Messed Up Relationships

*Ephesians 5:21-6-9*

*Lord’s Day, August 7, 2011*

**As a result of this sermon, what do I want them to do?**

Be an agent of transformation for the community. There needs to be restoration in relationships – between one another and between us and God

21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

*Spirit-Guided Relationships: Wives and Husbands*

22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word. 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. 28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we are members of his body.

31 As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. 33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

*Children and Parents*

1 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. 2 “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise: 3 If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.”

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

*Slaves and Masters*

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. 6 Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. 7 Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. 8 Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

9 Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don’t threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

Start Recording!

***Praise the Lord!***

This passage is a practical guide of all that has been taught to us from Ephesians thus far

* Think back to it –
* Ephesians has been telling us that even though we were sinners, God desired to relate to us – so he came down Himself to atone for our sinfulness so that we may now have a relationship with Him.
* As a result of that love, God calls us to love one another; to not be selfish and pursue satisfying our pleasures (Ephesians 4) – instead to have deep concern for one another, and form a relationship with them – be friends as He has called us friends (John 15).
* So now, how can we, out of gratefulness towards what God has done for us, love others?
* You’ve heard Christianity is not a religion, but about a relationship between us and God – how’s that going for you? (pause and ponder – is this your understanding of Christianity or do you have something else in mind?)

*Ephesians 5:1-2  
1Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Tell the story of the “gay guy” – the point is that I befriended him, even though most would not (girl following? Ha ha)

How do you relate to others?

*Eph 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

* We are to relate (not just be nice to!) towards others, as God relates to us (and that is the basis of our ministry!).

Today I want to tell you about how our culture has messed up our view of relationships. The world talks about independence, and the need to excel on our own. It has destroyed God’s picture of a community where each person relates to another. If you look at Acts 2, it says people gathered, shared lives with each other, gave what they had to those in need, and basically had a circle of friends that truly cared for one another. What is your picture of friendship? What is your picture of community?

* In our passage today, Paul makes a point (v. 21 – submit to one another) and gives example of what that looks like in three very common and important relationships.

There was a boy, his name was James. He was born in Korea and grew up in Seoul. His parents owned a store in Korea and felt he lived happily. When he became a thirteen, little to his knowledge, his parents were struggling with money, and their store had to close. Due to the deficit, they heard about a country where they can start over – and so they bought plane tickets with the little money they had left from selling all that they had – and they made their way to America.

When the family arrived, James was fortunate to have an uncle that came to America several years ago. The uncle and his family at least had a place to live – so James’ family stayed with them until they can figure out what to do. Life was difficult in America because he couldn’t communicate with anyone due to his lack of English. His parents were no different. Due to frustrations, parents constantly fought. Even after establishing a deli as a way to make a living, the family’s finances were tight, and difficulty of living in America persisted.

As a teenager, James was learning about the world and desired to become more independent. He was also becoming interested in girls. As time went on, James was able to communicate better in English, and though he loved his parents, he desired to receive more from them, as he felt his peers were getting from their parents.

His peers at school were able to get the latest gadgets, phones, even cars, he was given very little. His friends always had money to go eat somewhere after school, but because James had no money, he often avoided his friends after school and went home.

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Marriage is supposed to exemplify how God loves us – how we are one with God. (Ephesians 5:32 - *This . . . is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.*)

Is that how you perceive marriage?

Looking at our times, marriage doesn’t even seem like a blessing – many people don’t even want to get married!

Let’s see in detail our experiences

Our Experiences

* Divorced parents (over 50% of all married people in the US)
* Peers with single parents (this becomes something commonplace, and accepted as the norm)
* Media portrays that it is good to seek multiple relationships.
* Breaking up is a common thing (and now a norm) – just check facebook!

So we do:

* We can always date, hook up, get intimate, and break up
* Since everything is temporary, we just need to show our fake selves. (look good, act good, but don’t be real)
* No need for commitment, just desire romantic feelings and intimacy – and leave
* When feelings leave, no friendship or commitment exists, so people just break up
* Follow feelings, we do as we feel, then end the relationship when feelings disappear; we say “don’t be controlled, but do what I feel like”
* If we don’t like our marriage, just get a divorce. It’s easy and a norm.

A joke on Christians – allow gay people to get married instead of fighting it, after a year, they’ll just say “forget it!”

(but in this joke, there is a common acceptance of doing what I want, leave others when “I” feel like it)

*I, \_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_, to be my (husband/wife). I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life. I, \_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_, for my lawful (husband/wife), to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.*

There is commitment in this covenant – but does the world see it this way?

(View of Relationships, Marriage)

James learned his view of male-female relationships from television. Growing up, his parents would be working at the deli – so whenever he came home, he would just watch television and get on the Internet. On television, it seemed that hooking up was something to be taken lightly and something that every person should do on a regular basis. When people get together, they are to become intimate very quickly as relationships are meant to last only a while. Marriage is something that people tend to do only after having been around with many people. Even then, picture of divorce was rampant on television, and marriage has no constancy just like dating; and so, it was all the same – marriage is just another meaningless celebration. With his parents constantly fighting on the verge of divorce, and knowing many peers who only have a mom – James recognized living as a single as a norm. James now held a view that relationships are temporary, replaceable, and meant to feed one’s pleasures. There was no commitment involved, as either party can always leave and look for someone else.

**We ought to become agents of transformation for our community**

The world views relationships like this – as the Church, we are to portray a different picture of this wonderful blessing God has given us. It’s about relationships – will you love one another as Christ has loved you?

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Family (Children to Parents)

Experiences

* Parents struggling
* Parents do not discipline their children
* Other peers rebel against their parents
* Advent of Internet and Industrial age, younger people feel they know better

So we do

* Show defiance to our parents
* We do what we want, there’s no greater authority than “me”
* Complain, Criticize – become God, since they are no better than my opinions
* We do not honor our parents

(Defiance toward parents)

Eventually, James decided that he can change the way things are by getting a job. So he got a job at the local bakery. Now, he had enough money to get himself a smart phone and eat and hang out with friends. He became popular – liked by many people, and has become confident in his own abilities. He now felt that his parents are not needed to take him to where he wants to be. He started coming home late, even though his parents told him to be home by 9pm. He started drinking with friends, smoking, and other things his parents had taught him to avoid in life. His parents relinquished control because they felt they weren’t worthy parents, not being able to provide for their son and life being miserable in America with language and cultural barriers. James became more defiant and parents in their depression (stopped disciplining their child and) let him do what he wanted – thinking that he knew better. They began to distance themselves and relationship between parents and James had been broken.

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Work (Bosses to subordinates)

Experience

* Dead end jobs, jobs with no meaning or passion
* Working just to make a living/money (not something one desires to do) -- (debts and living expenses are so high, we are expected to work passionlessly)
* Jobs as a result of industrial age, where we were taught to study, focus on a major, then get a job (but we are multi-faceted) – we are expected to be experts in one field

We do

* No ownership, no passion for work – it is just to make a living
* Do bare minimum (which then carries on to the rest of our lives) – instead of living with passion for things we want to do
* We are constantly longing for something better, never being able to find satisfaction
* As a result, we disrespect our bosses, our peers, and want to be left alone

(View of Work, bosses, respect for others)

James worked at the local bakery. At first, he was so grateful that now he can make his own money that his parents couldn’t afford for him. He worked hard and went beyond his duties by cleaning the counters and even mopping the floors when time allowed. However, as time went, James realized that working harder or just doing the bare minimum earned him the same pay. Then he decided to just do the bare minimum; he figured his boss didn’t care anyway. As time went on, he began to lose passion in giving his best – and that carried on to rest of his life. He just stopped caring about anything. He went to work like a zombie, did what he had to do, went home and did only things to just get by in life. He no longer had passion toward anything, including his previous passion for music.

Eventually, James graduated college with an accounting degree. He got a position at a very respectable firm. However, he only went for the money since he had no passion in accounting. He only studied because he learned that he needed a job to make more money. As he learned throughout his working life, he did the bare minimum since it would all equate to the same pay regardless of how hard he worked. His boss gave him negative feedback, but James didn’t care – as long as he had his job and income was flowing in. James no longer had passion in life and his life’s pursuit has been to go after money, though he couldn’t fully realize it. His childhood passion for music has now disappeared, and he was living like a zombie to make money – he didn’t care for anyone else, neither his parents nor his superiors.

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Ultimately, in our days, our view of relationships has been screwed up. This is not just us, but all of our peers. Now relationships are seen as way of getting hurt – and people simply avoid. We are also taught to be great independent people – we need to get smarter, do better, be fake and always look good.

However, true relationships show our real-selves – just as Christ exposes us (Ephesians 5:14) and accepts us where we are.

So then, for us personally, it is a call for us to be genuine and real before God. Come to repentance of our independent lifestyle, and fall in love with God once again. Our root is in Christ – and from the love we received, we ought to love others.

For our community, it is a call to demonstrate rightful living – just like us, many people do not understand the value of friendships, relationships, and being dependent on God and others. Let us be the agents of change – agents for transformation within our community.

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Some of you may be thinking – I’m not ready yet – I’ll do it when I’m ready.

* Then you nullify God’s grace because you believe you’ll be perfect some time on your own strength.
* Just from where you are, seek to care for one another

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In the midst of “messed up” relationships, can we really form right relationships?

* D o you know of Israel’s downward spiral descent? It was at their lowest point Jesus came to save. We are repeating history again – will you be the counter-agent to do right in the midst of wrong?

Rebuilding our relationships

Within each other

* Friendship – they were not meant to be 1000s, but deeper
* Proverbs 17:17 says, “A friend loves at all times” – is that your view of friendship?
* Can we be un-selfish and not seek our own pleasures? Can we love others and accept them and their situation as they are? (Jesus did that toward us, and still does – Ephesians 2)

Toward God

* Can we consider Him in all we do?

*Proverbs 3:5-6*

*5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

* Can we commune with him, as we would be in constant communion with true friends?
* Can we be completely honest and bare before God like we would to our closest friends?

Friendship

* If common purpose forms friendship, then our single purpose is love (our acceptance of God’s love)

Love has the power to change – love is God

We should not be afraid to touch the lepers, that’s how Jesus was

How we are like the Pharisees, so clean pristine on the outside, but rotten on the inside

* Will you be an agent of change in this messed up world? Will you love others as Christ loves us?