

Colossians 3:15-4:1

Week 8 - The Care and Feeding of Other Christians

Learning Objectives

- Learn Paul's advice for how Christ would have us deal with our daily relationships, whether at home or at work.

? What types of relationships do you have to deal with on a daily basis?

Colossians 3:15-17 (NIV)

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And 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.

? Does this passage mean that Christians should not fight or disagree with each other? Why or why not?

Possible answers: The important thing is not that Christians never disagree, but that they do it with peace, knowing that God commands us to be Christlike in our dealings with one another.

? The word that Paul uses for "rule" in verse 15 literally means "umpire" - it's a verb from athletics. What is Paul trying to say about how decisions should be made in a Christian community?

Possible answers: This literally means "let the peace of Christ make your heart's decisions fair." Paul is noting that our decisions should let the peace of Christ have final say, like an umpire or referee does.

? Are there any hymns, songs, or psalms that you find serve not only as a means of worship but also as a teaching point for you?

Possible answers: Answers will vary. This will give people a chance to share about songs or hymns that they've found lyrically meaningful.

Colossians 3:18-4:1 (NIV)

¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

^{4:1} Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

? Take a look at the grid below. What do you think was the first-century view of this relationship? How about today's view? How does Paul see it in his letter?

Leader's Note: It is up to you how you'd like to fill in this grid - you can split into smaller groups that do a line or column each, or you can go box-by-box as a larger group and discuss each in turn. The order isn't entirely important, but each area may cause interesting discussions.

PEOPLE GROUP	1st Century	21st Century	The Biblical view
Christian Believers → Each Other	<i>Possible answers: Much of Paul's writing is concerned with disputes between believers. We can assume that the early church had its share of bickering.</i>	<i>The search for a Christian community is all about self-fulfillment - so much so that "church shopping" is an accepted part of the Christian experience. Believers search for the community that fits their wants and needs, not where they can provide the most service to others.</i>	<i>Believers have a mutual obligation to teach and rejoice with each other, and to be fair and love each other.</i>
Husbands → Wives	<i>Husbands could divorce their wives for any cause. Wives could not divorce their husbands unless the husband became an apostate, developed leprosy, or assaulted a virgin. Women lived almost entirely in seclusion, and never appeared on the streets alone. All the duties were the wife's, and all the</i>	<i>Husbands are childlike oafs; wives are nagging scolds. Both husbands and wives are mainly to be concerned with how they are being served, and whether the other person in the relationship is meeting their needs.</i>	<i>Paul writes about marriage as a partnership. Just as wives have the duty to be submissive "in the Lord" - in ways that are honoring to God - husbands have the duty to love their wives. Ephesians 5:25 says, "love as Christ loved the church" - which included the obligation to lay his life down for it.</i>

	<i>privileges were the husband's.</i>		
Parents → Children	<i>Under Roman law, parents could do literally anything they wanted with their children - work them to death, sell them into slavery, etc. All the duties were the child's and all the privileges were the parents'.</i>	<i>Parents' lives should be devoted to raising children, from helping them with their schoolwork (even arguing with teachers on kids' behalf) to serving as the child's best friend and closest confidant.</i>	<i>Paul writes that, while children must respect their parents, parents have an equal obligation to their children - to love them and to not be constantly criticizing and correcting them, lest their children become discouraged.</i>
Masters → Slaves	<i>Slaves were little more than animals, more like things than people. If a slave had children, the children belonged to the master - just like herd animals.</i>	<i>"Oh, you hate your job? There's a support group for that. It's called 'Everybody.'" -- Drew Carey</i> <i>Meanwhile, bosses and CEOs are held up as little less than saints, whether Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, or Donald Trump. The more all-powerful and ruthless, the more adored they are.</i>	<i>Both the worker and the overseer are reminded to carry out their roles as if they were working for Christ. Slaves are admonished to do good work, as if working for the Lord. Masters are reminded that they too have a master, in heaven - that they ultimately do not own their slaves, but instead are managing them for the glory of Christ.</i>

? What does it look like today for wives to submit to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives?

[Leader's Note: *The Greek word that Paul uses is a military term. Effectively, Paul is saying that there is a hierarchy of order and organization (like a general to a private in the army), not one based on personal value or worth.]*

Possible answers: Ultimately, both husbands and wives have obligations to one another in marriage, and ignoring one side of these is detrimental. Answers will vary somewhat depending on your group, of course; passages such as Ephesians 5:21-33 and 1 Peter 3:1-7 may also be helpful here.

? How are children in today's world called to submit to their parents? How can parents love their children without spoiling them?

Possible answers: Children are called not only to be obedient but to accept discipline and instruction for their own good. Similarly, parents are called to discipline their children, not just to give them things.

? How did Christ's time on earth challenge the cultural view of relationships?

Possible answers: Christ's service to all of mankind, to take away the sins of the world, is the example for all of us to follow in our relationships. Rather than be one-sided, our relationships should be about service to others. For examples, see the many arguments that Christ's disciples had about who was or would be the greatest, with Christ responding over and over that the least would be greatest and the last would be first.

? Which of these relationships do you have the hardest time viewing as one where both parties have obligations to each other?

Possible answers: Answers will vary.

For Discussion and Accountability

? Which of these types of relationships have you viewed as "what can the other person do for me?"

? How can you commit to serving others in relationships that have been one-sided in the past?