

LESSON 9
COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1

Review your memory verses from Colossians.

1. Write out the verse from Colossians that you've called to mind to help you most often during the study of Colossians.

Memorize Colossians 3:23, 24 ___ Yes! Said to _____.

Read Colossians 3 prayerfully and with concentration.

“What Paul is offering in this passage is a very brief [Kingdom] Code for household relationships. It is remarkable for several reasons. Perhaps the first is he doesn't just tell wives, children and slaves how to behave (as many pagan moralists of his day would have done). Their duties are balanced by the corresponding duties of husbands, parents and masters. This is every bit as revolutionary as what people today often wish he had said — for instance, that all slaves should be freed at once (which was unthinkable in his day, where slaves did much of the work done today by gas, electricity and the internal combustion engine). Rather than dreaming of impossible freedoms, he prefers to offer practical guidelines.”

Paul for Everyone: The Prison Epistles by N. T. Wright

2. In Colossians 3:18-4:1 to what three groupings does Paul give instructions?

“[Paul's] command to wives has come in for particular criticism. In many translations, the key word comes out as 'submit', and this conjures up in many people's imaginations the image of a downtrodden woman, the victim of her husband's every whim, unable to be herself, to think her own thoughts, to make a grown-up contribution to the relationship. The fact that there are still one or two places in the world where women are treated like that is enough to make some people suggest that this is what Paul intended.

Nothing could be further from the truth, as his parallel command to husbands indicates. Indeed, Paul's own fellow-workers included women, and married couples, where it appears that the women were, in our phrase, 'people in their own right' rather than shadowy figures screened from view by a bossy husband. At the

same time, Paul is quite clear that, in the mutuality of respect and love that makes a marriage what it should be, the roles are *reciprocal, not identical*.... If we don't allow scripture to challenge us at places where our culture is doing its best to squeeze us into a different pattern, what use is it?"

(Italic added for emphasis.)

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As we consider Paul's brief code for household relationships in God's Kingdom, we see an orderly system which can promote well-being and peace when each person gladly takes on his or her role. Ephesians 5:33 captures well the main idea in the roles of both a husband and of a wife.

3. Read Colossians 3:18. How can Ephesians 5:28 help you to understand what Paul means when he tells wives to "submit" to their own husbands as the head of the household?

Before you answer questions 4 and 5, please consider 1 Peter 3:3-6.

4. What are some ways a wife can demonstrate respect for her husband in different situations such as these listed below:

a) When they are alone –

b) In front of others or with one other outside the home –

c) To their children –

d) When they as a couple have to work out a problem –

e) When they as a couple have a disagreement –

f) When _____ –

5. What are some disrespectful ways a wife might relate to her husband in various situations? Please give examples.

Why do you think a wife might have trouble with God's directive to respect her husband as head of the household? List some reasons, please. Next, give a biblical answer to this reason if you can.

For example:

	Possible Reason	Biblical Answer
1	A wife might think this means she is inferior to her husband, especially in God's eyes.	God says in 1 Peter 3: 7 that husbands are to regard their wives as He does, that is "with honor as joint heirs of the grace of life." Galatians 3:28 affirms "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for the you are all one in Christ." Different roles do not denote inferiority. (The same principle is true for children/parents and slaves/masters.)
2	A wife might think she has no recourse if she is badly treated.	God says in Matthew 18:15,16 that there is a godly way to address a wrong at the right time. Also, she can get help if needed.
3	A wife might think she can have no impact or influence on her husband.	God says in Genesis 3 that she is to be a helper to her husband. The Hebrew word for "helper" is a very strong word <i>ezer</i> , often used for God as our help. She is to be a partner to her husband. (This partnership has to be worked out on a marriage-by- marriage basis, and there are many aids available for growing into a godly marriage. The greatest help a wife can be for her husband is to be what Proverbs 31 calls a "woman of strength and dignity" who is learning to wholly trust the Lord.)

6. Read Colossians 3:19. What should be the central attitude that define a husband's love for his wife? Read Ephesians 5:25-29 before you answer.
(See also 1 Corinthians 13:1-8.)

7. Husbands are told not to be embittered against their wives. What does Hebrews 12:14,15 say about bitterness in anyone? What is the solution to bitterness once it begins to grow?

8. Read Colossians 3:19-21. Children are told to obey their parents in all things. Are there any exceptions to this directive? In general, why is it a good thing for children to learn to obey and for parents to take seriously their role in helping the child to do so?

9. Most often, how we do something is as important as what we do. How does this truth apply to parenting a child so she or he does not become discouraged (or "provoked to anger" as one translation puts it) and lose heart because of parental treatment? Look back over Colossians 3: 1-13, and use this wisdom for part of your answer to how to parent in the right way.

10. How does Colossians 3:22-4:1 apply to employer/employee relationships?

11. In light of verse 20, evaluate the following advice from a bestselling book on parenting:
"Parents should never impose their will on their children. They should never try to make a child obey. Rather, they should teach a child to be respectful of other people and should work out all conflicts with the child by agreeing to mutually acceptable decisions."

19. Often when we look back on the ways God has planned for us to relate to others with His Kingdom Values, we have regrets. We know we have been deficient. This can be a time when the Enemy gets to us and discourages us from walking on with King Jesus. (The recipients of this letter were already people of faith, Christians.)

This deep discouragement is not God's plan for us. Scripture tells us "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation [godliness or wholeness, in this context] and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Corinthians 7:10). So yes, we sorrow. However, as we turn from our selfish, hurtful ways and turn back to God and His ways, we can go forward, leaving regret behind. (The word *repentance* means to turn or to change your mind about a way of being or about an attitude or action.)

Knowing we are forgiven for our failures, not on the basis of our good works but on the basis of Jesus' blood and righteousness, brings peace, joy and the motivation to go forward. We must remember that God's heart is always welcoming for He is the Waiting Father who rejoices when His child turns and comes home. Additionally, God is the God of redemption, restoration and reconciliation. Look what He did with Paul, who described himself as the chief of sinners. Look how God used Paul. Always remember when we change our minds about a sin and turn, we turn right into the mercy and grace of God. When we are shown our sin it is good to know that "God only reveals so that He can heal." He is committed to healing us. He is also committed to healing those we might have hurt as they turn to Him. Please write out a prayer of thanksgiving for the grace of God for you and for the others in your life, even as you tell Him what is on your heart that you regret. He can bring "beauty out of ashes" (Isaiah 61:3). And He does!

N. T. Wright wrote that Paul included women and married couples as ministry partners. Two of the passages about Paul's inclusion of women and married couples as fellow workers in the gospel, are Philippians 4:2,3 and Acts 18:18 -26.

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