

May 17, 2015

The Church

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit their husbands in everything. 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, to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body..." Ephesians 5:21-31

When we move away from the idea of church as something that exists only within a certain building and begin to understand that we are always church then all relationships involving believers become church. If we can accept church in these terms we can see, I think, that even a believer's family is church and thus should reflect Jesus as head.

Remember what the Apostle wrote at the beginning of chapter 4? ***"...I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received...Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."*** If unity is a primary necessity for the church then it is no less a necessity for the family. Division in any relationship which includes believers reflects directly on our Lord. ***"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*** (John 13:35)

When we let our relationships splinter, for any cause, we reflect badly on our Lord and show the world that we are, in fact, anything but his followers. Relationships matter to the Father and maintaining them has to be a major priority for each of us. Making marriages and families work is a "must do" for those who follow Jesus.

Paul's direction for making marriages work is not always popular, but as a marriage and family therapist for nearly thirty years, I can testify that these directions work. Note what the Apostle teaches us about making marriages work. First he says, ***"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."*** Submission, as we have observed before, is a hard task for any of us to master. We have trouble giving up our own way for anyone else. Those who follow Jesus however, must master this essential task; we must learn to submit.

In marriage Paul tells us, ***"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord."*** This does not give husbands permission to demand submission from their wives. Instead, choosing submission becomes the sole responsibility of the wife. Wives choose to be submissive because Jesus asks them to.

Husbands, I think, live under an even more difficult directive. ***"Husbands,"*** Paul writes, ***"love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."*** As a husband my most essential task is to love my wife sacrificially. The choice to love sacrificially is my responsibility just as submission is Gloria's. She chooses submission and I choose sacrificial love because our Lord commands us to. And why does Jesus command us to make these choices in marriage? He makes these commands because they are fundamental to successful marriages and like all relationships, marriages matter to the Father.



From the Father's perspective unity is essential in all relationships and learning to submit to one another is key to our ability to achieve and maintain unity. Making our relationships work in the church and in our marriages reflects well on the Father and letting them splinter makes us look like anything but his "...*children of light.*" M