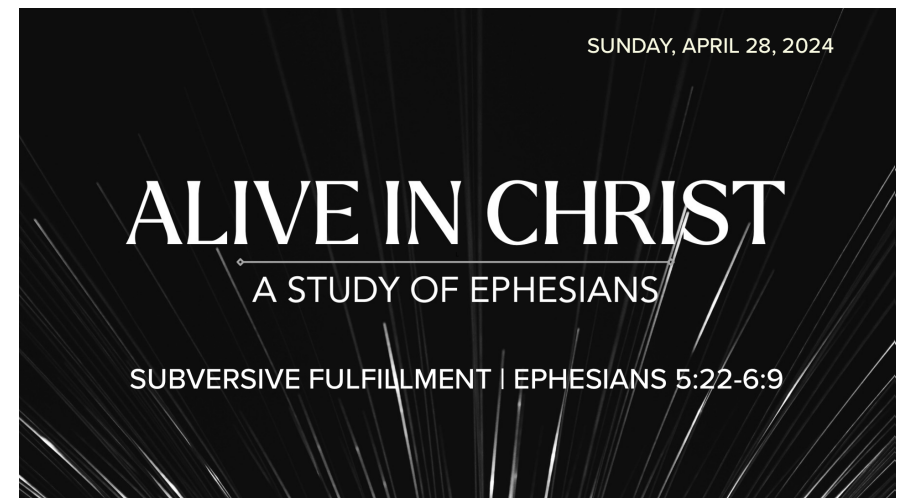


2. Where do you see the bare bones of the Graeco Roman household code in Ephesians 5:22-6:9?
3. Why do you think Paul chose the Graeco Roman household code as the framework for his instruction to Christian households?
4. Where and how does Paul interject Christ and the gospel into the norms of Roman culture?
5. Where do you see subversive fulfillment at work in this passage?
 - a. How does the gospel turn Graeco Roman norms inside out and upside down?
 - b. Who does Paul spend the most time and energy addressing in this passage? Why is that significant?
 - c. Which relationship in particular does Christ and the gospel turn most wildly on its head?
 - d. How and why?
 - e. What do you think Paul means when he says, “masters, treat your slaves in the same way (6:9)?
 - f. How does the gospel tell a better story than Graeco Roman practices and norms?
6. How can our family life and involvement in the marketplace offer a more compelling story than the norms and expectations of our culture?
7. What happens when we lecture (and sometimes even demean) those around us without actually telling a better story and showing a better way?

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Subversive fulfillment describes how the gospel collides with the norms and structures of our culture, and slowly but surely turns them upside down and inside out, and tells a far better story that speaks to the heart of our greatest fears and longings.

The norms of ancient Roman culture were built on Graeco Roman household code. They believed a well ordered home is the foundation of a well ordered society. The foundation of a well ordered home is a privileged male who ruled his household and enjoyed the benefits of his favored status in the home and society at large.

The household codes can be traced back to nearly four hundred years before the time of Christ to the golden age of Greek culture. Aristotle taught that there were essential differences between men and women, and Greeks and non-Greeks (i.e. anyone who was not Greek). Men were thought to be superior to women, and Greek culture far superior to the surrounding cultures. So it was only natural for men to rule over women, and Greeks to rule over barbarians. In Aristotle’s mind some strata of society were better suited to rule, and others were better suited to be ruled, or even enslaved. A Graeco Roman household code might simply read: Husbands rule your household with dignity and honor; wives honor and obey your husband; children honor and obey your parents; slaves honor and obey you masters.

It might be surprising to discover that Paul adopts the basic framework of the Graeco Roman household code as the foundation for his instruction to Christian households, but he turns the whole concept on its head by interjecting Christ and the gospel.

THE PROPER FOUNDATION (5:18,21)

Before Paul turns his attention to Christian households, he reminds us that our involvement in our homes and the marketplace need to be built on the foundation of being “filled with the Spirit” and “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit... ²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

1. Why are “being filled with the Spirit” and “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” essential if we are going to reflect the heart and character of Christ in our homes and the marketplace?
2. Some Biblical interpreters see Paul’s instruction to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” in this particular context as limited to the need for wives to submit to their husbands, children to their parents, and slaves to their masters. Others see it as a radical call to mutual submission and self giving love in all of our relationships.

How do passages like Philippians 2:1-4 argue for mutual submission and self giving love as the foundation of all of our relationships?.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

3. How does Paul’s instruction to Christian households (see below) reinforce this idea?
4. How does this more closely fit the pattern of Christ and the gospel?

SUBVERSIVE FULFILLMENT (5:22-6:9)

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.^b ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—³⁰ for 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.”^e ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

^{6:1} Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “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.”^h

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶ Obey 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. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

⁹ And 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.

1. How do passages like Galatians 3:26-28 undercut the very foundation of the Graeco Roman household codes?

GALATIANS 3:26-28 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.