

Revolutionary Disciple Week #4: Home Sphere

In this divisive, anxious, culture the most revolutionary thing followers of Jesus can do is to live humbly. That type of person will have the aroma of Jesus all over them. The trouble is, it is **not natural**. It's **difficult**, even **scary**. We must learn it from Jesus.

Here's our teacher. ³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. ⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his **divine privileges**; he took the **humble position of a slave** and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, ⁸ he **humbled himself in obedience to God** and died a criminal's death on a cross. Philippians 2:3-8

Pride is the opposite of what Jesus was. It is self-absorbed. It's my story, starring me, with Jesus and others in it. Instead of being Jesus' story, starring Jesus, I get to be in it. **Pride kills discipleship**, following, being changed by, and committing to Jesus' mission.

Humility is knowing who you are in relation to God and choosing to go lower by... This is where we list **some ways** of practicing humility. **These actions or behaviors** put us in a **humble position in relation to another person**.

Let's have some fun with this. I've given you the first letter of each. See if you can figure out the right answer. Adults it's a surprise. Let's do two at a time. This game is in honor of a man who taught me humility; **Sterling Gatling**, who used to guess the fill-ins by writing them to the side. We've talked a bit about these two ways of going lower.

Serving...Submitting

We have talked a lot about going lower, by serving or submitting. But we haven't talked as much about these next two ways to express humility. **The next one has to do with not talking, while the last has to do with talking.**

Listening...Confessing

Like the first two, **listening and confessing demand that I go lower and humble myself**. **Listening is about you and your thoughts and feelings, not mine**. I tend to be thinking of the **next clever or insightful thing** I'm going to say instead of being present by listening. **Confessing means owning my garbage**, in relationship to you not pointing out yours, and **how it would be better for me if you acted differently**.

As we look at the spheres, think and talk about this week's sphere, the family; lets try to picture listening and confessing. **Spheres Diagram**

As we read these verses about how to learn humility from Jesus in our families, please remember that **Paul is speaking into a culture, both Greek and Hebrew, that was very male dominant.** Women had very few rights. They weren't allowed to be **educated like the boys** and their **main purpose** in both of these cultures was to have children and care for them and their husbands.

Paul is speaking into this culture; not trying to destroy it, but unleash these revolutionary people into it. To attack the prevailing culture would have been to be seen as an **enemy of both Jerusalem and, more importantly, Rome.** They would have been seen as a **different kind of revolutionary.**

That being said, we are about to read **one of the most discussed, debated, and misused** passages of scripture in the Bible.

²¹ And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Many people start reading at this verse, thinking that this is a new section. It's not.) **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. Ephesians 5:21-33**

In the culture of the time, this was called a **"house code"**. Because Christians were being **accused of trying to destroy society and all structure** with their message of freedom, this is an attempt to show that they weren't trying to dismantle society. That's what an **anarchist** wants to do. Blow it up and start over; this was not Paul's purpose. **His purpose was to teach people how to apply their faith within the traditional family**

structure. The difference is that other "house codes" would not refer to those in power and what they should do. It was only children, wives, slaves, who were given a code to live by. **This is why Paul's words are revolutionary.**

And notice the structure. All of these challenges to wives, husbands, are examples of what verse 21 describes, which is mutual submission out of reverence or respect for God. To take them as **stand-alone**, will give you the wrong conclusion. **This is what many have done and, therefore, done great harm to families and God's people.**

Why did Paul spend so many words on all of this family stuff? Simple. **It's hard to learn humility from Jesus if we don't practice at home.**

In school, it's hard to learn, get good grades, and succeed academically, if you don't do homework. That is practicing your math skills, reading, music, language skills...

That's why God starts with the church first, so we know how to be a family as he designed it. The people who were hearing this in Ephesus were mostly **not Jewish**; therefore, they didn't have the whole Old Testament teaching them about family. They only had **false religions, Roman and Greek culture** that was based on human design for the family. Therefore, Paul starts with the Church; so that's what we did.

Let's start with that stuff directed at men...**Men need to understand what a leader is and isn't.**

To whom much is given, much is expected. As a man, I have had some inherent advantages. Physically, I am stronger. I have **testosterone** that helps me be aggressive and want to push outward. **I tend to make more money** than females in similar situations. I have not had to **fight to be taken seriously** in my vocation. I have not had someone say to me, "**you can't be a leader in the church and definitely not a pastor**" because of my biology. I don't really worry about **being alone in the office**, but the women do. That's why we have locks and cameras.

This is not about shaming men. It's simply in our culture, we have had, to this point, a leg up. **It's not about apologizing for that, it is about being responsible for what we have been given.**

But Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. ²⁶ But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first

among you must become your slave. ²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Matthew 20:25-28

Leading like Jesus means choosing humility first.

I'm about to make a statement that you aren't going to believe at first. You're going to say, "**no Bill that can't be true.**" Brace yourselves please, because this is going to **rock your world**. Suddenly in the **blink of an eye** all that you thought you knew about me is wrong. **Robin and I fight sometimes, and sometimes it's my fault!**

I can't remember what the argument was about. Most of the time, when people say that they are lying, because to say what they were arguing about would sound so petty that they act like they don't remember. In this case, I don't. **But I'm sure that the blond woman in the front row remembers.** We will be talking about someplace we went 20 years ago and she will say, "I remember you were mad at me when we went there." What?

What I do remember is that I felt like she was **pointing out everything that I was doing wrong** or that **represented a fault** of mine. She, on her side, **felt anxious** that **I was leaving too much responsibility** for certain family things on her plate. **I wanted to win and to have her say that she was nit-picking me.** In the midst of my passion to **punish her with silence**, I heard a **still small voice**. "It's ok Bill, I love you; therefore, you can go first." All I said was, "I'm sorry for _____. Let's set aside some time tomorrow to talk about our problems." **This was because we were about to have the kid with the greatest hearing** in the world come downstairs and, in this case, three is a crowd. Not that we are trying to hide conflict from him, but he tends to want to jump in and champion one side or the other, and then when we are weak, ask for money.

The next day we talked for about ten minutes and came to an agreement. She **heard how it felt to be micromanaged** and I heard how she felt when I was **too passive** about things that needed to get done for our family. **What seemed like a mountain was settled in ten minutes.**

I didn't want to risk going first, out of fear that she might just say, "Yes, you were wrong; I'm glad you finally figured that out. Now look, you forgot to put the toilet seat down." **It was the Holy Spirit that reminded me that because God loves me, I can lead by choosing to go lower first.**

Again, let's look at just the parts that concern men and how we are to operate within the family. **And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ... For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the**

head of the church... For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her... In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies..."A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the **two are united into one**"... So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself... From Ephesians 5:21-33

This sounds hierarchical, but it isn't. Remember, in Jesus' kingdom the hierarchy is flipped upside down. It's not like Jesus is CEO, husband is on his staff as V.P and the wife works on the line for the V.P. No, it's not like the husband is closer to Jesus and dearer to Jesus. His leadership is to serve others.

There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28 This is the verse that the people who misuse these verses never seem to remember. Neither one's value nor place in line is decided by these distinctions. Look at that list again, it has **ethnicity or culture**, it has **gender** and it has **power**. **None of these are allowed to get in the way of us being one.**

We've been mostly listening to Paul, who wrote Ephesians and Galatians. Here's another voice, Peter. **In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7**

That's quite a list; give honor, treat her with understanding and equal partners in God's gift of new life. It says she may be weaker. Again, in that culture the woman had no power of self-determination. They could not raise themselves through education or power. This isn't just about physical strength, although that is a part of it. Peter is saying that she is an equal partner in the new life that God has given.

I think that helps husbands know what this leadership role is and isn't. It is about being one in purpose with our wives in this new life he has given. This new life in the Kingdom of God, where we as individuals and families are to be the fullness of God wherever he sends us. We have a purpose in our families to pass this along to our kids, but live it with our kids.

Did you catch the level of responsibility? To whom much is given, much is expected. And then there's that punch line, "so your prayers will not be hindered." How I treat my wife affects my relationship with Jesus. Boom!

Being a leader doesn't mean husbands don't get more power. They do get **more pressure** to lead well, but like Jesus would.

What about single parents or grandmothers? Remember, men in the church; we **have a responsibility to fill in gaps** for kids.

"Single parents fight the devil too, and he actively accuses singles about their past, holding guilt and shame over their heads. They need the church's acceptance and love. The devil's leverage lies about their identity and their past to convince them that they don't belong in the church. He tells them they're not welcome and to go somewhere else. The church must help them reject these lies by treating them like family—because they are. Satan wants them to choose isolation." *The Revolutionary Disciple*, Putman & Harrington pg. 141

"Pride distances and isolates all of us, but for single parents, pride leaves them especially vulnerable." 142

Put your mask on first in an airplane. This goes for all parents, but it is particularly important for single parents. Put your mask on first, then help your child.

This brings us again back to why we started with church. If I make the church into something that is for my family and I convince myself that because they are my priority, I will focus only on them, then the church ceases to be the church. **It can never be just about me and mine.** That is pride or being self-absorbed.

Women reversing the curse.

Robin has told me, in her decade of work at Shelter House, our neighbor in the area of sexual/domestic violence, she has seen one consistent theme. Abusers know this scripture and use it as an excuse for being controlling, manipulative, lording over, being a bully, or worse, physical abuse.

Here are the parts of the passage about women or wives. **And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ...For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church ...As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything... and the wife must respect her husband. From Ephesians 5:21-33**

Once again, in order to **not get the wrong idea** here, we must remember that these commands given to wives are **examples of the mutual submission stated in verse 21**.

But there's that troubling word, "**head**." That sounds like he is **her boss** and is **free to direct her in any way he sees fit**. Listen to what New Testament scholar, Klyne Snogross, says in The NIV Application Commentary. "**Still, Ephesians 5:23 does not focus on authority, but on the self-giving love of both Christ and the husband. 'Head' in this context suggests 'responsibility for.'** The husband has a leadership role, though not in order to boss his wife or use his position as privilege. Just as Jesus redefined greatness as being a servant (Matt. 20:26-27), Paul redefines being head as having responsibility to love, to give oneself, and to nurture. A priority is placed on the husband, but, contrary to ancient society, it is for the benefit of the wife. The activity of both wife and husband is based in their relationship to Christ and in his giving himself for the church." Pg. 295

Submission for women is, in many ways, the same as it is for men. What pride will do in women, is to want to control. Then there comes a lack of respecting her husband. Men need to be respected and women need to feel love in the form of intimacy. That is a generalization, because women need respect and men need intimacy. These seem to be the areas that women tend to fall into pride.

I can tend to be too passive and Robin will tend to do more. Those two things feed each other. What happens is resentment builds in both and then we are back to making sure I get what I want or need first, then I'll give my spouse what she needs. That is pride.

Why is it so hard to practice humility in our marriages? Well, the whole thing got off track at the beginning, in the book of *Genesis*, in the Garden of Eden. **The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too...**¹¹ **"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"**¹² **The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it." Genesis 3:6-12**

The man stands by and allows his wife to be tempted by Satan. It also set up the beginning of the blame game. This all began with their sin of rebellion against God's loving authority. Once God's authority is tossed aside, then women and men start vying for the opportunity to fill that authority vacuum.

Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you." Genesis 3:16

This is all the curse of sin or rebellion against God. We were set up to have these problems; it's inherent in being a man and a woman. We are attracted to one another, get married, see who the person or partner really is and then it begins.

The man **blaming** the woman and **not serving** her and the woman then trying to **control** the man began here. **Both are complicit and both now seek power over the other as the path to fulfillment. It's here that wives can help reverse the curse.** Respect your husband, honor him, and submit to him or, in other words, don't play your part in the back and forth.

The curse can also continue when women **overcompensate and become bossy, domineering, acting like the worse parts of men.** Then we have men and women **focused on power and not serving.**

"Sin teaches couples to fight for their individual rights and preferences, but Christ teaches couples to love one another through submission and service. That's a revolutionary marriage." Pg. 153

You might be thinking that we are **talking about equality** here. **No, mutual submission is a much stronger and deeper challenge** to husbands and wives. **"With equality, you still have a battle of rights.** Equality can exist without love, but will not create a Christian community. With mutual submission, we give up rights and support each other. **Mutual submission is love in action.** Pg. 311

Children need a secure, stable place to learn humility

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. Ephesians 6:1-4

Obeying your parents is a part of creating the secure, stable environment where you can learn and grow. Again, this **obedience has boundaries.** If your parents are asking you to do something that is wrong, or not doing something that is right, then you need to talk to them about your concerns.

Allow your parents to make some decisions now so that you don't bear the responsibility and consequences of making a decision that you aren't ready for. A young woman who had an addiction problem, which continually caused her problems with boyfriends, said, "For now I'm going to trust my parents and what they think in this area." Not forever, but for now, allow them to create a safe environment.

This cannot be done by going to either extreme; too much control and not enough practice making decisions and just allowing them complete freedom. Neither way is loving and both cripple our kids' ability to become what God has called them to be. Fear drives both of these over reactions in parenting. I'm afraid, so I fight their battles for them and have a rule for everything because that will keep them safe. Or, I'm afraid that they will rebel or simply won't like me so I don't give them any boundaries. Both lead to kids who are hampered in the ability to make good godly decisions.

The two words "discipline" and "instruction" both have the goal of discipleship to maturity. It contains what to do and what not to do.

"While pride pushes your kids away, humility gives you the opportunity to win your kids' hearts for life. In the end, humble parenting is not about creating loyal children for ourselves, but rather about releasing our children into the world so they too can make disciples who walk with humility in every area of life. Ultimately, humble parents are willing to send their kids one day into the world on Christ's mission." Pg. 176

Learning Humility at Home

**This week I will seek to humble myself at home through one act of...
Serving Submitting Listening Confessing**