

Living God's Way in Our Relationships

DARRELL DELANEY

There is a book called *How Now Shall We Live?* By Charles Colson. In the book, he explains how we are to look at this world's patterns and find them to be bankrupt, and see what God teaches about how we ought to live. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we are going to look at what God wants us to do in very specific and practical aspects of life. Now that we understand our identity and purpose as laid out to us by the book of Ephesians, Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, will teach us how to live. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in part five of our six-part series, and I have been enjoying myself. We have learned a lot of things about how Christ has set our identity in him, and he has also coupled that with the fact that we have been saved by grace through faith. That is not a cliché, like you said in an earlier episode, but it is a blessed truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And also in this series on Ephesians we have seen that God has torn down the wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles—torn down all the dividing walls of hostility among and between people, and he has formed a new humanity in Christ and his work finished on the cross; and as Paul brings this epistle—this letter—in for a landing...and today we are going to be in the last part of Chapter 5 and the first part of Chapter 6...he is going to get very, very practical. He is going to lay a foundation for believers in terms of their identity and their purpose and how they are to live.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, for those of you who think that the Bible has nothing to say about specific aspects of life or relationships with family or wider society, I need you to buckle up and pay attention because Paul is about to clarify what we ought to live like, and how we should represent God in these next verses.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and I think it was Martin Luther or somebody who in German used to call these passages sort of the *Haustafeln*. You know, sort of house rules. This is how we are to behave at home. Here is Ephesians 5, and we are going to start at verse 21: Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²²Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of water through the Word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

DARRELL DELANEY

²⁹After all, no one has ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body just as Christ does the Church—³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³²This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the Church. ³³However, each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

So, we see here, Scott, that Paul is going right in and explaining how the relationship between the husband and the wife should be. Now, as a pastor, I have had these topics come up, not only in marriage counseling, but on the big day itself; and people are really trying to understand: What is God teaching with these concepts? We have seen the world use them in ways that were not very healthy.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, sometimes we in the Church have used them in ways that are not really healthy either. First of all, it is so very important to remember so often people start reading at verse 22 with the word to wives, but 21 is the setup: Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. In other words, it is all about mutual submission: men, women, everybody submit to each other; and now, after Paul says that in verse 21, then he gets a little more specific: Okay, here is what this is going to mean. So, wives submit to your husbands, and so forth; but what always has struck me here, too, Darrell, is that if you actually look through the verses we just read there, 21 to 33, there is actually more directed to the husband than the wife, and historically you have to imagine that is because maybe husbands have had more problems with this, being domineering or unloving or whatever. Paul has more things to say to the husbands than he does to the wife; and above all, what he says is be like Christ, and we know what Christ did; he laid down his life, and that is what you have to do.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is really important for us to understand that there is an order to things that Paul is laying out here, but it is also important that it comes under the umbrella of mutual submission, like you said.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

I said this to my wife before we were married. I said: You know I am supposed to submit to you, and she had this puzzled look on her face because it had always been drilled to her: the woman submits, the woman submits; but it really is that we model submission to one another, and under that umbrella of mutual submission, these things happen in a very healthy way; but we have seen in situations where men have become dominating, but we have also seen where women kind of buck this submission thing because they think it is going to make them a doormat or make them just totally accommodating, and that is not what the Bible intends. If you are following the Spirit of God and if you are in mutual submission, you are able to serve one another in a way that cannot be possible when you are self-seeking.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you almost have to think Paul says here: Treat your wife as though she were your own body, men...

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so, you know, it is almost like...reading between the lines...it is like do you guys beat up your own body? Do you hit yourself in the jaw? Do you...? No; of course not.

DARRELL DELANEY

Of course not.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, don't do that to your wife, either. I mean, you know, I would imagine in the ancient world, as unfortunately today, abuse of women was probably common; and so, Paul is saying there is a reason not to do that; unless you are going to beat up your own body, don't beat up your wife. Treat her like she is your own body; and of course, it goes on: One flesh—you are one flesh. Your body is her body, her body is your body, and so forth and so on. It reminds me, Darrell, of the Trinity. What you basically have here...we have talked about this before, this whole concept of *perichoresis*, from which we get choreography. In the Eastern tradition of the Church, the three persons of the Trinity are constantly submitting to each other.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Constantly deferring to each other; it is just this endless dance of deferment. I have sometimes said, you know, every once in a while at a four-way stop all four cars will get there at once, and everybody is waving to the next person...everybody is waving to go; and then two people start going at once, and people laugh, you know. They are not mad. It is sort of like, you know, eventually somebody has got to go, but meanwhile, we are deferring to each other. I think that is the image Paul is setting here for marriage.

DARRELL DELANEY

Paul is actually the one who does a lot of different imagery, and at the end of these verses, he talks about how this is a profound mystery, and he is talking about Christ and the Church. The imagery of the marriage relationship, based on what you just said about perichoresis, is a good image that Paul is bringing in to help us understand how Christ is the groom and the Church is the bride, and that him laying down his life and all the instructions that go for the male in that relationship are the ones that Christ demonstrated so that he shows the model of what this actually looks like.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; in that famous image of the Church, we are all the bride...we are all the woman in the relationship with Jesus; and we know what Jesus did for us: he laid down his life, he went to the cross, as we covered earlier, he saved us by grace; that was all part of earlier in Ephesians in this series. So, this is all kind of hanging together. God is the one who initiates all this by grace; Jesus is the example for us to follow. In a good marriage, the husband and the wife are so busy laying down their lives for one another, and deferring to one another, and submitting to one another, as verse 21 says, that nobody has time to wonder who is the boss. Nobody is the boss...Jesus is the boss, okay?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We are here as mutual servants of Jesus, and in marriage we try to behave in Christlike ways.

DARRELL DELANEY

And these are things that cannot be done without the help of the Holy Spirit...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

This goes without saying; and in just a minute, we would like to talk about another place where Paul addresses in these tables, which is parenting. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

Scott Hoezee:

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney, and we are getting right back into this fifth episode of the series of Ephesians, and we are jumping in at the family level. We talked about marriage, and now we are going to talk about children and parents.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, this slides us into Ephesians 6, which is the final chapter of this letter, as we have divided it up.¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, this one, I have what is called an echo when I hear scriptures because they always remember there is another verse somewhere in the Bible that actually says this, and this one goes all the way back to the Ten Commandments. We did a series not too long ago on the Ten Commandments, and it talked about this fifth commandment, which is honor your mother and your father; and this verse says that it may go well with you in the land in which they were going, because they were getting ready to head into the Promised Land. There are some people who believe that the opposite is also true, that if you do not honor your parents, that it will not go well with you, and you will not live long in the land. What do you think about that, Scott? I don’t know if that is really accurate or biblical.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, it is interesting, because when we did the Ten Commandment series, on the fifth commandment, we noticed that Paul is the one who inserts “this is the first commandment with a promise.” At the time, we said: I think this is the only commandment with a promise...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I don’t think there are any other commandments that really have a promise connected with them, and one of the things we said was that in the context of Israel getting ready to go into the Canaan Promised Land, the family unit was the building block of society, is what God was saying, through that commandment. It is going to go better for you in this new land. It is going to go better for you personally; it is going to go better for you as families if we honor those in authority over us—honor our fathers and mothers. So, I mean, the Ten Commandments aim at building shalom; and so, what this is saying, and as Paul quotes the fifth commandment here, this is going to contribute to flourishing; this is going to contribute to delight. Life will work better if husbands and wives treat each other the way we just talked about in the first part of the program, and if children show due honor and respect as well.

DARRELL DELANEY

And one thing is for sure, that God wants this to be the natural order of things. As the husband submits to the Lord, the wife submits to the husband, the children submit to the parents, I think that that is the order that you are talking about, that will help build society in a healthy way and bring shalom. Also, I think that the word *honor* is important. In Hebrew it is *kavod*, and that means to bring weight to or glory to. So, when you give

someone honor, you put weight on their name. When God deserves all the glory, it means we are putting all the credit, all the weight into his name. If children obey their parents and honor them—they give the weight of respect to them—I think that it will go well with them in their lives as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Now, we should note pastorally, I think, that of course there is brokenness in our world; there are husbands and wives who don't treat each other the way Paul suggested at the end of Ephesians 5, and there are some fathers and some mothers who, in some ways, kind of forfeit their right to be respected because they are abusers or they are abusive, and we are going to get to that in just a minute. We should also note that these days there are lots of different configurations of families...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Blended families, adopted families, step families, and so forth; but the basic principles are meant to apply here, that if everybody is doing it right, if husbands and wives are treating each other right, and if mothers and fathers are treating their children right, and if there is no real good reason for kids to not respect their parents, then you do, no matter what: stepmother or stepfather, whoever it might be; you are still called to try to lean into these patterns, because again, they will contribute to flourishing.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is a good point. You are explaining that these places, even though they are more complex than they ever have been...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

They could be redemptive places as well if these principles are followed; but also, the next section talks about that the father should not exasperate the child. In the King James it says: Provoke not your children to wrath. What do you think that means?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Don't make them mad! Now, kids get mad sometimes for not very good reasons, but Paul is saying here...and again, we noted earlier that at the end of Chapter 5, Paul talks probably a little bit more to the husband than he does to the wife, because maybe men have had more problems in this area, and here he doesn't say anything to moms, but he says to fathers: Don't provoke your children to anger...don't exasperate them. I suppose there are lots of ways we could do that, right? I mean, there are good child-rearing techniques and bad ones. There are ones that make sense, and there are ones that are just kind of cruel and don't serve a better purpose, other than just sort of being punitive.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, you are talking about different parenting styles, and I was literally talking about this with our children not too long ago. There are authoritarian styles, where it is like do this because I said so...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it is more punitive and punishing, but then the authoritative style is more like, okay, this is the context where we are explaining things to you, we are firm; we are not going to just let you do whatever you want, but we also are loving you firmly and allowing you to understand the context for rules and consequences; and

so, I think that the parents are being instructed to be instructors, especially fathers in this situation. I have seen situations where kids have been left discouraged because the dad yelled or he just got really excited or frustrated to the point where this kid is crushed inside. I have seen the face of the child. He is crushed or she is crushed, and that has not built the child up, it actually leads to emotional problems that cannot be expressed in healthy ways later.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, I mean, if you tell your kids to clean up their toys and they don't do it, well, that is frustrating, and you need to talk to them and you need to teach them about taking responsibility; but if your response to that is to take all their toys away, lock them in a closet and say: You don't get them for a week; that is not going to serve a great purpose. It is just going to make the kids angry...it is going to make them, you know, resentful. I think that is why Paul is saying don't do that. Find better, more Christlike ways to teach your children. You do have to teach them. We all know that. Kids need instruction. We don't come into the world doing it all right. Certainly not in our fallen world. So, be smart about how you raise your kids, is what Paul is saying here; and don't do it in ways that are just going to, you know, mess them up; and again, if "because I said so" is the only explanation you can ever give as to why you are instructing your children, that is not good enough. Kids don't think it is good enough, and in this case they are right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Paul is making clear that as fathers we have an opportunity to gently instruct our children. It doesn't mean that we are being loosey-goosey and let them do whatever they want to do; but when we do this well, with the Spirit of God helping us, and with other men who have experience, then we get to live out our name, which is *gentlemen*. We are called gentlemen for a reason. We have to have the strength to crush the bird but not crush the bird. We hold it gently, and that is the heart of our child. So, coming up in this next segment, we want to finish out this final episode by going to some practical applications that Paul has for us. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this fifth episode of a six-part series on Paul's letter to the Ephesians. We have been in the end of Ephesians 5, Darrell, where Paul has words of advice—*Haustafeln*—house rules for husbands and wives. Now we have slid into Chapter 6, which has some instructions for children, but also an instruction for fathers specifically, not to exasperate your children with bad parenting techniques; but then, Paul has one other thing he is going to say, and it is about a subject that is a little touchy and it can be controversial and that requires some careful treatment, and that is about masters and slaves.

DARRELL DELANEY

The master and slave relationship...so, before we go into these verses, can we just lay a little bit of understanding here. The master/slave relationship that Paul is talking about is something that was kind of commonplace in his day. This slavery that he has been addressing or he will address in these next verses is not the same as the chattel slavery that we have seen in the United States, that brings up these images of gruesome and grotesque brutality. It is not the same. It could be actually likened to indentured servitude, where you know, you go into debt, you get to work yourself out of the debt and then you are free. The Bible does say that the borrower is slave to the lender; but then, you could work your way out of that. So, it is not the same as what they experienced in Egypt; it is not the same as what we explained and understand in the United States. So, it is a different form, but it is a staple in this society, so Paul has to address it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and we can say a little bit more about that, but let's just hear these words a minute. This is Ephesians 6, starting at verse 5: Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not

people, ⁸because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. ⁹And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. So, once again, we see that Paul never just addresses half of the equation. He doesn't just address wives...husbands; not just children...fathers; not just slaves...masters.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, it is important for us to know that, number one, Paul is not trying to overthrow and be a revolutionary and turn this whole thing upside down, because this situation is a staple in the community and in the environment in which Paul finds himself; but even in those situations, there is a way to honor God in the situation. So, he is letting slaves know that if you serve your master, you are actually serving Christ—you are serving the Lord; and the Lord will help you with that, even if your master is mean, even if your master is unruly and unfair to you; but he also turns it on the other side and says: Masters, remember whose lordship you are under and remember that it is a privilege that you get. The point is, God shows no favoritism between you and your slave; and Paul will bring that illustration out when he comes into the new humanity; he talks about there is no difference between Jew or Gentile or slave or free, and we will talk about that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; but I also think...you know, I think it is absolutely right what you said a few moments ago, Darrell, that obviously however slavery functioned in Paul's day, it is not chattel slavery, it is not just enslaving one group of people...you know, Africans in the United States for instance; it is very different. That was a sinful form of slavery, and what happened to the Israelites in Egypt was a sinful form of slavery. There is a form of servanthood in Paul's day that he obviously doesn't think is sinful because he doesn't say so. You know, we did a series some while back on *Groundwork* on the very short letters...I think we called them the memos of the New Testament. One of them was Philemon, who had a runaway slave named Onesimus; and when Paul wrote Philemon, Paul doesn't say: Slavery is wrong and we should get rid of it; but if Philemon and Onesimus both did what Paul said, I think the master/slave relationship would end and they would be brothers...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Which is sort of what Paul encouraged. So, there is a sense in which, if you follow the trajectory of what Paul writes in the New Testament, even this kind of slavery, I think he was undercutting by suggesting: If you are both Christians, then that relationship is going to be so different, it really won't bear any resemblance to the secular master/slave relationship in the Roman Empire. It will become a loving, Christ-like relationship.

DARRELL DELANEY

Also, going back to the slavery that they had in this country, we have seen *these* verses used in a way that has been subjugating and trying to keep some sort of caste system...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

For selfish gain...for monetary gain...for power reasons; and it has been triggering and painful for some people of color to hear these verses because they know that it has been used in a way that is abusive and traumatizing. But I do know that is not what Paul or God intended for these verses, and I think that if we harken back to the beginning where we talked about the mutual submission, we would see that even masters are submitting to slaves...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is a radical concept for these people who are in Ephesus and the Roman Empire. Oh, I am a master and I am going to submit to my slave and he is going to submit to me and we are going to have this mutual submission; and I think that it is important that under the umbrella of humility and submission, these things can happen.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, I think that if Paul could have seen...in the United States for instance in the 19th Century...if Paul could have seen how his words here were used to prop up, in the Church, chattel slavery of black people in the United States, I think he would have been heartsick. He would have said: That is not what I meant at all. That is a misuse of what I wrote to the Ephesians, folks. That is *not at all* a Christlike institution; it is not a Christlike way to view other people, because, you know, Africans and black people were viewed as not quite human. Paul would say: In the new humanity, you are brothers...you are sisters. So, it is very, very clear here that Paul is saying: Whatever your role is in life, do it as though you were serving Jesus; and I think for all of us who are employees or whatever we do in life, we do it unto the Lord, and I think that is the main thing Paul has been saying all along.

DARRELL DELANEY

The Lord, out of mercy and grace, saved us and gave us a new status we didn't deserve; and now, we get to put off these old ways of life and live the new life that God has called us to; and that is something that we are going to do for the rest of our days, God helping us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we conclude our study of Ephesians with Paul's final encouragements to the Christians in Ephesus at the end of Ephesians 6.

Connect with us now at our website, groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you or tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

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