

# CONNECTING Church + Home

It's the time of year when university students begin the process of moving into residence. They'll have received their email detailing when they are to arrive, how things are to be labelled, and how the moving process will go. And then, there will be the dorm rules.

Every place of residence has rules for it to work well. You have to have an agreed upon set of rules for any home to work well. This isn't just the case for a university residence, it's true for our homes. We specify how we can live together and function best together.

This is not only true of our households, but also of God's as well. God has established his household with an eye that the home would display how the broader functioning of society should work.

With the breakdown of the modern family, the implications on our society are enormous. When marriages end in divorce, children suffer and lack the social stability of a home. With the redefinition of marriage and the fluidity of gender, the emotional stability of a home is no more. Families are not likely to last long with cohabitation, desertion, social isolation (who eats dinner together anymore?), and the autonomous self.

Christians have always recognized that the family is the most basic structure in the world. The family is not a private, personal choice. Historically, the household has been the foundation for all other social institutions – school, church, business, cities, nations. As the household goes, so goes the rest of society.

## **Belonging to The Household of God**

Before we think of an individual family, we need to start with a theological perspective of what it means to be family. When Paul addressed the church in Ephesus, he reminded that that God is our Father, from whom every family on earth derives its name (Eph. 3:15). Before we find our identity in our last name, Paul reorients us to think of ourselves not as autonomous individuals, but as individual stones being built into a holy temple, 'members of the household of God' (Eph. 2:19). It is by living as a household, mutually dependent upon one another, that we learn how to be the Church. Within the household of God, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. God is our Father, and we are adopted into the family of God by trusting in Christ. Only when we understand our position in the family of God can we rightly order our homes (see Eph. 5:21-6:9).

One of the key Greek words for household was *oikonomos*, consisting of two words: *oikos* describes the basic unit of the family, and *nomos* has the idea of ruling well. From these words, we derive our English word "economy." God is ruling his economy, his household, in a very specific way. How does he rule his household?

# CONNECTING Church + Home

In Ephesians 1:10 we are told that in Christ the plan for the fullness of time is brought together in him. Literally, Paul says that in Christ the economy or the rule of God's house (*oikonomian*) for the fullness of time is held together by Christ. Christ oversees the universe and brings it together just like a good steward does of his own household. God is bringing everything together in his economy, his household rule, in Christ. Things in heaven and things on earth are going to be ordered according to his design. And the way that God brings about the rule of his household is clarified in Eph. 3:2 with the same idea – the economy of God's grace.

The way that God rules is by his grace. He rescues sinners from the clutches of sin and death. We who were once dead in our trespasses and sins were made alive together in Christ – by grace you have been saved (2:4-7). He takes people who were divided and makes one new man in place of the two, bringing peace by the blood of the cross of Christ (2:11-18). He makes people who were excluded part of the family by his very own Son.

This household of God is good news! Because of Christ, family is reoriented around Christ as the head. In a world where people come from broken homes, where there are singles who often feel excluded by church ministries, and people who have lost loved ones, the church of Jesus Christ is intended to be a family. And this family lives and works together with one rule: the rule of God's grace. God's grace is what brought us into the family. God's grace is what keeps us as family. And God's grace is how we live together.

As we belong to Christ, we are more than individuals who live in isolation but a family who is brought into relationship with one another. The church is not first and foremost a corporate structure to manage, but a household that is living in the messiness of a broken world. And the way that God rules his household is not by processes and procedures, but by grace. It's the only way a family can function when sin and death are opposing you on every side.

## **Becoming a Christian Family**

Once we rightly understand what it means to belong to the family of God, we can reorient our perspective towards our homes with a gospel-focused eye. We are brought in to the family of God by grace and we remain a part of the family of God by grace. Therefore our homes are to reflect this same kind of grace. And what does this grace look like?

Beginning in Ephesians 5:22, we get the household code for Christians. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her (Eph. 5:25ff). Wives submit to their own husbands as unto the Lord (Eph. 5:22ff). A husband who cares for and loves his wife well is nurturing himself (Eph. 5:28-29). Just as husbands and wives become one through the covenant of marriage, so we are one in Christ (Eph. 4:4-6).

In other words, marriage begins and is sustained by grace. Just as someone becomes a part of God's family and remains in his family by grace, God has designed marriage to be between a

## **Connecting Church and Home – Ephesians**

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall  
September 4, 2021

# CONNECTING Church + Home

man and a woman to show that our differences are held together by a covenant of grace. We are not two people of the same kind, we are two different kinds of people – male and female. Just like Jew and Gentile were brought together and held together by the blood of the cross, a husband and wife are held together by gospel realities so that they can reflect gospel realities.

From our union with Christ and our union in marriage, parents provide an atmosphere and environment where children can learn the most basic structures of grace, a grace that enables submission to authority. Children obey their parents and fathers seek not to exasperate their children (Eph. 6:1-4). Just as God is our Father, fathers are to grow and reflect their Father in heaven to teach and show that there is a Father in heaven who is patient, not exasperating his children, but leading them into his grace.

In God's economy, he is seeking to rule his household well by his grace. Therefore, how one oversees one's home has to do with family instruction and worship, economic provision, and emotional encouragement. So it's no surprise that Paul will talk about an elder ruling his household well in 1 Timothy 3:4. To "manage his own household well" gives reflection as to how he will shepherd the flock of God. And as he manages his household well, a man demonstrates love for God and love for others.

Therefore, if we want to impact the world for Christ, we must begin within our own homes. Being good stewards of the ministry with our families will have a cosmic impact. Parents should teach their children the ways of the Lord – instructing them to know God, disciplining them so they submit to authority, loving them with radical grace and care.

Practically, our families ought to be places where the administration of God's grace is poured out with lavishness. Taking time to read the Scriptures and Bible stories with our children will give them a knowledge of God and his saving work in Christ. Praying together as spouses and then with our children will afford us the opportunity to point out the works of God's grace and the dependence we have upon him. Catechizing our children in the doctrine of the faith will help to root them in biblical instruction and guidance for all of life. And humbly confessing our faults to one another – when we lose our temper, when we act rashly, when we do not consider others more important than ourselves – will model that we know that we were those who were once lost in darkness but now have been brought into the marvelous light of the gospel.

When we live by the rule of God's grace, we display what God has always been doing (3:9). The rule of grace means that the family becomes our first mission field. We love our spouse and children and point them to the surpassing grace of God in Christ for us. And as we do that, we display to the principalities and powers that God's grace cannot be overthrown but will conquer. We can stand firm in the spiritual warfare because God fights for us so that his grace would be on display in our homes and in the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (3:10; 6:10ff).

# CONNECTING *Church + Home*

Therefore there's more going on in your home than just raising children and being married to your spouse. There is the wisdom of God's household rule showing the principalities and powers that they cannot be overcome. Evil may be great, but grace will prevail. And the church is the demonstration that grace prevails in a world of chaos and sin and death. The forces of hell may rage, but grace will triumph. All things in God's household will be brought together by grace. So live by grace. Depend upon his grace.

There may be rules that order the dorm and the house. But what is even greater than the rules is an atmosphere where we know we are bound to one another not by our performance, not by what happened in the past, but by the fact that we are bound together in Christ, one in him, and the grace of God that brought us safe thus far will be the grace that leads us home.