

Sterling Sermon Guide
Colossians 4: Living for Christ in All We Do
Moses Falco, June 25, 2017



How to use this guide

- The main purpose of this guide is to encourage groups and individuals to dig deeper into the topic of a sermon. This guide summarizes the sermon and provides discussion questions and suggestions of how to continue the conversation in order to apply the topic to real life.
- Listen to the sermon online (sterlingmennonite.ca) if you were not in church that Sunday or if you want to hear it again. If this sermon is not on the website, please contact our office.
- Re-read the scripture text and recommended reading.
- Select a leader in your group to guide your conversation and to lead you through this study.
- Use what is helpful for your group, but do not be bound by this guide. Let the Spirit lead you. You may be surprised where you end up.

Colossians 4: Living for Christ in All We Do
Part 4 of a 4-part series

Scripture Text: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Recommended Reading: Colossians 3:18-4:18

Prepare Your Heart: Colossians 3:17

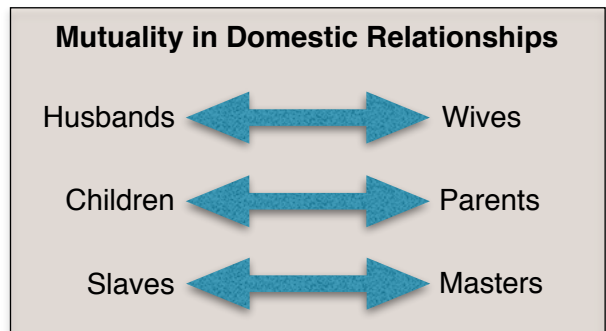
Sermon Nugget: In the last part of our study of Colossians, we get even more practical into what the Christian life looks like. Paul focuses on domestic relationships and although we may be not able to connect with every part of what he is saying, we get the overall message that we are called to submit to and serve one another. Whatever we do, whether in word or deed, we should do it for the Lord. What would life look like if we always had this in mind?

Living for Christ in Relationships

In Colossians 3:17, Paul tells the Colossians to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, whether in words or actions. When we put on the new “clothes” Jesus gives us, it affects every part of our lives. We are transformed from the inside out. As we submit our lives to Jesus, He works in us and changes us slowly as we do our part by loving God and others.

This is the context for Paul’s instructions in domestic relationships in Colossians 3:18 - 4:1. He provides us with a practical illustration of what it looks like to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is not a stand-alone piece but actually fits right into everything else Paul has been writing about.

Paul describes three sets of relationships and gives instruction on how to live for Christ. Although we may not like how Paul describes these relationships, they give us insight into the radical nature of his teachings. There is responsibility on both sides of these relationship. All three relationships describe some sort of power dynamic in Paul’s context. Women, children and slaves were all seen as lesser, but here Paul gives men, parents, and masters explicit instructions to love, care for, respect, and treat them fairly.



Our context is different, but we can still very much relate to the mutuality in these relationships. We are called to submit to and serve one another.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Imagine the context of Paul’s day. How is what Paul is teaching a radical message in a culture where women and children were not looked on as equal to men, or where slavery was a norm?
- 2) Examine your own relationships at home, church, work, or with friends. Describe the various forms of power you possess. How does being a follower of Jesus determine those relationships and what is expected of you?

Our heavenly Master gives us hope

Although Paul talks about slavery (a different kind of slavery from what we have seen in our recent history through the African slave trade), we see a glimpse that this is not how it was meant to be. Paul tells slaves to obey their masters, but also that their inheritance is found somewhere else. Their inheritance will come from God as their reward, so they should serve as if they were serving Christ. Slaves are not supposed to settle for what they have, but are to hold on to the gift and freedom they will find in Jesus.

Paul then gives instruction to masters. They are to treat their slaves with fairness and justice. Masters are told to do this because they have a heavenly master. Although they have power over someone, they should never abuse it. Christians all have that same master. No matter how much power we may have over other people, to live in Christ is to treat all people fairly, justly, and with love.

Discussion Questions

- 3) What would life look like if we all went about our days cognizant that we serve a master who is higher and more powerful than anything we are or any master or boss we might have?

Prayer and Witness

Paul began the letter to the Colossians talking about how he was praying for them. In Colossians 4:2-4, he encourages the church to be devoted in prayer. They should pray in all things, being watchful and thankful. He also asks them to pray for him and others who are sharing the gospel of Jesus around the world.

Paul also gives them instruction about how to witness to people in Colossians 4:5-6. We should be careful how we treat outsiders. So many people don't know about Jesus and when they come in contact with Christians, we leave an impression on them about what church and God is all about. Paul encourages Christians to be full of grace in their conversations, seasoned with salt (flavour, preservation, or similar analogies). We are to make the most of the opportunities God gives us to share God's love with people.

Discussion Questions

- 4) Describe your prayer practice. To what extent is prayer a part of your life? Are you devoted to prayer? Yes, we can pray when things get tough, but what about when things are going well?
- 5) Have you ever been an outsider to a church community? How did the actions (or lack of actions) of the community influence your experience with church and God? What are some practical ways in which we can be people of grace to people outside of the church?

The rest of Colossians

The rest of the letter to the Colossians (4:7-18), are personal messages from Paul to people he knows. He sends greetings and introduces other to the Colossians. We hear a little about Paul's situation in prison. He also asks them to share the letter more widely and we find out there are other letters for them to read as well. Paul asks them to remember his chains, the price he paid for living out and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

A thought to leave on

Paul, in this letter, is trying to convince us of an identity, the identity we have in Christ. He is asking us to put on our new selves and to allow Christ to work in us. Your identity is a child of God, so put on what Christ has already given you. It will radically change your relationships and therefore, the world. But also realize that you now represent this new identity. So when people see you, what do they see? Be careful how you interact with outsiders, because what people see and experience with you will give them their idea of who God is. So, be gracious, devote yourself to prayer, and in everything you do, whether word or deed. do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.



Discussion Questions

- 6) What other thoughts, reflections, questions, or concerns does Colossians 3:18 - 4 raise for you?

Resources for Further Study (available for loan from Sterling)

Colossians & Philemon by Ernest D. Martin (Believers Church Bible Commentary, 1993).

Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon by Ralph P. Martin (Interpretation Commentary, 1991).

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*"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid;
that foundation is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11*