

Dr. Judy Paulsen, Wycliffe College Toronto July 29th

Title of sermon: Allowing Scripture to Read Us

When we read Scripture, we read it through the lens of her own experience and some of what we read may seem irrelevant. Commands such as “slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling” don’t appear to have relevance to us today and so we may miss the greater significance of what is being said. So, Dr. Paulsen’s challenge to us was to “let Scripture read us”. As Christians, we believe the Bible is God’s message... His word... to humanity and so this message should read into our lives unlike any other. We need to take God’s word seriously and use the best of our abilities to understand the deep meaning of each text and find the message that God wants to speak to us.

Dr. Paulson illustrated from the passage from Ephesians 6, which speaks to relations with children, parents, slaves and slave masters. At the heart of the message is that all of our relationships are under His authority and if we place them there, it is life-giving for us and for others.

However, as human beings we want to have sole authority over our own relationships and as a consequence, we generally mess up. The Bible describes 4000 years of messed up relationships within and between families, including murder, incest, abuse and adultery. These are the consequences of not allowing God to direct our parenting, our marriages, our work relationships and our friendships

God wants to be involved in every one of our relationships. As a community of faith, the church can learn what this looks like and how to place ourselves under God’s authority. Although the world defines success and worth for us and tells us to “look out for number one”, Jesus says love others as you love yourself, seek good for those that hate you, pray for your enemies, pay back evil with good. So, as individual humans and as a church we need to “grow up into the full stature of Christ”. To do so, we need to read, learn and inwardly digest Scripture “to be a people who, empowered by God, put more of our relationships under His authority”

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Reading the Bible today through our own lens of experience may cause us to think that much of scripture is irrelevant. For example, when Ephesians 6 speaks to “slaves obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling”, we see no relevance to our current lives. However, if we allow Scripture to “read us”, we will see that the text is really directing us to place all of our relationships under God’s authority. Individually and as a community of faith, we can learn to place ourselves under God’s authority and grow into the full stature of Christ. But to do so we need to read, learn and inwardly digest Scripture.

