

HOUSEHOLD ORDER AND THE DISCIPLESHIP OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD:
AN EXEGETICAL SURVEY OF EPHESIANS 5:21–6:9 AND OTHER
NEW TESTAMENT HOUSEHOLD TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

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Household Order and the Discipleship of the People of God: An Exegetical Survey of Ephesians 5:21–6:9 and Other New Testament Household Texts

Edward Watson, Ph.D.

This thesis aims to observe instructions given to families in the Pauline corpus and how said instructions contributed to the apostle's theology of the Church. In Greco-Roman times, the household was commonly considered to be the building block of government. Perhaps God intends to use households to function similarly as the building block of the Church. The introductory chapter created the framework for the thesis as a whole. It presented the issues around these passages, defined key terms, such as Household Codes, presented aims and objectives, and set the stage for the exegesis of Ephesians 5:21–6:9. Chapter 2 exegeted the said passage, observing Paul's instructions to wives and husbands, children and fathers, and masters and slaves. Chapter 3 took the principles of the Ephesian Household Code and applied them to Paul's instructions to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:1–16 about establishing church leaders and formed an understanding of church communities as a family of families. The concluding chapter summarized the research presented in the thesis and gleaned pastoral insight for households today.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Hartley, for your endless support throughout my academic journey. This thesis would have no bearing on my life if it were not for the family that we have with each other.

This thesis also is dedicated to Parish Network, where the idea for this thesis was birthed. May the Lord's Church be rooted in healthy families that have a vision for the next generation of His kingdom.

PREFACE

The relationship between the Church and individual families is close to my heart. As a child of divorced parents, I can personally testify to the pain and malice that a decayed marriage creates. As a “millennial” who was raised in the “Bible-belt,” I have witnessed countless friends and family members walk away from Jesus—not because of who Jesus is, but rather, by his portrayal from churches that were wrapped in business models. As a pastor, I have seen too many marriages face hardship because of false understandings of the meaning of marriage. A friend recently said to me that it seems as though Americans’ deepest wounds come from family and churches. Perhaps this thesis makes the connection between the two parties. There is a stark disconnect between the theologized God-talk of Sunday, and the everyday talk of life on a given Thursday evening. Spiritual leadership in the household often times is reduced to tithing and to making sure that wives and children attend church gatherings. I contend that Paul had a role for families in his work of church planting. This thesis simply begins to ask questions regarding the family’s role in God’s grand strategy to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus. Countless more research could be done on Jesus’ own teaching about marriage and parenting. However, I firmly believe that if we are to see renewal in a post-Christian America, then families will first need to be re-centered around Christ’s self-sacrificial love, with those families forming small churches.

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CHAPTER 1

THE TASK OF STUDYING NEW TESTAMENT HOUSEHOLD CODES AND WHY THEY ARE NECESSARY TODAY

A Biblical Theology of the Family

The apostle Paul had a clear theology around the family, as presented by Ephesians 5:21–6:9 and similar Household Codes in his epistles, demonstrating his understanding of how families function as an outflow of the Gospel and how they play into the formation of local churches. His letters unfold vital teachings about how relationships in the family are to function, and that these functions are integral to the health of local churches and their mission to spread the Gospel. However, these teachings are only evident when read within their proper context, a task that the modern Western Church generally has failed to do for some time.

This thesis will examine Ephesians 5:21–6:4 to discover if Paul’s instructions are isolated commands to the Ephesians, or if he intended to extend his teachings to all Christian families, and if so, how this teaching functions as part of his overall mission. The passage will be exegeted in light of its Greco-Roman background and by examining the rhetorical structure of the Greek text. This thesis then will use the Ephesians Household Code as a hermeneutical lens for reading Paul’s instructions to Timothy concerning local church leadership in the Ephesian area (1 Tim 3:1–16) in order to see

how families shape Pauline churches. Before addressing this subject matter, or why the study is significant, it is best to define “Household Codes.”

What are Household Codes

Ephesians 5:21–6:9 is one of several passages in the New Testament epistles where the author instructs his audience on how to live out the ways of Jesus in a family setting (e.g., Col 3:18–4:1; 1 Tim 2:8–25; 6:1–2; Titus 2:1–10). These texts often address a specific demographic of the household and give instructions involving their relationship with a counterpart grouping (e.g., husbands and wives). Similar instructions for family behavior are found in multiple texts from the Apostolic Fathers (e.g., *I Clem* 21:6–16; *Didache* 4:9–11; *Barnabas* 19:5–7; *Ig Poly* 4:1–5:2; *Poly Phil* 4:2–3).¹

James D. G. Dunn states that these passages have come to be commonly referred to as the New Testament “Household Codes,” which he explains are used to describe the basic household rules in Pauline Christianity.² Philip H. Towner originates the term’s theological use back to the German word *Haustafel* (“house table”), which was first used by Martin Luther.³ According to Moisés Silva, “Household Codes” can be dated further

¹All Apostolic Fathers references are from Michael W. Holmes, ed. and trans, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Text and English Translations*, 3rd rev. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007). This assumed list is based on the author’s observations of these texts against the criteria for Household Code noted in this section.

²James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 665.

³Philip H. Towner, “Household Codes,” *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 513. For the purpose of this thesis, *Haustafel*/*Haustafeln* will be capitalized in order to be consistent with the capitalization of Household Code(s).

back to the Greek οἰκονομία, which is a compound of the noun οἶκος for “house” and the verb νέμω for “household management.”⁴ In essence, a Household Code describes the relationships and functions of the Christian household in light of the Gospel.

Yet, the concept of household order is not inherently Christian. The household was commonly seen as the starting point of government in Greco-Roman society. In a similar way that the body is comprised of organs that are made of tissues that are made of individual cells, people in the first century generally thought that larger political entities derived their authority from smaller ones—from the ruler of the empire to the leader of each house. Lynn H. Cohick argues that Paul and other New Testament authors adapted their teachings on the household from the popular philosophies of their time.⁵ The two largest influencers of these philosophies date back to the fourth and fifth centuries BCE with two of the fathers of philosophy itself, Plato and Aristotle.

From Plato’s point of view, the strong have the right to rule over the weak, whether in larger cities or within a family, including parents over children, masters over slaves, and the old over the young.⁶ Within this paradigm, women are typically placed

⁴Moisés Silva, ed., “οἰκονομία,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 466.

⁵Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 344. (c.f. Towner, 515).

⁶Plato, *Laws*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 7 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), 3.690a–b.

under the “rule” of men.⁷ Cohick describes Plato’s household law as one that “relies on reciprocity,” as the obligations of one grouping directly interact with the responsibilities of the other.⁸

Directly after Plato comes his student, Aristotle, who builds off the work of his teacher. According to Aristotle, the family was viewed as the basic unit of government within the larger society, making the larger governing authorities a reflection of the delegated authority in the individual house.⁹ Essentially, the state could only function in an orderly manner when the individual families that reside in it live in such ways. According to Cohick, the largest difference between Plato’s and Aristotle’s views on the house is that Aristotle grounds his principle on the ruler’s virtue.¹⁰ While more could be said about various nuances of household philosophies, comparisons between Gentile texts and that which Paul writes in Ephesians will be discussed at length in Chapter 2. Now that the concept of Household Codes has been introduced, it is time to examine the components of the Household.

⁷Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Great Books of the Western World, vol. 7 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), 5.455c–e.

⁸Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 344.

⁹Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Stilwell, KS: Digireads.com Publishing, 2017), Kindle Electronic Edition, 1.12.1–14.

¹⁰Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 345.

Components of the Household

The Greco-Roman household, while not entirely different from the modern Western family, requires some definition as well. James S. Jeffers breaks down the structure of the typical Greco-Roman household into three general relationships: between husband and wife, between father and children, and between master and slave.¹¹ While the individual household contained nuanced dynamics, these three general categories will serve as the household framework for this thesis. Jeffers also explains that the leading male in the house, the *Paterfamilias* in Latin, was sometimes given the authority of life and death over his wife and children.¹²

The Problem: Redeeming Texts from Poor Hermeneutics

As previously stated, Paul's theology of the family can be life-giving, and it offers instructions that set a roadmap for multi-generational church growth. However, like all other New Testament teachings, the Household Codes can only do so if they are read in their proper contexts. Unfortunately, these texts have endured a heritage of poor hermeneutics that have left their readers exposed to two different general groups of thought, neither of which do justice to reveal Paul's intentions, but boldly display the agendas of Western thought. A general overview will be provided to define what the researcher will call a hermeneutic of authoritarianism and a hermeneutic of skepticism.

¹¹James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 341.

¹²Jeffers, 342.

Household Codes and Authoritarianism

The first way in which the Household Codes have been mistreated is by a hermeneutic of authoritarianism. Seeing that the Pauline Household Codes address women and slaves with the vocabulary of submission, it is, unfortunately, no surprise that those in power have used these Codes to create systematic dogmas that have limited the freedoms of these demographics. Those in the Church who seek to justify oppression and the abuse of authority cannot ignore the words of scripture wholesale; however, they can tear the life-giving Word of God from its context.

Unfortunately, the Household Codes historically have been used as scriptural proof-texts to silence women. In the introduction to her commentary on Ephesians, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza states that the section of the Ephesian Household Code that addresses women (Eph 5:22–24) is the “most-quoted passage in the letter” and, therefore, is a focus for much feminist New Testament scholarship. She claims that the words of Ephesians have been manipulated to support “andro/kyriocentric [i.e., male-/Lord-centered] mind-sets” that present women with “second-class status” among Christians.¹³ Fiorenza’s concern that the Household Codes are used to demote women is not baseless. For example, in an article that examines a Household Code found in 1 Timothy 2:11–15, Douglas J. Moo concludes that, regardless of time or context, “[w]omen are not to teach men nor have authority over men because such activity would violate the structure of

¹³Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Ephesians*, ed. Linda M. Maloney, Wisdom Commentary, vol. 50 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), xlv.

created sexual relationships and would involve the woman in something for which she is not suited.”¹⁴

Another way in which the Pauline Household Codes have been used as a tool of oppression, specifically in the American Church, has been its weaponization against Black communities to endorse slavery. Jemar Tisby lays out a comprehensive history of the American Church and its relationship to racial injustice. He notes that in 1701 CE, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts compromised the Gospel for the sake of evangelism by stating that Christianity was able to save one’s soul “but not break one’s chain.”¹⁵ To appease slaveowners of their fear of rebellion, many missionaries in America emphasized a Gospel that was separate from liberation.¹⁶ Therefore, passages in the New Testament that addressed slavery, such as the Household Codes, were utilized prescriptively to teach slaves obedience, foregoing the due diligence that comes with historical exegesis.¹⁷ Esau McCaulley relates that Household Codes such as 1 Timothy 6:1–3 have been used as “a tool of oppression” to justify American race-based slavery.¹⁸

¹⁴Douglas J. Moo, “1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,” *Trinity Journal* 1, no. 1 (1980): 82, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (20 May 2021).

¹⁵Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church’s Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 38.

¹⁶Tisby, 39.

¹⁷Tisby, 45.

¹⁸Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 138.

Household Codes and Skepticism

In a pendulum-swinging reaction to the results of authoritarian interpretations of Pauline Household Codes, a movement has arisen of treating these passages with a hermeneutic of skepticism. This method of interpretation functions by shaping the context of the passage on some level, thereby arriving at an attenuated meaning in order to combat the idea that Paul would be anti-women and pro-slave. However, the result is that the Household Codes have little to no meaning outside their fabricated context.

An exemplary instance of this hermeneutic can be found in Angela Standhartinger's treatment of the Colossian Household Code (Col 3:18–4:1). First, she finds that the Household Code is void of context within the rest of Colossians, as the epistle fails to mention everyday life of the household elsewhere and can be read without a logical gap if the pericope was omitted.¹⁹ She concludes by stating that Colossians is written in a post-Pauline context, and it can be read as an adaptation of the larger Christian culture.²⁰ A similar argument can be made about the Ephesians pericope. However, this point will be disputed throughout this thesis, contending that the Household Codes of Colossians, as well as Ephesians, find a significant portion of their meaning because of how they play into the rhetorical flow of their respective epistles.

Other less astonishing examples of skepticism can be found even among evangelical scholars who uphold Pauline authorship of these texts. For example, Craig S.

¹⁹Angela Standhartinger, "The Origin and Intention of the Household Code in the Letter to the Colossians," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 23, no. 79 (September 2000): 123–25, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (15 March 2021).

²⁰Standhartinger, 130.

Keener, while presenting an extraordinary and insightful exegesis, concludes that the Ephesians Household Code can be understood by readers today as little more than a first-century apologetic for upholding the Church's public appearance to Rome.²¹ Similarly, Scot McKnight finds that the Colossian code has little-to-no application for Christian families today.²² Such interpretations, while maintaining the scripture's authorial integrity and pondering the *sitz im leben* of the individual epistles, shy away from sorting out Paul's overall purpose in creating such instructions, as well as how they can provide insight into the practicing Church throughout all times. Reducing parts of the scripture to mere apologetic is equally a skeptic reaction to the authoritative abuses that base themselves in New Testament Household Codes.

Household Codes in Fresh Perspective: Methodology and Purpose

This thesis intends to pave a different path for understanding the Pauline Household Codes—a way which, hopefully, redeems Paul's original purpose, as well as presents a fresh way to understand him today. The intended goal is to present a biblical theology of families and their role in Paul's strategy for church planting. This study will defend the authority of scripture, yet will wrestle with the hard cultural questions that it presents, both in the first century as well as the twenty-first century.

²¹Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 147.

²²Scot McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 343–344.

The purpose of this thesis is to look at the Household Code in Ephesians 5:21–6:4 and to discover whether these instructions are isolated commands to the Ephesian church or are a template of how Paul intended Christian families to live out their faith. This objective will be reached by exegeting the passage in light of its Greco-Roman background and by examining the rhetorical structure of the Greek text. The thesis will then compare the Ephesians text against 1 Timothy 3:1–16 to see how Paul’s understanding of family life influences local church communities. Finally, pastoral insight will be given for how to live the proposed principles of the Household Codes can shape church communities in today’s post-Christian culture of non-discipleship.

N. T. Wright contends that the connecting literary theme throughout the Pauline corpus was not solely salvation or justification, but a contended unity in the Church, which represented the renewed unity between God and humanity in and through the resurrection of Jesus.²³ This unity represents the salvation and eschatology of God’s people lived out on full display, thereby painting a portrait of Christ’s relationship with the Father and humanity to neighboring pagans.²⁴ Unity and ethical behavior of Christian communities are imperative if the communities wish to accurately worship Jesus and represent his life, death, and resurrection to a watching world. This unity transforms the Christian body from another cultic community to a distinctive people.

²³N. T. Wright, “Paul and Missional Hermeneutics,” in *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life: Ethical and Missional Implications of the New Perspective*, ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 183.

²⁴N. T. Wright, “Paul and Missional Hermeneutics,” 183.

At the heart of this unity within the Church, one should find the family—the household. As the Church represents the kingdom of God as the Christian’s true governmental authority at large, so the household represents the Church in a microcosm. Concerning the role of families in the Roman empire, Dunn says that “As part of the state’s good ordering, therefore, it was necessary to deal with the house’s basic relationship—that is, of husband to wife, father to children, and master to slave.”²⁵ The house was the building block of the Roman state. In a similar manner, this thesis will seek to discover whether families functioned as the building blocks of the Church, according to Paul’s epistles. In Jesus’ final moments, He vehemently contended that his disciples would be unified and that such unity is found in mirroring his self-giving love (John 13:34–35; 17:20–24). It is then a fair assumption that the apostles of the Church had meaningful guidelines to live out their Christo-centric and unifying love for one another, starting with the smallest unit of the community.

The academic value of this is that it will help reclaim a biblical ecclesiology that is not bound to any denomination. By surveying the Household Codes in the Pauline corpus, hopefully one can argue that household order was essential to the apostle’s mission of establishing and growing the Church. Ideally, the heart of this thesis will serve the practicing Church and all Christians who wish to see their faith passed on to future generations. This thesis is for those who want to see their churches filled with healthy marriages, with young adults established in their faith, and with people set in a unified enterprise to see the Gospel lived out in every context. These healthy churches will

²⁵Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 667.

hopefully multiply, thereby helping to form a Church of churches that is being made by a family of families.

Presuppositions, Assumptions, and Delimitations

This thesis assumes a basic framework that the scripture is God's Word and is the primary means of God revealing himself to humanity. However, these words that reveal who God is were written by specific human hands with specific readers in mind. While the Lord's Spirit can use the Bible to reveal God to humanity further today, the words found in scripture addressed certain people in a specific context. The reader's goal is to discern the context of scripture and to listen better to the Holy Spirit's guidance, having a sharper understanding of what that scripture means. Furthermore, this thesis assumes that the books of Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus were written by the Apostle Paul, as they have been historically attributed.²⁶

For the sake of thorough investigation and exegesis, this thesis will primarily focus its attention on the Greco-Roman backgrounds while being sensitive to what insights Second Temple Judaism has to offer. In her recent commentary, Cohick explains that while Paul was a pharisaical Jewish man full of zeal, and he saw God and his mission in this worldview, the audience of Ephesians probably was comprised primarily of Gentile readers.²⁷ Hence, many of those reading the letter saw that the culture of marriage

²⁶For Ephesians and Colossians: Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 24. For the Pastoral Epistles: William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Bible Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), ixxxvi.

²⁷Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 25–26.

would be shaped more from a Greco-Roman standpoint than from Second Temple Judaism. The passage being surveyed does quote the Torah (Eph 5:32; 6:2–3). Therefore, this thesis, at times, will look at Philo, Qumran, and other Jewish sources for the sake of composing a well-rounded exegesis. However, the primary focus of background studies will be on Greco-Roman backgrounds.

While the heart behind this thesis is to help reshape how family and local church discipleship look in a post-Christian culture, this thesis primarily will engage with the family dynamics of the first century CE. The hope is that the meaning of scripture in the first century CE will inform the significance in the twenty-first century. The role of Household Codes in America would be a whole new research study apart from this thesis. The final chapter of this thesis will provide some pastoral insights into the significance of these passages regarding church planting and family establishment.

Conclusion

This thesis will proceed to unveil the importance of the family's role in Paul's overall mission. Such a study will find that Household Codes were written with Paul's apostolic authority, as well as his pastoral sensitivity and wit. It is due time that these texts are read not only in the context of their correlating epistles, but also with Paul's grand strategy in mind: the Household Codes serving as a guide for churches to live as a family of families centered on Christ's self-giving love. This study will be accomplished by a survey method, overviewing Paul's instructions to families in his epistles and how they compare to the popular philosophies of his day. With this aim, key concepts of

Household Codes will be defined, the framework for the family will be set, and some of the leading philosophies concerning family around the early Church will be identified.

It is now time to observe the Pauline Household Codes in an exegetical study to understand the apostle's reasoning behind them. The next chapter will focus on one of the most extensive codes in the New Testament: Ephesians 5:21–6:9. The authorship, dating, and reason for writing the letter will be established to form a contextual foil to read the pericope. The bulk of the exegesis will be divided by the three relationships presented in the text considering the Roman *Paterfamilias*—the husband/wife, father/son, and master/slave—with dedicated attention given to the first two units. The objective will be to have this household text serve as the basic structure for household texts in Christian literature, which will be used to survey a similar passage in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

PAUL'S HOUSEHOLD CODE TO THE EPHESIAN CHURCH: AN EXEGESIS OF EPHESIANS 5:21–6:9

Introduction

Chapter one briefly surveyed the concept and origins of Household Codes. Now the task is to exegete one of the primary household texts not only in the Pauline corpus but also in the entirety of the New Testament: Ephesians 5:21–6:9. The purpose of this exegesis is two-fold: first, to compare the philosophy of Jesus concerning family (as presented by Paul) with those of the Greco-Roman culture surrounding this epistle, and second, to glean how Paul's instructions play into the overall purpose of the epistle. A vast corpus of work has been composed on New Testament *Haustafeln*, but little has been said about how they play into the mission of the Early Church.

Putting the Household Text into Context: Looking at Ephesians

Before exegeting the household text in Ephesians, the context of the letter must be examined. This context includes clarifying the authorship, date, audience, and purpose, as well as a brief synopsis, leading up to the pericope. In this task, the exegesis will yield itself not to picking apart random verses to create doctrine, but to revealing its role in the larger narrative of scripture.

Authorship

The quest for building a context for Ephesians begins with the epistle's authorship. Once it can be deduced who wrote the letter, then the task of dating and placing it within its historical context should be easier. As stated briefly in the last chapter, this thesis will defend the notion that Ephesians was written by Paul.

Ephesians is often categorized as one of the six disputed letters in the Pauline corpus. In his commentary, Harold W. Hoehner surveys the history of published academic opinions, from 1519–2001, regarding the epistle's Pauline authorship. Hoehner's findings show that affirmation of Ephesians' Pauline authorship has dropped in scholarship, going from near-unanimous to less than half as the twenty-first century dawned.¹ The basis for this non-Pauline claim is rooted in Ephesians' heightened theology and unique vocabulary.

The first claim against Ephesians' Pauline authorship is due to its theological teachings. Andrew T. Lincoln comments that the author of Ephesians avoids subjects that are found in the undisputed letters, such as the theological doctrine of justification, the equality of Gentile believers, and the hardships that Paul endured throughout his ministry.² Meanwhile, Margaret Y. MacDonald states that epistles such as Romans and Galatians engage with such discussions at length. She also takes an issue with the letter's

¹Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 6–20.

²Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), lxiii.

ecclesiology, finding that it tends to refer only to the universal Church and not to a specific congregation.³ Compared with such letters as 1 Corinthians, which is full of personal matters of the local community (1 Cor 1:10–17; 5:1–2), Ephesians’ universal ecclesiology feels as though it were written by someone other than the pastoral Paul.

However, basing the historical Paul around the theologies that are derived from his letter is a counter-productive task. Timothy Gombis strongly emphasizes that reading an epistle as a “doctrinal treatise” removes its context, thereby blinding the reader from what the author intended to say.⁴ Wright finds that Ephesians’ lofty Christology and cosmology portray a comprehensive “cosmic soteriology,” rooted in Paul’s Jewish heritage, which serves as a framework for the apostle’s larger discourses about justification and inclusion of Gentiles in other epistles.⁵ The theology espoused in Ephesians is not contradictory to Paul’s other letters; rather, they add to one another, thereby showing that he can think theologically on a vast array of issues.

Another issue taken up against Ephesians’ Pauline authenticity is its unique style and vocabulary. Lincoln observes that the tone of Ephesians feels impersonal and reads like a document that was intended to honor a “revered figure.” This hollow tone is striking when one considers Paul’s passionate voice that expresses frustration and joy in

³Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 16.

⁴Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 15.

⁵N. T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 40.

other Pauline letters (Gal 1:6–9; 3:1; 1 Thess 3:1–7).⁶ MacDonald explains that, unlike other epistles, Ephesians is filled with long and repetitive sentences, and it uses distinct phraseology, such as “heavenly places” (Eph 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12).⁷ Regarding these run-on sentences, John B. Polhill admits that sentences such as 1:3–14 in Greek are typically divided into smaller English sentences. He also notes the use of *ἐν*, around 115 times, is noticeably high compared to Paul’s other letters, and notes the pleonastic tone in such passages as 6:10 that use three synonyms for strength.⁸

However, to discredit Paul’s hand in Ephesians based on style and vocabulary is a shallow assumption. These differences reveal that over the career of his ministry, Paul can address different churches that require a vast array of pastoral needs. John R. W. Stott rightly declares that separate letters to various audiences require different tones and phrases, because they inevitably focus on different themes. Stott further explains that if Paul is the great mind that the Church holds him to be, then he should not have a narrow limit of theological focus and vocabulary.⁹ In addition to considering different audiences and situations, David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards propose that Paul’s use of co-writers and secretaries helps explain the literary differences in Ephesians. Paul operated as the leader of his missional team, and although his name is

⁶Lincoln, lxiii.

⁷MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 15–16.

⁸John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 356.

⁹John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God’s New Society*, rev. ed., *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 17.

accredited to each epistle, often he is the reprehensive mind behind someone else's hand.¹⁰ The use of co-authorship explains how Ephesians can sound similar to Paul in thought, but separate from Paul in style. As a craftsman in the art of writing, Paul has the right to grow in his craft.

While there are claims that Ephesians is too unique to be Pauline, there are also allegations that it is too much like Colossians to be genuine. The two epistles are remarkably close to each other, to the point where Lincoln says they rival the Synoptic Gospels in terms of New Testament texts with similarities.¹¹ The two epistles contain an almost mirrored appearance in structures and style, with thirty-four percent of Colossians' vocabulary being used in Ephesians. These observations led Lincoln to believe that the writer of Ephesians was dependent upon a pre-existing Colossians (which he also sees as Deutero-Pauline) as a source—seeing that the former is less personal and elongated.¹² This claim historically views Colossians as source material for a later author.

Still, the similarities between Ephesians and Colossians should point readers towards Paul's authorship rather than towards pseudepigraphy. Polhill finds that while Ephesians is similar to one-third of Colossians, few parts contain complete parallels for more than a few words—the exception being the reference to Tychicus (Eph 6:21–22; Col 4:7–8). Polhill concludes that Paul is the author of both epistles, addressing similar

¹⁰David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 273.

¹¹Lincoln, xlvi.

¹²Lincoln, xlvi–liv.

topics in differing ways for the intended purposes of each audience.¹³ Agreeing with Polhill, similarities in addressed topics and vocabulary should show continuity in the epistles.

The best solution concerning the original recipients comes from Clinton E. Arnold. He proposes that ἐν Ἐφεσῶ is authentic, but it functions as a circulatory epistle.¹⁴ This proposition fits well with Paul's history in Acts. One must remember that the apostle and his team spent about three years in the Ephesian area (Acts 19:10; 20:31), longer than any other location recorded in Acts. During this time, the Gospel rapidly grew in that region to the point where an idol craftsman instigated riots over the loss of work (Acts 19:23–41). On his way up to Jerusalem, Paul gathered the elders of the Ephesian churches in the neighboring city of Miletus to say farewell and to charge them to watch over their churches (Acts 20:17–38). Arnold considers that Paul's long-standing ministry in a sizeable city like Ephesus resulted in expanding new churches in surrounding cities in Asia Minor, including Miletus, Laodicea, and Colossae.¹⁵ That being said, it makes logical sense that the epistle was circulated not only among the possibly high volume of house churches in Ephesus, but in other areas of Asia Minor as well. Ephesians being a circuit letter also would explain its impersonal tone, considering that it was intended to reach a trans-local audience.

¹³Polhill, 357.

¹⁴Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 29.

¹⁵Arnold, 29.

Audience and Dating

Now that the Pauline authorship of Ephesians has been established, the next step is to discover to whom Paul wrote Ephesians, and approximately when he wrote it. It can be assumed that Paul wrote this epistle to the Christians in and around Ephesus from Rome about 60–62 CE. The evidence for this dating largely will be established from what is known about the apostle and his relationship with the Ephesian church from Luke's historical account in Acts, as well as by observing some contextual data.

Tracing this epistle to Ephesus is a tricky task. Polhill notes that some of the earliest, and typically deemed most reliable, manuscripts omit ἐν Ἐφέσῳ in the critical standard Greek New Testament,¹⁶ which creates suspicion relating to its origin. Polhill believes that it is most probable to assume that Ephesians is written to a different audience, or is perhaps a general letter which was later given its current name.¹⁷ Frank Thielman argues that even though some early manuscripts omit the reception, reading Ephesus as original creates a smoother reading.¹⁸ Cohick also sees Ephesus as the designated recipient, finding that it best explains the similarities to Colossians, as two cities in close proximity would share common pastoral concerns.¹⁹

¹⁶All Greek references are from *The Greek New Testament*, 5th rev. ed., ed. Barbara Aland et al. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 2014).

¹⁷Polhill, 355.

¹⁸Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 16.

¹⁹Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 30.

Paul's relationship with the Ephesian church in the book of Acts might help build a framework for dating the epistle. According to Acts 19, Paul arrives at Ephesus, where he "for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8).²⁰ After that time, Paul went to the lecture hall of Tyrannus for about two years. Over the course of that time, the Greek and Jewish people in the province of Asia heard the Gospel (Acts 19:9–10). According to Luke, the Gospel spread so much in that region that an idol craftsman rioted over the loss of work (Acts 19:23–41). Later, on his way up to Jerusalem, Paul arranged to meet with the elders of the Ephesian churches in Miletus to tell them where he was going, and he charged them to watch over their flocks because savage wolves would appear after he was gone (Acts 20:17–38). Years later, Paul sent his disciple Timothy to the Ephesian area to "instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine" (1 Tim 1:3). The question facing us is how the Acts timeline aligns with the letter to the Ephesians.

The best possible answer is that Paul wrote Ephesians during his Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30–31), somewhere between 60–62 CE. According to Cohick, the reason for this dating is found in the description of Paul's imprisonment in Acts 28:30–31. She also finds that Paul's description of his visitors in Colossians 4:7–14 matches Ephesians and Philemon. Moreover, the similarities between the letters also suggest that

²⁰Unless otherwise indicated all English Bible references in this thesis are to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989).

they were likely being delivered at the same time. Those going to Colossae from Rome would go through Ephesus on their journey.²¹

Purpose

With the above issues surrounding Ephesians made clear, the purpose of the letter can now be addressed. Paul's purpose can be seen when the full letter is viewed. The following paragraph will argue that Paul wrote the epistle to the Ephesians in order that the next generation of church communities might be established and unified through the Spirit as Jesus is revealed to have dominion over all things.

Paul's intent for writing to the Ephesians is seen throughout the epistle. Gombis writes that Ephesians is "concerned mainly with the internal life of new creation communities" and how the churches in Ephesus are to live in response to God's triumph in Jesus.²² Going one step more, Hoehner posits that a central motif in Ephesians is the Church's unity with God and within the community, with an emphasis on self-giving love.²³ Hoehner argues that throughout Acts and his epistles, Paul's ministry to the

²¹Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 47.

²²Timothy G. Gombis, "A Radically New Humanity: The Function of the *Haustafel* in Ephesians," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 2 (June 2005): 318, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (6 October 2020).

²³When referring to the concept of the Christian communities as a whole, "the Church" will be capitalized. The use of this term assumes that Paul is addressing his understanding of individual churches as playing into the universal Body of Christ. Finding that Ephesians is a circuit letter to multiple communities and it addresses little-to-no specific problem sets, the author of this thesis assumes that Paul largely is displaying his understanding of the universal Church throughout the epistle. The terms "the churches/communities" and "the community" will be used when specific church communities are the subject.

Ephesians is summarized by love.²⁴ Lisa Marie Belz sheds light on the emphasis on love in Ephesians by citing that the verb ἀγάπη and its noun counterpart ἀγαπάω can be found twenty times in the epistle.²⁵

Households Within God’s Household:
The Ephesians Household Code

Ephesians 5:21–6:9 is not meant to be read in isolation, but rather within the context of the whole epistle. Elna Mouton breaks Ephesians into four central units: a greeting (1:1–2), two sections that compose the main body of the letter (1:3–3:21; 4:1–6:20), and a farewell statement (6:21–24).²⁶ The first section is a declaration of Christology. In 1:10, Paul declares that in the fulness of time, God has summed up all things through Jesus (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ). Cohick reveals that κεφαλή, the root of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι in 1:10 which is used to describe the “summing up” of all things, is seen once again in 4:15, where Paul charges the congregation to grow in every way toward Christ, “who is the head.”²⁷ The word imagery of Christ as the head

²⁴Hoehner, 102–105.

²⁵Lisa Marie Belz, “The Rhetoric of Gender in the Household of God: Ephesians 5:21–33 and Its Place in Pauline Tradition” (Ph.D. diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2013), 133, *ProQuest Dissertations & These Global* (16 October 2020).

²⁶Elna Mouton, “Reimagining Ancient Household Ethos? On the Implied Rhetorical Effect of Ephesians 5:21–33,” *Neotestamentica* 48, no. 1 (2014): 169, *AtlaSerialsPLUS®*, EBSCOhost (15 October 2020).

²⁷Lynn H. Cohick, “The New Perspective and the Christian Life in Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians,” in *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life: Ethical and Missional Implications of the New Perspective*, ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 37.

is also seen in 1:22 and 5:23. According to Gombis, Paul declares throughout the rest of the first half of Ephesians that the once-divided humanity has been renewed and unified in and through Jesus, and that through His victory over death, Christ is building a new temple that consists of the renewed people of God (2:11–22).²⁸

In the second half of the epistle, Paul expounds on the implications of Christ’s victory and how it is to be lived out in the Christian community. Gombis submits that Paul is inviting the Ephesians to play their “role in the drama of redemption” to reveal God’s glory in Christ (3:21).²⁹ After reminding his readers of the Gospel, Paul moves into an exhortation to “lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (4:1), which is reaffirmed by the call to “no longer live as the Gentiles live” (4:17). Paul’s audience is called “to be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love” in light of Christ’s love for them (5:1–2). Paul presents a new way of life for those in Christ, and those in Christ must live out this new way. Mouton suggests that the reason for living out the ways of Jesus is due to Lord’s “transforming power” through the Spirit that is “qualified by his humility as a sacrificial love,” setting the model for Christian discipleship.³⁰

It is within this context of the declaration of God’s Gospel and the exhortation to participate in the expansion of the Church that the Household Code in 5:21–6:9 is to be read. For the sake of space, the exegesis of this passage will devote most of its attention

²⁸Gombis, “A Radically New Humanity,” 319.

²⁹Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 135.

³⁰Mouton, 170.

to the first two parts of the Ephesian Household Code, the marriage and parental relationships, because these relationships are still in practice today.³¹ All of these relationships will be treated more closely in Chapter 3. This section will look at the various parts of Paul's instructions and compare them with the popular philosophies of the family of his time. It should become clear that Paul is calling his readers to live lives that showcases the Gospel, even in the most primal relationships.

Husbands and Wives (5:21–33)

The Wives of the Greco-Roman Era

In much the same manner as today's Western society, marriage was one of the primal core relationships in Greco-Roman culture. Jeffers points out that only unions where both the man and the woman had Roman citizenship were considered legally valid in the eyes of the government.³² However, that is not to say that these marriages were not strong or loveless. Roughly a century before Paul wrote Ephesians, Cicero considered the bond between husband and wife to be nature's strongest bond.³³

³¹The issue of slavery in the Bible and its influence on the institution of slavery in America can be a study in its own right. However, the purpose of this thesis is to develop a theology of the household and to see how the Pauline Household Codes can shape the way that Christians today look at family, where slavery has been abolished for the better. However, the uniting principle of the household texts should still be found in Paul's address to slaves and masters. Therefore, it will be exegeted in brief to find the uniting principle.

³²Jeffers, 238.

³³Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 1.1.54.

By looking at the Household Codes of the time, one can see that the marriage relationship between husbands and wives was less than ideal. Between the fourth and fifth century BCE, Xenophon saw the training the wife and the instructing of her in her household duties to be the duty of the husband.³⁴ To Xenophon, the husband was only responsible for his wife's behavior if he did not properly instruct her. Xenophon also notes that, on occasion, wives were given some household tasks that were deemed harder than those of the servants of the house, since the wives were closer to the one who owned the property.³⁵ Closer to Paul's time in the first century CE, Plutarch held that a wife would be rewarded if she subordinated herself to her husband. He also says that it is the husband's job to control his wife and to make the rules for their house.³⁶ The Greco-Roman husband was culturally erected to be his wife's superior.

Women in Greco-Roman marriages did not have the same civic liberties that women have in modern Western culture. In all the Household Codes that concern marriage, John Howard Yoder points out that women are never directly addressed but are given their roles via the instructions presented to their husbands. This rhetoric carries

³⁴Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, trans. B. J. Hayes, The Tutorial Series (Cambridge, UK: University Correspondence College Office, 1890), 3.11–14; 7.4–9.

³⁵Xenophon, 9.16.

³⁶Plutarch, "Advice to the Bride and Groom," in *Moralia*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 33.

over to the child's and the slave's roles as well.³⁷ While the rule of a husband was labeled constitutional, where both parties are equal in human worth, Aristotle saw women as less fit to utilize authority, whereas the control of one's wife was considered a virtue.³⁸ According to Jeffers, at the height of Roman rule, the *Paterfamilias* had complete authority over his wife and children.³⁹ One noticeable difference mentioned by Jeffers, between marriages in the modern West and in Paul's day, is that only the husband could file for divorce against his wife in the first century, whereas either party is able to end the marriage today. This situation solidified the wife's marital status, no matter how abusive or unhealthy the union.⁴⁰ Although marriages in the Greco-Roman culture were common and long-lasting, it is easy to see that these marriages did not necessarily create a household culture of honor, happiness, health or security for the wives.

The Issue of Submission: Paul's Address to Wives in Context

Looking at the role of women in Greco-Roman Household Codes and in immediately reading Ephesians 5:22, several problems present themselves. What does it mean when the NRSV, as well as similar English translations, say “[w]ives, be subject to your husbands,” and how does Paul's teaching and vision for marriage differ from those

³⁷John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 171–172. Yoder's observation makes the *Haustafel* in Ephesians all the more striking, as Paul always addresses the person in the subordinate position with that person's role in the household before the *Paterfamilias*.

³⁸Aristotle, 1.12; 1.13.

³⁹Jeffers, 241–42.

⁴⁰Jeffers, 242.

viewed above? The immediate task is to trace the use of “submission” as found in Ephesians 5 and to determine how best to define ὑποτάσσω in this pericope.

As stated above, the NRSV reading of 5:22 contains an explicit imperative command for wives to “be subject” to their husbands. The ESV and the NIV similarly start with a call to “submit.” However, these English translations are implying a verb from the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι in 5:21, which reads, “submitting to each another out of reverence to Christ.” While some manuscripts include a repeated ὑποτάσσω in the imperative form, the critical Greek text contains no verb in 5:22, as it finds the shorter reading to match better with the overall style of Ephesians.⁴¹

The use of the participle ties the Household Code to the rest of the rhetorical structure of Ephesians. Gordon D. Fee points out the rhetorical placement of the Household Code, pointing back to 5:1–2, where Paul starts a long string of imperative exhortations about being imitators of God who love each other in reaction to Christ’s love for them, which is a point that Paul parallels in verse 25.⁴² Elsewhere, Fee ties this string of logic back to 4:17, where the Ephesians are instructed to “no longer live as the Gentiles live,”⁴³ which is the stark opposite of imitating Christ. Within this long string of

⁴¹Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators*, corr. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 398.

⁴²Gordon D. Fee, “The Cultural Context of Ephesians 5:18–6:9,” *Priscilla Papers* 31, no. 4 (2017): 4, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (27 September 2020).

⁴³Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 718–19.

imperatives, Paul tells his readers in 5:18 not to be “drunk on wine” but to “be filled with the Spirit” (πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι), a command that Keener notes is expounded upon by a chain of four participles that close the sentence in 5:24. Life filled by the Holy Spirit is described by people who present (λαλοῦντες) each other with psalms/hymns/spiritual songs, who are singing (ᾄδοντες) worship to the Lord, who are giving thanks (εὐχαριστοῦντες) to God, and who are submitting to one another.⁴⁴ While the three qualifications describe life in the Spirit in terms of corporate worship, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ takes place within the home.

It is apparent that the wife’s role of submission to her husband in Ephesians is seen in light of members within the community submitting to one another as part of the Spirit-filled lifestyle. Verses 21–22 should read: “submitting yourself to one another out of reverence to the Lord—wives, to your own husbands in the same manner as to the Lord.”⁴⁵ Keener suggests that the wife’s submission to her husband is presented as one “particular example” of what all believers submitting to one another looks like in practice.⁴⁶ It is important to note that Paul never uses an imperative command in describing the wife’s role in marriage. Even when ὑποτάσσω appears again in 5:24, Cohick pays special attention to the fact that it is in the indicative case, used to depict the

⁴⁴Keener, 158. He also argues here that this depiction of corporate worship pairs well with Paul’s ideal vision in 1 Corinthians 14:26. Note that the syntax of these descriptive participles in 5:18–21 is all actions directed towards a direct object. (c.f. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 719).

⁴⁵Unless otherwise stated, all English translations of Ephesians 5:21–6:9 will be the author’s translation.

⁴⁶Keener, 157.

Church's submission to Christ, emphatically implying that this role is already being carried out.⁴⁷

However, what does Paul mean when he writes to wives to submit to their husbands (ὕποτασσομένοι . . . γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν)? Stephen B. Clark understands ὑποτάσσω as “subordination” directed “to the one he or she should be subordinate to.”⁴⁸ He later states that “subordination” implies that wives were expected to obey their husbands, drawing on the comparison that Paul draws with the marriage relationship and the Church's relationship with Christ.⁴⁹ However, in response to Clark, Hoehner stresses that “subordination” may not be the best interpretation as it infers that wives are inferior to their spouses. Hoehner reasonably advocates using the term “submission,” expressing that it brings out the mutual aspect of ἀλλήλοις in 5:21.⁵⁰

Agreeing with Hoehner's rebuke to Clark, “submission” might be the best way to understand the wife's role in the Ephesian *Haustafel*. Hoehner further argues that “submission” fits better with the middle voice of ὑποτασσομένοι, considering that the three preceding participles utilize an active voice and express aspects of “cooperation” and free agency, whereas the “subjection” of wives denotes passivity.⁵¹ Hoehner also

⁴⁷Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 358.

⁴⁸Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1980), 74.

⁴⁹Clark, 84.

⁵⁰Hoehner, 716.

⁵¹Hoehner, 717.

emphasizes this point in his observation in 5:24, where Paul contrasts the wife’s role with the Church’s role, saying, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ (in the same way the Church submits to Christ). Here, ὑποτάσσω takes the form of a present, middle/passive, indicative. The Church’s relational role with Jesus is not a passive lifestyle, otherwise it would be perplexing that Paul would go to such lengths to exhort readers throughout his epistles to live rightly as Christ instructed them. Hoehner’s point is that if the Church’s submission to Christ is not a passive action, then there is no reason to assume passivity into the parallel relationship.⁵²

Understanding the use of ὑποτάσσω in 5:22–24 as “submission” still feels like it is at risk of carrying negative connotations in the eyes of the post-modern reader who may have seen the words of Paul wielded in unhealthy marriages against the wife, or the female gender. Perhaps the term “submission” needs to be clarified and refined further in order to point to the passage’s heart. It should promptly be stated, as Thielman articulates, that Paul is speaking about wives in relation to their own husbands, τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν (5:22), not to the male gender as a whole.⁵³ Nor does the role of submission mean that Paul is imploring women to *obey* their husbands. Frederick W. Danker expounds on the submission defined by ὑποτάσσω, expressing a “recognition of an ordered structure” that is directed towards an entity to whom “appropriate respect is

⁵²Hoehner, 731–32.

⁵³Thielman, 375.

shown.”⁵⁴ Cohick suggests that Paul is not even instructing wives to submit to their husbands, but Paul invites them to submit “in the same manner as to the Lord” out of an invitation to view marriage as a reflection of the relationship between Christ and His Church.⁵⁵ Likewise, Keener articulates that submission should not be synonymous with obedience, but rather it communicates the image of cooperation on the wife’s behalf.⁵⁶

Structurally, in the same way that the Lord is recognized as having authority over His Church, the husband is recognized by his wife as having authority in the household. However, Cohick rightly emphasizes that this reflection is not to be read as a “one-to-one correspondence,” and that Paul does not view the husband as the “lord of his wife.”⁵⁷ She goes on to argue that in 5:23, Paul is juxtaposing the images of “head” and “savior” to point forward to the upcoming instructions to the husband.⁵⁸ It is important to stress that nowhere in this pericope does Paul exalt the husband as being equal to the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, Yoder presents a hard point by stating that while husbands and wives are equal in terms of human worth, which is presented by Paul in Galatians 3:28, this does not mean that their identities in roles are equal.⁵⁹ The identity of role as a spouse does not

⁵⁴Frederick W. Danker, ed., “ὑποτάσσω,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1042.

⁵⁵Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 352–53.

⁵⁶Keener, 168.

⁵⁷Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 353.

⁵⁸Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 355.

⁵⁹Yoder, 177.

negate the role in other aspects of society. A woman should be able to recognize the authority given to her husband and should still be able to pastor a community wherein she is recognized as having authority over the congregation.⁶⁰

Husbands Serving Wives

Verses 5:21–24 tied the *Haustafel* in Ephesians with Paul’s wider purpose of living in the reality of God’s new Spirit-filled humanity, and how part of that reality involves the wife’s role of submitting to her husband. Now it is time to observe the husband’s role as instructed by Paul and how it reframes the way that authority ought to be utilized. By looking at verses 25–33, it should become clear how the Pauline Household Code models a different family philosophy than those seen in his time.

Whereas Paul did not refer to the wives in the imperative tense, he does so to the husbands in 5:25, telling them: “love your wives since Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.” Within 5:25–33, Paul uses the verb ἀγαπάω three times: twice in the imperative voice (5:25, 33), and once as a complimentary infinitive to ὀφείλω (5:28). Thielman addresses the fact that Paul is not instructing husbands to control their wives, which has been normative as seen above. The reasoning is that Christ did not control His Church but reconciled her to God.⁶¹ The model shaped around Christ presents something entirely different.

⁶⁰The role of women in church leadership will be addressed in further detail in the next chapter.

⁶¹Thielman, 378.

Instead, Paul directs the reader's attention to the love of Christ as the reason for husbands loving their wives, as is the rhetorical thrust of the epistle. At the epicenter of this love, Christ gave himself away for the Church. In defining the verb παραδίδομι, Silva points out that the giving of one's body is always qualified by love in the New Testament (1 Cor 13:3; Eph 5:2).⁶² On top of being qualified by love, Belz perceives παραδίδομι as playing into Paul's language for depicting Christ's death (Rom 4:25; 8:32; Gal 2:20).⁶³

The passage is contextualized by biblical imagery and early Christian tradition. Stott surveys the typology of using marriage as a metaphor between God and His people throughout the Old Testament (Isa 54:5–8; Jer 2:1–3; 31:31–32; Ezek 23; Hos 1–3) to the point where Jesus alluded to himself as the bridegroom (Mark 2:18–20; John 3:29).⁶⁴ Cohick pulls on two descriptions from the Gospels concerning to how the bridegroom acted towards his bride, citing the action of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (John 13) and His saying that He came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45; Matt 20:28).⁶⁵ These Gospel allusions to Jesus being the bridegroom of the Church could show that there was an early Christian understanding of the marriage metaphor in practice.

⁶²Silva, “παραδίδομι,” vol. 3, 624.

⁶³Belz, 125.

⁶⁴Stott, 226.

⁶⁵Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 353.

Verses 26–27 explain why Jesus gave Himself up for His Church, “in order that she might be made holy through cleansing her by the washing of the water with the word, so that he might place her at His side as an honorable Church, without having a spot or a wrinkle of any kind, so that she might be found holy and without blame.” Belz signifies that there are three ἵνα subjunctive clauses found in these two verses: that Christ’s self-giving love might sanctify the Church (ἵνα αὐτήν ἀγιάσῃ), might present her with honor (ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἔνδοξον), and that the Church would be found holy (να ἦ ἁγία).⁶⁶ Stephen E. Fowl claims that the cleansing action found here is a reference to Ezekiel 16,⁶⁷ where God cleansed Jerusalem from her blood and adorned her in fine garments (16:9–13), even though the rest of the chapter discusses her adultery with other gods, of which Paul makes no mention. Arnold also pulls on the imagery of Ezekiel, finding it to refer to the imputation of the Holy Spirit, as God said, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses . . . and a new spirit I will put within you” (Ezek 36:25–26).⁶⁸

Cohick contends that this image of washing denotes that Paul saw Christ taking on household tasks that were given to women, creating a contrast between the Christian husband and the culture around him.⁶⁹ Earlier, Cohick argues that by telling husbands to

⁶⁶Belz, 127.

⁶⁷Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 190.

⁶⁸Arnold, 388.

⁶⁹Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 364.

love their wives as Christ loved the Church, Paul “challenges conventional definitions of masculinity,” citing that masculinity was equated with authority in the Roman empire. In this situation, Jesus would have had both His masculinity and His authority taken away by His crucifixion.⁷⁰

If loving one’s wife as a reflection of Christ’s self-giving love for the Church is not enough reason for husbands, then Paul tells them, in verses 5:28–33, to “love their wives as they do their own bodies” (5:28). The apostle drives this point across in 5:29, writing that since no one hates his own body, then why should he hate his wife? Furthermore, “we are all members of his body” and Christ has served the Church (5:30). Reading with the husband as being the head of his wife in 5:23 in mind, Kelvin F. Mutter finds a contrast with Paul and the stoic view of the body. Whereas the body was something for the head to rule over in popular Greco-Roman mindsets, Paul is saying that the body is something to nurture and love.⁷¹ The husband is no longer to treat his wife as a subject to wield authority over, but as a part of himself.

There is a revolutionary implication found within this passage. Gombis proposes that by saying that the husband must treat his wife as himself, Paul is elevating the wife’s cultural value to being equal to that of her husband.⁷² Expounding on this aspect of elevating love, Cohick argues that Paul unveils a subtle internal freedom from God,

⁷⁰Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 361.

⁷¹Kelvin F. Mutter, “Ephesians 5:21-33 as Christian Alternative Discourse,” *Trinity Journal* 39, no. 1 (2018): 16, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (21 September 2020).

⁷²Gombis, “A Radically New Humanity,” 327.

allowing a woman to be her own person which is tied closely to Paul's call for women to be celibate in 1 Corinthians 7:40.⁷³ This elevating love that the husband presents sheds light on the equality of human worth, despite functioning in different household roles.

In 5:31, Paul alludes to a Greek form of Genesis 2:24, which says, "therefore, a man will leave behind his father and mother and will be united with his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." In making this reference to the marriage of Adam and Eve, Belz finds that the apostle is taking the practical statement of husbands loving their wives as themselves and making it a theological statement, adding weight to his charge with a reference to the first example of marriage.⁷⁴ C. Mack Roark finds that Paul is expressing God's unifying intentions in the institution of marriage, and Paul points to how Christ's relationship with humanity creates the ultimate example of such unification.⁷⁵ Paul's exhortation to act in self-giving love is not only backed by practicality, but also is supported by the example set in the Law and, more importantly, by Christ.

Marriage Revisited in Ephesians

Does Paul ask the husbands to submit to their wives? The answer is an upfront "no," but also a subtle "yes." Keener suggests that the wife's submission to her husband is presented as one "particular example" of what all believers submitting to one another

⁷³Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 367.

⁷⁴Belz, 125.

⁷⁵C. Mack Roark, "Interpreting Ephesians 4–6: God's People in a Walk Worthy of His Calling," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 39, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 40, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (21 September 2020).

looks like in practice.⁷⁶ Hoehner draws out the point that “specific roles of submission are related to certain lines of authority.”⁷⁷ If wives are to submit to their husbands because the Church submits to Christ, then a problem occurs when the roles are reversed as Christ does not submit to the Church. Referring once again to Yoder’s idea about the equality of worth is not equal to the identity of role and authority, one must recognize that the *Paterfamilias* has been given authority over his wife. However, Stott warns that authority should also not be equated with tyranny, but with responsibility. Ultimately, the one with authority will answer not only to God, but also to the one whom for whom he has been entrusted to care by God.⁷⁸

The concept of a wife submitting to her husband was nothing new to the Christians in Ephesus, as it was more than likely a cultural expectation. What was revolutionary was the idea of a husband laying down his authority for the sake of his wife. It is exactly this revolutionary idea that one uncovers when reading Paul’s instructions in Ephesians 5:25–33, as he ties marital roles to his understanding of the person of Christ.

It would have been next to impossible for Paul to tell the *Paterfamilias* to give up his authority. Even if it were possible within the Church, the larger culture would not recognize the wife’s authority. However, Belz suggests that Paul is inviting the husband

⁷⁶Keener, 157.

⁷⁷Hoehner, 732–33.

⁷⁸Stott, 219–20.

to use his authority in order that he might humanize his wife by meeting her needs.⁷⁹ The husband is able to empower the wife to use her full potential in the same way that Jesus empowers the disciples to be the humanity that God intended them to be through Jesus' death and the giving of the Holy Spirit. Thielman presents a comparison from Plutarch's view of marriage and Paul's view in the Household Code. Whereas Plutarch advocates for the wife's role of submission out of practicality, Paul's view of her role is formed from Christology when he calls the husband to serve his wife.⁸⁰ The apostle's vision of marriage is shaped by his re-imagining of humanity being renewed in Christ.

The household text addressed to husbands and wives revealed Paul's vision for healthy marriages. Unlike the other Household Codes provided by Greco-Roman culture, Paul personally addresses women, calls on husbands to provide self-giving love to their wives, and ties their duty to their understanding of Christ rather than to mere practicality. As the exegesis moves forward with the other two relationships, which are shorter in textual length, similar themes will be revealed regarding what the apostle says to the *Paterfamilias*, as well as the intention behind these texts.

Fathers and Children (6:1–4)

The Culture of Parenting

Today, young parents will consult books on child rearing and will seek advice from those who are experienced in order to figure out how best to raise a child. There is a

⁷⁹Belz, 263–64.

⁸⁰Thielman, 378.

good sum of opinions when it comes to philosophies and strategies on how to be a quality parent. The quest of parenting in the Greco-Roman era was no exception, which influenced the world in which Paul wrote Ephesians 6:1–4.⁸¹

The Household Codes involving children can be dated as far back as Plato and Aristotle. In his *Laws*, Plato compares mindless sheep without a shepherd to a child without someone to educate him. Plato describes children as crafty and only semi-rational, which is why they need to be instructed on how to be proper humans.⁸² In Plato's eyes, children were something to be controlled. Aristotle's view of parenting was more rational. He compared the father disciplining his child to a king ruling over his subjects. Nevertheless, Aristotle recognized that the king is similar in his humanity to his subjects, as the child is similar to his father.⁸³ Eventually, the son will become the father of his own children, thereby taking up the role of the king over his subjects. In the same passage, Aristotle commends Homer for describing Zeus as a father to both humanity and the other gods as a designation for his kingship.⁸⁴ It is clear that, while reinforcing the idea of authority over children, nevertheless, Aristotle saw children as being equally human as the father.

⁸¹Similar to the Household Codes on marriage, it is primarily the *Paterfamilias* who is addressed in regards to tending to his children, not the mother. The focus here will be on the role of fathers, as they are singled out by Paul in 6:4.

⁸²Plato, *Laws*, 7.808.

⁸³Aristotle, 1.1259.

⁸⁴Aristotle, 1.1259.

Mortality played a big factor in the relationship between parents and children. Cohick states that roughly half of the children born in the Roman empire died before the age of ten.⁸⁵ MacDonald notices that in the first century CE, roughly one of four children would have lost their fathers by the age of fifteen.⁸⁶ These combined statistics create a large pool of mortality within the Roman household. However, in cases where both the parent and child survive through the years, Cohick states that the adult child was expected to look after his parents when they were elderly.⁸⁷

The Roman era depicts a harsh tone in terms of the father-child relationship. Joe E. Trull states that during the peak of the Roman empire, the *Paterfamilias* had absolute power over his children, to the degree that they could be sold as slaves or put to death.⁸⁸ While the *Paterfamilias* could only sell a slave once, Dionysius of Halicarnassus said that if a Roman child was sold into slavery by his father and attained his freedom, then his father could turn around and sell him again, until freedom was attained three times.⁸⁹ However, while this might have been the legal norm, the relationship between the *Paterfamilias* and his child served a utilitarian purpose.

⁸⁵Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 376.

⁸⁶Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Power of Children: The Construction of Christian Families in the Greco-Roman World* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 72.

⁸⁷Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 377.

⁸⁸Joe E. Trull, "Is the Head of the House at Home? (Eph 5:21–6:9)," in *The Theological Educator* 54 (Fall 1996): 86, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (15 October 2020).

⁸⁹Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, vol. 1, trans. Ernest Cary, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 2.27.1–3.

Similar to Aristotle's image of a king guiding his heir, the *Paterfamilias*, with the help of a tutor on occasion, was responsible for overseeing his children's education. Jeffers describes Roman fathers as strict, instilling their children with structure and discipline to keep them productive and not idle.⁹⁰ This process of instilling discipline could take the form of physical force. According to Mark J. Keown, this responsibility was focused primarily on sons who were between the ages of seven and sixteen.⁹¹ The Roman philosopher Seneca instructs parents to "subject the still malleable characters of their children to what will do them good," and to "instill liberal culture" into the children. This process can be done "by means of terror" if the child is not quick to obey.⁹²

Roman fathers also could be seen as caring toward their sons. In his biography of Cato the Elder, Plutarch gives an account of how the Roman senator went to great lengths to provide a quality education for his descendant. Cato held that a man who would strike his child "laid violent hands on the holiest of holy things."⁹³ Not finding it fit to see his son under the authority of a slave tutor, he taught the child in reading, law, athletics, and how to be a proper soldier.⁹⁴ Plutarch's account can testify that, much like today, fathers provided invested interest in their sons' upbringing.

⁹⁰Jeffers, 247.

⁹¹Mark J. Keown, "Paul's Vision of a New Masculinity (Eph 5:21–6:9)," *Colloquium* 48, no. 1 (May 2016): 56, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (6 October 2020).

⁹²Seneca, *Moral Epistles*, 47; quoted in Jeffers, 237.

⁹³Plutarch, "Marcus Cato," in *Lives*, vol. 2, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 20.2.

⁹⁴Plutarch, "Marcus Cato," 20.3–4.

However, while the example of Cato the Elder portrays a devoted and loving parent, this is merely one example among a culture of rigorous fatherhood directed towards children. MacDonald asserts that in most cases, the mother would have functioned as the educator for daughters and younger boys in the house, but under supervision of the *Paterfamilias*.⁹⁵ The general consensus is that children were seen as malleable and that the father's role was to provide them with structure, whether it be personally or facilitated through others.

Children Who Obey

In Ephesians 6:1, Paul specifically addresses the children in the community, saying, “Children, listen to your parents in the Lord, for this is just.” Upon hearing “children,” the English reader might be tempted to read this word in terms of young children before puberty. However, what age range was Paul addressing in his instructions to the “children?” The Greek word τέκνα has a broader meaning than merely young pre-pubescent children.

When was a child recognized as an adult in Roman society? According to Beryl Rawson, the age at which a child fully transitioned to adulthood in Roman culture is unclear, as the marking of adulthood was based on the development of the individual

⁹⁵Margaret Y. MacDonald, “Reading the New Testament Household Codes in Light of New Research on Children and Childhood in the Roman World,” *Studies in Religion* 41, no. 3 (2012): 383, <https://journals-sagepub-com.oralroberts.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/0008429812441340/> (15 October 2020).

child and not on a specific age marker.⁹⁶ She further finds that a son did not start taking on economic responsibilities until his mid-twenties, and he was not trained in military duties until seventeen. Nevertheless, a son who was between the ages of thirteen and eighteen could go through a ceremony of adulthood if his father deemed him worthy of such honor.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, the closest coming-of-age event for daughters was marriage, which could start as early as twelve.⁹⁸ Rawson's account of the stages of childhood in Roman culture shows that there are blurred lines when defining who is a child, since that stage could carry well into someone's mid-twenties with no clear marker.

Now that the range of childhood in Rome has been established, it is time to establish who would have been addressed as children in this pericope. MacDonald argues that while they might be included, this section of the *Haustafel* should not be solely understood as addressing younger children, but rather it is likely that the development and training of adult children could be in Paul's mind.⁹⁹ This argument fits well with the literary context of this passage, as Paul calls on the congregation to be imitators of God, as they are beloved children (ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητά, 5:1).

From this point, the apostle begins to give the readers a new list of instructions. Silva finds that the discipleship of the Church matches the way children should obey their

⁹⁶Beryl Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (New York: Oxford, 2003), 135–36 (E-book accessed on 20 February 2021, from ProQuest Ebook Central).

⁹⁷Rawson, 138–42.

⁹⁸Rawson, 145.

⁹⁹MacDonald, "Reading the New Testament Household Codes," 385.

parents.¹⁰⁰ In some way, the collective readers of this epistle are children who are being disciplined in the ways of the Lord. Lincoln presents the best range of age here, as he considers the fact that they need to be old enough to comprehend Paul's exhortation as well as their relationship with the Lord, yet young enough that they still require discipline.¹⁰¹ Based on Lincoln's observation, it might be best to judge that the τέκνα refers to boys and girls in the community who range roughly from ages ten to twenty-six.

The instruction presented to the children is that they should listen to their parents. Notice that unlike Paul's previous address to wives, the children are addressed with the imperative tense of ὑπακούω. Ben Witherington III draws on the fact that to obey (ὑπακούω) is more "all-encompassing" than to submit (ὑποτάσσω), which is why the imperative is used in 6:1.¹⁰² Paul is calling on children to do more than place themselves under their parents' authority, but to follow through with their instructions. This command might have had gravitas with Jewish children in the community, as Benjamin Sear notes that ὑπακούω, and its root ἀκούω, often were the Greek translations for the Hebrew verb for listening and obeying (שמע) in the Septuagint (LXX).¹⁰³ Sear's observation might add a rhetorical allusion to the Shema of Deuteronomy (Deut 6:4–9),

¹⁰⁰Silva, "τέκνον," vol. 4, 466.

¹⁰¹Lincoln, 403.

¹⁰²Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 335–36.

¹⁰³Benjamin Sear, "The Role of Fathers in the Purposes of God: An Investigation and Application of the Instructions in Ephesians 6:1-4," *Churchman* 131, no. 1 (2017): 59, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (15 October 2020).

with Paul placing the divine will of God into his command. For this reason, the above translation reads ὑπακούετε as “listen,” but with the understanding that it is a listening that requires a responsive obedience.

Paul qualifies his instruction to listen with the phrase “in the Lord.” Roger L. Omanson notes that the prepositional phrase ἐν κυρίῳ is not found in some early manuscripts or citations from the Church Fathers, but suggests that if the phrase was a later addition, then it would look closer to the parallel in 5:23.¹⁰⁴ MacDonald distinguishes the qualifier here with that in the Colossians *Haustafel* commands to “listen” to parents in 3:20, which is qualified with κατὰ πάντα (in everything).¹⁰⁵ Cohick expresses that this preposition modifies the verb rather than the parent, protecting children from abuse by presenting them with the reason for listening.¹⁰⁶ They are to be obedient “in the Lord,” meaning that listening to their parents is a reflection of listening to Jesus. If the children’s parents place them in a situation that is contrary to the values of Christ’s kingdom, then they are first to be obedient to Jesus. Hoehner states that the last phrase in 6:1 reinforces the idea that it is proper “listen” to one’s parents.¹⁰⁷ The command to listen to one’s parents is to also listen to God. Silva adds that obedience in

¹⁰⁴Omanson, 398–99.

¹⁰⁵MacDonald, *The Power of Children*, 68.

¹⁰⁶Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 374, 380.

¹⁰⁷Hoehner, 787.

the Lord cannot be “separated from his messengers and from the message they proclaim.”¹⁰⁸

In verses 2–3, Paul develops his instruction to the children, saying, “Honor your father and mother.” Here, Paul is expounding on the command in verse 1 by undergirding it with a slightly altered version of the Decalogue in the LXX (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16). Hoehner finds that obedience and honor hold synonymous functions in the Old Testament, with severe consequences for those who disobey and dishonor their parents (Exod 21:15, 17; Deut 21:18–21; 27:16).¹⁰⁹ Arnold states that this command is also reiterated in wisdom literature (Sir 3:8; 7:27; Prov 19:26; 20:20).¹¹⁰ Being Jewish, Paul would have taken the Decalogue seriously.

The reason that Paul expounds on 6:1 is multi-faceted and points to the heart of his ethics. Hoehner suggests a long-term objective, finding that instilling obedience to and honor for one’s parents is vital for learning to honor and obey the Lord.¹¹¹ Younger children who learn discipline from their parents are likely to become well-adjusted followers of Christ as adults. MacDonald argues that Paul’s double command, in the tradition of the Torah, points towards the idea that adult children would care for their aging parents (Exod 21:15; Prov 19:26; Matt 15:4–6; Mark 7:9–13).¹¹² This objective

¹⁰⁸Silva, “ὑπακούω, vol. 4, 550.

¹⁰⁹Hoehner, 788.

¹¹⁰Arnold, 416.

¹¹¹Hoehner, 788–789.

¹¹²MacDonald, “Reading the New Testament Household Codes,” 382–383.

would be geared towards the adult children in the community, who no longer are directly under the authority of their parents yet are still tied to their households.

The reason given directly in the text is that the command comes with a promise: “in order that it may go well for you and you will have a long life in the land” (6:3). This statement is not about the absence of suffering, as Cohick notes, because Paul himself was a prisoner for the Gospel (3:1; 4:1) and he prepares his readers to endure suffering (6:10–13). Rather, she suggests that the text is referring to the quality of life.¹¹³ Arnold agrees with this idea, finding that the phrase does not point to eternal life, but rather is in the line of Wisdom Tradition and the expectation, hence “in the land.” Arnold also notes that Paul omits the part in the LXX about the land being the given promised land, allowing this instruction to apply to both Jewish and Gentile readers.¹¹⁴ This clause applies the household role for children to both young children and adult children in the audience, and finds itself lending to both Hoehner’s and MacDonald’s reasons for application. The desire for a good life, centered around honoring parents in the Lord, develops the younger children into God-fearing adults and leads the older children to take care of their parents in the hope that their children also will honor them with care.

Paul’s Vision for Fathers

In 6:4, Paul instructs the *Paterfamilias* with how to fulfill the role of parenting in the Christian community: “And fathers, do not exacerbate your children to anger, but

¹¹³Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 375.

¹¹⁴Arnold, 417.

nourish them in discipline and in the instructions of the Lord.” Gombis recognizes that Paul switches his vocabulary from “parents” (τοῖς γονεῦσιν) in 6:1 to “fathers” (οἱ πατέρες) in 6:4, showing that he is addressing the authority that the father has been given in the house.¹¹⁵ Lincoln also holds this view, considering that the mother had no true legal power over her children compared to the *Paterfamilias*.¹¹⁶ A similar observation is brought up by Keown, who highlights that it is the same children (τέκνα) in 6:1 who are the object of the father’s actions here, and not exclusively sons (υἱοῦς). This observation would suggest that the father is personally responsible for the development of all his children, regardless of their gender. This is a blatant contrast to the average Greco-Roman father who only found himself being responsible for his sons from ages seven to sixteen.¹¹⁷

Unlike the advice found earlier in Seneca’s *Moral Epistles*, which involves father’s being instructed to develop their children by pragmatic use of terror, Paul has something else in mind for the Ephesian fathers. They are told not to provoke their children to anger. Sear suggests that the reason for this prohibition is that instilling anger in them would promote a lifestyle that is counter to Christ’s lordship, as earlier stated in

¹¹⁵Gombis, “A Radically New Humanity,” 328. Also note that both mothers and fathers were addressed in Paul’s LXX quotation in 6:2. If mothers were the focus of 6:4, then he would have used either of the above inclusive ways.

¹¹⁶Lincoln, 399.

¹¹⁷Keown, 56.

the epistle (4:26; 31).¹¹⁸ If Paul is warning the Ephesians to put away their bitterness and not to sin in anger, then the father should avoid any encouragement of such things.

The text shows that the fathers' role is to develop and teach their children. The only place where the Greek ἐκτρέφω, "nourish," is found in the New Testament is Ephesians 5:29, where Paul explains that the husband is to take care of his wife as he does his own body. According to Danker, the verb implies the upbringing and nurturing of the cherished object to which it is directed,¹¹⁹ that being the children of the *Paterfamilias* in 6:4. He is to nourish them "in discipline and the instructions of the Lord." MacDonald argues that the phrase ἐν παιδείᾳ, "in discipline," does not merely include a small child's upbringing in strictness, but also points to the "formation of an adult" in older children. This formation is found in the ways that the children's discipline is united with "instructions of the Lord" (νουθεσία κυρίου).¹²⁰ The father is called not only to cultivate his children's development, but to make sure that they are being formed around Christ's teachings. Jewish fathers would know that part of the Shema, as Sear notes, which involved children having their parents recite the Law to them, and the incorporation of the Law into the regularities of life (Deut 6:4–9).¹²¹ In teaching his children discipline and the teachings of the Lord, the father is equipping them to be obedient children of God.

¹¹⁸Sear, 62.

¹¹⁹ Danker, "ἐκτρέφω," 311.

¹²⁰MacDonald, "Reading the New Testament Household Codes," 384.

¹²¹Sear, 52.

Parenting Revisited

Much like the relationship between husbands and wives, the principle of mutual self-giving love can be found here in the instructions to fathers and children. Although not explicitly stated in this pericope, Hoehner finds that the best model for children, according to Paul, is a set of parents who are obedient the Lord (Rom 1:5; 6:17; 15:18; 2 Cor 10:5; Phil 2:12; 2 Thess 1:8; 3:14).¹²² The father is to teach his children the ways of Christ, passing down the Christian faith from one generation to the next, and the father is to do so without provoking anger in them so as to not create a false depiction of the Father. The image is of a father who is rooted in the Gospel and is discipling his children to be likewise, which can happen only when the father himself is obedient to God. The future hope is that the children will turn around and listen to their parents, as well as honor them by taking care of them in their old age.

Masters and Slaves (6:5–9)

Greco-Roman Slavery

The institution of slavery was widespread in Paul's day and, therefore, was included as one of the key elements of the Greco-Roman household. According to John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, there were more slaves in the Roman Empire than in any previous recorded era.¹²³ Slaves comprised a noticeable demographic in Roman

¹²²Hoehner, 786.

¹²³John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 124.

society. Cohick reports that in the first century CE, slaves made up ten percent of the population in the entire empire, with a jump to thirty percent of the population in the city of Rome itself.¹²⁴ According to McKnight, there were around 250,000 slaves reported living in Rome around the first century.¹²⁵

How were Greco-Roman slaves perceived and treated within the *oikos*? On one hand, Stambaugh and Balch state that there were few, if any, signs of political tension in Rome between slaves and their masters.¹²⁶ On the other hand, J. Albert Harris warns against this logic, as the primary evidence of Greco-Roman slavery is hard to come by, and the majority of what has been uncovered is written from the view of the master, giving the slave little to no voice.¹²⁷ This scarcity of source material presents a challenge in understanding the context of slavery in Ephesians.

Among the source materials available, two factors stand out for forming a context. In his *Politics*, Aristotle defines the humanity of a slave merely as a “living tool.” From the philosopher’s perspective, some people were designed to be enslaved and others to enslave.¹²⁸ However, Seneca the Younger found that slaves and free people comprised

¹²⁴Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 391.

¹²⁵Scot McKnight, *The Letter to Philemon*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 14.

¹²⁶Stambaugh and Balch, 124.

¹²⁷J. Albert Harris, “Paul and Slavery,” in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2003), 575.

¹²⁸Aristotle, 1252a–1256b.

the same humanity. The only difference between the two classes is that slaves were unlucky, either by birth or circumstances.¹²⁹ The humanity of a slave would still be perceived, but without legal rights or status in society, and thus slaves were totally dependent upon their master for life and liberty.

Roman slaves could attain their “freedom” from their masters. McKnight lists that there were three different types of freedom that could be attained. The first, and least common, type of freedom granted the former slave full citizenship. Second, a slave could be freed, but due to past actions, would not be granted citizenship, and thus were unable to inherit or to establish a will. These types of freedmen could, however, work their way into citizenship. The final type of “freedom” was for slaves who could never truly be citizens.¹³⁰ Even upon attaining their freedom, most slaves still worked for their former masters, and these freedmen continued to carry the stigma of slavery with them.¹³¹

Slaves Who Obey

Once again, the reader finds that those under the authority of the *Paterfamilias*, the slaves, are addressed first. Paul commends slaves to obey their human masters “with fear and trembling,” but also with “sincerity of heart” as they obey Christ (6:5). Thielman notes that by describing the master as human or, as Paul says, “fleshly,” *σάρκα κυρίους*,

¹²⁹Seneca, “Master and Slave,” in *Epistles 1–65*, trans. Richard M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 301.

¹³⁰McKnight, *The Letter to Philemon*, 14.

¹³¹McKnight, *The Letter to Philemon*, 14.

Paul implies that there is a better master who is worthy of obedience.¹³² In the next verse, Paul calls them “slaves of Christ” (δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ), who are called to do the will of God from their souls (6:6). Lincoln suggests that those who are already slaves are being invited to be slaves to Jesus, and that in serving their human masters, they are serving their true Lord.¹³³ In creating a contrast between the human master and Christ, Keener explains that Paul “relativizes the real authority of the master” by pointing to Jesus as the direct authority.¹³⁴

What the reader finds in the *Haustafel* is that Paul reevaluates the role of slaves and why they are to be obedient. According to Gombis, the motivation for obeying one’s master is no longer to be out of fear or survival, nor is it merely to help contribute to an ordered society. The motivation for obeying is to be found from a desire “to cultivate an eschatological focus” that is centered around Christ, seeking the reward from the true Lord.¹³⁵ Trull continues this point, finding that obedience is based in the slaves’ “sincerity of heart,” with their hope set on God’s ultimate justice.¹³⁶ The service of the slave in the house is no longer one of utilitarian purpose—the service of a “human tool”—but is one that is pointed to Christ and the building of His kingdom.

¹³²Thielman, 405.

¹³³Lincoln, 420.

¹³⁴Keener, 205.

¹³⁵Gombis, “A Radically New Humanity,” 329.

¹³⁶Trull, 93.

God is the Master in His House

Turning to the slave owners in the community, Paul tells them to “do the same” to those under their service (6:9). Keener suggests that the Greek phrase, τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς, should be a literal reading of “do the same things to them,” pointing to mutual submission.¹³⁷ While Keener is not wrong in asserting the theme of self-giving love, this translation undermines the role of the authority that masters have over slaves. Hoehner proposes that the phrase is directed at a “general idea” of integrity that is pointed to Jesus. As the slave serves his or her true master, Christ, so too is the earthly master to serve Him.¹³⁸ However, if the Household Code has revealed anything, this general idea implies that the human master is called to sacrifice his authority for the sake of the slave; this action mirrors Christ who forsook His authority to serve humanity.

This principle is furthered in the second part of Paul’s instruction for slave owners, saying that they are to “cease from threatening them” (6:9). For Paul, the just treatment of the oppressed would be an ethical and personal position. Cohick points out that, being a Jew, the apostle was well aware of Israel’s history of slavery and oppression under Egypt, and how God instructed His people not to mirror such behavior (Deut 15:15; 24:17–22).¹³⁹ According to Keener, the wisdom tradition of Ben Sirach continues this view of slavery, saying that masters are to love slaves, even granting them freedom

¹³⁷Keener, 206.

¹³⁸Hoehner, 813.

¹³⁹Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 389.

(Sir 7:20–21) and treating them with kindness (Sir 10:25; 33:30–31). Slaves are called to be treated like family by their masters.

Slavery Revisited

Instructing a slave to obey his or her earthly master is not a groundbreaking claim. However, Witherington III finds that this position is no longer the status quo for the households under Christ’s authority. The will of the master is still the command, but Paul finds that “the will that must be done, even by the slave is the will of God.”¹⁴⁰ In this final section of the Household Code, Keener claims that the apostle presents slaves and masters equally in God’s eyes, and subtly discards the notion that institutional slavery was part of the Lord’s design for humanity.¹⁴¹ While Paul may not have had the cultural authority—which unknowingly he has today—to attempt to abolish the institution of slavery and the stigma carried by its victims, his Household Code humanizes slaves within the Christian home as a window into the larger cultural reality that is the Lord Jesus’ kingdom.

Conclusion: Family Under Christ’s Authority

Paul’s intention in writing to the Ephesians is to unfold the administration of God’s grace (3:2), so that “through the church the wisdom of God . . . might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (3:10). Paul continues

¹⁴⁰Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians*, 341.

¹⁴¹Keener, 205.

by saying that he prays for his readers that the Spirit would empower them, and that Christ would dwell in and be made known in them (3:14–19). Paul is writing these words to those with whom he spent many years during his missionary journeys, strategically equipping churches in a highly populated and trafficked area where those congregations could potentially multiply in order that the Church might grow throughout the region. This growth is to be done for the equipping of “the saints for the work of ministry” by those who are called to lead until everyone comes to “the unity of faith and of knowledge of the Son of God” (4:11–13), thus continuing the work of subjecting all things in Christ (1:10).

Throughout the rest of Ephesians, Paul lists how the churches are to live in order to serve this meta-purpose. The central idea is that those in Christ no longer live as Gentiles (4:17), but rather are called to be “imitators of God” and are to live in the example of Jesus (5:1–2). This new lifestyle is seen clearest within the home. As Wright says, the point of the *Haustafel* is not simply to blend in with the social order of the day, but to redefine one’s identity in Jesus. This is much deeper than living moral lives. The meaning behind the Household Codes is that, in Paul’s vision, home life becomes the “vital context” where “following and imitating the Messiah” are sustainable for the people of God.¹⁴² The churches’ pursuit to have the ways of Jesus known by and practiced within the larger outside world is done by having these ideals become the cultural center of individual Christian households.

¹⁴²N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God: Parts 3 and 4*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 1108.

In contrast to the philosophies around the apostle, “Paul’s political vision is radical in that all members of God’s new people enjoy dignity and honor as humans.”¹⁴³ In lieu of Christ’s Gospel, God is reshaping humanity anew and, through Paul’s vision, is calling that renewed humanity to live out their calling. As Mutter notes, the Household Code found in Ephesians is part of a larger point that is targeted at the community’s life “in Christ” (4:1–6:20), with individual households functioning as a “subset to community.”¹⁴⁴ How then does the Household Code that is found in Ephesians play into the larger narrative, not only of the epistle, but of Paul’s missional and ecclesial framework? A few concluding principles will be proposed.

The Paterfamilias Lovingly Gives Over His Authority

The *Paterfamilias* of the household is called to subject himself to the self-giving love of Christ. Being an imitator of Christ means laying down the authority of the *Paterfamilias* to serve his wife, his children, and the slaves in his house, in the same way that Jesus—to whom all authority is given—served humanity and His disciples. The set of roles instructed to the *Paterfamilias* are the most remarkable sections of the Household Code, as they are unexpected in light of the cultural norms. The husband has the legal right to lord over his wife—who has little to no legal rights on her own—yet he is called to serve her by cultivating an environment for her to mature in her identity in Christ. The husband has every right to be passive regarding his children, or he can forcibly bend them

¹⁴³Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 176.

¹⁴⁴Mutter, 12.

to his will; however, he is called to disciple them by instructing them in the Lord and by being patient in his discipline. Being the owner of the slave, the master could extract abuse where he deems fit; nevertheless, he is told to withhold threats and to treat those under his authority with dignity. Once again pointing back to Yoder's role of identity, while the *Paterfamilias* is placed in the role of authority in the house, that authority is to be wielded in a way that elevates the equality of human value in those under his authority. Thus, the *Paterfamilias* should elevate the identity of Christ in the members of the home.

A Culture of Reciprocity

The Christocentric and self-giving love shown by the *Paterfamilias* ideally should then be reflected by those with less, or completely without, authority. The household roles of wives, children, and slaves already were solidified by cultural expectations. However, instead of these roles pragmatically functioning to create an ordered society, they have been repurposed by the Lord to mirror the way that the Church views authority as a whole. Paul neither sought to eradicate the cultural views of his time, nor was it likely that he could, with his limited influence in a power-driven empire. However, in Christ, Paul sought to reshape the understanding of authority in the lives of believers and the need to dignify those without authority. This culture of Christocentric reciprocity should create several outcomes.

The Implications of Household Codes and the Gospel

If the wisdom displayed in Paul's Household Codes are practiced, then every facet of the household should be transformed. Marriages now should reflect the larger narrative of the Gospel. As the husband and wife love each other, they proclaim the self-giving love that is shown in the relationship between the Lord and His people. Fathers should be found taking on the responsibility of discipling their children in the ways of the Lord. This task is done both implicitly, by openly living out the lifestyle and by loving the children's mother, and explicitly, by passing down the teachings of Jesus. The expansion of the Church, then, is naturally found in passing on the heritage of faith. While slaves may carry the stigma of their status culturally, they are found free in the culture of God's household. These implications of a household culture of mutual submission lead to one final principle to take from the Ephesian Household Code.

Households as a Model for Church Community

The combined principles may demonstrate that individual households are to function missionally as small churches within the city, with the Gospel being lived out in the most public and most private places. This chapter has demonstrated how Paul instructs households in his letter to the Ephesians. Authority is to be utilized for the betterment of those under it. The mature are to instruct the immature in wisdom and in the scriptures. A culture is to be maintained where everyone is known and knows the Lord. The structure of life presented in the Household Code is one in which all are unified in the call to live under the Lord Jesus' authority and to grow in their understanding of the Gospel.

Perhaps Paul saw this structure to be a starting point for expanding the Church. As stated in Chapter 1, unity is one of the key themes in the Pauline corpus. The heart behind Ephesians 5:21–6:9 is that families might find themselves unified with each other and with the Lord. As individual households live out these instructions, they could naturally form small church communities of families. This strategy falls in line with Paul's message to the Ephesians and his overall missional vision to plant and establish churches throughout the world.

Families and Church Community?

This chapter has observed Paul's vision for households to be encompassed by a culture of self-giving love. This culture is one that mirrors the relationship between Christ and His Church, where authority is used to lift up rather than abuse those under it. In a way, the economy of the home becomes similar to that of a small community of Christians. Yet, how exactly does understanding the meaning of the Pauline Household Code inform one's understanding of the structure of church communities and the global Church? The next chapter will answer this question by examining one of Paul's epistles written to his disciple Timothy in Ephesus in order to parse the role families have in the expansion and establishment of the Church.

CHAPTER 3

A FAMILY OF FAMILIES: CREATING A BIBLICAL ECCLESIOLOGY THROUGH HOUSEHOLD ORDER

Introduction

Chapter 2 exegeted the Household Code found in Ephesians 5:21–6:9, compared it to the household philosophies of Paul’s surrounding culture, and derived key principles from the text. It concluded by proposing that Paul desired authority figures of individual households to cultivate a culture of self-giving love that mirrors Jesus and the Gospel. Nevertheless, how does this theology of the family inform Paul’s ecclesiology? How do families being centered on the Lordship of Jesus inform how one views Paul’s church planting strategy? This chapter’s objective is to answer these questions by observing 1 Timothy through the lens of the household. Studying the theology of family found in 1 Timothy will naturally build upon the principles of chapter 2, as the epistle will display Paul’s developing concern for the churches in Ephesus.¹

This chapter will examine Paul’s first letter to Timothy, establishing its connection to Ephesus and the continuity of Paul’s teachings there. Then the qualifications for leadership in 1 Timothy will be examined, noting the significance for household order as one example. This examination will unfold the image of church communities functioning in the manner of a household. This image then will lead towards

¹The discussion of 1 Timothy’s Ephesian audience will be established later.

reading 1 Timothy as one large Household Code by looking at the terminology of the “household of God” in 3:15. This study will connect the individual household to the local church community, as well as the global Church.

A Household Code in God’s Households: 1 Timothy

First Timothy is the natural place to investigate how families and household order relate to Paul’s vision for church communities. The epistle has a robust connection with Ephesians, and it can help extract what Paul was possibly thinking throughout an extended period of time. In examining 1 Timothy, one can potentially gain a firm understanding of the role of the Household Code in Ephesians 5:21–6:9. However, some groundwork must be laid for the epistle in order to engage with it properly.

Authorship and Setting of the Pastoral Epistles

Similar to Ephesians, 1 Timothy has been critically debated regarding its stance as authentically Pauline. These accusations against Pauline authorship are generally presented due to these epistles’ vocabulary and theological emphasis, as well as their continuity with the book of Acts. A brief defense now will be given for Paul’s authorship of these epistles.

Regarding the Pastorals’ unique vocabulary style, Polhill argues that Paul often utilized co-writers and amanuenses to compose his letters. Using different co-writers and secretaries logically would result in a difference in style and vocabulary.² Referring back to Chapter 2, Paul was occasionally the mind behind the letter that someone else’s hand

²Polhill, 400.

wrote.³ Towner notes that when 1 Timothy is placed next to other “Deutero-Pauline” epistles such as Ephesians—whose authorship was strongly argued for in Chapter 2—the dissimilarities with the rest of the Pauline corpus drop significantly.⁴ The letters can remain Pauline in thought while being different in style.

One should also not discredit the Pastorals because they do not unescapably align with the chronology found in Acts. Polhill reminds his readers that the book of Acts is open-ended, with Paul in Roman imprisonment. He also states that Acts was not written to be a complete biography of Paul’s life, giving room for later Pauline activity upon his release.⁵ There is much about Paul’s life that is not known before Acts; therefore, it should also be acceptable that there are aspects of his life that are unknown after the account ends. William D. Mounce argues that even though the background of 1 Timothy presents some questions, Pauline authorship still creates a more solid setting than a fabricated authorship developed by later readers.⁶

Purpose of 1 Timothy

Before examining Paul’s understanding of family and church government, it is important first to understand his reason for writing to Timothy. According to Luke Timothy Johnson, Paul is writing to Timothy in response to a crisis that was created by

³See page 19.

⁴Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 25.

⁵Polhill, 403.

⁶Mounce, cxxix.

weak leadership in local church communities.⁷ George W. Knight III further adds that Paul instructs Timothy to correct false teachings in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3), namely from two heretics called Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1:20), and to reclaim orthodoxy through new leadership.⁸ From a practical standpoint, 1 Timothy appears to be written as a maintenance guide for churches. However, the reason behind such maintenance is important to address.

There appears to be a theological significance concerning why Paul wants false teachings corrected. According to R. Kent Hughes, the epistle is written to equip Timothy to teach and re-establish “the proper ordering and conduct” or “sound doctrine” in the Ephesian churches.⁹ Hughes says that the reason for Timothy to institute sound doctrine is so that “through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10).¹⁰ One must remember that Paul is writing to his disciple who is tasked with stabilizing the same geographical group of churches that were addressed in Ephesians. Therefore, the instructions for healthy churches in 1 Timothy to be seen as a sort of follow-up letter. As discussed in Chapter 2, Paul intended the believers in Ephesus to live in a full

⁷Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, Anchor Bible Commentary, vol. 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 148.

⁸George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 4–5.

⁹R. Kent Hughes, “1 Timothy,” *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 17.

¹⁰Hughes, 19.

understanding of the Gospel so that they might participate in its expansion. The contextual clues of false teachings in 1 Timothy suggest that the local communities are not living up to Paul's intentions and need to be restabilized. Hence, Johnson notes an emphasis on "healthy training" (1:10; 6:3) and "training in godliness" (4:7).¹¹

Household Order as a Qualification for Leadership in 1 Timothy

In line with the overall purpose of the epistle, Paul lists several qualifications for those who want to serve in local church leadership. In re-shaping the standard for leadership, Timothy is instructed to work towards protecting sound doctrine being taught in the Ephesian churches. Among these qualifications, household order is found as playing a key role in finding healthy leadership.

Qualifications of Bishops

In his letter, Paul lists a specific set of qualifications for those who wish to serve the churches as bishops. In Paul's list of qualifications for bishops in 1 Timothy 3:1–8, two of the fourteen are centered around the candidates' household role (1 Tim 3:2, 4–5). The first qualification is that they be "married only once" (1 Tim 3:2). One could assume that this qualification is met with a prerequisite of marriage. However, Fee rightly argues against such an interpretation, seeing that emphasis of the verse is placed on the "one" wife.¹² J. N. D. Kelly argues that in saying "one wife," Paul refers to men with a strict

¹¹Johnson, 148.

¹²Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 80.

sexual ethic and who refrain from re-marriage. This refraining would take place in either situations of divorce or the death of a spouse.¹³ While Kelly's point is in line with Jesus' and Paul's teachings on divorce (Matt 5:27–32; 1 Cor 7:12–13), nevertheless, the request for a widower to refrain from remarriage may not have the strongest bearing in light of the later instructions for widows to remarry (1 Tim 5:3–16).

The qualification says something about a bishop's fidelity. Towner suggests that Paul is referring to faithful men who are monogamous and who safeguard themselves from promiscuity.¹⁴ Towner's claim is backed up by Thomas C. Oden, who notes that in the first century, port cities such as Ephesus were known for cultures of infidelity and divorce.¹⁵ This qualification can be seen as an application of the Household Code instructions to the *Paterfamilias* in Ephesians 5:25–33, that a bishop should withhold his right to divorce in order to love his wife as himself and to mirror God's steadfast love to her. It appears as though Paul is requiring those in leadership to be men who are faithful to long-term commitments.

A few verses later, Paul says that a candidate for bishop "must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way—for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?" (1 Tim 3:4–5). Johnson posits that the qualification in 3:2 helps establish

¹³J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1960), 75–76.

¹⁴Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 250–251.

¹⁵Thomas C. Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 141.

a stable household culture, which appears as a separate qualification listed in 3:4.¹⁶

Johnson’s logic builds to demonstrate that one qualification of healthy leadership should lead to more signs of health. If the *Paterfamilias* is faithful to his one wife, then he is on track toward leading his household well.

The phrase “manage his own household,” which appears twice in verses 4–5, is worth observation. The Greek work προΐστημι is first seen as an attributive present participle in verse 4, modifying “must” in verse 2, and again in verse 5 it is seen as an aorist infinitive. Johnson interprets προΐστημι to denote the action of managing or governing, translating it to “ruling well.”¹⁷

However, much like “submission” in Ephesians 5:21–22, the terms “manage” found in the NRSV and Johnson’s “ruling” need some clarification in today’s culture. One direction toward understanding the heart behind προΐστημι is to view it in light of self-giving leadership. In this passage, Fee defines προΐστημι as a leadership that is “guiding” and takes care of those under its authority.¹⁸ In verses 4–5, Dunn interprets προΐστημι as one who has been given leadership and “takes initiative on behalf of” the household.¹⁹ Ronald Clark Jr. understands προΐστημι to mean the *Paterfamilias*’

¹⁶Johnson, 214.

¹⁷Johnson, 216.

¹⁸Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 82.

¹⁹James D. G. Dunn, “The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 11 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 806.

involvement with his family, and not about dictating to them.²⁰ Essentially, the bishop is to love and lead his family by cultivating self-giving love. This household management required for bishops in 1 Timothy does not reflect an understanding of authoritarian and dictating management, but a form of leadership that is self-giving and seeks the betterment of those being led.

Under this form of management, the bishop functions as the *Paterfamilias* for the church community. One sees that a healthy bishop is required to live out the instructions to the *Paterfamilias* in the Ephesian Household Code, representing loving and self-giving leadership to all household members. In doing so, he is qualified to function in such a way with a church community. According to MacDonald, the bishop and the *Paterfamilias* both have roles in defining and defending tradition as well as creating a culture of virtue.²¹ Mounce observes that the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3 express Paul's vision for church leaders who are morally upstanding and able to shepherd their communities towards obedience to God.²²

These qualifications describe men who are self-giving individuals who utilize their authority to instruct churches into Jesus' lordship lovingly. Put another way, the qualifications for bishops describe a similar image to the *Paterfamilias* in Ephesians

²⁰Ronald Clark Jr., "Family Management or Involvement? Paul's Use of προΐστημι in 1 Timothy 3 as a Requirement for Church Leadership," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 9, no. 2 (2006): 252, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (21 September 2021).

²¹Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 156–157.

²²Mounce, 187.

5:21–6:9. Now the importance of the Pauline Household Codes in church leadership is becoming clear. If, as suggested in Chapter 2, households participating in household order reflect and teach Christ’s self-giving love to one another, then each church community can be seen as a family of families that is participating in the principles of household order.

In verse 5, Paul compares the individual household to the church community that the bishop oversees, calling it “God’s church.” According to Mounce, by comparing the individual household to God’s Church, Paul is implicitly calling church communities God’s household, a statement that will become explicit in 3:15.²³ Witherington III believes that in making this comparison, Paul is overlapping physical households with the spiritual household of God as church communities.²⁴ The community gathers as members of one unified household, centering themselves as God’s children. It is as St. John Chrysostom said, “the Church is, as it were, a small household, and as in a house, there are children and wife and domestics,” and with it a need for healthy authority, like a father, and partners in that authority, such as a wife.²⁵ Without household order that is rooted in Christology, the model by which the bishop pastors his community becomes abstract.

²³Mounce, 178.

²⁴Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy and 1–3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 238.

²⁵St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the First Epistle of Paul to Timothy*, 10 (NPNF 13:439).

Qualifications of Deacons

There are not many differences between the qualifications of a bishop and a deacon involving household order that are worth noting. Johnson defines the Greek term *διάκονος* to mean “helper,” with the main role being one who helps the bishops lead the church community.²⁶ Therefore, it makes sense that those who help maintain sound doctrine should be held to a similar standard. More or less, these instructions in 1 Timothy 3:12 use similar vocabulary to 3:2–5. Paul tells Timothy that those who hold authority as deacons are to “be married only once” and to “manage their children and their households well.” Mounce notes that, like bishops, these qualifications demonstrate individuals who lead by service and not by dictation.²⁷

The prime difference is the explicit inclusion of women leaders in the role of deacon. There is some debate whether *γυνή* in 1 Timothy 3:11 should be translated as “wives” of the deacons or “women” who serve as deacons. The NRSV is just to translate the passage to say “women.” Much can and should be said about this translation and the ordination of women, yet only a brief justification shall be presented here for the sake of staying on task. Johnson lists several reasons: the qualifications of women in 3:11 mirror the male qualifications listed in the pericope and places them within the same moral standard; there is no clear mention that the women in 3:11 are the wives mentioned in 3:12, and Paul makes explicit mention of a female deacon in Romans 16:1.²⁸ In the same

²⁶Johnson, 226.

²⁷Mounce, 205.

²⁸Johnson, 229.

way that the bishop acts as a *Paterfamilias* to the churches, the deacons function in the authority of a mother to her children.

Conclusion

The above observations on Paul's qualifications for leadership in 1 Timothy demonstrate that household order was necessary for healthy churches. Dunn argues how first-century churches would gather in the homes of community members, and how houses became "the model for good order" within those churches and their gatherings.²⁹ Suppose someone with authority in his household cultivates a culture that manifests the ways of Christ in his house. In that case, it is a likely assumption that such culture would be cultivated in a community that is functioning as a family of families.

A person's function in the Household Codes takes on a larger role within the context of church community. The *Paterfamilias* is called to love and to lead not only his household, but the other households in his church. Parents are no longer just to instruct and disciple their children, but to instruct and disciple the other children of the church (cf. Titus 2:3–8). The influence of authority has a wider reach within the context of multiple households. The consensus of Paul's qualifications for leadership shows that leaders who are living the principles of the Household Code are important to help establish sound doctrine and right living. Even so, 1 Timothy demonstrates that the importance of right living within the home context goes deeper than the local church.

²⁹Dunn, "The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus," 804.

The Church as God's Household: 3:14–15

The last section examined the importance of household order being practiced in local church leadership. Now it is time to examine the grand scheme of why orderly living is important in Pauline churches. This grand strategy is revealed in 1 Timothy 3:14–15, which shows Paul's intent for writing the epistle. Here is where Paul tells his disciple that he is writing to him so that he “may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). The following section will examine what Paul means by the “church of the living God” as God's “household.”

The Household of God

Directly after Paul presents his list of leadership qualifications to Timothy, Paul tells his disciple of his desire to visit him in Ephesus: “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God” (1 Tim 3:14–15a).

The issue here is to define the phrase οἶκος θεοῦ which the NRSV translates as “the household of God,” and why an individual's behavior in it matters. This phrase encapsulates the essence of the epistle as one large Household Code in which the universal Church functions as a macrocosm for Christian households. However, there are some scholars who take a stance that this “household” should merely be interpreted to mean the house churches in the Ephesian area that Timothy is tasked to stabilize. Among these scholars, Mounce finds that the use of Household Codes in the Pauline corpus to be

too common to have such a high level of significance in 1 Timothy.³⁰ Mounce defends this interpretation by noting the absence of a definite article associated with οἶκος θεοῦ. Therefore, he concludes that Paul was not addressing *the* household of God as in *the* Church, but simply the church communities in Ephesus.³¹

However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Paul is referring to the universal body of Christians as God’s household. Reading the passage to mean the universal Church is in line with Paul’s Jewish worldview, Dunn posits that the phrase “household of God” is a single cosmic household that emphasizes the apostle’s Jewish identity, thereby affirming the oneness of God and His desire to commune with a distinct people.³² A cosmic household might be the best way to understand this passage. Korinna Zamfir notes that in the LXX, God’s οἶκος often refers to the temple (Deut 23:19; Ps 41:5; 115:10; 121:1; 1 Kgs 5:3–5; Ezra 6:12–17; Dan 5:22–23).³³ The image of the temple alludes to God’s physical house on the earth during Israel’s monarchy.

The terminology of God’s house also appears in Ephesians 2:19. Here, Paul describes the unifying work of Christ, saying that disciples of the Lord are “members of the household of God.” Cohick notes that by entering into membership of God’s

³⁰Mounce, 221.

³¹Mounce, 220.

³²Dunn, “The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus,” 784.

³³Korinna Zamfir, “Is the *ekklēsia* a Household (of God)? Reassessing the Notion of οἶκος θεοῦ in 1 Tim 3.15,” *New Testament Studies* 66, no. 4 (2014): 517, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (19 September 2021). (c.f. Knight, 180).

household, οἰκεῖος, those in it are no longer “alien,” πάροικος, to God.³⁴ This language is universal to anyone who considers himself to be a son of God and other believers to be his brothers and sisters in Christ. After all, Stott notes that earlier in Ephesians, both Jews and Gentiles are “adopted” as God’s “children,” making all who follow Jesus to be siblings under one holy Father.³⁵ Paul goes on to say that this household was “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone,” comprising one “holy temple” (Eph 2:20–21).

It is possible that Paul is referring to the collective Christian body as God’s household. The whole letter gears its reader toward such a mentality. Towner notes that Household Codes are utilized throughout the letter (1 Tim 2:1–15; 3:4–5, 12; 5:3–16; 6:1–2), thereby shaping Christians’ identity around household order.³⁶ Paul sees that the Ephesian Christians need to participate in household order for orderly houses, which contribute to orderly communities of families, which contribute to orderly living among these communities as one cosmic household.

The Church of the Living God

Paul defines the household of God further by calling it “the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15b). The terminology used here is ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος, which can roughly be translated as “a people belonging to the

³⁴Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 196.

³⁵Stott, 105–106.

³⁶Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 273.

living God.”³⁷ This phrase builds upon the last one to define the Church and the importance of right behavior for its members. Knight explains that Paul is both restating and highlighting the “awesomeness” of God’s household by expressing what comprises this cosmic household by saying “the church of the living God.”³⁸

Is Paul referring to the global Church or to a single Christian community? While ἐκκλησία can mean a casual gathering or assembly of people (Acts 19:39), Danker notes that it can also describe a collective people with “shared belief” or interest, including Israelites who assembled “to hear the law” (Deut 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 31:30; Acts 7:38).³⁹ He further explains that this collective group of people can refer to the “global community of Christians,” especially when attached to the genitive θεοῦ (1 Cor 10:32; 11:16, 22; 1 Tim 3:5).⁴⁰

Zamfir posits that ἐκκλησία in this passage does not mean one household church, but a “larger social entity” comprised of several households.⁴¹ She further states that just as the Greco-Roman ἐκκλησία describes a unified community, so the Christian ἐκκλησία is unified to “accomplish legal and liturgical acts” for God within a public sphere.⁴² The ἐκκλησία is a manifestation of a heavenly city within the public realm, acting as God’s

³⁷Author’s translation.

³⁸Knight, 180.

³⁹Danker, “ἐκκλησία,” 303.

⁴⁰Danker, “ἐκκλησία,” 304.

⁴¹Zamfir, 513.

⁴²Zamfir, 514.

agents of kingdom building (Gal 4:26; Phil 3:20; 1 Thes 4:17).⁴³ It is best to understand ἐκκλησία in 1 Timothy 3:15 to mean the collective body of Christians and their communities that are centered around the living God.

How One Ought to Behave As a Member of God's Household

Now that the global Church has been established as God's cosmic household, it is time to address the ethical behavior of that said household. Paul tells Timothy that he is writing to him so that he "may know how one ought to behave" in God's house (1 Tim 3:14–15). This behavior will be examined as the behavior of a family member in God's household.

If the "household of God" and the ἐκκλησία represent the global Church, then what does it mean for one to behave in it? It could suggest a calling for orderly gathering of Christians throughout church communities. However, Fee notes that Paul appears less concerned with providing a manual for the services and government of God's household than he is concerned with the conduct of its members.⁴⁴ Johnson argues that "behavior" is a weak translation of ἀναστρέφω stating that it means a "manner of life" under leading principles.⁴⁵ David C. Verner finds ἀναστρέφω to indicate how one conducts one's entire

⁴³Zamfir, 515.

⁴⁴Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 92.

⁴⁵Johnson, 231.

life as a Christian.⁴⁶ Just as a son's behavior, both inside and outside the house, represents his father's household, so the Christian's actions represent God's household.

According to Verner, 1 Timothy 3:16 functions to undergird Paul's point in 3:15, adding Christological value.⁴⁷ Christians are to behave under God's fatherly authority to uphold His truth like a pillar for the watching world. The truth that the Church upholds is given in the Christ hymn in 3:16, "He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory." Paul's point is that Christians cannot proclaim the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection if they are living outside God's authority. As Witherington III proposes, Paul is concerned with how either good or bad Christian ethics shape thoughts about the Gospel in the minds of non-believers.⁴⁸

Conclusion

The above has demonstrated that just as families that are shaped by household order are important for establishing orderly church leaders and communities, so orderly church communities are important for an orderly global Church. The household of God is the Church, through which God reveals the Gospel to non-believers. The godly lifestyle of the members of individual church communities is important to maintain for

⁴⁶David C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 71 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 109.

⁴⁷Verner, 111.

⁴⁸Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 245.

establishing future Christians. This lifestyle is maintained by ensuring that mature leaders in healthy families are shepherding their communities in the ways of God.

Conclusion: Church as a Family of Families

In response to the question presented at the beginning of this chapter, household order is essential because the house is the basic unit of the Church. MacDonald posits that 1 Timothy views households as “the public manifestation of church identity,” where the private and public expressions of Christian faith are most intertwined.⁴⁹ Suppose the *Paterfamilias* is not cultivating a culture centered in the Gospel. In that case, his family cannot participate in cultivating that culture in their community which is a representation of the Church. Conversely, suppose healthy leadership with respect for authority is established in the household, and the household is being led in the ways of Jesus. In that case, that household has a positive impact on their community and the Church.

Previously, chapter 1 brought up Aristotle’s view that the household was the basic unit of government.⁵⁰ According to this logic, one cannot get to the emperor’s authority without parental government in place. The world could only appear Greek if the individual houses that made the empire lived like Greeks. This current chapter concludes by suggesting a similar idea: the household is the basic unit of the Church, and the Church will only function as it is intended to if her families are disciplined in Jesus’ ways. As Towner says, “. . . just as the household was regarded as the epicenter of social life in

⁴⁹MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, 171.

⁵⁰See page 4 above.

the Greek and Roman world, so too in the Christian community the household is to provide the first authentic reflection of Christian faith and godliness.”⁵¹ The household is a small public expression of God’s household.

It is possible that Paul saw his strategic church planting in such a manner. Dunn sees a natural connection in 1 Timothy among the house (2:9–15), the local church (3:1–13), and the global society (2:1–2).⁵² If God is to be revealed to the world as the ultimate authority, then Christians are required to order themselves around God’s order of life. This means that order must first be established in the home, then in communities, and then to the rest of the world. This is why Paul saw it as important that leaders in churches be quality leaders in their homes. Simply put, the Church is a family of families, and living out the principles of the Pauline Household Code is how one ought to behave in God’s household.

Chapter 1 introduced some of the fundamental problems surrounding Household Codes in the Pauline corpus. Chapter 2 then exegeted and interpreted one of the primary Codes concerning the individual family. Chapter 3 has examined the impact and importance of individual families participating in household order regarding the Church. Now it is time to conclude with the final chapter, which will glean pastoral insights for how household order can be practiced in the Church of the secular and Western worlds.

⁵¹Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 31–32.

⁵²Dunn, “The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus,” 804.

CHAPTER 4

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF FAMILIES: HOW HOUSEHOLD CODES REVEAL PAUL’S UNDERSTANDING OF CHURCH AND FAMILY

Introduction

After examining the Pauline Household Code as presented in Ephesians 5:21–6:9, and seeing how it is integrated into the framework of 1 Timothy, this thesis concludes that the Apostle Paul had a theology that was based around the family. His teachings have constructed a clear understanding that households are instructed to live their domestic lives as expressions of their faith. The previous chapter showed how healthy families are to operate within the context of local communities and in the Church as the household of God. This final chapter will summarize the research that was presented thus far as a biblical theology of families, as well as posit applications for how a theology of families can help churches today.

A Biblical Theology of Families: Individual Homes to Global Communities

Chapter 1 introduced the concept of Household Codes and the problem that they present to the modern reader. It explained that the term “Household Codes” is used to define a collection of New Testament and Early Church pericopae that address counterpart groupings of typical households, and how they ought to behave regarding each other. However, over time, these Household Codes were taken out of context by an

authoritarian hermeneutic, by those with power to abuse those without power. In response, a hermeneutic of skepticism has become popularized, implying that the Household Codes can be ignored, and contexts can be fabricated surrounding them. Therefore, the hope is that this thesis has presented a meaningful middle ground for interpreting the Household Codes; one that demonstrates Paul's intentions for families and their role in the Church.

Chapter 1 also briefly examined Greco-Roman philosophies about the household. It was stated that Aristotle believed that an empire could not function unless individual houses operated within said government. According to Aristotle, the family composed the basic unit of a larger society.¹ An empire cannot truly be Greek unless the individual families behave as Greek households.

Chapter 2 exegeted one of the essential Pauline Household Codes in Ephesians 5:21–6:9. This passage was taken as the primary Pauline Household Code for this thesis, rather than Colossians 3:18–4:1. Colossians and Ephesians are classically held in close proximity to each other in scholarship and structure, with the similarities being most prominent in their Household Codes. James P. Hering provides an exhaustive side-by-side comparison of the two Household Codes in their critical Greek form, highlighting the similarities and dissimilarities.² Hering also notes that the instructions to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:21–33 are expounded upon twenty times more than that of the

¹Aristotle, 1.12.1–14.

²James P. Hering, *The Colossian and Ephesian Haustafeln in Theological Context: An Analysis of Their Origins, Relationship, and Message* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 137–39.

instructions in Colossians 3:18–19.³ Out of the three relationships found in the Pauline Household Codes—husband and wife, parent/father and children, and master and slave—the marriage relationship was found as most critical in today’s present context. Therefore, the Household Code found in Ephesians was selected for this thesis as the basis for understanding Paul’s vision for household order.

The exegesis of Ephesians 5:21–6:9 compared the popular Greco-Roman philosophies on family in Paul’s day with his instructions to Ephesian families. Once it is placed into its context, the controversial message of the *Haustafel* becomes a clear vision for a new humanity under Christ’s lordship. As Gombis points out, “Paul’s political vision is radical,” changing the ethos of the household, so that all in Christ’s new humanity receive “dignity and honor as humans.”⁴

This new reality for humanity is most intimately displayed in household order. Stott states that the *Paterfamilias* uses his authority not to deprive those under him, but to honor the *Imago Dei* of his wife, children, and slaves. The *Paterfamilias* is called to serve those under his authority. This authority over the household is synonymous with responsibility for the health of its members. This authority is seen not as something to rebel against, but is a source of security for those under it.⁵ Thielman continues that, in the same way that Jesus does not forcibly control the Church, but reconciles her to God, so the husband is called not to control his wife, but to love her in a manner that leads her

³Hering, 141.

⁴Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 176.

⁵Stott, 219–220.

towards Jesus' lordship.⁶ Similarly, Sears states that parents—namely the father—are called not to wield their authority over their children in a way that leads to anger and resentment even toward Christ's authority.⁷ But, according to Hoehner, parents are called to disciple their children, teaching them how to live out the Christian faith.⁸ Finally, Keener finds that both the slave and his master are placed under Christ's authority; and, they share the condition of humanity. Therefore, the slave is to be treated with dignity and respect.⁹ In reaction to the Christo-centric, self-giving love of the *Paterfamilias*, those under his authority reciprocate this love back to him. Chapter 2 concluded by stating that the Christian household is centered around Jesus' self-giving authority and reciprocal love, thus displaying the Gospel message in daily living.

Finally, chapter 3 demonstrated how the principles of the Household Codes are woven into the framework of 1 Timothy. First, healthy leaders of churches are instructed to have a healthy leadership of their families. Elders and deacons must first show evidence that they can steward their authority well in their homes before they are placed in positions of authority in a church community, as the *Haustafeln* present the household as a microcosm of Christian community. Verner, who sees the entirety of the Pastorals as a series of Household Codes, says that Paul “presents material concerned with behavior in the church according to a schema that is closely associated with the early church's

⁶Thielman, 378.

⁷Sear, 62.

⁸Hoehner, 786.

⁹Keener, 205.

ethical codes for household life.”¹⁰ The reason why local church leadership is intertwined with familial authority is because Paul saw the Church as “the household of God” (1Tim 3:16).¹¹ The Church, under the self-giving authority of the Lord, is comprised of communities under the self-giving authority of leaders, which are comprised of families under the self-giving authority of their corresponding *Patersfamilias*. In short, the Household of God functions as a family of families. And as such, it should operate in household order, where authority is not abusive, but instructive, thereby leading others into the ultimate authority of the Lord Jesus. Now it is time to build applications upon the data concluded around the Pauline Household Codes.

Developing Household Codes into Pastoral Application

It is now time to apply the research that is presented in this thesis in practical ways by examining how a biblical theology of families is relevant to churches in a post-modern context. Understanding and exegeting the various *Haustafeln* of the Pauline corpus is a gentle gesture towards developing churches with strong families. However, biblical study often can be found woefully incomplete without also exegeting the context and how one can apply the truths of scripture. The following will provide a brief list of how a theology of families can shape the way that pastors care for their families and communities.

¹⁰Verner, 127.

¹¹See pages 78–79 above.

Family as an Expression of Church Discipleship

One of the concluding points in chapter 2 was that Ephesians 5:21–6:9 presents families as a model of church communities. In his preface to a mass service, Martin Luther proposed a “truly evangelical order.”¹² This order would be a smaller service that was not held in public places, but was held in private places by those who desire intimate Christian community, “alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacraments, and to do other Christian works.”¹³ The idea for a small service was to allow those who desired to live the Christian life to be made known and formed in Christ through sincere relational equity by those leading the service.¹⁴ Many contemporary churches today have adopted Luther’s idea of the smaller service through the formation of small groups.

However, such small groups are at risk of being nothing more than social clubs for the members of the larger church body. James K. A. Smith suggests that unless Christian communities worship in ways that are formed around habits that reinforce the narrative of the Gospel, they are in danger of partaking in liturgies of the secular culture.¹⁵ This predicament is where cultural commentator Mark Sayers proposes the idea

¹²Martin Luther, “The German Mass and Order of Service (1526),” trans. Augustus Steimle, rev. Ulrich S. Leupold, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 63.

¹³Luther, 64.

¹⁴Luther, 64.

¹⁵James K. A. Smith, *You are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016), 74–75, 80.

of “remnant groups,” which are pockets of Spirit-filled believers that are centered around discipleship to renew the larger congregation’s spiritual ethos. The idea of a remnant group suggests that the remnant is unified by living a sincere Christian lifestyle that subtly ministers to the greater church, which contributes to the community’s ministry to the secular culture.¹⁶

The exegesis of Ephesians 5:21–6:9 in chapter 2 concluded by suggesting that Paul intended households to be unified under the Lord in a paradigm of living that is similar to the wider church community. The household under Christ’s authority is one in which the Gospel is declared in the most primitive relationships. The young are being taught and disciplined by their parents—parents who self-sacrificially love each other, and in doing so, proclaim Christ. The implications posited by the Pauline household suggest that such a household culture creates a “truly evangelical society” or the “remnant” model for church communities.

In viewing the home as a small church, the Pauline Household Code should serve as a call for husbands/fathers/parents to take responsibility for the spiritual well-being of their homes. In the same way that each household in Paul’s day had its own economy, it can be assumed that modern Western households have an economy. Authority over the household can either be delegated or assumed. The principle derived from this thesis is that such authority should reflect Christ’s self-giving love to humanity being extended to every member of the Christian household.

¹⁶Mark Sayers, *Reappearing Church: The Hope for Renewal in the Rise of Our Post-Christian Culture* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019), 165–166.

The conclusion of chapter 3 stated that the Christian household reflects the grand Household of God (1 Tim 3:15). Leaning on Mounce's findings, this thesis views the cosmic Household of God is made manifest by church communities that consist of individual households.¹⁷ The churches are under the pastoral leadership of elders and deacons, who are assumed to be leading their own households well. Under this Church-family paradigm, the family is seen as an extension of the family of God, which according to Smith, in baptism, the Christian enters God's household, which is a family that "traverses the boundaries" of residential households.¹⁸ The Church becomes the Christian's primary family. Within the primary family of God, David Matzko McCarthy states that the domestic household then becomes one's "secondary family," which is defined by the ethics and structures of the primary.¹⁹

This understanding of family shapes the way that individuals operate. The husband loves his wife as an expression of his worship to the Lord, and thereby, creates a culture of spiritual formation in his house. The wife reciprocates her husband's love through trust and mutual submission. Marriage becomes a sacramental display of the relationship between Jesus and the Church. Similarly, parenting in the primary family is seen through the lens of discipleship. The ways in which the children in a household are disciplined and taught now are connected directly to how they understand loving the Lord

¹⁷Mounce, 178. However, unlike Mounce, this thesis contended the Church is *the* Household of God. See pages 74–77 above.

¹⁸Smith, 117.

¹⁹David Matzko McCarthy, *The Good Life: Genuine Christianity for the Middle Class* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 52.

and respecting His kingly authority. The parents are not only to teach their children with information about the Gospel, but also to show how to participate in loving the Lord. As MacDonald posits, the individual households are where holy lives of Christian virtue are lived out in the mundane reality of domestic life.²⁰ The holy domestic life lived out by multiple families will lead to a culture of interdependence.

Family of Families as a Culture of Interdependence

Obviously, the dynamics of the American household, like those in the first century, vary from home to home. No two households will have the exact same dynamics, and each family will look different from other families. A household could be touched by a death in the family or by the Western realities of no-fault divorce, thereby leaving the household with one less parental figure. Perhaps a married couple is unable to have children of their own. These situations, and others, result in complexities that shape the forms and functions of domestic living, making the hope of household order more difficult to live out in daily life. Thankfully, this is why the Church operates as a family of families, creating a culture of interdependence. The following is a brief glimpse into a church community that operates in such a culture in light of the Household Codes.

When individual households view the Church as their adopted primary family, these households take on the familial responsibilities of the community. A marriage is no longer considered a mere private relationship, but is a sacred covenant that the community promises to help uphold according to the covenant stipulations. Marital crisis

²⁰MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, 171.

is met with loving intervention and assistance, and the promise of Lord's marriage to the Church is reminded. If the unity of the marriage is a sacrament for the unity of Jesus and the Church, then the older men and women, with decades of covenant fidelity, are most valued aids to the younger couples. Younger Christian spouses are taught how to love self-sacrificially by older spouses or widows.

The interdependence of the family of families is also vital in parenting. The children of the Church are also the future of the Church. The responsibility of discipling the young within the community is in the hands of all parishioners, yet specifically those who serve in leadership or hold authority in their households. This communal responsibility for the young members is how the love of Jesus is shown to the single parent or to the parent-deprived child in the community. This process could start at a child's baptism or dedication, or once the parents enter church membership. The responsibility boundaries of the nuclear family vanish in the family of families, and in doing so, responsibilities are carried out according to Paul's wish for the Ephesian church (Eph 3:2–19).

The discipleship of the Christian community's children is not just for infants and toddlers, but also for teenagers and young adults. As noted by Rawson, the Greek word τέκνα (children) in Ephesians 6:1–4 can refer to any child from early adolescence though his or her mid-twenties.²¹ The youthful adults in the Christian community still should find themselves being established by older figures of authority within the context of the Church. The hope here is that in being led by experienced authority figures, the young

²¹Rawson, 138–142, 145.

adults of the Church will find themselves surrounded by wisdom as they enter into parenthood and into other places of authority. In turn, this loving wisdom that is given by the older people in the community is returned by the younger people providing care for them. This loving care is especially impactful to the widowed and to those who do not have their own children around to provide such care. Thus, the Pauline Household Codes find their meaning and relevance in the Church.

Conclusion

Much more could be said about the practical applications of Household Codes in Western culture. Many other Household Codes exist outside Ephesians and 1 Timothy, from 1 Peter 2:15–3:7 to the ones found in Early Church documents, such as *The Didache* 4:9–11 or *1 Clement* 21:6–16.²² However, there simply is not enough room in this thesis to delve into the depths of theology presented in these texts. This thesis has merely scratched the surface, opening the door for further conversation both in the biblical academy and in the confessing Church.

The purpose of this thesis was to observe a pattern within the Pauline corpus, in order to better understand Paul's theology of the family. It was proposed that when one reads the Pauline Household Codes not from a hermeneutical viewpoint of authoritarianism or skepticism, but from a viewpoint that seeks to contextualize Paul, then the Household Codes present a robust understanding of domestic life under the reign of Christ. This thesis has demonstrated that Ephesians 5:21–6:9 presents a redeemed

²²Holmes, n.p.

culture of self-giving love, which reflects the image of the Church and her communities in the household. The hope is that modern church communities might have the imagination to recapture Paul's vision for the family of families.

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