

EPHESIANS

21. GOD'S TEST TUBES EPHESIANS 5:21-6:9

In the later parts of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul shows us what trusting and following Jesus practically looks like in various relational scenarios. Paul takes most of his words from the previous weeks and moves them into the real world. As we explore these things and gain more clarity, our lives begin to change as a deeper understanding of God dawns on us.

- ♦ **Are there things you still find confusing about the book of Ephesians?**
- ♦ **What truths from Ephesians have you been intentional about applying to your relationships/everyday life?**

Living a spiritually renewed life means there are times we have to “swim upstream” as we learn what honors God in the day to day. A Gospel paradigm transforms relationships so that they should look different than those in the world.

Paul addresses the three most common spheres of our lives: **Marriage, Family, and Work.**

- ♦ **How have you learned about God and been made more like Him through your own relationships?**

Remember, *God's main purpose for us is Christ-likeness*; we are called to imitate Him and resemble Him as His sons and daughters. *God is sovereign and He uses all things in our lives for His purpose.* Paul applies these two truths to our relationships and shows us that in the most basic of human relationships, God is sovereignly at work.

- ♦ **Where do you long to be made more like Jesus?**

Paul starts by telling us to *'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ' (Eph 5:21)*. Paul has been reminding us that *self-centeredness is the main problem in any relationship.*

- ♦ **How have you seen self-centeredness and power struggles destroy relationships?**
- ♦ **Has God revealed any self-centeredness in you recently?**

Marriage – Read Ephesians 5:22-33.

1. **In marriage we see a taste of the beauty of God.**

That doesn't mean you have to BE married to understand it! C.S. Lewis wrote, *“Being in love is a good thing, but it is not the best thing. There are many things below it, but there are also things above it. You cannot make it the basis of a whole life.”* That love is a shadow, but the reality it points to is God's love.

2. **Part of the reason men and women were created differently was to reveal the complementary aspects of the image of God.**

When we tear down distinctions, we remove something important God intended to use to teach us about **Himself**—a respect for the design of who we are and who God is.

3. **The forgiveness required in marriage is a taste of the grace of God.**

Jesus; He changes us by absorbing the effects of sin onto Himself. God uses marriage to put us in a relationship where we can give that kind of grace and experience that kind of grace in return.

- ♦ **If you are married, how has your marriage (the highs and lows) deepened your understanding of the Gospel?**
- ♦ **If you are single, how have other marriages (the highs and lows), deepened your understanding of the Gospel?**

Family – Read Ephesians 6:1-4.

1. **A child's relationship to their parent(s) teaches them about the authority of God.**

2. **Parents, your child learns to submit to God by submitting to you**

You are like the training wheels; we are called to love and guide children like God does.

- ♦ **How has the Gospel shaped your relationship(s) with your own parent(s)/caregiver(s)?**
- ♦ **If you have children, how has the Gospel shaped your parenting approach?**

Work – Read Ephesians 6:5-9.

Paul is not addressing the social system; he's acknowledging the reality—right or wrong—and telling us about God's purposes for us. **God uses our work relationships to teach us to work wholeheartedly for Him.**

- ♦ **How does Paul subvert the power imbalances of his day by bringing honor and dignity to all?**

All of our relationships are given to us to teach us about God and remind us that *self-centeredness is the main problem in any relationship.* God can and will teach us that in any and every relationship, we can live with and for Him, to learn about Him as we bring Him glory.