

Relationships for our new life in Jesus (Proverbs 1:8-9 & Col 3:18-4:1)

07-October-2018

We're continuing our series on the Apostle Paul's letter to the church of the Colossians. So please have your Bibles turned to Colossians chapter 3 - we're starting at verse 18 and going through to chapter 4 verse 1.

Let me ask God to help us in our understanding of this passage.

Let's pray...

Recap/Relationships

Last week we finished up by saying that when we believe in our Lord Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead

It's like our old sinful life is done away with

And we now have a new life in Jesus

The Apostle Paul described it in terms of taking off the old sinful dirty clothes of our old life - and putting on new clean clothes for our new life in Jesus

With these new clothes on

Paul said God wants us to live a new life centred on Jesus

And so this week Paul describes what our relationships should look like - if our lives are centred on Jesus

Our relationships are important

After all God made us as relational human beings

[PowerPoint 1-Relationships]

God created us in his image (Gen 1:27)

And God said it wasn't good for a man to be alone (Gen 2:18)

God created us as relational human beings because He is a social God -
God Himself lives in community within the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Our relationships are meant to be loving ones

Why?

Because as 1 John 4:8

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

So if God is love - it stands to reason that our relationships should be loving ones

Which is why Jesus summarized the 10 commandments in Mark 12:28-31 as:

Loving God

And loving others

And our purpose in living - is to bring glory and honour to God (Isaiah 43:7)

So in our Bible passage today - the Apostle Paul sets out how our relationships should be - if they are to be loving relationships that bring glory and honour to God

First he looks at Marriage relationships in vv18-19

NEW LIFE - MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIPS (3:18-19)

See v18

[PowerPoint 2a-v18]

Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Immediately women hear the word **submit** - they can go into a tail-spin.

But the word submit does not have anything to do with men being better or smarter than women

The Greek word for submit is a military term

In the army - if we have a captain - it doesn't necessarily mean that the captain has more ability or is braver or of more value than the soldiers - but for the sake of good order - someone has to take the lead

It's the same in a football team - the captain of the team is not always the best player in the team - but again for the sake of good order in the team - someone has to captain the team

That's the way God has designed households

He has put the man in charge of the household

In Genesis 2:18

[PowerPoint 2b-Gen 2:18]

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Now God could have given Adam another man to help him - or a dog or a horse - but he gave Adam - Eve - a wife to be his suitable helper

This doesn't mean Adam is better or smarter than Eve - but that they have different roles - the man to lead - the woman to be a suitable helper

And the man is meant to be the head of the household.

Ephesians 5:23 says:

[PowerPoint 2c-Eph 5:23]

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.

So the husband is head of the wife -

But look at the context of this marriage relationship - it is a picture of the relationship between Jesus and His Church - the body of believers

So a husband needs to head up his family - like Jesus heads up his church

That's not like a dictator, not bossy - not arrogant - not mean - but in the same way Jesus loved his church

How did Jesus love His church?

He laid down His life for His church

He sacrificed Himself for His church - He put himself last and His church first

So if the husband loves his wife like that

The wife will have no trouble submitting to Him - because the husband will be putting his wife first and himself last - he will be making godly loving decisions that will have the best interest of His wife at heart - and this will be **fitting to the Lord** - it will be bringing glory to the Lord - and respecting God's wishes for good and loving order in the household

If the husband loves the wife like Jesus loves the church - then the wife will submit and follow the husband to the moon and back.

On the other hand - if the husband doesn't love the wife like Jesus loves the church - then the wife will not submit and won't follow the husband to the bus stop!

They are some exceptions:

- If the husband is violent or abusive - physically or emotionally - the wife doesn't have to accept that or submit to it. And may have to leave the marriage!
- If the husband cheats - the wife doesn't have to submit to that either - but may forgive and reconcile and recommit in some cases
- If the husband expects the wife to sin - the wife doesn't not have to submit to that either

All these exceptions are not acceptable because they would ***not be fitting to the Lord***

There is another circumstance where the wife may submit to the husband to bring glory to God...

For example if a wife is in a relationship with a husband who does not believe in Jesus - 1 Peter 3:1 says this:

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,

So a believing faithful wife may lead her unbelieving husband to faith in Jesus

V19 says:

[PowerPoint 3a-v19]

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

Husbands are then told to love their wives and not be harsh with them

The word for love here is the Greek word - *agape*

This word is the word used to describe how God loves us so much that He sent Jesus (John 3:16) to die for us

[PowerPoint 3b-agape]

Agape love is a caring love, concerned for the well-being of the other person, without any expectation for anything in return. It's a sacrificial love. It's a love that loves and keeps on loving no matter what. It's a love that continually practices self-denial. It's a love that at times loves the unlovable. Because if you think about it - our sin makes us unlovable to God - but he loves us anyway and sent Jesus to give us the opportunity to be forgiven - even though we didn't deserve it. The Bible calls this undeserved love from God - GRACE. That's *agape* love - showing grace - underserved love over and over. That's what husbands are to do. Show God's love to their wives.

The verse also says the husbands are not to be harsh - the word literally means bitter - don't be angry or hold grudges or look for revenge - instead be patient and long-suffering and forgiving

[PowerPoint 4-Advice]

Christian counsellor Gary Smalley gives these 2 pieces of advice:

1. *Anger is to marriage what termites and rot are to trying to rebuild a home.*
2. *The key to forgiving is to become soft and tender with the person. The first step is become soft in your mind and spirit. Lower your voice and relax your facial expressions. As Proverbs 15:1 suggests: "A gentle answer turns away wrath"*

[PowerPoint 5-2 books]

I can recommend 2 of Gary Smalley's books

One for husbands

If only he knew – a valuable guide to knowing, understanding and loving your wife

One for wives

For better or for best – understand your man

SO when we put verses 18 and 19 together

The wife will submit to the husband as the head of the household - because the husband is loving her in such a Christ-like manner - that she won't be able to help herself but to submit and follow her husband's lead

Some challenges:

[PowerPoint 6-Challenges]

Husbands - are we taking the lead in the families' spiritual life - initiating prayer times, quiet times, devotions and bible study - with our wife and our family - or have we abdicated that responsibility to our wives?

Husbands - are we loving our wives like Jesus loves the church - sacrificially - agape like? Or are we being a bully, or angry or bitter or harsh? What corrections are necessary? Confess them to God and repent - and ask for God's help with them

Wives - are we submitting to our husbands as God's good order suggests? Or are we undermining or disrespecting his leadership or criticizing our husbands too much. What corrections are necessary? Confess them to God and repent and ask God to help

Next Paul turns to parent/child relationships in v20-21

NEW LIFE - PARENT/CHILD RELATIONSHIPS (3:20-21)

And the context here is children that live in the home

For the children who don't live at home

There is still the 5th commandment *to honour our father and mother* - which means making sure our parents are always okay - and loving and respecting them as the parents God gave us

[PowerPoint 7-v20]

For children in the home

V20 says

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Obey here means - listen to and follow the parents' instructions

Rules are important for good order - God gives us rules to protect us and keep us safe and for the reason that - it pleases the Lord

This is the pattern that God Himself establishes in the Trinity

The 1st person of the Trinity - the Father exercises authority over the 2nd person of the Trinity - the Son - who submits to the Father's authority.

So if Jesus - the Son - always obeys the Father's will - then it's good enough for children too

[PowerPoint 8-Challenges]

Challenge: As grown up children - are we honouring our parents? Do we need to confess something to God - and take some corrective action?

Challenge: As children living with our parents - are we obeying our parents?

This shows we love our parents, because we want to please them. And it shows we love Jesus - because it pleases Him when we obey our parents? Do we need to confess and take some corrective action?

V21 says:

[PowerPoint 9-v21]

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Just as children have a responsibility to obey their parents

Fathers (parents) have a responsibility to not embitter (literally provoke or stir up) their children

Parents can be too harsh, too demanding, too controlling, unforgiving or just plain angry. This harshness can be in words, in actions - or even through not talking to them for days - the silent treatment

It's easy for the parent to blame the child's bad behavior - but Paul warns that the parent might actually provoke or stir up that bad behavior

There's a reason given for not provoking our children - and that is that they will become discouraged and feel like giving up. They will start to feel unloved and unsupported and grow up feeling the whole world is against them.

As parents - we should remind ourselves of how gracious, gentle, forgiving and longsuffering God is with us, His children

[PowerPoint 10-Challenge]

Challenge: Parents and Grandparents, are we discouraging our children by being too tough with our rules or constantly finding faults and never praising good behavior. Are we being unreasonable or angry or petty?

Next Paul turns His attention to working relationships in verses 3:22 to 4:1

NEW LIFE - WORK RELATIONSHIPS (3:22-4:1)

He's actually speaking about a slave and master relationship here

Because in Paul's day - there was slavery and slaves and masters

We don't have slaves in Australia as far as I know?

So in our context - Paul's talking about work relationships - whether paid or voluntary

[PowerPoint 11a-v22]

V22 says

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

So employees are to obey their bosses or supervisors - out of reverence to the Lord - as He has established good order in all relationships

And employees are to work just as hard when the boss is not around as they do when the boss isn't around. Remember - God is always watching us! He knows when we're being dishonest, lazy or unreliable

And we shouldn't be watching the clock either

[PowerPoint 11b-v23]

Because as v23 says:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,

It's like we're working for the Lord not for a human employer

And after all as v24 says:

[PowerPoint 11c=V24]

Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Paul reminds us that as Christians we have an inheritance in Heaven to look forward to - so that should be a great reason to sincerely serve the Lord in our work - out of thankfulness!

As a Christian employee - we're modelling Jesus to our boss and co-workers - so as v25 says:

[PowerPoint 11d-v25]

Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

So if we do the wrong thing at work - we shouldn't expect leniency - as Christians - Paul is saying we should be more responsible and more accountable - not less. We are Christ's ambassador at work as well as outside of work.

[PowerPoint 12-4:1]

Then in v1 of chapter 4 - Paul turns his attention to employers or bosses
Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

It is important for all bosses to be fair

More so for Christian bosses

It's a terrible thing for a boss to cheat or mistreat their workers - but far worse for a Christian boss - they are supposed to modelling what Jesus would do!

In the context of masters and slavery - Paul is saying there needs to be fairness and not cruelty

Paul's point is that Christian masters and Christian slaves are equal because everyone in Jesus' family are all equal - so bosses need to remember that when

they deal with their employees. Because at the end of the day - the bosses themselves - have a head boss in Heaven - that they are accountable to!

Now some of us here this morning might not be husbands or wives nor parents nor have children - and we might not have an employee/boss relationship - because we're retired

But as Christians - we are in God's family and we have a church family - and so we have people in our church family who are like our mum and dad - or who are like our children -

And we have people who are like our bosses in some of the ministries we're involved in - for example - Jeanette is Sunday School Coordinator, Chris is musical director - we have a group of elders who are our spiritual leaders, we have a COM who make decisions about our buildings and finance - we have PWA office bearers and so on...

These instructions from Paul apply in our church family relationships too.

Challenges:

[PowerPoint 13-Challenges]

For people who are like our mum and dad - are we respecting and loving and honouring them?

For people who are in authority over us in certain ministries - are we respecting and submitting to their leadership, obeying their instructions - are we agreeing with them face to face - but behind their back undermining them?

For those volunteering in these ministries; are we working in that ministry for the Lord - serving the Lord - or serving ourselves?

And those people who are in authority over us - are we being right and fair in how we treat people under our authority - remembering we have a Master in Heaven - we are accountable to?

CONCLUSION

If we follow Paul's instructions for our relationships

Our relationships will be loving ones - pleasing to God - and will attract others to follow Jesus

Let me leave us with Philippians 2:5:

[PowerPoint 14-Conclusion]

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus

Let's pray...