

Rules for Christian Living

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0:00] So, we're still in the section of Colossians where Paul is reminding his readers how they should live as Christians.

! Last week we focused on Colossians 3, 10-17. Let's go ahead and read some of those verses for review. Starting in verse 12, Paul said, Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. In tonight's passage, Paul will focus on how to apply these characteristics to various life situations.

[1:27] We'll see rules for Christian relationships. So let's go ahead and read verses 18 in chapter 3 all the way to verse 1 of chapter 4.

Starting with 3.18, Paul said, Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

[2:31] Throughout history, Christianity has had a positive influence on society. J.C. Winger wrote of the early church, Christianity burst into a corrupt world with a brilliantly new moral radiance.

The moral level of society was dismal, and sin prevailed in many forms. Into this discouraged world came Christ and his spirit-transformed disciples, filled with holy joy, motivated by a love which the pagans could not grasp, and proclaiming good news, the message that God has provided a Savior. These Christians lived in tiny communities knit together in the power of the Holy Spirit, little colonies of heaven. They thought of themselves as pilgrims on the way to the celestial city, but they were very much concerned to manifest the love of Christ in all relationships.

These early Christians insisted on bringing all of life under the lordship of Christ. It is men and women of this kind of moral purity who built into society a strong fabric of integrity and strength.

Then he goes on to say, life was cheap in the pre-Christian world. Murder, abortions, infant exposure, war. People died in great numbers without anyone being troubled in conscience.

[3:47] The early Christians brought a new concern into society on these points. In more recent times, much of the social reform in the Western society has been related to Christianity.

Leaders of the 18th century evangelical awakening, such as John Wesley, often spoke out against social evils. John Howard, who was a contemporary of John Wesley, worked tirelessly for prison reform.

His work was continued by Elizabeth Gurney Fry. And the great awakening of early 18th century America, led by the preaching of men like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, resulted in the

founding of several universities.

It was also pressure from evangelicals led by William Wilberforce that caused Britain to abolish the slave trade in 1807 and then outlaw slavery in all her possessions in 1833.

American evangelicals also were involved in the abolitionist movement that culminated in the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. But it goes on from there because the 19th century British evangelical, Lord Shaftesbury, was instrumental in getting Parliament to pass laws regulating child labor.

[5:03] He also was a champion of better treatment for the insane. Agencies like the YMCA, YWCA, and the Salvation Army were also active in social work during the 19th century.

And we also have heard of William Carey, missionary to India, who worked for the abolition of widow burning and child sacrifice there. Missionaries to Africa discouraged polygamy, fought the slave trade, and also built schools and hospitals there as well.

The message for us tonight is that God still expects Christians to have a similar positive impact on society. And we'll see that from this passage. Tonight's verses look at three different types of relationships.

We'll see husbands and wives, parents and children, and then servants and masters. And in all of these, the relationships during Paul's day took place in the home because during that time, servants were usual members of the household.

But before we look at the relationships in detail, think about why Paul focused on household relationships. Any idea why he started there? Well, actually, it's very difficult to see how Christianity can have a positive effect on society if it can't even transform the own homes of Christians.

[6:26] So we'll see that we're to start by transforming our homes, and then that will carry over into society. Paul talks about two basic principles throughout this passage, and those are authority and submission.

And these aren't unique to Christianity because it's always been God's plan for homes to operate on that basis. But Christianity did introduce several new elements into the home.

First, Christianity brought a new presence into the home, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And that new presence brings a new power. Christ is there, and his spirit provides the power to make the family what it ought to be.

Then there's also a new purpose. He talks about whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. And then finally, Christianity introduced a new pattern for the home.

We'll see him talk about husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. That's actually a cross-reference to Ephesians as well there. So the new pattern is Christ, and he is the model for us to follow in everything that we do.

[7:33] So as you probably surmised from the introduction, we'll break tonight's passage into three sections, one for each pair of relationships. And the first pair of relationships is wives and husbands.

So wives and husbands are the two fill-ins for that first set of blanks. And we see that relationship described in verses 18 and 19.

Here are those verses again. Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. We can't stop with just the first part of verse 18 because Paul says more than wives submit to your husbands.

He says wives submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Keep the phrase as is fitting in the Lord in mind as we've talked about the meaning of this verse.

But first let's talk about the word submission itself. The word submission comes from military vocabulary, and it means to arrange under rank. The fact that one soldier is a private and another is a colonel doesn't mean that one man is necessarily better than the other one.

[8:44] It only means that they have different ranks. And the fact that the woman is to submit to her husband does not suggest that the man is better than the woman. It only means that the man has the responsibility of headship and leadership in the home.

The foundation of the marriage relationship goes back to the very beginning of mankind. And this is Genesis 2:18. In Genesis 2:18 we see this.

Then the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. And then a little further down in Genesis 2, verses 21 and 22 say, So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, took one of the ribs and closed up the place with its

flesh.

And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. So the concept of the wife being the helper of the husband in no way implies her inferiority.

In fact, the Hebrew word translated helper is often used in the Old Testament to refer to God as the helper of mankind. I don't think any one of us would argue that God is inferior to us.

[10:02] Instead, this passage means that the husband, even before the fall into sin, was incomplete without his wife, and that the husband will never reach his full potential apart from the input and support of his wife.

So let's talk a little bit about what submission doesn't mean. Submission doesn't mean that the wife must suppress her creative energy or adopt a passive approach to life in general.

If you want proof of that, just take a look at Proverbs 31 for some homework tonight, and you'll put that myth to rest. So there is no biblically prescribed personality for wives either.

There's also not one for husbands. So husbands who exercise godly leadership can be introverts, and wives who submit can be extroverts. So neither does submission entail silence.

Constructive criticism that is lovingly motivated and corrective in nature is consistent with godly submission. Submission of the wife is not an excuse for sin or sloth or sloppiness on the part of the husband.

[11:09] And here's one more thing that submission does not mean. Submission does not mean that everything a wife does must be directly dependent upon or connected to her husband. So in other words, this doesn't mean that the wife can never do anything for her own benefit or for the benefit of others, or that she can never become involved and active in ministries apart from the home.

It simply means that nothing she does should bring harm to her husband or undermine her primary responsibility to her family. So now that we've talked about what submission isn't, let's talk a little bit about what submission is.

Submission is the disposition to honor and affirm a husband's authority and an inclination to yield to his leadership. Submission is fundamentally an attitude and act of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And for proof of that, here are some cross-references. Look at Colossians 3.18. We just read that. It says that the submission is as is fitting in the Lord.

And then in Ephesians 5.22, Paul wrote this. Ephesians 5.22 says, So submission is a commitment to support one's husband in a way that he may reach his full potential as a man of God.

[12:29] So this can involve several things. Making the home a safe place, free from the sinful influence of the world. Striving to be dependable and trustworthy. Providing affirmation and encouragement.

And building loyalty to the husband and the children. And also showing confidence in the husband's decisions. So, so far, we have talked about the marriage relationship only in the context of both spouses being believers.

But what about cases where the wife is a believer but the husband is not? Well, the Bible has something to say about that, too. Listen to 1 Peter 3.1-2.

Here are 1 Peter 3.1-2. Peter wrote, Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their lives when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

We have examples in this church where husbands have become believers, some after many years of marriage, because of the conduct that they saw in their wives. So the submission to which Paul calls wives has a particular character.

[13:39] Every human relationship can be perverted. And the standard of what Paul means is that which is fitting in the Lord. We keep hammering that phrase over and over.

And the teaching of which Colossians 3.18 is an example has sometimes been taken by men and used to provide a framework for the most appalling chauvinism and self-centered greedy assertiveness.

A husband might require a wife to meet his needs or to serve his interests or to fulfill his desires or to bow to his selfish will. And it can get very ugly when that happens.

But the Bible's answer is to understand the character of the husband's headship. And so that's why we need to look at verse 19 now. Verse 19 says, Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

Elsewhere in the Bible, Paul expanded on this concept. We've already alluded to this cross-reference once, but listen to Ephesians 5.25. Ephesians 5.25 says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

[14:46] In spite of all the failings of the church, Christ has continually loved the church with grace and forgiving mercy and has never become bitter because of the church's many sins.

So this type of love is the model for husbands. Peter described the marriage relationship like this in 1 Peter 3.7. 1 Peter 3.7 says, Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel since they are heirs with you of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be hindered.

So Paul addresses two commands to husbands in our text tonight. First, they must love their wives. Notice that it's present tense, so that implies continuous action.

The verb itself seems best understood in the New Testament to express a willing love, not the love of passion or emotion, but the love of choice. That's a covenant kind of love.

And it could be translated there, husbands, keep on loving your wives. So the love that existed at the start of the marriage is to continue throughout the marriage and it mustn't give way to bitterness.

[15:59] So this willing covenant love in view here is the activity of self-sacrifice. It's a deep affection that views the wife as a sister in the Lord and the object of a promise to be kept.

The love that Paul commands sees the wife as the weaker vessel to be cared for while at the same time seeing her as a fellow heir to grace, a best friend and a life partner.

So now we see why the biblical concept of a wife's submission requires us to understand the husband's responsibility too. God designed that a wife's submission operates within a concept and a context of love.

In that way the wife is protected because a man who truly loves his wife would never force her to submit to something that's humiliating, degrading, or violating of her conscience.

The godly husband loves his wife like Christ loves the church. Second, Paul says that husbands are not to be harsh with their wives. So the husbands must not display harshness of temper or resentment toward their wives.

[17:03] They're not to irritate or exasperate them but rather provide loving leadership in the home. So now that we've looked at the relationship between wives and husbands, let's move on to the second relationship in this passage.

Next we see the relationship between children and parents. So children and parents are our second item. This relationship is described in verses 20 and 21.

Paul wrote, Children, obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged. Ephesians has a similar comment to children that nearly is identical.

In Ephesians 6.1, Paul wrote, Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. The parent-child relationship can't be right unless the relationship between the husband and the wife is right.

The word translated children here is a general term for children and it's not limited to a specific age group. It actually just refers to any child still living in the home and under parental guidance.

[18:17] The present tense of the imperative to obey demands continuous obedience. The fact that children are to honor and obey their parents is taught repeatedly in scripture.

Obviously, it appears in the Ten Commandments under honor your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. That is Exodus 20.12.

And then in the Old Testament, striking or cursing one's parents was punishable by death.

Continuing disobedience also was punishable by death in the Old Testament days too.

Children are to listen to and respect their parents' instructions and obey those instructions. And the consequences of disrespect for parents are graphically portrayed in Proverbs 30.17.

Listen to Proverbs 30.17. It says, The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.

[19:19] It's quite a verse there, isn't it? So children are to obey their parents in all things. The only limit placed on a child's obedience is when a parent demands something that is contrary to God's

law.

Jesus himself knew that some children would have to defy their parents to come to have faith in him. Listen to Jesus' words in Luke 12 verses 51 through 53.

Jesus said, Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two, and two against three. They will be divided father against son, and son against father, mother against daughter, and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

But except for when parents require you to do something or expect you to do something that is contrary to God's law, we should obey our parents, and children should obey their parents.

[20:24] And the motive for the children's obedience is to please the Lord. It's possible to please the parents and not please the Lord if the parents aren't yielded to the Lord themselves.

But the family that lives in an atmosphere of love and truth that reads the word of God and that prays together will have an easier time discovering God's will and pleasing the Lord.

Listen to two quotes from Warren Wiersbe about the relationship between children and parents. He said, The child who does not learn to obey his parents is not likely to grow up obeying any authority. He will defy his teachers, the police, his employers, and anyone else who tries to exercise authority over him. The breakdown of authority in our society reflects the breakdown of authority in the home. And then Wiersbe goes on to say this later. He says, For the most part, children do not create problems, they reveal them. Parents who cannot discipline themselves cannot discipline their children.

[21:27] If a father and a mother are not under authority themselves, they cannot exercise authority over others. It is only as parents submit to each other and to the Lord that they can exercise properly balanced spiritual and physical authority over their children.

The properly balanced authority comes into play in verse 21. Look at Colossians 3, 21 again. It says, Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.

Obviously, the reason for this command was to avoid discouragement. We know that constant nagging produces a situation where children do become discouraged either because they cannot please those they love or because they feel like they're of no worth to anybody.

Mothers, though, aren't off the hook by verse 21 because the word fathers in Colossians 3, 21 could be translated as parents. In fact, the same word is translated as parents in Hebrews 11, 23.

Parents often change their minds and create problems for their children, sometimes by swinging from extreme permissiveness to extreme legalism. So fathers and mothers should encourage their children, not discourage them.

[22:42] And one of the most important things that parents can do is to spend time with their children. A survey in one town indicated that fathers spend only 37 seconds a day with their small sons.

And yes, that's true. I did say 37 seconds a day. So it's hard to imagine that it can be that small. But it's an encouragement for children to know that their parents, as busy as they are, take time and make time to be with them.

We looked at some cross-references between Ephesians and Colossians and Ephesians and Colossians complement each other by presenting two sides of the issue.

In Ephesians, Paul exhorted the parents to raise the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. So this suggests a positive Christian environment in which children will appreciate the Christian commitment of their parents.

And in most cases, children will come to believe in the Lord and be mature in Christian life and worldview. In Colossians, Paul warned parents not to discourage their children.

[23:50] Especially in the child-rearing process, fathers were to obey Christian principles and remember the equality of all persons in Christ. In God's sight, children and parents have equal worth and parents were to treat their children with respect as people themselves.

I put a poem here by Dorothy Law Noti, and I didn't include that in your handout, but if you want a copy of it, I can give that to you later. But here's what Dorothy Law Noti wrote, and the poem is titled, Children Learn What They Live.

She said, If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty. If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence. If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate. If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice. If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

[25 : 01] If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself. And finally, if a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.

So we've studied the relationships between wives and husbands and children and parents. Now let's look at the last relationship, and that's the relationship between servants and masters. Servants and masters are what we'll look at next. And actually, Paul spent most of the passage talking about this relationship. Some people have criticized Paul, Jesus, and the Bible for seemingly avoiding speaking out against the wrong of slavery.

But these people have failed to look at what the Bible really says. By setting a standard for how people are to be treated, the Bible set in motion changes that led to the abolition of slavery. As we saw in the introduction, early Christians played key roles in banning legalized slavery. The last verse we will study tonight is one such verse that revolutionized how people should be treated.

[26 : 09] We'll cover it in more detail in a few minutes, but for now, just listen to Colossians 4.1 again. It says, Masters, treat your bond servants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

Given that we are a society that no longer has legalized slavery, why then should we bother to study about servants and masters in Colossians 3.22 to 4.1?

Any ideas there? Well, the answer is pretty simple. The same principles that apply to servants and masters also apply to employers and employees.

Workplaces with Christian employees and supervisors can become powerful examples to the unbelievers that also work there. So with the employer-employee relationship in mind, let's read verses 22 through 25 of chapter 3 and then also read verse 1 of chapter 4.

Paul wrote, Bond servants, Obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

[27 : 19] Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your bond servants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

As in the relationships between husbands and wives and parents and children, the principle of authority and submission is central to Paul's thought here. In everything is a comprehensive phrase, and it refers to both enjoyable and distasteful duties.

Christian servants are to please the Lord by working with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Holding God in his will in high regard is the right motive. Paul says that they are to work heartily, putting their whole inner man into the effort, and they are to do that as for the Lord rather than for men, serving their master as if the master was the Lord himself.

So Paul mentions that Christian workers should avoid eye service. What do you think he means by eye service there? It's actually a very descriptive term.

[28 : 37] Eye service is an interesting phrase that translates one word in the original Greek. Paul has in mind an approach to work designed to either attract attention or to avoid punishment or both.

Put another way, he's talking about the type of person who works only when he thinks the boss is looking. That's why it's called eye service. Without a show of hands, can you all think of people you've worked with that might have been good at having eye service?

It's especially bad when Christians have that type of eye service because it seems like everybody knows that person is a Christian, and they judge other Christians because of that.

The people who practice eye service also seek to be people pleasers. But Christians, when they follow God's will, have a higher purpose because Christians know that ultimately we work for the Lord.

We saw that in verse 23 when it says, whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men. Paul then gives us two reasons to work heartily.

[29 : 41] One of those reasons is positive. One of those reasons is negative. The positive reason is in verse 24, and we'll see that the Lord will repay them for their faithfulness.

Verse 24 says, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward, you are serving the Lord Christ. The earthly master or boss may not give the servant what he wants, but the Lord ultimately will.

The Lord is the one who will ensure that eternal compensation is what it should be. That eternal compensation is what we should be thinking about and working for.

Christian slaves also are heirs of an eternal reward. And as an employee on the job or a servant in the home, it's the Lord Christ who believers serve, and he will pay them back with grace and generosity.

The negative reason for obedience comes from verse 25. Verse 25 says, for the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

[30:47] Notice it says, the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done. It doesn't say, we're responsible for paying back the wrongdoer for the wrong he's done. The warning is that the Lord will discipline without partiality the cases of disobedience.

Paul acknowledged that the Christian slave Onesimus was responsible to repay Philemon. We saw that when Tom took us through the book of Philemon a few months ago. That was in Philemon 18.

The Christian servant is not to presume on his Christianity to justify disobedience. Even if we are God's children, the principle is that we will reap what we sow because God is impartial.

Being united to Christ changes everything. We've died with Christ. We've been raised with Christ.

Our life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ appears, we also will appear with him.

We've seen all of those things as we've gone through Colossians so far. But this doesn't mean that we're taken out of the world or the obligations of life in this world because we are to apply these things in every situation we find ourselves in.

[31:58] Serving the Lord Christ deepens, but it does not lessen our obligation to those who we serve in this world. So think about that again. Serving the Lord Christ deepens.

It does not lessen our obligations to those we serve in this world. Workers have a high standard to uphold, but so do their supervisors. And that standard is in Colossians 4.1.

We've read it several times already, but here it is again. Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

So human masters must conduct themselves knowing that they are slaves of their own master in heaven. In today's society, we can fail to grasp how revolutionary this concept was when Paul wrote it.

And in fact, it's still revolutionary to some extent today. But think back to the Roman society that Paul was part of. Roman masters considered their slaves as things and not people.

[32:58] Masters had almost total control over their slaves and could do with them whatever they pleased. Few unsaved Roman masters ever thought of treating their slaves with fairness.

In their view, slaves deserve nothing. We talked about this a little just a few minutes ago, but it's important to remember that the gospel did not immediately destroy slavery, but it did gradually change the relationship between the slave and master.

The social standards and pressures disagreed with Christian ideals, but the Christian master was to practice those Christian ideals just the same. The Christian master was to treat his slave like a person and like a brother in Christ.

He was not to mistreat him. He was to deal with his slave justly and fairly. After all, the Christian slave was a free man in the Lord, and the master was a slave to Christ. In the same way, our social and physical relationships must be governed by our spiritual relationships.

And for some cross-references supporting these concepts, listen to Galatians 3.28. Galatians 3.28 says, There is neither Jew nor Greek.

[34:09] There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and no female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And then a second cross-reference is 1 Corinthians 7.22.

1 Corinthians 7.22 says, For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freed man of the Lord. Likewise, he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ.

So the bottom line is that God will judge masters who mistreat their slaves, and he will judge slaves who fail to serve their masters. That's because slaves and masters are spiritually equal in Christ.

Masters must treat their Christian servants as brothers in Christ, showing toward them all the virtues required for holy fellowship. And put it in today's vernacular, bosses should treat their employees like they desire the Lord Jesus to treat them.

Can you imagine how the workplace would be different if every supervisor treated his or her employees that way? So in this section, the Apostle Paul repeatedly brings matters of everyday life under the searchlight of the Lordship of Christ.

[35 : 20] First, he said, Wives were to be treated as is fitting in the Lord. Children were to do things well-pleasing to the Lord. Servants were to be fearing the Lord.

Servants were to be doing their job as to the Lord. And masters to remember that their own master is in heaven. Think about one sentence from one of the opening quotes I used, and it was this, Life was cheap in the pre-Christian world.

Murder, abortions, infant exposure, and war. People died in great numbers without anyone being troubled in conscience. How much does that quote of Paul's time remind you of our society today? It actually sounds like it could be written about our society today, doesn't it? Think about this then. How much impact can we make if we strive to live like what Paul challenges us to live in this passage?

The teaching that Christians are to have relationships that affect society is not unique to Colossians. So let's look at some of those cross-references. Here's what Jesus said to believers in Matthew 5, verses 13-16.

[36 : 32] Jesus said, You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. And then listen to Philippians 2, verses 14-16a.

Starting in Philippians 2, here are 14-16a. Paul said there, Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.

And finally, 1 Peter 2-12 says, Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may hear good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

[37 : 46] So believers are not called to withdraw from society, but to influence it for Christ. And we exercise that influence particularly through our relationships.

John MacArthur said, If all Christians displayed the characteristics of relationships as defined in the principles of Colossians 3.18-4.1, the results would be dramatic.

Believers would indeed become light shining in the darkness. So as we strive to be the shining light in the darkness, remember Colossians 3.24.

That's the verse that says, Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward, you are serving the Lord Christ. So on that note, let's go ahead and close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the reminder in this lesson that in everything we do and in every relationship we have, we are actually serving Christ just as well as serving the people that are in that relationship with us.

[38 : 50] Enable us to more and more live that out as we continue to grow in our Christian lives and mature in our sanctification. Please be with us as we go through the rest of the week.

Help make us more willing to share the word that you have sent us with others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.