**A CHRISTIAN’S NEW LIFE IN THE HOME AND AT WORK**

Colossians 3:18-4:1 (key verse 3:23)

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters....”*

As the year begins many people make resolutions, to be better, to do better and the goal is to mainly be happy and to make those around us happy. As the year begins many make resolutions to have peace in their homes and at work. People make these resolutions, but the question is, how to fulfill these resolutions. To help us and the people of Colossae who had this deep desire to be happy and at peace, Apostle Paul wrote this section of the letter which addresses the question on how to live a happy and peaceful life in the home as husbands, wives, children and parents, as well as how to live a peaceful life at work as workers.

In today’s passage we learn that in order to live a happy and peaceful life as Christian believers, Apostle Paul urged the Colossian believers in the key verse saying: *“In whatever we do, we must do it with all our heart, as doing it for the Lord and not for human beings*”. I pray that the Lord may have mercy on us all, to receive one word, be filled with a godly attitude on how to live life in the home and at work.

**Part 1: A Christian’s life at home**

The passage today begins with Apostle Paul’s focus on life at home, giving directions on how to live life, to wives, husbands, children and parents. Apostle Paul focused on life at home because a Christian life begins at home, it is not just about going to church on Sunday, it is not just about doing Bible studies with our sheep or Bible teacher. Furthermore, Apostle Paul began teaching and giving direction on Christian life at home because, just like today the Christian life at home was attacked during the times of the Colossian believers. The Colossian believers were influenced by the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures.

In Jewish culture, women and children were ignored and not even counted in numbering the population, woman had no legal rights, husband could divorce wives, but wives could not divorce husbands, wives were treated like slaves. In Greco-Roman culture women were to absolutely obey their husbands, children had no rights, they could be sold as slaves. Because of these influences, life in the home was unstable and negatively influenced the faith of the Colossian believers. In the same way, today many Christian lives are negatively influenced, happiness in the home is negatively influenced by various distorted interpretation of the democracy, the rights of children, women, the law of divorce and many others. This is not in accordance with God’s order of creation.

To help the Colossian believers and us Christian believers today to have a happy life and restore the order of creation in the home where the Christian life begins, Apostle began giving direction.

**First wives’ obligation to submit**. Let us look at **verse 18**: “***18****Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”* Apostle Paul’s direction to wives is that they must submit to their husbands. What does this mean? This means that wives must subject themselves willingly to their husbands, this submission does not imply inferiority. Wives should submit themselves to their husbands not by force, but willingly as equals.

Furthermore, Apostle Paul said wives are to submit to their husbands as fitting to the Lord. What does this mean? This refers to the original purpose of creation, in **Genesis 1:27** it says: *“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* Here we learn that both male and female are equals, created in the image of God, the difference is that they are created for a different purpose, so the wife is not inferior but created as a suitable helper, to submit to the husband who is the head of the household, to give direction and lead the household. If the husband is not right in God’s sight, the wife must pray for him and try to help him.

Furthermore, wives must submit to their husbands because it is the order of creation. In **Ephesians 5:22-24** it says: ***22****Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.****23****For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.****24****Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.* The wife’s submission to the husband is should not depended on the how smart, talented, handsome he is or his financial position, it is about the order of creation established by God. So regardless, the woman’s role is to submit to the husband, because since creation the man was created as the head and the wife as suitable helper.

**Second, Husband’s obligation to love**. Let us look at verse 19: “***19****Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”* Here the husband’s obligation is first to love his wife. The word love comes from a Greek work “agape” which means unconditional and sacrificial love, it is a covenant love. In **Ephesians 5:25** it says: *“****25****Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.****”*** We were terrible sinners and unlovable, we were God’s enemies, we did not deserve a relationship with God. But Christ died for us on the cross, shedding his blood on the cross, he gave his life to save us and to make us God’s children and for this reason the church willingly submits to Christ Jesus. In the same way husbands can gain leadership through unconditional sacrificial love. Love is patient, kind, compassionate and understanding. As husbands we must exercise this love, not because our wife more beautiful, they respect us, cooks delicious food. Our love should be unconditional always.

Furthermore, husbands should not be harsh to their wives, this includes both verbal and physical abuse. If wives are treated harshly, they are deeply wounded, so husbands must never be violent with their wives. Women are very sensitive creatures; they need to be treated gently and with kindness. How a husband treats the woman is so important to the woman. I am learning that showing love to my wife both verbally and deed is so important. I am learning that as my wife her deep desire is that I show her love, kindness and gentleness. I pray that I may repent from lack of love and gentleness towards her.

**Third, Children’s obligation to obey.** Let us look at **verse 20**: “***20****Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”* Here we learn that children’s basic obligation is to obey their parents, however in Paul’s time children were rather forced than to obey willingly. Today on the other hand, many children find obedience uncool, they use disobedience to get attention, they disobey their parents because they feel not loved as compared to their other siblings, some think disobedience is a sign of courage and boldness. Children’s obligation is to obey their parents, there is no exemption to obedience, also obedience does not mean children must do anything that parents say they must do. In South Africa many young people come from families of ancestral worship. So, refusing to worship ancestors because of our new faith is not disobedience, rather it is obedience for it pleases the Lord. Our obedience to our parents has limits, if it does not please the Lord then is not obedience, but force for us to disobey our Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, in **Ephesians 6:2-3** it says: *“****2****“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—****3****“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.””* Here we learn that actually children’s obedience is based on the 10 commandments, which is ultimately obedience to God. So when we obey our parents, we are ultimately obeying God, and this pleases God. Furthermore, when children obey their parents, they are blessed by God. The word of God promises that if children obey their parents, everything will go well for them, and they will enjoy long life on the earth.

**Lastly, Parents/Fathers obligation to not embitter their children**. Let us look at **verse 21**:  *“****21****Fathers,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%203%3A18-4%3A1&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29539a)*] do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.“* Here Apostle Paul mentions fathers, but this also implies parents, furthermore he did not tell parents to love their children, but rather he said do not make your children bitter, this is because naturally and easily parents love their children, however, they also easily make their children bitter. There are many various ways that make children bitter, especially when they grow up to be teenagers and older, parents can be demanding and treat their children as their possessions, they may try to fulfil their dreams through their children. On the other hand, some parents neglect their children leaving them discouraged and wounded.

So, Apostle Paul instructed parents to not embitter their children, instead they must encourage them. **Ephesians 6:4** it says: *“****4****Fathers,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph%206%3A4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29342a)*] do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”* To encourage children, parents must raise their children by teaching them the word of God first and for most. Just as the word of God is able to change parents, restore them into powerful man and woman. The word of God also has power to transform children into powerful, young men and women. Education is good, but when we raise children without teaching them the word of God, education can leave them bitter, rebellious.

When I grew things were quite nice in my family, my father had a descent job, I had a very awesome mother, she was so beautiful, and she loved me so much. And just out of the blue, things changed my mother started drinking excessively that everyone in the community knew about it and in those days it was taboo for woman to drink especially and a mother and wife, I saw my father who stopped loving her and complained about her, my mother lost respect for my father, they would just fight out of the blue and embarrass me in front of my friends. I remember one day my friend Jafta was at my home and we were watching soccer, and just then my parents started fighting. Eventually my parents separated. These experiences made me so bitter, I lost respect for both my parents, I disobeyed them and just demanded things, branded clothes and when they did not give me, I would make their lives so tough. I later stayed with my uncle, his home was stable, but I lived daily with fear in their home, afraid of making mistakes. And this experiences, left me very confused about the dynamics of a home, I did not have direction about what a true home is, and what marriage is.

But glory to God, when I came to UBF in 2009 Sh. Jacob and Shds Rebekah taught me the gospel of Jesus and when I shared with them about my life they prayed for me and in 2012 I received one word from Genesis 2, when I prepared a message on Godly marriage. From this passage, I learnt that marriage and a home is established by God. For marriage and the dynamics of a home to work, I need to seek God’s help for he is the author and creator. I need to work on marriage for the glory of God. From today’s passage I have also learnt that for a wife to submit unconditionally it is not easy, for a husband to love unconditionally and sacrificially is not easy, for children to obey is not easy, for parents to not embitter their children is not easy. How can they do it then? They can do it by focussing of Jesus Christ, the head of the church, though the church is rebellious, underserving, sinful, Jesus submitted and obeyed the father’s command and died on the cross for them, Jesus loved the church unconditionally and sacrificially. I pray that just like Jesus, I may love my wife unconditionally and sacrificially and that I lead her and my daughter with the word of God.

**Part 2: A Christian’s life at work**

Here Apostle Paul went further to give direction on life at work, what attitude workers should have towards their employers, and what attitude should employers have towards their workers. Apostle Paul focused on this, for among the Colossian believers there were slaves and masters who were influenced by the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. In those days slaves were treated as living tools. If slaves were sick or old, they were considered useless and abandoned, if they had children, the children became the master’s property. Basically, masters had all the rights and slaves had none.

Today as well, workers may feel the same way as slaves with no rights, and this influences their attitude at work, leaving the work environment sour, with no joy. To help the Colossian believers to be filled with joy, Apostle Paul gave them direction.

**First, Slaves obligation is to obey their masters**. Let us look at **verse 22-25**: ***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.* Here Apostle Paul first challenged the Colossian believers who were slaves, by addressing the issue where they did not work hard when their masters were not watching. They did not work hard because they did not feel valued by their masters, because they were just used as tools and not treated like human beings. So, they only worked when they were watched. A similar attitude is seen today where some workers today only work for the money, and do not put effort and dedication in their work, and no sincerity and no truth. Today one could use reasons that their managers do not value them, that they are treated differently from others or underpaid.

Even in those circumstances, Apostle instructed the slaves saying obey your masters, in everything, even when they are not looking, they must do their work with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. As workers, we must do our assigned work with sincerity, to the fullest, even when the managers are not watching. In the key verse it says: “”*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters”* As Christian, our attitude at work must be different, we must work with all our heart as working for the Lord, not human beings. When we work as working for the Lord, Christ’s presence is revealed in our lives. When we work as working for the Lord, the Lord’s presence is revealed in our lives, and this pleases the Lord. As Christian believers, we must consider our workplace as a mission field, not just a workplace, we are placed at our workplace as Christ Ambassadors. Some Christians you find they are dedicated members at their churches, but when you go to their workplace, they are completely different people, their association will shock you, they have this association because their attitude is not that of working for the Lord but of working for their own ambitions. But today Apostle Paul is urging you and me to work as working for the Lord, not for humans, work with all our heart. When we do this Christ is honoured, and we can be a blessing to others who through us are drawn to Salvation.

Furthermore, Apostle reminded us that when we work with sincerity and work as working for the Lord we will receive a great reward. During Paul’s time slaves were not rewarded, so this added to their demotivation to not work hard with sincerity. But Apostle Paul revealed to them that when they work for the glory of God, they will be greatly rewarded. In verse 24 it says: “***24****since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving*” Our jobs are not just given by men, but Christ Jesus, he is the one who planted us in our mission field, and he will be the one who rewards us. When I became Shepherd, I accepted God mission to serve as a campus Shepherd for Wits University, God provided for me with various jobs in Johannesburg, even though I had to travel for work, I still could serve campus students with Bible study, participate in Sunday worship service and I could serve message.

In later years, things became very tough at work, complex projects, lack of resources, challenges with growth opportunities, and this left me very discouraged. Last year I tried to leave, and I was convinced that it was time to leave my current employer, but somehow something happened and I could not leave, and deep down in my heart I was convinced that the Lord wanted me to stay. I am still frustrated, but I thank God for this message, Apostle Paul’s direction to work as working for the Lord and not humans. I pray that I may focus on the reward from the Lord, an inheritance from the Lord.

**Second, master’s obligation to provide what is right and fair**. Let us look at **verse 4:1**: “***4:1****Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.”* In Paul’s time masters were generally not concerned about the well-being of their slaves, but only about using them to make money. Masters did not consider right and wrong in their treatment of slaves, for they thought of slaves as their property. But Paul taught master’s that what they possessed was not theirs; it was God’s. They also had a Master in heaven. They were just stewards of their Master in heaven. So they must provide for their slaves what is right and fair. It is the same for employers in our times too*.* When we are privileged with the opportunity to manage others in the workplace, we must consider doing what is right and fair to them, for we are planted there by Christ Jesus, who is pleased when we do what is right and fair. Let lead by the example of our Master Jesus Christ who is just, right and fair, who even gave up his life for us, that we may have life. Let us learn servant leadership from Christ Jesus.

**Conclusion**

In this passage we have learned how to live as Christians in our homes and at work. Fundamentally, we need to consider Christ who is Lord in every area of our lives. Christ is the Lord of our families and of our workplaces. Instead of demanding others to do their duty for us, we should seek to do our duty before Christ. Then we will grow in Christ’s character. Let us also follow Christ as our example. Learn from him how to submit, love, obey, raise children, work hard and provide for others. We should fix our eyes on Jesus and keep learning from him.