

God-Honouring Ethical Relationships

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[0:00] Kirola. Good afternoon, church. It's such a good...

And the scripture is in Colossians 3.18-4.1.

By the way, thanks for Bible reading. The central message is Paul exhorts believers to live according to God's will in their relationship within marriage, parenting, and between masters and servants.

And today's main idea is Christians should practice mutual submission within the family and demonstrate that Christ is the true law of the family.

Have you ever watched this movie before? Right. It's called The Adam's Family. It was one of the most popular Hollywood films of the 1990s.

[1:31] It is a dark comedy featuring each family member have unusual personalities. Take a closer look at these family photos.

It actually shows several different kinds of relationships within this family. Can you figure out how many different kinds? Just one?

Well, actually five different kinds of relationships. So at the center is the married couple, obviously. Okay? Below them are their three children, three kids.

And standing beside them are their husband's brother and the wife's mother. At the top is the family servant.

So when you look at this photo, do you see a happy family photo here? Or do you see a strange family photo here?

[2:39] Today, the theme of the sermon is God honoring ethical relationships. Through this message, I hope that we will reflect together, not only on the relationship between husband and wife, but also on the relationship between parents and children, and between master and servant.

So how can we live according to God's will in each of these relationships and demonstrate that Jesus is a true head of our family?

Let's pray. Let's pray. So it's not working.

Let me do that again. Oh, yeah. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we give thanks to you with a grateful heart.

Because of your grace and love, we gather together in Christ to study your word and learn how to live according to your will. So we ask that the Holy Spirit be with us today.

[3:57] Open our hearts so that we may humbly listen to what you are saying to each one of us. May your word dwell richly within us and remain in our hearts half forever.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Oops. Okay. Cool. Probably these nine verses are familiar to many of us.

But have you ever wondered why Paul gave this particular instruction to us? In the olden days, family relations were built on a social structure of authority and submission.

For example, every member of the family was expected to submit to the head of the family who could be the father, the husband, or the master.

A fail to do so could bring dishonor to the family or to become a bad witness to the gospel.

However, I mean, how about in New Zealand today?

[5:14] Do you think, do we still have to submit ourselves to the head of the family? Well, Paul is concerned not only simply with our roles in the family, but more concerned to the unity of the Christ body, which is our church.

Early this year, I shared a message about the first part, the first bit of the chapter 3.

Paul teaches us to forgive one another and to let God's love, God's love bind everything together in a perfect unity.

Also, he asks all believers are called to teach and encourage one another. So, apparently, Paul placed great importance on relationships, especially these three key relationships within the family. Which three? The first one, husband and wife, second, parents and the children, and the third one, as master and servants.

[6:31] Now, let's look at the first one. In Colossians 3.18, Paul says, Wife, submit yourself to your husband as is fitting in the law.

That sounds like a command, isn't it? But you may ask, how can a wife truly submit to and respect to her husband? Well, at least she needs to have a willing heart and a humble heart to honor and respect to the person she loves.

I know for the younger ones who are not married yet, they may think marriage does not apply to them yet. You may be right. It is not time yet.

But it is always good to know in advance how a perfect marriage would look like. Likewise, we are told to respect and submit to those who have authority over us, such as our parents, our grandparents, and the spiritual leaders at church, and the government, etc.

So each of them deserves our respect and honor. I know a couple from another church. They always argue over small things.

[7:59] The wife asks, I am more capable than you. Why shouldn't I be the head of the family? Hey, wait a minute.

To be the head of the family isn't really determined by who is more capable in the family. Of course not. A wife does not submit to her husband because he is more talented, more intelligent, or more capable than she is.

Actually, it is because of Jesus. A wife should submit herself out of reverence for the Christ and in obedience to him.

a husband has the responsibility to be the head of the family due to God's created order. Although God created Adam before Eve, but he doesn't look down the value of the woman.

Instead, he promotes sex equality because they both bear his image and share equally in his glory.

[9:19] So, both husband and wife submit to each other within the marriage as out of the reverence for Christ. It is really not about proving who is stronger or more capable.

Then you may ask, how can we do it as it's fitting in the law? Well, it is really based on how much we know about our God.

As long as the husband's desire are consistent with the will of God, the wife should willingly follow his leadership.

I give you an example. A Christian couple facing a sudden job change, so they have to move to a new city. The wife shares her feelings, her worries.

She listens to his reasons. After they pray about it, she supports the decision they make together, and then they are working as a team.

[10:31] You see, Jesus is the key person. As they pray to Jesus, so because they know only Jesus can determine what is truly fitting and acceptable.

So we should not shape our lives according to the value and the standard surrounding us in our world because they may be comforting with the will of the God and create confusions that make it even more difficult for us to submit to his word.

Afterward, Paul exhorts all husbands. He said, husband, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

In Ephesians 5.25 explain this more. husband, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

In the olden days, the husband had extensive authority within marriage. Yet Paul doesn't emphasize a husband's right here.

[11:57] Instead, he focused on husband's responsibilities. A husband is called to love his wife. Just as Christ loved the church, a love can demonstrate through self-sacrifice.

The Bible says, this love is not defined merely by emotion or by physical attraction. Instead, it is God's sacrifice love.

love. A selfless willingness to care for another person's needs, to seek their well-being and to put them before oneself.

Such love requires us to turn away from selfish desires and abandoning every form of idolatry.

God created the woman from Adam's rib. This reminds us that in a marriage, husband and wife belong to one another.

[13:09] They are partners who support each other, living together with respect, love, and trust. then you may ask, to what extent should a husband love his wife?

What does it mean to love her as himself? What does it mean? Well, loving your wife is not optional. I'm sorry.

It is a command for every Christian husband. In particular, Paul gives the husband warning not to be harsh with their wives.

As the Bible says, this harsh is associated with bitterness and bondage to sin. So, after teaching the husband and wives, Paul turns his attention to the children in verse 20.

He says, children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Again, this sounds like a command.

[14:28] The faith in everything refers to all instructions. They are consistent with God's will. So, children, the kids, have to obey their parents wholeheartedly because such obedience is pleasing God.

In 1 Timothy 5.8, remind us that failing to honor your parents is like denial of your faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

However, in verse 21, Paul also gives an important warning to all fathers. he said, father, do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged.

So, how can father avoid provoking their children? The answer is, I got six. The first one, by relating to them in an appropriate and loving manner.

The second, be sensitive to their feelings and avoid damaging the relationship. The third one, giving them more time to grow and to be trained.

[15:51] The fourth one, don't discipline them in such a way that provokes anger and resentment. number five, try to encourage them by the word of God.

And then the last one is, teach them and help them to grow into spiritual maturity, becoming more and more like Christ.

Eighteen years ago, my wife and I had our first child son. We carefully followed every parenting books in order to learn how to raise a child in an appropriate manner.

But by the time our second son came along, we became much more casual. We simply relied on our own experience.

Brothers and sisters, have you ever made the same mistake like me before? We sometimes think we already know enough that we no longer need guidance.

[17:02] And as a result, we fail. We fail to raise our children according to God's teaching and instruction. So may God help us to apply this in our life.

Have you looked at that Paul doesn't address mothers here? perhaps Paul regards the wife as the husband helper, so he plays the leadership responsibility on the father?

Maybe? However, when we apply this passage today, I believe that both parents should share the responsibility of raising and disciplining their children together.

It is not just a task for the fathers, but the mother also plays an important role in teaching and nurturing their children.

children. The Bible gives us several excellent examples of godly mothers. The typical example is Timothy's mom and his grandma.

[18:16] They were devoted Jewish Christians, but Timothy's dad was a Greek. The scripture says very little about him.

Leading many scholars to think or to believe that he may have died while Timothy was still young. So under the faithful teaching of his mom and his grandma, Timothy learned the word of God and came to know the truth from childhood.

Brothers and sisters, our ultimate goal is to pass God's word and his commandments on to the next generation. Just like the mission statement of PCBC, to pass on the faith to the next generation. We want our children to learn the difference between good and evil from an early age. So don't place high expectation upon them.

For example, to insist them to become a lawyer or a doctor or a teacher, but instead, help them to discover the gifts God has given them.

[19:34] Guide them to understand who they are and ultimately lead them to know Jesus as their savior. Okay, so at this point, you may already figure out the first principle of these passages.

So it is the family relationships are based on Jesus' sacrificial work of redemption. Paul doesn't emphasize the authority of the male head of the family, but rather he uplives the lordship of Jesus Christ.

So through his obedient death on the cross, Jesus has become the one we worship. As he is the truth head of every Christian family.

Brothers and sisters, for the first application, have we reexam our own attitude to see if we relate to one another with the humility and submission that are fitting for those who belong for the Christ?

Let me repeat. Do we relate to one another with the humility and submission that are fitting for those who belong to the Christ?

[21:00] Do we recognize that our willingness to submit to one another flows from our reverence for the Christ and our obedience to him?

Do we recognize that? may the Lord help us to take it seriously and to put it into practice in our life. Okay, after learning the behavior within the family, now Paul turns to teach about the behavior as a master and servant.

In verse 22, he says, Slaves, in all things, obey to who are your master on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the law.

Let me ask you, do you think slavery still exists in our world today? Do you think so? Yes, the answer is yes.

It is even more than as any other time in history. The slavery still exists because to poverty, corruption, injustice, of the law system, and also the demand for the cheap labor.

[22:30] If it is so wrong in the olden days, so why didn't Paul openly condemn it in his letter? Why? Why didn't he simply tell the master to set free the slaves?

Why? Well, before we answer these questions, we must first understand what Paul's calling is from the God.

God asked Paul to be a preacher of the gospel, not a social reformer or a politician. He concerned more about how people can live in a relationship with harmony in Christ and to become a witness of the God's love.

Properly, he believed that when the gospel is preached, the unjust system will be becoming easier to challenge and then eventually will disappear.

Although Paul didn't directly attack slavery in his letter. But his teaching carries profound spiritual significance here.

[23:54] Think about it. A servant is called to serve wholeheartedly to a master. Likewise, Paul teaches that the one we ultimately serve is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Mark 1230, Jesus teaches love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

So no matter how difficult your circumstances may be, if you fear God and remain faithful to him, he will remember you and will deal with you justly.

Okay, we have learned how slaves obey their earthly master from verse 22, but then why? Paul says in chapter 4 verse 1, the master also has a master in heaven.

Well, obviously, earthly master and the master in heaven is a contrast. So who is the master in heaven?

[25:13] Anyone know? Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ. So that's why in Colossians 3, 24, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward, it is the Lord Jesus you are serving.

Paul is telling us here if we serve him faithfully we will receive an inheritance from him.

What is this inheritance? So in Galatians chapter 4, 7 explain more. So you are no longer a slave but God's child.

And since you are his child God has made you also an heir. What an amazing truth. A slave's identity is transformed.

So instead of remaining merely a servant he becomes a true heir in God's family. Remember in the Old Testament God promised Abraham for the land of Canaan as an inheritance and then in the New Testament God promised believers an internal inheritance will share in his glory in his love and in his everlasting life.

[26 : 50] But then Paul continues his teaching in verse 25 since we receive a new identity as the children of God we must no longer practice wrongdoing or show favoritism toward others.

James in chapter 2 9 he also reminds us the same thing not to pray favoritism he said if you show favoritism!

you sin and you are convicted by the law as the law breakers so I have summarized this relationship using a chart as you can see the fear of the Lord Jesus Christ is the key behavior to have within a master and servant relationship so when servants fear Lord Jesus they will serve their master faithfully on the other hand when master know Jesus Christ they will treat their servants with justice fairness and compassion so the fear of God transforms both those who need and those who follow producing relationships that honor him so our second principle of this passage is whatever you do work as it with all your heart as working for the law not for human masters this command summarizes all of

Paul's exhortation and instructions in his passage it is parallel with what he said earlier in chapter 317 whatever you do whether in word or deed do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the father through him just like a servant serving his master we are now called to serve Christ he is our true master and we must remain he must remain at the center of everything we do in brief whether we are wives the children or the servants we must acknowledge Christ as our Lord and place him first in our lives likewise husband father and the master are called to fulfill the responsibilities

God has entrusted to them so as you can see in every relationships Jesus is our good example good role model as well as our Lord lastly the second application for this application for this application for this passage is do Paul's word resonate with you when we serve the Lord do we serve him with the attitude of a faithful servant are we willing to obey Lord Jesus in everything not merely doing when others are watching you or seeking people approval but serving him whole heartily with sincere hearts and prevent fear may the Lord help us to live in this way let's pray dear heavenly father you are full of love and compassion we give thanks to you with a grateful heart through the message from

[31 : 08] Paul today you call us to love one another and to submit to one another whole heartily for demonstrating that you are the true master of our lives may we live according to your will and rely on your grace so that we can still continue to be your light and the salt and to bearing more spiritual fruits thank you God thank you Jesus in your name we pray Amen