

## Ephesians Study 8

**Prayer: May my whole life be open to participating in your work**

God is bringing everything in heaven and on earth into unity in Christ (remember ch.1?). Where does this unity become reality? It happens within our own selves and between us, in every relationship, through reconciliation, out of reverence for Jesus.

When we are being reconciled to God and to each other, we enter into what it means to be transformed into HIS likeness and we enter into the process of maturing.

After the lofty conversations about God doing this wonderfully huge thing, Paul makes it clear that HOW God does it is through the concrete, named, particular reality of our lives. Transformation and maturity never happen in a vacuum, individualistically, but is always worked out within personal relationships—families and churches. God is not abstract and being a follower of Jesus is never abstract – it has everything to do with real relationship and our personal lives with each other.

### **Reading and Reflection**

**Read Ephesians 5:21-6:10**

Paul writes about all our relationships: with parents, with children, with spouses, with those under us, with those over us. He doesn't give a huge long treatise on how to do these relationships but reorients each of them, as relationships with **power imbalances** in the greater culture, to relationships lived out in Christ. These relationships are re-understood as defined by Jesus Christ.

Pick one relationship from Paul's list. Imagine it as defined by their culture and how would Jesus redefined it? How is it different because of Jesus?

What is it about Jesus that makes it ok to submit to each other? What does it take for you to submit to another person? What is hard about submitting? Are there times when submission doesn't/shouldn't work? Consider the meanings of the word submit – to yield your power to another authority but also to give something of yourself (ie submit something for publication).

### **Responding to the Text**

Write out your definition of the verbs Paul uses: "submit"? "obey"? "love"? What arises within you? How do you react to these words? Invite Jesus into your response and see what he says.