

Sermon for Sunday, July 29, 1979, by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
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"GOD'S GLUE FOR FRACTURED FAMILIES - II"

Ephesians 5:21 - 6:4

Text: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Ephesians 5:21

Today is the second in our series on God's Glue for Fractured Families. In the beginning, let me remind us of several thoughts from last week that we need to keep in mind as we think about the important subject of the family. We dealt with the question of whether or not what the Bible says about the family, about the relationship of husband and wife, of parents and children, is valid today, or, is it simply a reflection of the social and cultural conditions of the time in which it was written? We concluded that the Bible - the whole Bible - is God's authority and God's word for us. It is truth that was truth yesterday, it is truth for today, and it will be truth for the future. Now, it is true that God's truth can be misunderstood and misapplied, but that doesn't change God's truth from being true. For example, last week I indicated there were three basic elements to God's glue: Rule, Relationship, and Role. I also said that these three are of such a whole that one of them apart from the other two is not the whole truth. Thus, I know of many men who take the biblical idea that man is head of the house and elevate that above the other two parts of God's truth. And when a man does that, he has hold of only partial truth - incomplete truth. So, last week, when I said God's order for the home is for man to be the head of the house, I warned all of us that wasn't the whole truth. It is only a part of it. (Because of that, I gave the wives permission to smite their husbands with the whole Bible if the men started ordering them around. I have noticed one of my young Deacons walking around this week with a black eye and seven stitches, but I do not know if there is any connection!)

I tried to explain as best I could why the home must have an order. You couldn't drive home from church this morning if we didn't have the order of traffic laws. Nations must have the order of government, businesses must have the order of management, the legal system must have the order of the law. So God gives us an order for the Christian home and that order is that the husband is the head of the home.

So last Sunday, I said I believed the Bible was true about God's word for the home, and I said that I believed God's order for the home is just what the Bible says, the man is the head of the house. And I went on to say that true freedom for every individual occurs within the framework of order. I used the illustration of the prodigal son who wanted to be free of order, only to discover that with no order in his life he ended up broke, desperately hungry, living with the pigs. It was a sader and much wiser young man who went home again to put himself back under the discipline and structure of order and said to his father, "I am no longer worthy to be a son, make me as one of your hired hands."

Now, there is one other thing I said last Sunday that I want to remind you of. God's rule for the home has nothing to do with relative importance. That is to say, the fact that man's role (and next week I'll talk about roles in the family) is to be the head of the home doesn't mean he is relatively more important than anyone else. The Bible tells us there is no longer male and female in that sense. As Paul said in Ephesians 6:9, "God is no respecter of persons." The husband is not better than the wife because of God's order of rule for the home.

So, today I want to talk about the second part of God's glue for fractured families. Oh, there are so many divorces today - there are so many children being raised in one-parent homes. And there are so many homes where there is tension and bitterness and shouting and quarreling and harshness and unhappiness. If only families would take God's glue, so many of those fractured and fracturing families could be put back together, could be healed, could be glued together again.

The second part of God's glue for fractured families is Relationship. The key to the kind of relationship God is talking about here is spelled out in our text. There we read, "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Do you know the biggest problem I run into in marriage counseling? Husband and wife don't even treat each other with the same courtesy and respect they do absolute strangers. Now, St. Peter and St. Paul both tell us that in the pagan world of their day, men treated women badly and people treated people badly. But the Bible says we are to be in subjection to one another - and the Greek word there literally means to "stand under". Do you remember what I Peter 5:5 says? It reads, "...clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Notice that our text says husband and wife are to be in subjection to one another out of reverence for Christ. Isn't that interesting? But what does it mean? Doesn't it mean that for two Christians married to each other, Christ is in the life and heart of each? Therefore, we ought to recognize and honor the Jesus in the life of the person closest to us.

Had you ever thought of that? You husbands, your Christian wife has Jesus in her heart. And while he controls her life imperfectly and the image of him is often distorted, still it is Jesus in her heart. Would you treat Jesus with a lack of courtesy and disrespect? By the same token, you women, do you not know that your Christian husband has Jesus in his heart? And while it is true Jesus does not always control your husband's will, while it is true the picture you see in your husband of the face of Jesus is dim and sometimes blurred, still Jesus is there. So we ought to treat one another as we would treat Jesus. Husband, your wife may be a poor reflection of Jesus, but I want you to know he loves and cherishes her. He wants you to feel the same way about her. Wife, your husband may be a poor example of what Jesus wants him to be, but I tell you Jesus went to the cross to die for your husband. Had he been the only person in the whole world, still he would have shed his blood, that your husband might be saved. He wants you to love him the same way. So also for the relation of parents to children and children to parents. You young people, do you know what the Bible says about your relationship to mom and dad? It says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." (Eph. 6:1) And do you know what I think that means? First, I think that in the Lord's order for the home you are under your parents and should be obedient. But second, I believe when the scripture says "obey your parents in the Lord", it means to be submissive, to honor, to reverence, to give homage to the Lord that is in them. And I know your parents are not always like Jesus - and neither are you. But every family member ought to be in subjection to one another - that is, to give them honor and courtesy and respect and love because of the Jesus in the heart, no matter how faintly or dimly he may be seen.

Do you know what usually goes wrong in a family? Well, let me share with you the nature of family failure. An individual, or more than one - and that includes children and young people - begin to develop a spirit of self-assertion, an attitude of jealousy, claiming one's rights, demanding one's privileges. That means people begin to put self at the center of life. Unfortunately, this is an attitude of "me-ism" that is developing in our world today. We hear it said, "if it feels good, do it." We even have an advertisement for a luxury car that claims we owe it to ourselves to own that luxury. Now, that is self-centeredness. That is the way of the world. That is the way of lost man. But it is exactly the antithesis - it is the exact opposite - of the Christian concept of being in subjection to one another. As one writer has put it, "the spirit of mutual subjection is cardinal (and that doesn't mean the baseball or the football team!) - the spirit of mutual subjection is cardinal (it is central, it is principal, it is at the heart of) the whole Christian concept of social relations - especially in marriage."

So, when the Bible says that God's order for the home is that the husband is the head of the house, it certainly doesn't mean the husband is better than any other family member. It just means that every organization has to have order and structure, and the husband as head of the home is God's choice, God's rule for the home.

You husbands, authority is not the authority of tyranny. Authority does not assert itself without seeing Jesus in others, and honoring them for it. Authority does not ignore full respect for the personhood of others.

Our Scripture for today says, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her." That means the husband who loves his wife that way, no matter how patriarchal he may be or how much authority he may have in the home will submit himself, as one writer puts it, to the "unlordly" things of the home like helping with the dishes, or the cleaning, or the children, or whatever. You men, listen to me, you may find in some literature somewhere justification for treating your wife as a second-rate human being who should be at your beck and call, but I guarantee you one thing: you will not find it in the New Testament!

Now, this morning, I have been talking about the second part of God's glue that can hold fractured families together. The first part of the glue is God's order for the home, the Rule of the home. The second part of God's glue is relationships. Today I have tended to focus more on the relationship that the husband should have to the wife. Next Sunday, I'll talk more about the woman being in subjection to her husband and perhaps about what it means for children to be in subjection to parents. Later on, I'll be talking about roles in the home. But today I wanted to get quickly to the relationship of the husband because I wanted that understood before too much damage was done because last Sunday I said he was to be the head of the house!

With that in mind, let me close with one sober thought which I direct principally to you husbands and to you young men who will one day likely be husbands. Over in I Peter, chapter three, St. Peter talks a great deal about family relationships. He makes one statement about how the husband should treat the wife that I want to share with you. Now, here is the verse from I Peter 3:7. "Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered." Notice the two words "considerately" and "honor". Now, let me add parenthetically something about that phrase "the weaker sex". Obviously St. Peter is talking simply about physical strength. And while many modern women object strenuously to it, the fact is, generally speaking, in a physical sense, man is stronger than woman and she is in that sense (and by the way, that is not derogatory) the weaker sex. So St. Peter says to be considerate and to honor your wife. Do you do that? Are you really and truly considerate and thoughtful, do you honor her and show her respect and courtesy? You can't really answer that question, but let me suggest that when you go home, ask your wife if you do. If she is honest and tells you "no", then in a humble spirit, ask her to help you find ways and to show you ways to be considerate and how to show her honor.

There is a reason you ought to do that. Let me confess I was never aware of that reason until I was working on this sermon. You see, I have read that passage many times, but there was something there I just didn't catch, or didn't see or it didn't come home to me before. But the reason you should show consideration and honor is because if you don't there is a penalty attached to it. It is a spiritual penalty. You see, the passage says to show consideration and honor, and I quote, "that your prayers may not be hindered."

