

Daily Readings

Please note: This week we look at making our families a place of blessing. These passages are recommended for your daily reading. Each of these passages deal with different aspects of offering God's blessing to those we love.

Monday, September 1 – Read *Ephesians 5:21*.

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” This is the key passage for our lives together. This is MUTUAL submission. Any one sided submission is destructive to all parties involved. Pray for guidance in how you can model mutual submission in your relationships. What three things can you do for the important individuals in your life?

Tuesday, September 2 – Read *Ephesians 5:22-33*.

Read this passage three times. Remember this passage is being written primarily for husbands. How can we live out the instructions for both the husband and wife in all our relationships? What does it look like for both the husband and wife to share leadership? What does it mean for us to love another person as our own bodies?

Wednesday, September 3 – Read *Ephesians 6:1-4*.

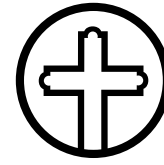
What does it mean when Paul says, *“Fathers, do not provoke our children to anger”*? Further, what does it mean when Paul says, *“bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”*?

Thursday, September 4 – Read *John 13:1-20*.

In this passage Jesus washes his disciple's feet. What would it mean for you to wash the feet of someone your care about? What would it mean for you wash the feet of those in your family? What would it mean for your family to wash each other's feet? If you feel comfortable with the idea, husbands and wives wash each other's feet as an example for your children. If you do not have children at home, wash each other's feet as a sign of mutual submission.

Friday, September 5 – Read *Philippians 4:10-14*.

Paul writes this letter from prison. He says, *“I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* What is it that makes Paul content in any circumstance? Can you fully rely on Christ in any circumstance? Identify five persons that would stand with you no matter what. Can you call them and say thanks?



TRIETSCH

August 31, 2008
Study Guide & Daily Readings

Family Ties (Week 3)

Discovering a God-Led Family Life **The Blessing**

Ephesians 5:21

The Word from the Bible version The New International Version

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

This passage of scripture, along with *Colossians 3:18-21*, is one of the most controversial passages for the Christian family. At first look, the passage seems to instruct the subservience of wives to their husbands. Some Christian groups still read this passage in this manner. Some more extreme groups believe women to be inferior to men. At the other end of the theological spectrum, Christian groups go so far as to ignore this passage or use it as a reason to dismiss other passages of Paul.

This scriptural view of marriage as servile submission is severely limited, missing the point and full intent of this passage and the broader message of Paul to love each other.

An understanding of this passage requires a fuller knowledge of scripture, the intention of the author, the audience to which it is written and the culture of the first century.

Scripture – In *1 Corinthians 7*, Paul addresses marriage. Here Paul speaks of mutual submission or a shared authority. Any understanding of *Ephesians* or *Colossians* needs to take into consideration all of Paul's comments on this subject.

Intention of the author – With regard to the marriage relationship, Paul addresses the traditional view of husband and wife. As declared in scripture (*Genesis 2:24*) husband and wife become one. *“One flesh”* which is found in many manuscripts, seems likely here because it is equated with the author's own theological idea of one body (*verses 28-29*). This leads the reader to understand marriage as a relationship where the differences between husband and wife are shared as one to create strength.

Culture - In the first century women were considered possessions to be obtained in arranged marriages. In extreme cases wives (particularly wives who had trouble having children) were considered to have less value than the livestock that could produce income. When Paul writes in verse 23, *“...the husband is the head of the wife...”* He was stating the current

condition of the society to which this letter is written. When he adds in verse 24, *“Just as the church is subject to Christ, so wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands,”* Paul is speaking to the culture of the day. Obviously, this is not the situation in our 21st century society.

Audience – We can confidently assume that Paul’s audience included only men. Women were not taught to read and they were not allowed to participate in any of the community discussions. This passage seems to be instruction for both wives and husbands, but given the culture to which it is addressed, one can assume its message is focused entirely on the function of the husband.

A Message for Our Day

Paul’s vision of *“submission”* was a two way street. The idea that a husband would treat his wife with the love and respect described in verses 25-33 was a revolutionary concept in the first century. Even in the 21st century, with all our talk of equality for all, our human tendency is to subject another to MY will. This passage is not so much about the authority of the husband over the wife as it is a call of Christ to love one another.

When Paul says, *“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ,”* he is clearly laying down a foundation for mutual concern for each other. Further, as stated earlier, the responsibilities of the husband described in verses 25-33 (so revolutionary for the first century) are a reminder of the balance that Paul is advocating for every relationship.

The Blessing

Healthy mutual relationships where love, respect, encouragement and communication flourish are a blessing. The culture of the 21st century can be challenging and dehumanizing. We can easily lose our identity and personal focus when the pressures and demands of our society become our major focus. The support and strength our families and close relationships can offer are imperative for healthy living.

Active Listening – The motto of the Kairos prison ministry is “Listen, Listen, Love, Love.” This ministry understands that active listening is the key to reaching the most difficult and challenging individuals. The practice of active listening is the first key in every relationship. “Active listening” is listening to emotions as well as the content of the words. “Active listening” is making understanding the whole individual a priority as well as understanding the information shared.

Non-judgmental sharing – This is the hardest part of the blessing for most of us. When we hear about a situation, we want to fix it. After listening actively to the person, paying attention to the emotions as well as the facts, the next step is to seek to understand where this person sees the situation going. Do they have any ideas? What is their counsel? Once we have heard the other person’s thoughts and feelings, affirm who they are. Find something

to praise. Consider their feelings first. If we are part of the problem, it may be necessary to ask forgiveness. Remember, the most important aspect of understanding is to see the other person’s perspective, even when it is not our own.

Seek to be understood – Now it is time to share how we see the world, with giving feedback, with teaching our children, with the courage to confront in love. We may choose to do this over more than one conversation depending on the intensity of the emotions. When we really understand someone, it’s much easier to share, to teach, to confront with love. We know how to speak to others in the language they understand.

Giving feedback – Here are five suggestions in giving feedback.

- Always ask ourselves, “Will this feedback really be helpful to this person, or does it just fulfill my own need to set this person straight?”
- Know what’s important to the person and how our feedback will help that person accomplish his or her goals.
- Separate the person from the behavior. Never judge the person – only the behavior.
- Be sensitive to blind spots. Feedback on something they can’t realistically do anything about is threatening and counterproductive.
- Use “I” messages. Qualify our feedback by beginning with, “I feel...”, “My perception is...”, or “I see it this way...”

Next Week’s Worship: Family Ties Week 4

Guest Speaker Michael Smalley

“Becoming the Family of Your Dreams”

Your marriage and family are important to you and Michael Smalley addresses the critical needs for both relationships. Michael will speak during all three services on September 7.

To learn even more, join us on September 7 from 4-6 p.m. in the Sanctuary for the Michael Smalley Seminar “Becoming the Family of Your Dreams.” The cost is \$15 per couple and visit tmumc.org to register.

In today’s world, it’s not enough to simply strive for a healthy marriage, children are under attack from many different directions and you need guidance on how to help your child grow into a loving and responsible adult who follows the will of God.

Becoming the Family of Your Dreams is a not just a life-changing event but a family-changing event as well. You will learn and discover the six most important elements to a happy family; a family who can stand up against the onslaught of today’s culture and be proud for who they are and who they are becoming.

Michael and Amy Smalley are nationally renowned marriage/family counselors and specialize in teaching couples the principles of loving well and loving for a lifetime. They share their own stories of overcoming obstacles and you will delight in knowing that even healthy families are not about being perfect, but about being willing to repair the hurt inevitable in any close relationship.