- Eph. 5:25 uses the phrase “gave himself up for” which is similar to the language in Phil 2:5f. Read Phil 2:5f. How would this description of Christ serve as an example of husband / wife relationship?
- Eph. 5:30 mentions the idea of unity using the words, “one body.” How does the idea of being “one body” help to explain the relationship between husband & wife?
- When is submitting hard? Easy?
- In what ways is the submission mentioned in 5:21f voluntary? Involuntary?
- According to Paul's instructions in this section, how are the social roles of husband, wife, child, parent, slave, and master changed by being in Christ? How are the attitudes of the persons in those roles modified?
- If we are all one (Eph 4:1f) and all looking after the interests of each other (Eph 4:17-5:20) and all submitting to each other (Eph 5:21) then how do we understand the statement, “the husband is the head of the wife?”
- Based on Ephesians 1-5, what is the purpose of headship?

## (6:1-4) Children and Parents

- What reason(s) does Paul offer for why children should obey their parents?
- What responsibility is placed on Fathers in this relationship?

## (6:5-9) Masters & Slaves

Although this section addresses master-slave relationships, apply the comments to the employer-employee relationship.

- What reasons does Paul list for why employees should obey their employers?
- What attitudes are recommended for Masters? For Slaves?

## (6:10-24) Pray!

The opening words of “finally” signal that the author is bringing the sermon to a conclusion. In this concluding image we are reminded that we are not the enemy. It is not “the other person” who is to be overcome, rather the entire struggle against sin is placed within a big picture context where our lives and struggles exist as a part of the on-going battle in the heavenly realms. Just as the church serves as a demonstration to the powers in heaven, so also the battle we fight is with those forces.

- What action verbs can you find in this last section?