

Ephesians 5:21-6:24

Intro

- Share your summary of Ephesians 5:21-6:24.
- What is Paul's revelation? (*Look at 1 on 1 #1 for the answer*)

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:9

Note: It is important to know that, grammatically, all of Ephesians 5:21-27 is one sentence expanding on the idea of "submitting to one another." Therefore, it would read along the lines "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ... Wives like this... Husbands like this."

- Of these verses, what might be countercultural to the people at the time?
 - *The wives, children, and slaves are addressed before the patriarchal person.*
 - *Masters are to treat their slaves in the same way that their slaves are to treat them*
 - *Paul describes the role of Jesus Christ using words associated with the status of women at the time (cleansing, washing, stain, wrinkle, feed, care) (the words for feed and care are specifically "to raise a child" and "to nurse a baby").*
- What is Paul trying to say, using these countercultural ideas?
 - *In the new humanity that is established through Jesus, there is no hierarchy of social class and social order.*
- In our modern world, why do we often miss Paul's intention in these verses?
 - *We are often offended that Paul says "Wives submit to your husbands" and also that Paul didn't directly state "Let's cause a rebellion and abolish all slavery!" When we become fixated on how Paul didn't address our wildly different culture 2000 years later, we can lose sight of the message that actually changes the world.*
- Why do you think people are often offended by Ephesians 5:21-33?
- What does it mean that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the Church?
 - *Husbands are to do much more than "be nice" to their wives. If the husband's standard is Jesus, then he has a heavy responsibility! Jesus, with the greatest humility, laid down His life so that the Church could be without sin and could be one with Him. In a similar way, a husband should aim to guide his wife towards oneness with God.*

"Within this Christian vision of marriage, here's what it means to fall in love. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of what God is creating, and to say, 'I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, 'I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!'"
(Timothy Keller - Meaning of Marriage)

- If it is true that men are to be the spiritual leaders of the household...
 - Questions for women:
 - What type of man should you marry?
 - If your husband loves you just as Jesus loved the Church, why should there be fear in accepting his leadership?
 - Questions for men:
 - In the context of the household, what kind of responsibility has God entrusted the husband with?
 - What does it look like to lead the household spiritually?
- What does Paul's instructions for a Christian household have to do with his revelation?

If your main focus is whether or not wives should submit to their husbands, you are missing out on what it looks like to live in the Kingdom. When you are a part of the Kingdom, you seek to lift others higher than yourself. Even while here on earth, where we have separated ourselves into a hierarchy of social classes, the Kingdom invades to bring a new culture, one that seeks to lift others higher than yourself.

Read Ephesians 6:10-24

- Do you usually see other people as the offender/enemy? Explain.
- According to these verses, who is our actual offender/enemy?
- What is the armor of God supposed to protect us against?
- In context of Paul's revelation, what do you think are the devil's schemes?
- How do each of the pieces of the armor of God help us stand against the devil's schemes?
- How do you think this section on the armor of God is bringing the whole letter of Ephesians to a culmination? How does it relate to the message of the whole letter?

Further Study Opportunities (Optional)

- Where do you see the concept of God's "chosen" people?
- Where do you see the concept of "inheritance?"
- Where do you see Paul's "temple" language?
- What is Paul's intention in talking about this "armor of God?" - In Romans 13, Paul states that we need to protect ourselves against the power of this world by clothing ourselves with Jesus Himself. Isaiah 11:1-5 prophesies that the difference between the redeeming Messiah and all other men is that the fullness of God rests on Him as He wears the armor of righteousness and faithfulness. Isaiah 59:9-19 states that no one of God's people were good enough to deliver them from evil, so God achieved salvation by wearing His own armor of perfect righteousness, salvation, vengeance, and zeal. Isaiah 52:7 praises the feet of those ready to spread the coming good news of peace. Isaiah 53 follows to say that the good news is here, but the Messiah chose to wear suffering and servitude to bring salvation. Paul's intention behind wearing the armor of God is that we would wear Jesus Himself, who lowered Himself to lift others up, and that is how we are going to stand against the powers of this world.