

Lake Joseph Community Church July 29, 2018.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise),” that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ. Ephes. 6:1-5

Allowing Scripture to Read Us (& Our Relationships)

As the preacher today I think it’s best to admit right up front that today’s Scripture reading, with its instruction to children, fathers, slaves and slave masters initially left me with the following reaction ho hum:

- My kids are all grown up.
- My parents passed away years ago.
- I have neither been a slave nor owned one.

I might well say, this passage has very little to do with my life.

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This is often our approach to Scripture isn’t it? ... we read it through the lens of our own experience, and if we don’t see a match-up we tune it out, as ‘not applying to my situation’.

We read scripture this way because that’s how we read all the other truckload of print we’re faced with each day Looking for what does or does not ‘apply to us’.

As Christians though, I’d like to convince you today that to read *Scripture* like this is a sure-fire way to miss it’s significance, and more importantly it’s power, in your life.

Instead of us reading Scripture, We need to let Scripture read us. What do I mean when I say that?

As Christians we believe that the Bible is more than a collection of ancient writings.

We believe that, taken in its entirety, it is God's *message ... his word ...* to humanity.

The writer of the NT book of Hebrews wrote this about God's word "It is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."
(Hebrews 4:12)

If the One we've come to worship today is truly the Living God ... the source of reality itselfthe One Being who speaks out of perfect wisdom And who alone knows everything that can be known about us.

If *that's* the God we're talking about and *this is his message* to humanity, then it changes everything.

Then, we read Scripture not as just another book that might or might not apply. We read it with the expectation that it has something critical to say to us.

That it *reads into our lives a message* that is unlike any other.

- This doesn't mean we don't recognize that God used people to write the Bible
- It doesn't mean we force every bit of it into a literalistic box.
- It doesn't mean we ignore the cultural context it was written in. Quite the opposite.

Taking God's word seriously means we use the *very best* of our scholarship to plumb the deep meaning of each text.

But taking God's word seriously means we read this book *differently* than we read anything else.

We don't just read it We allow it to read us.

We look for the message that God wants to speak to us, as his human creatures, and as His people.

So even if a particular passage *seems* to have very little to do with my personal lifeI can approach the text with the expectation that God wants to speak to me through it.

So back to our passage for today.

What does this passage from Ephesians 6 have to say to people that have no children, or whose parents have passed on, or who have nothing to do with slaves or masters?

At the heart of this passage is the idea that as children of God, all our relationships are rightfully under His authority, and when we place them there it's life-giving for us and others.

But this is not our *natural* human bent is it?

It's not our natural bent to place either ourselves or the relationships we're in under anyone's authority but our own.

- We don't want anyone telling us we shouldn't be rude at the Tim Horton's drive-through when they so obviously got our order wrong
- We don't want anyone telling us to reach out to that person in the office that everyone else avoids like the plague
- We don't want to be told we bear some responsibility for our neighbour

As human beings we want to be the sole authority over our relationships.

This has always been the way (at least since very early in human existence) And the devastating results are recorded in the earliest chapters of Genesis, and are still all around us today.

Relationally, we're a mess! And there is small comfort in the fact that this has been true since nearly the beginning.

You only have to take a look back to the lives of those people now called the Patriarchs To events dating back 4,000 years to see that we humans have pretty much always been a mess relationally.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob And their respective families, were just as screwed up as families today. And it carries on throughout the history of ancient Israel.

Whenever they veered away from God's authority Whenever they tried to manipulate relationships to their particular advantage.... Havoc was the result.

You've got brothers cheating brothers, and sons lying to fathers.

You've got mother's scheming, and daughters deceiving.

You've got murder, incest, prostitution, abuse, & adultery.

The only comfort for us is that we can honestly say, 'We're no worse than they were', when it comes to relationships.

Whenever, as human beings, we fail to bring our relationships under the authority of God We mess up.

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But what happens when we do allow God to direct our parenting, our marriages, our work relationships, our friendships? What then?

Well, although we're never perfect at it when we change our own behaviour to be in-line with God's ways extraordinary things happen.

I have a friend whose marriage went through a very rocky period a couple of years ago. In the midst of that crisis, she and her husband came to realize that although they were Christians they had never really allowed God to have any authority over their relationship with each other.

She realized that passages of Scripture about husbands and wives loving and respecting each other, hadn't really been lived-out on the ground in their marriage. They had to both commit to some deep soul-searching and hard work to learn new

ways of relating. This is not always possible for couples as it really does mean both people have to really commit to new ways. But in this couple's case they *were* able to build a much stronger marriage.

What about the other relationships in our lives? Have we asked God to direct us in our relationship with our boss, our employees, our friends?

The truth is, that although it's rarely a straight line without any bumps or wrinkles When we put relationships under God's authority, as Scripture shows us how to do It's life-giving.

When we allow scriptures like today's scripture to read us We see things in our own lives that need to change.

For instance, we see that although we may not be children There are people in our lives that we need to learn to obey.

We may no longer have our parents with us But we have elders around us who God wants us to treat with special honour.

We no longer operate in a culture that condones slavery (thank goodness) But we can all work with greater honesty and diligence in the workplace. We can all treat our colleagues and those under our authority with respect and dignity.

Plainly put God wants in to our relationships.

The reason for that is He wants to bring life. And this life lives itself out in very practical ways: hospitality among neighbours, less workplace theft, better employee pensions, faith shared with long-time friends..

So what relationships does God want in on? Every single one.

This is where the church comes in.

It is together, as a community of faith, that we learn what this looks like, and how to do it.

As we learn together to walk in the ways of Jesus We learn to treat people differently, whether:

- the Tim Horton's server
- our husband or wife, or
- the office misfit

One of the first names Christians were given was people of The Way. That's because as members of the Christian community we are learning to walk in Jesus' way.

The world around us gives us certain definitions of success and worth ... Jesus gives us very different ones.

- The world around us tells us to 'look out for number one', never show your weakness, pay back evil with evil.
- Jesus says love others as you love yourself, seek good for those that hate you, pray for your enemies, pay back evil with good.

There is no rule book big enough to cover every relationship we encounter in life.

What we need is to be shaped into people of a certain character.

Scripture actually describes this character ...as 'growing up into the full stature of Christ'. In other words, becoming Christ-like.

Why read, mark, learn and inwardly digest Scripture?

To be a People who, empowered by God, put more and more of our relationships under His authority.