

Expressing Fullness in Family Relationships

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 September 2022

Preacher: Dave Bott

[0 : 00] please open your Bibles to Colossians chapter 3. We're going to start at verse 1. Colossians chapter 3. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

On account of these things, the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away.

Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

[1 : 32] Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all.

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

[3 : 00] 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. Well, can I, uh, kick off, kick off, with, that's a good start, isn't it?

Um, with a question for you. How many TV streaming devices, or, uh, devices do you have to stream content, do you have in your household? Apparently the average is like seven, in the normal household.

Now, now what's the point, you've seen the advertising as I have, like all the internet providers, all the streaming services, what are they spending big money on in adverts? It's, it's spend all this money, so they've got the bandwidth of internet, so that each person can choose their own thing to watch.

You can be a loving, united family, off in different parts of the house, watching your own thing, having nothing in common. Individual choice reigns in the family.

[4 : 29] Uh, teenagers, let me speak to you. How would you feel if your parents put a curfew on your social media apps? Like, they automatically just got shut down, at 7pm every night.

I don't know if a, a little part of you died inside, even contemplating that, but, uh, should it be your choice? Is that an overreach of parents' authority? Is it oppressive?

Uh, what about parenting advice? Aren't we confused today? Like, are boundaries good or not? Is discipline good or not? Should, should we, is, uh, just affirming and affirming and affirming the way to go?

Uh, we, it's really confusing. Or socially, we, we give pre-pubescent teenagers the authority to make lifelong, body-altering choices, and they don't have to include their parents to make that choice. That's incredible where we're at, that, that, that we would think that's wise. Um, or, or an ABC article recently said that, uh, divorce, divorce applications during COVID just hit a peak, which I suppose the strain, it's understandable and, uh, that, that, that occurred, but out of this came a new profession, not just a life coach, but a divorce coach, uh, to help you feel not alone and, and affirmed as you, as you divorce.

[6 : 08] Uh, one of the divorce coaches said in the article, to be honest, I don't see it as a failure in marriage or a failure in love. Actually, I just think it's us evolving as a society. Uh, we had, we had in the article is, uh, Gwyneth Paltrow.

Hopefully I said her name right. Uh, she was leading the way, this celebrity in consciously uncoupling was her term, which has become popular now. All right, no, uh, what about wedding vows?

Like, have you heard some vows and you're like, I didn't hear a promise anywhere in that. All you've said is something sentimental saying, wow, you make me feel so good about myself.

I can't imagine living without you. There's no promise in that statement. There's a problem in that because a few years later, that same person can very much imagine living without you.

Um, should couples have separate bank accounts? Uh, that's pretty common.

[7 : 12] Uh, these days I hear. Uh, what even is a family? Uh, what even is a family? Like, is it oppressive to even give a definition?

Uh, because shouldn't each person in each group decide for themselves what constitutes a family? It's a confusing time we're in, isn't it?

It's confusing. Uh, there's so much isolation in marriage and families. Um, and, and it's, it's, it's the symptom of this cultural air we've been talking about in this series.

Where it's, it's, it's, it's the individual who has to fill up their sense of self. Uh, here's a definition of this cultural air we're breathing, just to remind us. Uh, so it's a guy called Charles Taylor.

He describes it like this. Uh, the cultural, uh, the culture of authenticity is one where each one of us has his or her own way of realizing our humanity and that it is important to find and live out one's own as against surrendering to conformity of a model imposed on us from outside by society or the previous generation or religious or political authority.

[8 : 35] So it's the self you need to find yourself. Live that out. Nothing external should tell you who you are, how to live. And so no wonder we're, we don't know what to do with authority these days.

Uh, we're very suspicious of it being, uh, oppressing us, aren't we? If we're under authority, that person above us is only using their power if I think they've made the right choice or we grasp at authority for ourselves because it's a way to feel good about my self image.

And it creates a power struggle with everyone trying to fill their own bucket, their own inner sense of, of meaning and, and value. And we're using other people to do it.

And it makes relationships so fragile. Now, I think we need to be careful as Christians, um, to go, the problem is out there.

The problem isn't with us. Uh, I, I saw this illustration once, uh, where, if you could imagine that we need to keep arms reached away from the society that doesn't live under, under, in God's ways.

[9 : 49] Now, the problem is if society moves further and further away from God's standard, if we think we're doing well just by staying arms reach away, before long, we look around, we, we are so far from God's way.

And yet we comfort ourselves thinking we're doing well. We need God's way as our reference point is what I'm trying to say. We don't need to just be a little bit different to our society.

We need a totally different way, a way that brings peace, a way that brings intimacy, building trust, a way of fullness, a way of sacrificial love.

And that's what we've got in these verses. And let me address, uh, a stumbling block. I think, uh, we shouldn't think that these verses are calling us to return to a patriarchal, oppressive model.

Uh, these verses were very challenging in the Roman society, patriarchal society. So I really like how Bible gateway present illustrates this.

[10 : 57] So we're going to watch a one minute clip of this. If, if technology helps, otherwise I'll describe it. And he shows the Colossians what this new humanity might look like in a first century Roman household, which was a highly authoritarian institution where the male patriarch held the

power of life and death over his wife and children and slaves.

Not so in a Christian household. Here, the risen Jesus is the true Lord. And so in the Lord, the wife allows her husband to become responsible for her.

And the husband is subject to Jesus by loving his wife and placing her well-being above his own. In a home where Jesus is Lord, children are not objects, but are called to maturity and to respect.

And parents are to raise their children with patience and understanding. Christians who are slaves are to honor their human masters precisely because they're not the real master.

Jesus is. And Christians who have slaves are to understand that this slave is not their property, but rather a fellow member of Jesus's body to be honored and embraced in love.

[12:10] Paul's walking a very fine line here. He is reshaping the most basic Roman institution around Jesus who rules by his self-giving love. And so while he doesn't abolish the household structure outright, the exalted Messiah demands that it be transformed, almost beyond the point of recognition for any Roman living in Colossae.

Now it gets into slaves and masters. We'll deal with that next week. So just leave that out of your minds for now. But I hope that just gives you a taste of how this radically challenged the patriarchal society back then.

Radically challenged. And Adam opened my way. It's radically challenging us today. It's challenging us in a different way. But if we were having this sermon, this passage in another part of the world, a different culture, it would probably be radically challenging that culture in a very different way.

It might not be submission that they stumble over. Maybe it's fathers having a limit on their authority in how they raise their children. It's challenging.

No matter what, all of us are called to a higher standard. Not just a higher standard. Let me rephrase that. All of us are called to a higher culture, to bring heavenly culture into our earthly culture.

[13:31] We are called to not use our family as a way of filling our internal bucket. But since we are filled by Jesus, we overflow into our families.

That's what we're going to look at today. So as we get into God's word, let me quickly pause and ask, why do you need to listen to this passage if these categories don't apply to you? If you're single or no longer married, a grown adult, an empty nester, why do you need to listen?

I think, let me give you four reasons. One is to know the heart and purposes of God because this is meant to image who God is. We are calling God our Father.

We're meant to understand Christ as our husband of the church. So we need to know God's goodness as a father, especially if we've experienced a broken earthly father.

We need to know what God is like, what our heavenly husband is like. A second reason is families in this church need you to be encouraging them and holding them accountable to this.

[14:49] We need you. The third reason is to be ready to give a thoughtful and winsome answer to anyone who says that this is oppressive and out of date.

We need to be ready to show that this is actually the way to thrive. And the fourth reason is the way of thinking about human authority in the family.

We're all under authority and we all have authority to some extent in lots of spheres of life. So the way of thinking of being full in Christ is helpful to be thinking in other spheres as well.

So there is lots of reasons for us all to get into this. So let's do that. So how can you express your fullness in Christ within the family?

Some this morning might be feeling like finally, after all this abstract thinking about fullness in Christ, we're getting to where I live in the nitty-gritty of family struggle and next week as we look at work.

[15:58] But don't you find the brevity of such complex topics frustrating if you're approaching it that way? Like one sentence?

Like how many seminars are there and books and government spending is there on marriage and parenting? And we get one sentence. Like why is that?

That's because what you need to thrive as a wife and as a husband, as a parent, as a child, is more than instruction. We need to go deeper in knowing Christ and we need the whole of Scripture to do that.

I think the point of these few verses is to help us to be clear on what does it mean to set our minds on things above. If we've died with Christ, if we've been raised with him, we're seated with him in

Christ at God's right hand, what does it mean to set our minds on things above?

We're not to treat each other according to earthly categories anymore. We're all in Christ. So what does that mean in terms of human authority? Does it abolish human authority?

[17 : 13] Does it obliterate it? Or does it give the husband and the head of the house not only legal and social power but the full power of God? Unquestioned.

Does it mean that? Or does it mean that you should spend your time only on church-related things? You should be just involved in mission while your family suffers.

So I think that's why these verses are here, just to explain what does fullness look like. What fullness looks like is restoring us to God's original design as his image bearers.

These verses tell us that you can express fullness in whatever situation you're in. Whether you're in authority or under authority, it's not just possible, but whatever situation you're in, Christ has chosen that context for you to express fullness in him.

I think this is where the rubber hits the road, whether we are grasping fullness in Christ or not.

Because family relationships are hard, aren't they?

[18 : 28] We don't feel full. So this is where the rubber hits the road, whether we really do rest in the fullness we have in Christ, find power there.

So how do we set our minds on things above? How do we know this fullness? We need to preach to ourselves. I can't remember who said it, but someone said, in a way, you're the most influential person on yourself because you're talking to yourself constantly.

Some of you out loud, which is really distracting. We're always talking to ourselves. What are you telling yourself? So you need to be preaching to yourself.

If you focus on the family, on what you're entitled to, that's what you'll see. That's what you interpret everything as. If you think, I need to be full and this family is going to fill me, you will approach it with entitlement.

But if you think, I am full in Christ and I'm called to represent him in the family, you'll see opportunity. So although I can deeply desire my spouse's love and respect, my parents' understanding, my children to listen to me, I can deeply desire that to the point where I feel paralysed if they don't give it to me.

[19 : 54] Like I can only respond positively if they give it to me. Those desires cry out to us, but we need to preach ourselves that we have everything we need in Christ.

I am chosen by God, holy and loved, and that never changes. My status is not greater because I am head of the family and my status is not diminished when I'm called to submit.

Why? Because my status, we all have the highest status in the cosmos. You cannot get a higher status than being in Christ.

You're a child of God. My purpose in life is so much bigger than my own story of creating a comfortable, self-affirming, pain-avoiding little kingdom.

My purpose is to be part of Christ's cosmic purpose of reconciling everything to him. I'm called to represent his grace. And I'm not alone in my struggle.

[20 : 57] His powerful grace is at work, and so I'm confident that he has the power, not me, he has the power to bring change in the family. And when I get it wrong and when I fall short again and again, his grace covers my sin and shame to help me move into the struggle again.

His grace covers my family's sin and shame. I don't have to lay down the law. They need grace. We need to be preaching the gospel to ourselves.

So how does this fullness overflow into the family? How can you show Christ's character? How can you show the goodness of Christ's authority?

Let's get into each of the verses. I think each person in their situation has a unique opportunity to show the goodness of being in Christ and living under his authority.

So wives, as a wife, how do you show the goodness of Christ's authority? Verse 18, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.

[22 : 14] I think fear is still very real in the hearts of Christian women with this call. Even though socially, legally, it's changed since Paul's day, I think there's still a lot of fear.

If I acknowledge my husband's authority to take the lead in this relationship, will I lose my voice in decisions? Will I lose my value to contribute competently?

Will I lose my dignity and become a sexual object for my husband's desires? There's a lot of fear still. And as we come to this command, as we come to the command of husbands, hopefully, wives,

you will have great reason not to be afraid, but to find a safe place to thrive.

Let me first define submission. I'm going to use Christian psychologist Larry Crabb's definition. Submission is a woman's warmly inviting, receiving, and meaningfully supporting a man's involvement in life in a way that encourages his godliness.

So it's inviting, receiving, supporting a man's involvement that encourages his godliness.

[23 : 44] I'm going to risk a small concrete example. When Em describes to me a distressing situation at work, she's inviting my input at that point.

And to be honest, sometimes I'm just like, I just want to get on with my day. But at that point, by inviting me into that situation, I have to step up. What does it look like to love her in that, for her situation at work?

Does she need a hug? Does she need prayer? Does she need guidance? Does she need redirection? What does she need? By inviting me in, I have to step up.

It encourages my godliness. I think that's just a small example. But notice the motivation here is for the Lord's sake, ultimately.

It's as fitting in the Lord. Another way we could word that is in a manner that is proper in the Lord.

So I think wives, notice four things here.

[24 : 53] This is something the Lord instructs you directly. He's not talking to past you, to your husbands. He's talking to you. You can choose to do this.

You have the authority to obey Christ. So husbands, it's not your role to command your wife to follow, to submit. Secondly, your ultimate motivation is because you trust Christ to only command what's good and it's going to honour him.

Thirdly, in a manner proper to the Lord gives a limit to the husband's authority. You're not told here to obey blindly. You are following as much as your husband is directing you in the way of Christ.

And fourth, in a manner proper to the Lord, that's described in verses 12 to 17. Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness.

That's what it looks like, to have the character of Christ in the way you follow the lead of your husband. So submission is not a doormat.

[26 : 06] It's thoughtful, it's conscious of Christ's presence, it's conscious of Christ's grace, knowing that he's calling you to represent him to your husband. It's bringing all your giftedness to follow your husband in living for Christ.

So when a marriage is working well, I like to think of it as like ballroom dancing. I know this illustration won't work on everyone, but in ballroom dancing, someone's got to take the lead. Someone has to. And so when the man is leading well and the wife is following, what do you see when it's beautifully done?

You don't go, oh, wow, he is leading well. Oh, wow, she is so submissive. You don't see that.

There's such a unit that they're just one.

So I like that picture because you need leadership, you need following. But when it's done well, you almost can't recognise when it's happening because it's so unified.

[27 : 10] Another reason I like that picture is because when the man is loving well, the woman thrives. In ballroom dancing, often it's the thriving of the woman that is the focus.

Wives, your husband will fail you to one degree or another, but you don't need a fear because Christ, your heavenly Lord and husband, will always use his grace for your good.

You're putting yourself in Christ's hands. So can I encourage you to confess your earthly desire to not lose control?

Confess that. Preach to yourself who you are in Christ. You're not losing any dignity in submitting. You're representing Christ, his character.

And then entrust yourself to the Lord who will always treat you with grace. Wives, by the way you submit to your husbands, you have the unique opportunity to display that Christ's authority is good and trustworthy, that you can entrust your whole life to it.

[28 : 26] Okay, husbands, how can you show the goodness of Christ's authority? Verse 19, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. I don't think this command is any less troubling than the previous one.

Husbands, our sovereign head is telling us how to use the calling he's given us as the spiritual head of the family. There is no qualification given to the command to love our wives.

In all we do, in every second, in every activity, in every season of life, we're called to think of her eternal interests.

It's a high calling. And I think for us men, fear kicks in at this point too, just in a different way. Fear of losing control.

Fear of losing control. Us blokes, we want to move into the world competently, knowing what we're doing. Things we can master and control.

[29 : 29] Relationships, you can't control them. This calling is going to push us into areas where we don't know what we're doing.

And I think we're afraid of that as men. I heard an illustration the other day that clicked with me. It may not. It's a sporting one, so it may not. And it's baseball.

American, sorry. But anyway, this guy was describing that when he was a boy learning baseball, he kept getting struck out. Swinging and missing the, he kept missing the ball.

So he kept getting struck out and it was just embarrassing. And until he learned a strategy, if he just stood there and didn't swing, if the pitch didn't go over the plate, then sometimes he could walk to first base.

So he's contributing. Now, do you get the point? He would rather not try and not be embarrassed rather than trying and failing.

[30 : 31] That illustration clicked for me as a guy. I think the call to love our wives is so huge that we can find it more safe to not even try.

Just withdraw. Do the bare minimum. What if we won't measure up? What if our wives see how afraid and spiritually weak we actually feel inside?

So fear of losing control is threatening us here as well. Husbands, we are called to spiritually nourish our wives so that they thrive in living for Christ.

And we need to step up to the plate. Risk failing. And we can do it in the grace of our sovereign head.

When we're broken by our sin, learning the depths of his acceptance. When we don't know what we're doing, just relying on his wisdom and grace to get us through.

[31 : 37] When we realise it's his power that changes things, not ours. So what will stop us from loving in this way?

The verse gives us a hint there. Do not be harsh. Do not be harsh with your wives. That word there is literally bitter. Don't become embittered to the point of harshness.

And I think I know this attitude all too well. I think it's when I'm entitled and self-pitying. And I get in such a headspace of the law. And I just, all I can focus on is the failures or perceived failures of Emma.

And I just get bitter and entitled. And that creates harshness. In other words, if I don't give Emma the grace in Christ that I accept for myself, that's when I can become entitled and bitter and harsh. We need to extend the grace to our wives that we want for ourselves. So husbands, confess your earthly desire to not lose control. Preach to yourself who you are in Christ.

[32 : 48] You are safe in his grace. He goes with you as he calls you to spiritually lead. And husbands, by the way we nourish and direct our wives to live for Christ, we have the unique opportunity to display the goodness of Christ's authority by self-sacrificing love.

Always thinking of what's for her good and the family's good. Okay, children, let me speak directly to you.

Notice that the Lord Jesus is, and teenagers, when you're under the parents' authority, the Lord Jesus is speaking directly to you. He's not speaking past you, telling your parents to make you obey.

He's talking to you. So how can you show the goodness of Jesus' authority? Obey your parents in everything, for this pleases me.

And by me, not me, but this pleases the Lord of the universe. Jesus isn't saying you're less important than adults, so you need to let them tell you what to do.

[34 : 05] He's saying that you are dearly loved by Christ, and your heavenly Father, and the way you can show that you trust that you are so loved is by obeying your parents, the parents he's given you for your good.

And I think you too might be fearing the loss of control, like afraid that your parents will choose things that will take your happiness away, afraid that if you follow what your parents say, you're not

going to fit in with friends at school.

I think you're bombarded by social media and shows and people at school telling you to hide things from your parents, that being too close to your parents is weird, that they're old and don't know anything about life.

You're being told that again and again, to throw off connection with them. They're so opposite to what Jesus says will give you life. Teenagers, children, you have a choice to do what will please your friends to feel like you belong, or you can realise that you belong to God.

You belong to him. And so you can please him. You already fit in. You can choose to do what makes him smile.

[35 : 19] And that's gladly letting your mum and dad be your mum and dad. Letting them provide for you, letting them keep you safe, comforting you, advising you, praying for you, imitating them.

Now, your friends are going to think you're weird if you do this, if you treat your parents so intimately and trustingly. You're going to look weird. But I think it's a good weird.

I think it's like eating hot chips with ice cream kind of weird. It's a good weird that your friends are missing out on. You can try it and see if I'm right.

But it's a good weird. Your friends who, if they ridicule for it, to be honest, in their heart they are craving parents who are really involved with them.

They're craving it. So don't be worried about being weird. Preach to yourself who you are in Christ. You are a son, a daughter of the King of Kings.

[36 : 23] And entrust yourself to the Lord and give yourself to your parents. You have the unique opportunity to show that you are full of Jesus' love by letting your parents have the control.

And finally, fathers. Now, mothers are assumed here, I think, because in the previous verse, you've got children obey your parents.

So that's both. But I think it's also assumed because wives are following their husband's lead in the family. So it's assumed here. So when I say fathers, mums listen in too.

But I also wonder if this is calling us for fathers to be who we're called to be in Christ, the spiritual head of the family, nurturers of the family. So fathers, how can you show the goodness of living under Christ's authority?

Do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged. So the idea here is not provoking to the point of anger, where they're unmotivated to do what is pleasing to God.

[37 : 35] So it's not saying just make choices to keep them happy. We're not called to be buddies. We're called to be fathers. At first, I thought this was a fairly low bar, like just don't make them angry.

I thought there was a low bar, but I've changed my mind on that. I think this takes a lot of thought and courage.

Paul's purpose in writing this whole letter, he says in chapter 2, is that the Colossians don't, so that the Colossians are encouraged, their hearts are encouraged, knit together in love, so that they know the full assurance of love.

of being in Christ. Otherwise, they are left open to error and wrong teaching. So losing encouragement can leave our children open to the wrong ideas and being led astray.

This is super important that our kids, we try and make our kids encouraged in the Lord. How they respond, that's on them. But our goal needs to be trying to encourage.

[38 : 49] So this is a high bar. It's calling us to nurture our children, to do all we can to encourage them to live for Christ. If you feel as a father like you don't know what you're doing, it's probably good.

That's probably where, that's the space you need to live in. Because we're being called here to enter the confusing mess of relating, to understand our children, which is hard work, and then understand what they're facing in the world, and then understand what the scriptures say about that and how grace applies to that for them to live well.

We're called to be vulnerable in how we say that and gracious in the way we say that, not laying down the law. That's a hard place to live as a father, which is why I think it's a high bar.

It's calling us to think gospel and to treat our children with gospel. And again, I think the fear of losing control is a big factor.

I think we can feel somewhat competent to put food on the table, but to do this, to be spiritually nurturing, that's hard. It's really confusing and hard.

[40 : 10] It's out of our comfort zone, and I think we can avoid it as men by either withdrawing or laying down the law as if that will keep control.

And what do I mean by laying down the law? I heard an illustration of this. It doesn't quite fit because this illustration, it was a grown adult who was coming to his father, but still I think it helped me grasp it.

So this guy was struggling in his own marriage and he went to his dad for help and advice. He was just really struggling. He was in tears.

He didn't know what to do. And his dad, with good intention, says, read Ephesians 5 and pray. And then the son's like, I've done that.

It's not working. I don't know what to do. And the father said nothing, gave a disapproving look and walked out of the room.

[41 : 17] That was it. He laid down the law. This is what God commands of you. But he wasn't vulnerable enough to go, I know the struggle you're in.

I've been there. I'm in that struggle too. Here's some grace to you. He couldn't do that. He just laid down the law and left his son to it.

If we just lay down the law without grace, I think that's an attempt for us as men to just stay in control because we can be comfortable there. God says this and that's it.

We need more than that. Or another way to put it is our children need to know how to think in Christ, where they're at in their sin and the mess of the world and how does that connect to being in Christ.

So, fathers, we need to know Christ's grace, that we have his forgiveness. I'm sure failures are coming into your minds. Let his grace cover that sin and shame so that you can move back into the struggle of parenting well.

[42 : 30] We need to know we are dependent on grace ourselves. And if we're dependent on grace, that's a great place for grace to come, to flow out of us. So confess your desire to not lose control.

Preach to yourself who you are in Christ and entrust your Lord who is present to treat you with grace. And fathers, we have the unique opportunity to show the nurturing and gentle instruction and love of God the Father.

We can glorify God the Father. So if in the family we act out of fear of losing control, if we see earthly authority simply as something to affirm ourselves, it really just shows that we're trying to use our families to fill up our own sense of inner emptiness.

But as Christians, we've got to remember our bucket is full. We have everything in him and we're called to overflow into our families.

We can show how good our heavenly husband and father is. And this is true, I think, even when it's not, the love isn't reciprocated.

[43 : 47] Like, you know that when it's not, when you don't feel loved, it is agonising. It is agonising to live in that space. But that pushes us to realise how much we're loved in Jesus.

That's a context for us to go even deeper into how much we have in Jesus. And it's a context where if you can find the resources in Jesus and not in your loved one to move towards them graciously, that actually is an opportunity to show how full Jesus is.

Agonising, yes. But even if we don't get reciprocal love, we're still full in Jesus. Let me briefly finish by asking, what will keep us from experiencing and modelling fullness in our families.

What will keep us from it is if we see our families individualistically, instead of nourished and held accountable by this church family. If we're going to be thinking in gospel categories, we need the word of Christ dwelling in us richly, which is what the previous paragraph is about.

We need the whole church speaking into families, into children, into fathers, mothers. I picture like a military unit.

[45 : 13] Life is hard, isn't it? You're just bombarded. If you are cut off from the rest of the army, if you don't allow anyone to speak in and provide the resources, there's too much pressure.

It's too hard. But if your unit is connected to the whole army behind you, the home base, that's when you'll be nourished.

So me as a father, as a husband, I need you to speak in to my life. It's not my possession. My marriage, my family is meant to be for the glory of Jesus.

You have to speak in. And you do. So many encourage. Encouragement, spurring on, correcting, praying, involved in our family. We need everyone involved.

And I'll just say one other thing. Let's not play identity politics, where it's like only a married man can speak to a married man. No, we have the authority of scripture here.

[46 : 21] Singles, we need you to speak into families. We need everyone to be encouraging and involved. The older modelling and instructing the younger.

So let me finish by saying, wrapping up. In a society that views relationships, even close relationships, as from an individual perspective, as something to be used to fill up themselves, broken by self-gratifying use of power, isolated by fear of entrusting ourselves to another, we're called in Christ to offer a different way, a heavenly way, an overflowing way, a way that creates peace and intimacy, as there's sacrificial love going both ways, being knit together, not driven by fear, but trusting in our sovereign Lord to be present and full of grace.

Let me finish on this challenge. Let us not use our families to fill up ourselves. Let's overflow who we are in Christ into our families so that they thrive.

Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Father, I pray that you would empower us by the power of your spirit who shows us Christ in the learning community of the church.

Empower us to show this broken world a different way, a way that is reconciled to you and reconciled to one another.

[48 : 18] I pray this for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.