***Clear About the Gospel* Bible Study**
Ephesians 5.15—6.9
BYF 11-15-26
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TEACHING OUTLINE

1. Start with announcements and prayer. (5 minutes)

2. Read aloud Ephesians 5.15—6.9. (5 minutes)

3. Discuss how the Spirit-filled life reveals itself in Christian daily living in Ephesians 5.15-21. (15 minutes)

- Call to wise, careful, thoughtful living with opportunity for Christian love, service, and witness in "these evil days" (Eph 5.16); grounded in being "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph 5.18)
- Avoid pitfalls of foolish, thoughtless living, such as drunkenness, that destroys witness and creates havoc in faith communities (unknown if drunkenness was a particularly bad problem in Ephesus, or if Paul speaking more generally, given realities of Greco-Roman culture)
- Five participles describing the Christian "walk" (ESV) or "life" (NLT) in Eph 5.19-21 in how we treat one another, sing praises to God, give thanks to God, and mutually submit to each other
- Mutual submission perhaps most important participle here based on what follows: sets the context for following discussion on how families live in relationship (so-called "house codes"); cannot understand Eph 5.22—6.9 without seeing it in light of Eph 5.21's mutual submission
- Submission (*hypotasso* in Greek) means to "arrange under": cannot be construed as merely "supportive of" or "identify with," but carries clear meanings of authority and leadership
- Often translations do not make clear connection between mutual submission and relationships of wives/husbands, children/fathers, and slaves/masters
    - ESV: new paragraph at Eph 5.22 and separates Eph 5.22-33 from Eph 5.21 with new paragraph and subhead "Wives and Husbands"
    - NLT: connecting Eph 5.21 and Eph 5.22-33 typographically and linking them through a subhead of "Spirit-guided Relationships: Wives and Husbands"
- In discussion of wives/husbands, children/fathers, and slaves/masters to come, surprises come in how mutual submission shows up with second party (husbands, fathers, masters)

4. Discuss how mutual submission shapes the relationship between wives and husbands in Ephesians 5.22-33. (10 minutes)

- In Greek text, "submit" is not in Eph 5.22; literally reads "wives to your husbands as to the Lord"; "submit" assumed from Eph 5.21; "obey" is not in text either, as in Eph 6.1, 6.5
- "Headship" of husband noted as similar to how Christian submits to Christ; nothing to differentiate from culture of that day

- Bombshell dropped in 5.25 *ff,* as husband not told to "rule" (as we'd expect given Eph 5.22-24), but instead to "love" selflessly and sacrificially as Christ loves the church and gave himself for it; no room for husband to be demeaning, abusive, domineering, but to live in mutual submission
- Greco-Roman husbands had near absolute authority over all of family life, but instead Paul calls husbands to love wives as Christ loves church and as they love themselves
- Theological application of wife/husband relationship of "one flesh" expressing mystery of the relationship of Christ and his church: as husband/wife are united and "one," so are Christ/church

5. Discuss how mutual submission shapes the relationships between children and parents and slaves/bondservants and masters in Ephesians 6.1-9. (10 minutes)

- Children (Eph 6.1) and slaves (Eph 6.5) also called upon to obey
- Instruction to children grounded in 5th Commandment (*tekna* in Greek)*:* not just "sons"; inclusion of daughters at time when most daughters not educated but trained in domestic duties
- First bombshell comes in Eph 6.4: fathers not to provoke to anger but to raise children in "the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord" (NLT): in Greco-Roman culture, father's authority over children near absolute and often terrifying, so significant, positive limitation
- ESV translates slaves (*doulos* in Greek) as "bondservants," noting differences in Greco-Roman and American slavery, like voluntary acceptance of servitude and chance of eventual freedom
- Argument made that slaves/masters best understood today as employees/employers relationship
- Slaves urged to serve masters as they would serve Christ "as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people" (Eph 6.7b NLT)
- Second bombshell in Eph 6.9: masters to treat slaves "in the same way… remember you have the same Master in heaven" (NLT); as articulated will destroy slavery, oppressive hierarchy

6. Close with prayer.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Mutual submission to one another as Christian brothers and sisters is the center of Paul's direction in Ephesians 5.21. Explain what you think he means in your own words.
2. The surprise that comes in Ephesians 5.25-30 is stunning. How does Paul advise the Christian husband to show the love of Christ to his wife? How is Paul's counsel so different from what we've been led to expect? How is this counsel so different from what we often see in today's world?
3. How are fathers to live out the implications of their faith with the children, according to Paul? Give some real-life examples of when you've seen this godly parenting at work.
4. Some say employees and employers are the modern-day equivalents of slaves and masters. If this is the case, then what should employee/employer relationships look like in today's world?