

February 29, 2016

## ***Jesus and His Church***

***"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better..."***

***"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household..."***

***"...live a life worth of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith..."***

***"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."***

***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord...Fathers, do not exasperate you children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."***

***"Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ...masters treat you slaves in the same way..."***  
Ephesians 1:17-6:9

As we have often said, if we choose to follow Jesus then our lives must become all about the relationships. This concept resonates through Paul's letter to the believers in Ephesus. He begins in the first chapter with an encouragement for us to know God better. He reminds us that God's grace in Jesus is intended to bring all of us into his very. He calls on the body of believers to make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Beginning in chapter five the Apostle shows husbands and wives how to become one, children and fathers how to bring unity to the family, and he even addresses workplace relationships between slaves and masters. It is if we understand Paul's message at all, all about the relationships, but there is a bit more to it than just focusing on relationships.

When we read Scripture we often understand the commandments that we receive in as requiring group responses. We think of Paul's commands in this letter as being group directed; the church should work to know God better, the church should work at unity, the church should...



All of the Apostle's commands in this letter, and, for that matter, nearly all of the commands that we receive in the entire New Testament, need, I believe, to be understood and applied personally. God wants me to work at knowing and understanding him better. He wants me to personally make every effort to preserve unity of the Spirit in the body of believers, he wants me to be the husband who loves his wife as Christ loves the church, he wants me to be the father who brings up his children in the Lord, and he wants me to be an obedient employee and a he wants me to be a good employer.

The relationships that we are a part of from the one with God to the ones in our work places are up to us and we are responsible for being the right kind of person in every one of them. To do this I am convinced we need to view our role differently than most of us do. We tend, I

think, to make our choices about relationships dependent on how others behave. For believers, choices about how to relate to others are our personal and individual responsibility. They are never dependent.

So, my relationship with the Father is my personal responsibility. I am either closely connected to him or I am not. My relationship with the body of believers is the same. I am either very connected with them or I am not. In the family the same thing is true. Wives need to see the choice to submit as being entirely theirs. Of course, it is easier to submit to a husband who sacrificially loves, but it cannot be dependent on that. Husbands face the same kind of choice. Their choice to love sacrificially is not dependent on their wives submissiveness. Children need to choose obedience even if their fathers are not perfect, and so on.

My task in every relationship, from my relationship with the Father to my relationships at work, is my soul responsibility. The Father, speaking to us through the Apostle, makes it abundantly clear that relationships are hugely important to him. We need to make them just as important to us. So, what are your relationship choices?