

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

Intro Question: What's the most counter-cultural thing about the way you try to run your home or approach your work?

Pray: That we would see every relationship and role as lived before the Lord.

Read: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Questions about the passage:

- How does 3:18-4:1 flow from 3:1-17? What is the recurring theme of 3:18-4:1?
- How does Paul address both wives and husbands in v.18-19?
- How do you think 3:22-4:1 applies to workers/bosses today?
- What does Paul say about both reward and consequence? v.24-25

Questions for us:

- Do you treat people differently depending on who's watching?
- The promises in v.23-24 are given to people doing invisible, unglamorous work. How does knowing that God sees and rewards that work change how you approach the ordinary parts of your week?
- Paul addresses both sides of every relationship, the one in authority and the one under it. Which side of a relationship do you find harder to inhabit faithfully right now?
- How does this passage apply to your work/life situation?

Pray: that Village would continue to grow into full Christian maturity

Homework: Read Ephesians 5:21-6:9, Paul's fuller treatment of the same household code. Notice what is similar and what is different.

Remind: *End of Financial Year donation to MTS*

www.myvillagechurch.net/give

Praying to see 10% of the northern suburbs in gospel-centred churches & 250 by 2030 at Village Church who grow, gather, give & go, in love & joy to the glory of God

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Overview:

Paul's letter to the Christians of Colosse in Asia Minor is one of his shortest letters. Paul is writing to a young church that's just starting to figure out what it means to believe in Jesus and follow him. He urges them to dig into the riches of the gospel and let it shape the way they live.

This week, Paul turns the new humanity he has described in the church toward the home, giving instructions to wives and husbands, children and fathers, slaves and masters.

Paul's aim:

Paul writes to a church he's never visited to establish his apostolic authority and relationship with them. His core aim is to ground them deeply in the gospel so they grow to maturity in Christ. Urgently underlying everything is a warning - don't drift toward the alternative teachings circulating in Colosse.

Asia Minor Map:



Asia Minor in the time of Paul

Source: N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 12, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 18.

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Questions about the passage:

How does 3:18-4:1 flow from 3:1-17? What is the recurring theme of 3:18-4:1?

Paul has just described the new self, renewed in the image of its creator, where 'Christ is all and in all' v.11. The household code is one of the important places we apply that vision. If anything, the move from the picture of the worshipping church in 3:15-17 to the almost mundane instructions of 3:18-4:1 is the point, a faith that does not reach into the ordinary texture of daily relationships has not been fully integrated. The shape that new humanity takes in practice is mutual obligation. In every relationship, wife/husband, father/child, master/slave, Paul addresses both parties, and those with power are given responsibilities rather than rights.

How does Paul address both wives and husbands in v.18-19?

Household codes in Paul's world typically spoke only to those with power. Paul's willingness to address both parties gives dignity to those with less social standing, treating them as morally responsible people in their own right. The wife is to submit 'as is fitting in the Lord', a deliberate and willing act within a Christian marriage rather than just social compliance. Paul offers a careful balance. Neither party is to be arrogant or domineering. The husband isn't told to rule but to love, and specifically not to be harsh, guarding against the bitterness that poisons a marriage when it is driven by self-interest rather than self-giving.

How do you think 3:22-4:1 applies to workers/bosses today?

Slave/master is different to worker/boss like we experience today. However, I think some principles apply the same. Bosses should treat their workers well. Workers should seek to do a good job - as if they were working for God. And Christians should remember that what frees them to work hard/unpleasant jobs is our future hope.

What does Paul say about both reward and consequence? v.24-25

Having promised slaves an inheritance from the Lord as their reward, Paul adds a warning 'the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality' v.25. The inheritance promise alone is shocking in their context, slaves had no legal right to inherit anything in the ancient world, but Paul tells them their true master is Christ and their true reward is eternal. The warning cuts equally in both directions, God shows no favouritism and those who exploit their position will answer for it just as people who avoid their responsibilities. Earthly masters have a Master in heaven, and will be held to account for how they treat those under them.

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Questions for us:

Do you treat people differently depending on who's watching?

Paul warns against eye-service, the performance of effort rather than the giving of it. Reflect honestly on where that shows up in your own life, at work, at home, or in church. What would it look like to close the gap between how you act when observed and when you're not?

The promises in v.23-24 are given to people doing invisible, unglamorous work. How does knowing that God sees and rewards that work change how you approach the ordinary parts of your week?

Most of life is made up of tasks that no one notices or thanks you for. Paul assures us that God sees all of it and values it. Is there an area of your life where that reminder would change how you show up?

Paul addresses both sides of every relationship, the one in authority and the one under it. Which side of a relationship do you find harder to inhabit faithfully right now?

Paul places obligations on everyone, not just those at the bottom. Consider the relationships in your life where you hold authority and those where you are under it. Which feels harder to inhabit well, and what might faithfulness look like there?