

**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

Think about the process when you learned to swim or learned to ride a bike. You probably didn’t learn about the physics involved. You probably didn’t learn about the buoyancy of water, the mathematical expression for the force involved to move the pedals or push against the water. You needed to know the how. You needed to get a feel for the balance and skill. You needed to learn by doing. You needed to place yourself in the moment and try. And you likely had some scary moments and a few skinned knees or elbows. Maybe you have a scar or story to share.

Home is that place where we figure it out. Today we’ll be in a portion of Scripture together that helps us in the daily ups and downs of figuring it out in relationships with family.

**INTRODUCTION**

Sometimes the Bible gives us background theology and —so important for our understanding. And sometimes we get lived in, practical life lessons. We need to know how to respond to the world as it is, not to the world as we wish it to be. How does being a Christian shape our home and family life? Marriage and family were created by God and He purposefully places us within it. Not for our idea of perfect experiences, but for deep gospel formation. In this portion of Colossians Paul addresses life at home. Home is a crucible. (A specific environment for dramatic chemical change.) It’s a special container for our wrestling with truth and how it affects our choices and attitudes as we become deeper followers of Christ.

**What makes you grateful that the Bible clearly addresses daily home life?**

***READ together Colossians 3:18-4:1***

1. **What qualities are given here for a God-honoring marriage?** This is God’s good design, but we live in a fallen world. This is not always the reality in marriages, even ones between two Christians. Creating this ecosystem of mutual love and respect takes continuous work but worthwhile work. Even though marriage seems a long way off now, you can honor your someday marriage now by preparing your heart to submit to God in this area and commit to pursuing character that honors God. **What examples have you seen of strong, faith-filled marriage?**
2. **What does it look like for children to obey their parents at various stages in life? Why is it important that parents not exasperate (or discourage) their children?**
3. **What does it mean to not work “only while being watched” (v. 22)? Why does this matter? What does it mean to live our everyday routines for the Lord? (v. 23)**
4. **How can living in the ways Paul instructed give us opportunity to share the gospel with others?**

**WRAP UP**

**Share one way you can honor your parents in a new way today.**

**Think of one attitude you want to confess to God and let go of, and one attitude you want to ask God to help you grow in. Share as you feel led.**
*Ask for any prayer requests, and pray for one another.*

**Memorize Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people. - Colossians 3:23**

**EXTENDED CUT**

In our Scripture reading today, Paul gave instructions regarding something scholars call “household codes.” Remember that his letter to the Colossian church was written to a group of believers, so everyone Paul addressed was first submitting to the Lord, who has ultimate authority. We see Paul’s habit in his biblical letters of unpacking truths and then applying them in practical living. What’s more practical than daily life at home? Not much!

The first household code Paul addressed: wives and husbands. Marriage relationships are healthiest when operating together and for the good of the marriage. Paul’s writing in Colossians adds depth to the cohesive marriage relationship God has in mind for us.

Paul’s letter addressed also addressed households with children. The children Paul’s instruction had in mind here are minors, though Scripture speaks elsewhere on the universal command to honor your parents, no matter your age (Exodus 20:12; Matthew 19:19). To honor your parents is to respect them, and one way to do this, as a minor, is to obey. This is written not as an option but as a command for children. When children obey their parents in all things, “this pleases the Lord” (v. 20).

As we discussed with the wife and husband relationship, Paul’s writing presents a hierarchy of leadership in the home, with parents, both fathers and mothers, as the leaders. God’s good design for this part of the household is that parents fully submit to the Lord, and in turn creating a safe, stable, loving, and godly household for the children living in it. This command to obey does not extend into harmful or wrong circumstances. Asking a child to step outside of God’s will or do something that is outside of God’s design is not what Paul had in mind here. This behavior would not be pleasing to the Lord, and applying this verse in that way is a gross misinterpretation. As with the first household code, in the second, there is a joint responsibility: children should obey, and parents should not “exasperate” (v. 21) their children. **The home should be the primary place where we receive and give godly encouragement to every family member.**

The third type of household Paul addressed were households with slaves. ***\*Handle with Care—Colossians 3:22-4:1 Prayerfully consider and communicate these points as you discuss this passage***

With the echoes of the unjust history of American slavery still reverberating in our culture today, this can be a hard section to read. **It is important to understand that Paul addressed this household code because it was an established reality in his culture, not because he endorsed the idea of slavery as we know it or even the idea of slavery in his own day**. In fact, the letter of Colossians was delivered by a runaway slave, Onesimus, who Paul called “my son” (Philemon 1:10), and for whom Paul advocated forgiveness and fair treatment. You can read more about this in the book of Philemon, which Paul also wrote. Notice that Paul’s instructions here also demanded mutuality: a slave should obey, working hard, and a master should be just and fair in his dealings. Both elements were necessary for this relationship to function in as healthy a way as possible under the cultural construct of the time. Masters in this day would have had complete control over their slaves, even holding the ability to put them to death for any reason, but God held them to a higher standard: just and fair treatment.

The big idea was this: **The very most important thing both slave and master could do in Paul’s day was conduct themselves as Christ commands and Scripture teaches.** In the day in and day out there was a lot they couldn’t control about the system and culture. But they could submit their attitudes and actions to Christ. While they were equal as brothers and sisters in Christ (Galatians 3:28), their society placed them on different tiers, and Paul’s instruction offered a path to exist in that structure in a way that created order and peace and honored the Lord. **We can still glean things for our lives today from this text**. While we no longer have slave masters in America, we still exist in workplaces and environments where our hard work should glorify Christ. **We have a similar call to follow orders, work hard even when no one is looking over our shoulder, and work as if we’re working for the Lord**. As Paul said in verse 24, ultimately, we serve Christ, and He calls us to a higher standard than the world holds itself to. When we are fully submitted to Jesus and living for Him, we will conduct ourselves this way, bringing glory to the Lord. We will be rewarded for this faithfulness (v. 24) and can rest assured that any injustice done will be paid back on the day of judgement (v. 25).