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Presentation Transcript
How God Works
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Good day to all. This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries.

Our title today is *How God Works*.

I just to be a counselor at an elementary school. And after I'd been there two years, our principal retired. We all learned the name of the incoming principal, and immediately people began to try to find out what she was like. What would working with her be like? What kind of changes would she make? What's her organizational style? Another personal change that some might be more familiar with would be, "What's the new pastor like?" Do you remember that one? The antennae come all the way out, don't they? We all wonder, when any kind of upstream change occurs, "How will it affect me – an us?" There's usually a bit of anxiety around it.

But have you ever wondered what *God* is like? I mean, He's coming to be our boss down here some day, right? At least, that's what He tells us. And what will God want of us when we're finally in His Kingdom, working in His organizational system? I mean, it's a pretty big question, isn't it? After all, it's forever. Have you ever had a boss you couldn't satisfy? Or one that disrespected you? Well, you might say, "Yes, but God's not like that." Oh? Well, if He's not like that, then what *is* He like? What are we in for? Well, let's take a look at that today – how God works with His staff, how He organizes His forces to accomplish His great feats. What's His system like? How is it organized? Amazingly, it's in the Bible from beginning to end. There are probably *thousands* of references to it.

Let's start first, if we going to learn about how God going to treat us, let's think about how God relates to Jesus. Let's look in John 1:1 through 5.

John 1:1-5 – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without him was not anything made that was made.*

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Let's stop that quote right after *without Him was not anything made*. We don't need to read the rest of it. It seems clear, from this, that the Word – that is, the one who became Jesus – has *always* been with the One called God here. He's called the Father in the New Testament, as well. And the Word – or Jesus – is God also. And He was the One who created the universe. So let's look at that knowledge at work in Genesis 1:1 through 25. I'm not going to read every word of it, but we can get some of it.

Genesis 1:1-6 – *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Who was that that did that? The Word, right? Jesus became the Word – or Word became Jesus. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said....* Every time it says, "And God said....," something big happens from here on out. Verse 9:

V-9 – *And God said...verse 11:*

V-11 – *And God said...verse 14:*

V-14 – *And God said...verse 20:*

V-20 – *And God said...and then in verse 24:*

V-24-25 – *And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds – livestock, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth according to their kinds. And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind.” And God saw that it was good.* So who’s doing that? The Word, right? At least, that’s what it sounds like. Right? I mean, with God, sometimes, you don’t always know what’s going on, but, if Jesus is the Word, and the Word created the universe, then that’s what it’s okay to think.

Now look in this: Genesis 1:26 – the next verse.

V-26 – *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”* So, oh, there’s more than one of them there. Right? Who’s the other one? Well, they’re both there.

So, you know, we have this idea of God off in heaven, with Jesus, the Word, down on the earth, but *both* of them were right there. Doesn’t it say that? There they were, working together, conferring, talking about it. But I played a bit of a trick on you. Jesus and God are not bound by time and space. They are both everywhere all at once. Right? When we hear of God the Father on His throne in heaven, that’s so that we can know who is in charge. It’s talking about His office. So while He’s there, just as much, He’s also here. What can we say about this without overstepping, or reading in, or assuming? Well, one really big assumption I made in my earlier Christian life was to assume that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. Well, you might say, “But He *is*.” Well, if that’s true, quote me a scripture that says that. Well, John 1:1. No, it doesn’t say that. It says that He was One that created the earth. It doesn’t say He was the God of the Old Testament. And there were two of them there in Genesis 1. Right? So it’s not there. You can’t find a scripture that says exactly that. They work together. They have different roles and tasks. So, would it be safe to say that?

Is there any illumination on the roles of Father and the Son in the Bible? Well, hundreds of them. But let’s look at just one for now – 1 Corinthians 8:6. Paul’s talking here to the Corinthians in church, and he says:

1 Corinthians 8:6 – *Yet for us, there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we exist.* Different, right? Jesus is the one that created us, but He did that at the behest of the Father. So, it’s God’s plan – Father’s plan – and Jesus is helping Him with it. God is the one that initiates it, and Jesus is the one that carries it out – probably a huge overstatement, but roughly that – from this verse – from the Father, through the Son. It all comes from God the Father. It’s His plan, but comes through Jesus Christ, who is the Word. He’s the prime mover. He executes God’s

will.

So Jesus and God work as One for the same purpose, which comes from the Father. And Jesus executes His Father's plan – the plan that is His. So it's safe to say that God's will is higher than Jesus' will. Right? God is *over* Jesus in the way a good father is over his son. He's not pounding Him into the earth, as a malevolent ruler, but as a loving Father.

How does the Father feel about Jesus? Is there anything about that in the Bible? Well, let's look in Mark 1:9.

Mark 1:9 – *In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son. With You, I am well pleased."* So the good Father shows up at His Son's baptism.

So, while God is higher in the hierarchy of God, He loves Jesus. He trusts Jesus. He give Jesus a lot of good work to do and many rewards. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords forever. That's what He's called. So God the Father is a ruler, but He's a benevolent one – something we don't often see on the earth among men or women very often. Everything the Father does – or, in some cases, doesn't do – is for the benefit of those under Him in authority. Because that's what He's like. He's love. That's what John tells us. So there's something really important about how God works. He does have all control and all power, but He doesn't use it to squeeze people down or hold them back. He uses it out of love to help them.

Okay, so that's how God feels about Jesus. How does Jesus relate to the Father? Well, Luke 22:42:

Luke 22:42 – *Father, if You're willing, remove this cup from Me.* Jesus said that the night before He was about to be crucified. He knew what was coming. He perspired blood He was so anxious about it. Then He said: *Nevertheless, not My will, but Your's be done.*

In another place, He said His food was to do the will of the Father. That's what propelled Him, and drove, and energized Him. So Jesus puts His will behind or below the will of the Father. Here's another one. It's in John 6:44. I just quoted that to you without quoting the scripture – *My food is to do the will of the Father* is in John 4:34. Jesus told His disciples that God the Father is the one who calls, not He Himself, though He also said that it was His job to seek and to save those who are called. But who's calling them? God the Father. He told them also that *no one* but the Father knows the day and the hour that He, Jesus, will return to the earth. So there are some things He doesn't know about what the plan is. Why would we say that? That God wants to withhold it from Him? I don't think so. I think it's that God is waiting for conditions to be met. And He's the One that's going to pull the trigger on that, if you'll pardon that expression. He also said that while He *is* the head of the church, it's not *His* church. It's the Church of God. It's not

the Church of Jesus. It's the Church of God. And that's the Father.

The biggest clue about how the two of them feel about each other are the terms *Father* and *Son*. God is a good, loving Father to Jesus, and Jesus is a good, loving Son to His Father. They have a great relationship. They have each other's backs.

Now let's take a step down the hierarchy to Jesus and the church. So much to learn here. In fact, this whole church thing is to help us learn how to fit into God's family – how we're going to play our roles. Let's look – John 17:9. This is also the night before He died. He's praying to God the Father. And He said:

John 17:9-10 – *I am praying for them – that would be the church. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom You have given Me. For they are Yours. All mine are Yours and Yours are Mine. And I am glorified in them.*

So while it's God's church, Jesus is the head of the church. So God *delegated* the headship of the church – of all of His people – to Jesus. So He's the delegator – an awesome delegator. He's not stingy with His power and control. He doesn't have to micromanage everything. He let's Jesus do a lot of things for him. That God has given Jesus authority over His church is an incredible compliment to Him. It glorifies Him.

A bit later, I'm going to quote a scripture that will completely freak you out. It's going to blow your mind. It's going to shine a bright light on all of this for you and just completely snap it into focus. But I've got to make some other points first.

So, Jesus is over us, like God the Father is over Him. That's the pattern that's set. In John 15:13, Jesus said:

John 15:13 – *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

Perhaps we could say that Jesus loves us like the Father loves Jesus. Notice, too, that this kind of love that Jesus has for His church is *sacrificial* love. You know, another way to think about that, that I've thought about often in the past, is that God also gave up His Son for the church, so His love toward the church is sacrificial as well. They both love and protect us like parents protect their children, because that's what we are. And they're good parents. That's what they're like.

So, the pattern we're seeing is *family*. Right? That's one way to describe it. So, Jesus is a great team player, and He also is a great delegator. So He knows how to be cooperative with those above Him in the hierarchy, and He knows how to be an inspiring leader to those under Him in it. He's a delegator. In Ephesians 4:11, we can read:

Ephesians 4:11-16 – *And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and*

teachers – wow! All of those offices, or positions, or tasks, jobs in the hierarchy of God’s system. And He generously passes out authority in the church – not only authority, but spiritual gifts to make us powerful in doing the Father’s will in the church – and out of it, as we interface with people outside of the church. ...*to equip the saints* – verse 12 – *for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God – to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.* Why does He do this? So that we may no longer be children. Right? He’s about maturing us to be in His family. He’s not worried about keeping us down. He wants to build us up. *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head – into Christ.* We’re to become just like Him in our ability to lead others and follow others. ...*from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

So He shares opportunity. He shares responsibility and accountability with us to help us grow to be like Him. So here’s what’s happening. We’re seeing a pattern here in the way God works. He loves Jesus. Jesus loves him. They work cooperatively in different roles to accomplish the plan that the Father has laid out. And Jesus is to the church like the Father is to Him. He loves us like us like the Father loves Him. We love and try to submit to Jesus, because we know He loves us. He delegates responsibility to us to help us learn to be like Him and the Father. So the God family is a hierarchy.

You know, I run into people now and then that have abdicated their responsibility, as parents to their kids, and they try to be friends with them. Well, if they put hierarchy first, and the kids know who the head of the family is, then it’s a lot easier to be friendly, but you have to play that role first.

So, God’s family is a hierarchy, but it is based on sacrificial love, *not* self-interest. That’s the difference between all the kingdoms of that have existed in the world and God’s Kingdom. All of those people that were kings, in days of old, ruled over their subjects with self-interest being the primary element there.

Okay, so now I’m going to quit preaching and go to meddling. Husbands and wives. And now we’re going to come to that mind-blowing snap-it-into-focus scripture I told you about – the one that opens it up for us. It’s in Ephesians 5:31.

Ephesians 5:31 – *Therefore a man shall father and mother, and hold fast to his wife, and the two of them shall become one flesh.* Now that’s not the mind-blowing part of it. Here it is: *The mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*

Ohhh...so marriage is also a part of this hierarchical, loving government. Jesus said, “In the

Kingdom, there will be no marriage, because there will be no gender,” so why did God create us male and female? So that we could understand how to be in a family – in *God’s* family. This mystery refers to Christ and the church. What mystery? Well, husbands and wives. So there’s one huge difference, however, between the relationship between Christ and the church and a married couple. The man is not perfect like Christ is. And neither is the wife. Men inherently do not know perfectly how to protect and care for their wives like Christ does the church. And women do not perfectly know how to respect and cooperate with their husbands like Jesus does with the Father.

So why did God pull this cruel trick on us? Well, it’s *not* a cruel trick. It’s so that we can learn how to work in the Kingdom and the family of God. And struggling is how we work. Paul gives us instruction about how to conduct this relationship, and he says two really, really important things. Here’s the first one. It’s in Ephesians 5:21.

Ephesians 5:21 - *...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.* That’s how the relationship is supposed to work.

A lot of people think that, because it’s hierarchical – the husband dominating the woman – he’s the boss.... That’s not what he said. He said, “...submitting one to another.” Since it’s not just like Jesus and Father, where the Father and Jesus are so connected that the Father knows what Jesus needs and wants, and is of a mind to provide that for Him, the husband and wife have to communicate and work together to make things work that way. While the husband is in the place of Christ, as the head to his wife, is *not* Christ, and he ought to know that he needs help, advice, support, open communication, feedback so that he can do a good job. And his wife, since she is not Christ either – who *always* supports the Father – needs to respect her husband. And she needs feedback on that, too.

And this relationship, as we talk about it out of the pages of the Bible – that’s the only thing I’ve quoted to talk about the relationship, right? – this outrages many people in our society today. They *hate* it, because they have seen it done imperfectly so often. And, you know, I can see how some people could be embittered. But most people’s relationships in the world do not have that cooperative, mutual relationship. It’s one of self-centeredness. There’s a battle going on between the two of them to make sure they get what they want.

The second really important thing Paul says helps us understand why we don’t need to hate marriage with the men higher in the hierarchy. Here it is – Ephesians 5:25:

Ephesians 5:25 – *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water by the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*

I had a man come to me once, who told me that he was having trouble with his wife, and that he got angry with her, and said something really insulting to her. And he said, “I’m actually insulting myself when I say that to my wife. How stupid am I!” I knew he wasn’t far away from getting over his problem. But most men aren’t like that.

Let’s think about a marriage constructed this way. When the man loves his wife as much as he loves himself, and he has her back, and he’s concerned about her eternal salvation, and wants to be a good husband so that she’ll have an easier time of fulfilling her role to him,, so that she can be a part of Christ’s body, without spot or blemish, instead of making unilateral and self-centered decisions for the marriage and the family, he wants to know what the family needs, so he asks his mate and his kids, and he tries to provide a solution, with their help, that meets everybody’s needs. That puts everybody’s needs on the same level as our own. Now, if you think about that, what does that look like? It looks like a team. That’s what it looks like.

Now, no people that I know of are against teamwork in marriage. That’s what everybody wants, right? So, with the two working together to take care of each other, and meeting everyone’s needs, things change. Who’s in charge becomes very much less important, if everyone’s needs are met. That’s how God works.

You know, all the innumerable multitude, and the millions of angels, and the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures, and all those beings that are around God’s throne? They’re not sitting there chafing away because God’s in charge. They like it that way. God is good. So Jesus loves the church, and the church loves Jesus. Jesus and the church are one. Husbands, love your wives. Wives love their husbands. When you do that, you’re one, too.

So do you see the pattern? Do you see the pattern – how this works? God loves Jesus. Jesus loves God. Jesus loves the church. The church loves Jesus. Husbands love their wives. Wives love their husbands. So it all works together. It makes us one when we do that.

But there’s another level. It’s in Ephesians 6:1.

Ephesians 6:1 – *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

A woman said to me once, “We women have to submit to everybody – God, Jesus, our husbands.” No, it’s not like that. Do you have kids? Are there any women that supervise employees? Well, if you do, then you have a responsibility to take care of them, just like Christ cares for the church.

And all of you young people, you know, right now it’s your time to learn how to be good children to your parents – to be cooperative, to give them feedback, to make your needs known, to go with the decisions of your parents, because your time is coming. One day sooner than you think, you’ll be in their position, and you’ll have to how to do what they do. And you will wish

for children who are easy to work with – cooperative and appreciative.

But look with me here at another thing he said. It goes even deeper than this. In Ephesians 6:5:

V-5 – *Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ. So bondservants are people that sold themselves to work for others to pay their debts, or to get free food. They didn't really have employees as much as they had bondservants back in those days. So, if you're an employee or an employer, and you're a Christian, you have to fit into this hierarchy, too. You have to do it the way God says to do it, if you want to be a part of God's Kingdom. ...not by the way of eye service, as people pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive back from the Lord, whether he's a bondservant or is free. You know, whatever position you're in, you can always please God. Masters, do the same thing to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. You know, whatever we dish out is coming back around.*

So what do you know? It's not just that wives have to submit to husbands. It's across the board in all hierarchical relationships. See, it's not an evil plot to suppress women or children. It's God's way of teaching us all about how it's going to be in His Kingdom and what we're going to have to learn how to do – which is to work cooperatively with the people over us and under us in the hierarchy. There's always going to be a hierarchy with God, because that's how He is.

So God gives us all opportunities to lead, to support in almost all our relationships. Why again? Well, because that's how God is. And if you hope to be happy in His family, we better become skilled in playing both of those roles.

We could go a lot further, but that's all the time we have for today. Don't forget to comment on the Website – liferesource.org. Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.