

Colossians 3:18-4:6 The Family Life

Review From Last Time – What are we supposed to put off and what are we supposed to put on in our daily spiritual dress?

Opening Thought: How would you describe the family you grew up in? What was it like? Was there any dysfunction? What does a dysfunctional church family look like? What does a maturing / growing church family look like?

3:18-4:6

1. Why do you think Paul leaves the most specific instructions to last? What does he include first before getting to the “so now what” portion? How does the opening thought relate to this section? How do the instructions in 3:1-17 prepare us for this section?
2. List the different “vocations” that Paul outlines and what God commands for each:
3. If Christians did the opposite of what Paul is saying here, what would that look like and what does it lead to in our daily society and future? (go through each vocation in the list)
4. Each vocation relates back to the Lord. What does it mean for each responsibility to relate back to Jesus as the Head of the Church and how does that change our perspective and motivation for our daily lives?

5. Remember that the Bible was not written to us but it was written for us. As we read it, we want to understand it through the setting in which it was written as the original hearers would have. Slavery in particular was interwoven into the fabric of Graeco-Roman society and in many ways was much different than what we know of the African-American slave trade. The instructions given to slaves and masters was meant to challenge and witness to the culture of the Greeks and Romans. Why do you think that Paul does not just instruct slaves to run away or masters to set their slaves free? How would Paul's instructions about slaves obeying from the heart and masters treating slaves with respect compare to the practices of Greek and Roman culture?

6. If we apply Paul's writings on slaves and masters to the workplace today, what is he saying for us? How does your workplace monitor people's activity and productivity and what is your experience of people's behavior when no one is looking? How are Christians different?

7. (time permitting) 4:2-6 - The final command relates to how we behave and talk in front of "outsiders." Why does he list prayer first before time management, behavior, or speech? What is a watchful prayer? / "Redeeming the time" is a something that TV ads know quite well as they have to squeeze their message into seconds of commercial content. How does the idea of "redeeming the time" affect your thinking on time management? Why is time so precious and how does it affect our messaging? What does "unseasoned" speech sound like? What does Paul want to accomplish by his carefully chosen words and demeanor? (If you have time, a great example is Acts 26 when Paul is before King Agrippa)

Closing Section: 4:7-18 Greetings with My Own Hand

Reflect: Paul likely did not pen his letter, rather was collaborating/dictating with Timothy, possibly involving Epaphras. Why do you think Paul felt it so important to share so many personal reflections about different helpers? Why do you think Paul made a point to give his own personal sign off with his own hand at 4:18? What does this teach us about our own church fellowship and ministry?