

May 24, 2015

The Church

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ...Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right...Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord...Slaves (employees), obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ...doing the will of God from your hearts...and Masters (employers), treat your slaves (employees) in the same way...since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven and there is not favoritism with him." Ephesians 6:1-9



By now we hopefully understand that in Jesus everything is about relationships. If the most important commands are to love God and to love our neighbor and the new commandment is to love others as Christ has loved us then relationships matter. In fact, if our relationships fail, we fail as those who follow him.

The single most important quality that we must master to make our relationships work is the capacity to submit. As we have already noted, submission does not come easily to us. We are much more likely to demand our own way than we are to submit to someone else's direction. By nature we are a self-serving people and it is our selfishness that destroys our relationships.

Overcoming our drive for self-gratification and putting the needs of others before our own is tough, but it is essential to our relationship with the Father and in all of our relationships in this life as well.

So the Apostle will tell children, ***"...obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."*** I struggled with this one a lot when I was growing up. Most of us do. Submitting our wills to the will of our parents is a tough call.

So is the command to Fathers that Paul adds in this context. ***"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*** Effective parenting takes time, time from Mom for sure, but especially time with Dad. Too many Fathers let their children down and destroy the relationship they need to have with their children because too many other things become more important.

The importance of relationships extends to the workplace as well. In the first century a large portion of the population was slaves. So the Apostle speaks to slaves and masters. In our culture what he writes is still applicable. Those of us who work for others need to ***"...obey...with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart...doing the will of God from (our) hearts..."***

Those of us who oversee employees are also commanded to make sure those relationships are effective. As a manager or business owner I must treat those who work for me as my Lord has treated me.

There are two basic thoughts that occur to me from Paul's teaching in this letter. First, I am always expected to live as a ***"child of light"*** regardless of where I am or who I am with. I am a member of the body of Christ and as such, I always represent him. Second, it is in my relationships with others, all of my relationships, that I most obviously represent my Lord. Whether it is in the church, or in the marriage, or in the family, or in the workplace, I represent Jesus before the world in all of those interactions all of the time. The world is watching. Can they see Jesus living in us?