

The New Life and Household Relationships

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[0:00] How about I pray for us and then we'll get into God's word together. So let's pray. Father, thanks so much for your word and the instructions that it gives us. Thank you, as Simon said at the start of the service, that these instructions are designed for our good.

And so we pray that you help us to understand what they are saying and more than that, to put them into practice. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. I don't know if you've heard, but Melbourne last week was voted the world's most liveable city.

So on the next slide, Aidan, is the headline from The Age. Fifth year in a row Melbourne has won, which just so happens to be the same number of years my family has been here in Melbourne, actually.

Just saying, just saying. But when Michelle and I moved from Sydney to Melbourne, it was a big change for us. It meant a change of school for the kids, a change of church for the family, a change of job for me and a change in friends for us.

It was like having a new life. And now that we have this new life in Melbourne, our behaviour was to match. And so I started drinking coffee. I wear a bit more black these days, which apparently is very Melbourne.

[1:14] And even some of our words have changed. I was saying this to a couple of families we had over for lunch last Sunday. So in Sydney, we used to call on the next slide these, we used to call these sneakers.

But in Melbourne, I now call them runners. That's right. On the next slide, we used to, in Sydney, call these cicadas. But in Melbourne now, I call them cicadas.

Yeah, yeah. Next, in Sydney, I used to call these swimmers. But not now. Now I call them bathers. That's right. Togs.

Now we're in Melbourne. It's bathers. And then on the last slide in Sydney. Oh, where's the next one back? Is there one back before that? No. What's this?

Oh, we're going straight to this one. Okay. So in Sydney, this was league. And I used to follow the dragons. But now it's footy means AFL. So there's a change in state has brought a new change in life.

[2:20] A new identity as Melburnians. And now we had to live out that new life, that identity by behaviour that matches. That's the point. That's the point that Devon was making for us from the first part of chapter 3 in Colossians.

When we become Christians, it's like we change state. We have been given new spiritual life in God's family. And so I think on the next slide is a passage from chapter 1, verse 13, where Paul has written for, God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves.

It's like he has rescued us from Sydney where there is sin and judgment. I can say that because I'm from Sydney. And brought us to Melbourne where there is forgiveness and new spiritual life. Or 2, verse 13, you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature.

But God made you alive with Christ. It's as though before we lived alive on the outside but dead on the inside. We were dead to God.

We didn't know God. We didn't care about God. We rejected God. And so we were destined for judgment. But now God has made us spiritually alive on the inside. Brought us into his kingdom where we know him as our father and care about what he says and are destined for heavenly inheritance.

[3 : 35] And so what is our response to be with this new life? Well, on the next slide, just a couple of verses of what we're seeing so far. Paul says, so then just as you receive Jesus as your Lord, the Lord who died to give you new life, so continue to walk, to live your lives in him.

Continue to live with Jesus as your Lord. Or chapter 3, verse 1, at the start of our chapter today, says, since then you have been raised with Christ. We've started the new life.

And so we're to seek the things above where Christ is seated. We're to live out the new life, in other words, with Jesus as our Lord.

In fact, if you've got your Bibles there, have a look at verse 17, the verse just before our passage today. Verse 17 really sums up our response because it picks up two main themes. First, it says, whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And so whatever we do, our response to our new life is to do everything in his name. That is to honor Jesus, to obey Jesus, to live with Jesus as our Lord.

[4 : 45] But then Paul also adds in the rest of verse 17, giving thanks to God the Father through him. And both these ideas of Jesus' Lordship and giving thanks comes up quite a lot in Colossians.

I mean, in our passage today, out of nine verses, the word Lord is mentioned seven times. Six times as Lord and once as Master. And so he's really reminding us to live with Jesus as Lord.

And that the idea of thanksgiving comes up lots, and not just in our passage, but just before. So verse 15, at the end of that, it says, and be thankful. Or verse 16, at the end of verse 16, with gratitude in your hearts.

End of verse 17, giving thanks to God the Father. You see, Paul knows that living with Jesus as our Lord in the new life will sometimes be hard.

But if we are continually thankful for all God has done for us through Christ, then our thankfulness will motivate us to keep trying. Well, why am I telling you all this?

[5 : 48] Because today's passage is really a continuation of last week's. And so on the next slide, I've tried to try and break it up like that. So verses 1 to 4 of chapter 3, it's about our new lives in Christ, you know, being brought to Melbourne, if you like.

Verses 5 to 11 is putting to death the old ways, no longer following league anymore. Verses 12 to 14, putting on the new ways, firstly as individuals, 15 and 16 as a church, letting the peace of God dwell richly among us and teaching and admonishing one another.

Verse 17, in everything, and in today's passage, at the home, in home, household relationships. That's how it all fits together. And that brings us to point 1, the new life as wives and husbands.

So point 1 in your outlines, verse 18 in your Bibles. It says, wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.

Does anyone want to preach this now for me? Verse 18 jars with us, doesn't it? And often it's because we come to the Bible with ideas that are shaped by the world more than by God and his word.

- [6:55] And so we must work, always work, at understanding what God means by this and not necessarily what the world means by this. And so what does God mean by this? Well, firstly notice it's talking about submitting yourselves to your own husbands.
- It's not talking about men in general. As some Christians will say on the extreme end, that women cannot be a boss anywhere because they have to submit. But it's not talking about that at all. It's talking about as your role as a wife, submitting to your husband.
- The second thing to notice is that the word submit here is different to the word for children and slaves. Do you notice that in your Bibles? Wives submit, but children, verse 20, obey. Slaves, verse 22, obey. And now there is obedience involved in submission, but there's also a difference. And the difference is that the wife is to submit themselves, says verse 18.
- In other words, the husband cannot demand a wife's obedience. So all those guys, husbands who nudged your wives, as I read verse 18, you can't do that.
- [8:00] It's the wife's business. She is the one who is to submit herself to a husband, whereas parents and masters, they can demand children and slaves' obedience. Actually, I must confess, early on in my marriage, Michelle and I were having an argument, I mean, a lively discussion, and in an effort to win it, I pulled out this verse and said, you have to submit.
- That was dumb. Lost the argument and I was flat out wrong. I apologised and Michelle very graciously forgave me.
- But you see, submission is about voluntarily placing yourself under your husband's leadership. So it's up to the wives to live out this instruction and not for the husbands to enforce it.
- So what does this submission look like and not look like? Well, firstly, it does not mean the wife is a doormat for the husband. It does not mean the wife cannot make decisions.
- It does not mean the wife cannot have a say, especially when wives know better than most husbands anyway. Wives, feel free to nudge your husbands back at this point. And it certainly does not mean that you let your husband be a tyrant.
- [9:12] Now, please hear this. It does not mean that women must excuse or endure abuse of any kind, because that is how this verse has been used in history. And if there is serious abuse, then you need to separate from your husband so that you can be safe, he can get help, and you can both be reconciled in a much healthier marriage.
- Though I realise the latter is not always possible. Submission, however, does mean that you don't function completely independently of your husband. Rather, you talk with your husband about things and come to some sort of agreement.
- And if you cannot agree, you either leave it for a bit and come back to it and see if you can agree again. Or if a decision really needs to be made then and there, then it means trusting your husband to make it.
- It means accepting his responsibility for you and not trying to undermine him. A simple way that Michelle does this is when the kids want to do something, and we may have spoken about it, and usually we agree, but even if we haven't agreed, she will say, look, your father has said not until you finish this.
- She trusts me enough to go with my decisions, you see. And the good thing for my wife is that if the decision goes pear-shaped, then it's my fault. And when the kids complain about it, they don't go to her, they come to me, which actually relieves Michelle from dealing with that and forces me to take responsibility as I'm called by God to do.
- [10:37] And husbands, although the word is directed to wives, you've been listening in, and that's good, and not so you can tell them what to do, but so that you can make it easier for them to do it. How?

Well, by being a husband who's trustworthy with money and decisions and relationships so that our wives can trust us and submit. By being a husband who takes responsibility and doesn't just switch off and leave it up to the wife to sort out.

Lots of husbands do that. By being a husband who takes time to listen and talk about decisions and working at coming to an agreement rather than just saying, no, we're doing this. In other words, it's doing what verse 19 says.

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. This is the word to the husbands now. We're to love and not be harsh or bitter towards them.

And the type of love on view here is a sacrificial kind of love, a love which means husbands that are willing to give up their wants or their work or TV or sport, even their life, if it will be good for their wife.

[11:41] That's how Paul puts it in a parallel passage in Ephesians on the next slide, I think it is. It says, Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

See, husbands are to love like Christ. And what did Christ do to show his love? He died for the church. And so husbands are to love like that, sacrificially, willing to give up even their life for their wife.

And when you understand that, then this instruction to husbands is just as big a call as the instruction to the wives. The world thinks that the Bible is chauvinistic. You know, women have to submit but men only have to love.

But they've misunderstood what submission really looks like and what love really looks like. But God says, husbands are to be willing to die for the good of their wife.

And if husbands love like that, then it won't be a problem to submit to that kind of love, will it? Let me die for you. Okay. So, a more serious example, a little one from our marriage of sacrificial love and submission.

[12:50] It's not really sacrificial love but it's late at night and I come into the kitchen and I say to Michelle, don't wash up, let me do the dishes and then she submits and says, okay. Sacrificial love, submission.

That's what it's meant to look like. I must confess it's not all that sacrificial now because we have a dishwasher. But it's that sort of thing. It's husbands taking responsibility to make sure things are under control not by coming home and taking over, no, not by that, but taking the initiative to ask, what can I do to help?

Or simply seeing a need and saying, can I take the kids off your hands? Or whatever. And when you take the loving lead by asking, how can I help? And your wife submits by answering your question, you can do this and this, then before you know it, you're leading, she's submitting and you don't even realise it.

Now of course some Christians say that these verses don't apply to us today because we live in a different culture. But do you notice the end of verse 18 there? It says, as is fitting in the Lord.

This is part of what it means to live under the Lordship of Jesus, to do whatever you do in the name of the Lord Jesus. And so it does not depend on culture, it depends on whether Jesus is our Lord or not.

[14:05] And if he is, then we are to live out the new life like this and with thankfulness that we might keep wanting to try and live like this. Now I'm acutely aware that there are a number of single or divorced or widowed people amongst us and while some of this might not be directly applicable to you at the moment, it might be one day.

In fact, I've recently been asked to do a wedding of a couple from our church. He is a widower and in his late 60s or even early 70s, I think, marrying them next year so you never know.

But you do need to know what the roles involve so you know what you're signing up for and what you might be looking for in a potential spouse. Whether they are a man you think will love you sacrificially or a woman whom you can love sacrificially.

What's more, it helps you to know how to pray for your friends who are married and give godly advice. Well, enough about marriage. The next pair of relationships in the home are children and parents.

Point to verse 20. Children, obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord. Here there is an instruction given to children though as I said it's one parents can enforce unlike the husbands enforcing the wives instructions.

[15:22] But nonetheless it is given to the children and by directing it to the children themselves Paul assumes children are part of the church. They are Christians until they say otherwise. So perhaps we should have kept all the kids in today so they could hear this.

This is all part of the reason why I'm also happy to baptise children have them take communion and be involved in the life of the church because the Bible seems to assume they are. But children are to obey their parents.

Why? Because this pleases the Lord. And notice again it's not about culture but about pleasing the Lord Jesus who has given you new life. Of course the practical reason children are to obey is for their own good.

I mean parents generally know what's best for them and so a child is to obey their parents for their own good. So when my kids come home and they want afternoon tea and they want to eat biscuits and chips we don't have many chips actually biscuits all the time and I say no you'd have fruit or bread then they have to obey because it's for their good.

which means we must resist this trend in society where children become the centre of the family such that parents end up obeying the children. Have you ever noticed that? Parents just give in to kids all the time because well let's face it it is easier and so kids end up acting like adults and the kids decide what they will eat and won't eat and how much TV they will watch and what shows they will see and even if the family will go to church or not the kids decide.

[16:46] Now there may be times when you just have to let it slide and let them do what they want because you're just trying to survive. The early years of when you first have kids it's like that that's normal and other times you need to let them take ownership for decisions as part of helping them to grow up and so we let our children spend their pocket money on what they like and yet even then we still put boundaries on it which they need to obey.

Why? Because we love them and we know what's good for them. We know that spending \$20 gift voucher all on bubble gum is not good and so we say no and they must obey.

I remember hearing a story about a mum who went to the shops a Christian lady went to the shops and one of their children spat the dummy had a tantrum on the floor in front of everyone because the child wanted something which the mother rightly said no to but the child continued to have this tantrum and another person in the shops made a snarky comment about a good mother would just give their child what they wanted.

Now apart from being grossly rude this mother was doing the right thing. The person in the queue was utterly wrong.

You see in God's sight this mother was being a good mother by seeking the child to obey her. Working hard even to make the child obey her because it was for the child's good and it pleases the Lord.

[18:12] So parents I know getting kids to obey you is hard work and if you struggle with this then you're normal because kids are hardwired to push the boundaries.

You never have to teach a child to do naughty things do you? It comes naturally. It's called having a sinful nature but over time they do grow in maturity.

I mean we have some parents of adult children here and look they've survived. But it is worth if you're struggling finding someone whom you can exchange war stories with and pray with and perhaps stay off Facebook for a bit or brag book as it becomes for some parents who give this idyllic picture of their kids which is really true.

And remember your self-worth is not tied up in your identity as a mother it's first and foremost tied up with your identity as a dearly loved child of God. That's where your self-worth comes from.

And if you're not a parent of kids and you see a parent struggling with disobedient children then why not say you're doing well or perhaps just pray for them because even that might not be appropriate.

[19:20] Maybe don't tell them you're going to pray for them. Oh dear I'll pray for you. But just shoot up a silent prayer. God will hear. Again I'm acutely aware that we have a number of people here who don't have children and so it would be great if families could show hospitality to singles as well.

So instead of just inviting families around for Sunday lunch include singles as well. Include them as part of the family. And singles you can support families by going along and helping with the kids and so on.

We're not meant to do Christian life alone you see. We're meant to do it together. But here children are to obey their parents. And on the flip side verse 21 fathers do not embitter your children or they will be discouraged.

Paul says fathers when actually it's mothers who do most of the child rearing. Why? Well again because it's ultimately the father's responsibility. He's the head of the family and will be held accountable for it.

Even social studies from what I understand show that the fathers have significant impact given how much time they actually spend with the kids. What's more it's often fathers who are guilty of going to the man cave or the back shed to avoid the kids.

[20:34] All this means that we who are fathers need to make sure we don't leave it all to the mothers but take the initiative when it comes to the kids. Helping out. Especially taking the initiative when it comes to their spiritual growth.

Instead of leaving it all to our wives. And in the process we're not to embitter or literally provoke our kids. We're not to do things that discourage them or belittle them. It's fine to have a joke but often kids are more sensitive and us dads can be insensitive and we can stir them unfairly or criticize them harshly.

I've got to be careful what type of illustrations I use. And we all need to keep being patient with them. Fathers and mothers which is really hard to do isn't it? I once heard a story of a guy in a supermarket trying to do some shopping when his son was in the trolley screaming and the father was calmly saying calm down George not long to go George hang in there George.

And a lady who heard this as he walked past in the aisle she came up and said excuse me sir I know it's none of my business but I just wanted to commend you on how patient you were being with young George. And he said lady I'm George.

It can be hard can't it? To be patient. But we must keep loving and being patient with kids. And then finally in the ancient family home there are also domestic slaves and masters.

[21:56] point three. And we need to remember at this point by the way that slavery in the ancient world was very different to the slavery we often think about of negro slaves in America and Britain. Slaves in the ancient times included people from all races and many willingly chose to become slaves as a form of employment.

And freedom was not always a good thing it often meant you were worse off as a slave. But it was also a major part of society. In fact one scholar estimates one third of people were slaves.

It seems to have been normal for that time. Having said all that it was still not a good institution. Owning another human being is not a good thing. And I should say that the Bible does not promote slavery.

In fact Paul was saying 1 Corinthians on the next slide I think. Is it on the next slide? Yep. He says were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you. Although if you can gain your freedom do so.

And you are bought at a price. So do not become slaves of men. So if anything Paul goes against it. But slavery in the ancient world was a normal part of life and so the Bible talks about how to live the new life as a slave or a master.

[23:06] And these words therefore don't really directly apply to us here do they? Because we've got no slaves or masters. I'm assuming we have no slaves or masters here. But like we listen in to the other examples we can still listen in here.

And we can still take principles that we can apply to other roles where we might have to submit to someone over us or we might be over someone like at work for example. And so Paul says verse 22 slaves obey your earthly masters in everything and do it not only when their eyes on you to manipulate their favor but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

Whatever you do work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord and not for human masters. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs and there is no favoritism. Notice again there has been a change in who they are. They have a new master the Lord Jesus.

He is the one they are now ultimately serving he says. Serve as though you're serving Jesus Paul writes. And so they are to serve regardless of whether people see or not. Because they are serving out of reverence for Christ who died for them and rose again.

[24:29] And they are to serve with their whole heart knowing that they will already receive an inheritance as a reward. Verse 24. And when you think about it this is actually freeing.

I mean if you serve to be seen and rewarded whether it's at work or at your child's kinder or even at church then you can get discouraged if people don't see your work or don't reward you with a pay rise or don't praise you and appreciate you.

Or worse you can get angry if people take the credit for your hard work. But because Jesus is your new master he does see and he has already secured an inheritance for you that will more than compensate.

And so it frees us from having to work to be seen. It frees us from being discouraged if people don't recognize our hard work or others take credit for it. Because Jesus sees us and already has an inheritance waiting for us as a reward.

We just need to keep faithfully serving him in whatever role we have. And then masters chapter 4 verse 1. Masters provide for your slaves what is right and fair because you know that you also have a master or literally lord in heaven.

[25:50] You see living the new life means living with Jesus as our lord. Living out and obeying his way of life in these various roles that we find ourselves.

I'm not going to say much more than that. It's time to finish. Christ as we've heard has died to pay for our sins. To bring us new spiritual life from Sydney to Melbourne if you like.

And Jesus rose again as our lord and so we're to live out our new life with Jesus as our lord. And we're to do so with thankfulness. For God has given us forgiveness of sins.

An inheritance that will never perish, spoil or fade. brought us into his family with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Giving us hope and meaning in life.

So we're to live with thankfulness. And we're to live with thankfulness so that we might live rightly. Out of thankfulness. We're to let thankfulness to Christ and to God drive us to live out this new life his way.

[26 : 59] Even in the home. Even when it's hard. When it's hard to sacrificially love or submit. When it's hard to get them to obey or be patient. Even when it's hard to serve wholeheartedly without being seen.

We are to remember the cost of our new life. And out of thankfulness live it to the glory of our lord. Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for the new life we have in Christ.

And just as you gave the Israelites new life out of Egypt when you rescued them and then gave them instructions by way of the ten commandments to live. So here you've rescued us out of dominion of darkness and given us new life in Christ.

And given us new instructions on how to live in the home. And out of thankfulness father we pray that you might help us to so live this new life your way.

For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.