

**His Family and Your Family**  
**Ephesians 5:1-21**  
**April 20, 2007**  
**FBC Waynesboro**  
**Second in Series: His, Hers, and Ours**

Paul absolutely loved order. It was the key word for him in addressing all the issues that he faced in the chaos of the church in Corinth. He gave attention to issue after issue after issue, at the end of which he spoke this summary sentence, “let all things be done decently and in order.” But before we interpret this word “order” through our own sinful structures: it means formality to some, it means the repetition of ritual to others, it means rigid routine to still others and it may even mean unchanging tradition to some. It meant of these things to Paul. The word that he used literally means “under authority.” He knew that the ultimate authority is God who by His Spirit and through His Word has established the way He wants things done. We do not establish order. It has been established by God. We simply submit our lives to that which God has already established and the result is lives that are well-ordered.

I began this week clearly committed to talking today about the relationship of husbands to wives from the latter half of this chapter. As I began to study this week, God changed my mind. Let me share with you what He showed me. Teaching chapter five, verses 22-33 is out of order if they are not rooted and grounded in the first twenty-one verses. So, I began to spend a lot of time on these verses and then it became very clear to me why it was that God was changing my mind. The six chapters of this whole letter are all about God’s order that He has established. Remember that a key verse is 1:10. God is working in the world through His people in the pursuit of His purpose to bring all things in subjection to Him for His glory. And the primary place in which, through which and for which God is working is the church 1:22-23. For the first place of priority for the people of God is the church that consists of believers who come together in a body to engage in the worship of God, to do the work of God from which we go forth to our families and our world to bear witness to God.

Chapter two teaches us about who is in the church, those who have been saved by grace through faith in whom and through whom the works of God are being done, 2:10. Listen to how this marvelous chapter concludes, 2:19-21. Chapter three is all about the center of the life of the church which is the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ that has saved us and secured us of which we are the servants and for which we suffer in this world. Now look at the beginning of

chapter four: we are called to a lifestyle that is worthy of our calling that is first seen in our understanding of the biblical organization of the church, 4:11-16. And in order for us to be the church that God has called us to be, we must receive the teaching of the Word of God that energizes and equips us and be enabled by the Spirit of God to be in this unending process of putting off the old way of living which is in our flesh and fueled by the world and putting on this new way of living, 4:17-32. And all of this is worthy of days of diligent detailed study. The first four chapters of Ephesians are all about our priority relationship as the people of God, about what is first and foremost for us as the people of God and that is our living out the life of the Gospel in and through the church. And the first twenty-one verses of chapter five give us ten principles for doing this.

It is only then in 5:22 that Paul turns to the family. Why here? Why now? Because of order. Paul knew what we have forgotten and all but forsaken. For the believer, the body of Christ is foundational for it is here that the base is built for life in the home and life in the world. Get this out of order and our families will falter because we will not know how to function as the faithful in the world and will thus find ourselves functioning in the way the world functions while we are in it which leads to dysfunction in our families and disappointment in our churches particularly if they are holding tenaciously to the absolute truth of the Word of God. Paul makes it plain in Ephesians: a real relationship with God through Christ leads us to the faithful investment and involvement of our lives in the church which becomes the foundation for functional families that are able to have a vital and victorious impact on the world which Paul addresses in Ephesians 6:10ff. by showing us that it is warfare when we go to the world, and if the other is out of order, the world is going to win.

This is big. And I want you to pray for me that I am wrong, dead wrong; about what I am seeing and sensing in our day in our culture in the church, even in this one. I have never wanted to be more wrong about something than I want to be wrong about this one, but this is what I see and sense. We are seriously out of order. We have made our families first and it is worse than that. It is not husbands who are making wives first and wives who are making husbands first; it is children who are now first. Life in most of our families revolves around the children. It is a great day from the perspective of the flesh to be a child, because we have bought into the self-determined, self-directed, self-developed life so that we want children to succeed at everything and in every way, and beyond that we want them to be happy, so we ask them what they want to do and we pursue that with them and for them. I talked to a parent recently who told me that they had not been in church because their children just weren't happy in church and didn't want to come on

Sunday. I talked to another who told me that their child wasn't happy here and they were going to probably look for another church. So, we've put family first and even in the family we have it messed up according to biblical standards which is the only ultimate authority I recognize. And this is what is getting me: from this perspective of family first and wanting our children to be happy we pursue what will make them happy IN THE WORLD. Now let's be clear about the what the world is; it is whatever you and I are involved in that carries little or no eternal value. And when we spend as much time, energy and money in those activities that have no eternal value as we do in church, guess who or what is controlling our lives. And the more you are in that environment with a family first mentality, the more you will be disinclined to this one. This is what I see: we have come to the place where family is first and we go to the world where we can pursue those things that make us happy and we come to church to satisfy the religious requirement of our lives but it is by no means either first, fundamental or foundational.

Paul would say that we are out of order. And that talking to husbands and wives or parents and children is non-productive until we get our lives in order with our relationship to Jesus revealed in the active investment of our lives in the church as a non-negotiable foundation. He would know this both as a Christian Preacher and as a faithful Jew where the call to observe the Sabbath precedes to call to honor father and mother. That is why we must hear the first twenty-one verses of chapter five before we can hear the rest. It is the cornerstone for all that follows. We have here ten principles for life in the church that revolve around one word repeated in three contexts. Let's look first at the one word and the three contexts and then let me just give you very briefly the ten principles.

The word is "peripatew." It is a combination word that means "to walk about or to walk around." It has to do with the conduct of our lives. Paul proclaims in all of his letters that our character is revealed by our conduct. We and others can know who we are by how we act. Our conduct reveals our commitment. Our actions in relationship to one another reveal our attitude toward Christ. It is one reason that some churches cannot and should not be taken seriously as churches. Phil Waldrep in his book on parenting prodigals says that of the thirty prodigals he interviewed all of them had one thing in common: their distaste for the church grew up out of a Baptist Business Meeting. Believe me, those times show our hearts.

Paul says that as believers we are to walk about in love, 5:1. We are to walk about in light, 5:8 and we are to walk about in wisdom, 5:15. We are to be

committed to God, we are to communicate the glory of God in the Gospel of Jesus and we are to conduct our lives in accordance with the teachings of the Word of God. Now in the context of walking in love, walking in light and walking in wisdom, God gives us ten principles for the way we are to live out our lives in the church. These serve as the foundation for how we are to be in relationship to one another in the family. I want us to be clear about this one: it is not what you do at home that shapes what you do at church; it is what you do at church that shapes what you do at home so that if there is a disconnect between church and home it is far worse than hypocrisy, it is bordering on blasphemy.

One, mimic God, 5:1. We have been loved by God. Now if that does not stun you and startle you, you have too low view of God and too high view of yourself. That God loves us ought to shock us and surprise us every time we hear it. He who has no reason rooted in us to love us, loves us for His own sake and that love cost Him the life of His dear son. There is nothing lovely in us and He loved us still. Mimic God. Two, Walk about in love, 5:2. Look what Paul does here; it is what John does in 1 John. I don't know whether Paul knew that there would come a time when love would be so misunderstood, but God knew. So, the love that God has for us and that we are to have for Him and for each other in the church is explained. It is the kind of love that Christ has for us. It is self-denying, sacrificial, substitutionary love. It is love that does what God desires and demands even when it does not delight our sensibilities to do so. What you do with your family on the Lord's Day in relationship to the Lord's House shows how much you love God and how much you love them. Genuine love gives itself to the Word of God and the way of God even when it doesn't make us happy to do so. Third, Flee idolatry, 5:3-5. Now I want you to tell me what we do when we don't want to hear this second principle as the Truth of God; This text tells us. We want to hold on to God so we create for ourselves a "god" of our own making, 5. What are the signs in a society that we have done this, that we have made for ourselves an idol and abandoned the Lord God Almighty, the only true God.

Let me show you what this text says literally. The first word in verse 3 is "porneia." It covers every form of sexual immorality which is any kind of sexual activity which is not heterosexual sexual activity in the context and confines of marriage. But where does this kind of sexual immorality come from? It comes from impurity in our hearts because of greed. Well, where does this greed come from? It comes from living in and being inundated by a culture that communicates that having our desires fulfilled, wishes granted, dreams fulfilled, and ambitions realized is what life is all about. Live in that culture long enough and listen to its message without a foundation in the church of God communicating the truth of

God and you will begin to believe it while believing that you are still a believer because you have abandoned the holy God for a god of your own choosing. Paul is talking to some who are thinking that way and he reminds them in verse 4 that it is obscene, foolish, even a cruel joke to think this way. Then he drives home the conclusion in verse 5.

This is as far as I want to go today. This is heavy material and I know that. But it is critical for us in this church and in our families in these days. I see struggling marriages and hurting families. I don't have the remedy, but God does. And it begins with our getting our lives in order. Dads, Moms; would you today look at the order in your home. Can you say that listening to the Word of God and gathering for the worship of God with the people of God in this place is our priority every weekend? It is what we build our week around? If not, why not? If there is something else then is it something that has eternal value at least equivalent to what goes on here? Let me close with a very personal note. I have to be cautious to be basically biblical in teaching this material and not to be overly personal. I did not grow up in the church. I grew up in the world. My father did not take me to bars; he didn't even drink and disdained who those who did. He was a faithful husband to my mother. We went to ball games in the Fall every Friday night, Saturday and sometimes on Saturday night. We hung out on Sunday. We travelled every weekend during the summer and the winter. By the time he died I had been enough times to Gatlinburg, Cherokee, and Myrtle Beach that I could get to all three without a map. But only once or twice a year did he take me to church. I learned to love Georgia football and fall foliage but I learned nothing about Jesus. When he died, I had nothing under me to sustain so I turned to alcohol and except for the grace of God sending a youth minister in my life who loved me to Jesus, I perhaps would have never known him. My father gave me all the world had to offer and nothing of Jesus. What are you giving your family?