



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

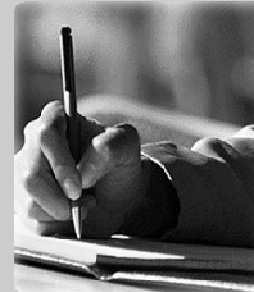


HG78: Living In Christ (5/6)
Christ In Your Relationships

Colossians 3:12 - 4:1

Home Group Study Notes

4th November 2012 - Revd Tom Loh



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

What outfits do you like wearing most? How do different outfits make you feel?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...





Looking Upwards (40 mins) *Bible Study*

Read through the text for this study, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, of your answers with your Home Group.

1: Some people live the Christian life out of a sense of duty and fear of God, some do it because they love him – which do you feel you are more motivated by? Does our motivation matter?

2: **3:12-15**. How would you describe the difference between the old human nature, to the new one in Christ? What does it mean to “clothe” ourselves with this new life?

3: **3:16-18**. How can we, as Christian brothers and sisters, help each other stay close to Jesus?

Children need to know that they are loved for who they are, and not for what they should be. When parents are controlling we often communicate to our children that it is not okay for them to be who they are, and that our love is conditional upon their good behaviour. Often, love requires parents to let their children go, in hope that they may return (Luke 15:11-27).

Of course, even the most loving parents still experience rebellious children. This is the nature of sin – to fight against our Father. Thus, Paul tells children to obey their parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

The New Life: Bosses and workers (3:22 – 4:1)

Living out godly relationships in the workplace is difficult. Loving our families is one thing, but loving our colleagues, superiors (masters) and employees (slaves) is harder. This is because the relationships are not based upon love, but upon money and power. We work to earn, not to be charitable. Paul reminds the Colossians that regardless of your work status – boss or employee – you are to work as if working for the Lord Jesus himself. Therefore we treat our bosses and employees as if they were Jesus himself, even if they are far from being like him.

Paul understands how we operate as selfish sinners. We behave ourselves only when we are given sufficient reward, or sufficient threat. Thus, we will behave ourselves and work hard when the boss is watching, lest we lose our jobs. But when the boss is not watching we feel no compulsion to work hard. This is not the kind of motivation the Lord desires. As Christians we do not serve Christ in order to gain reward alone, we do it out of devotion and gratitude to the kindness of our Master who loves us.

Likewise, bosses need to treat their employees rightly and fairly, not just viewing them as people who make you money, but as people to be valued, loved and cared for. Bosses are to serve their employees and put their wellbeing and happiness first, before their own. This is the way of the Master in heaven.

Summary

Whatever relationships or position we find ourselves in as Christians, we are to always put on the nature of Christ. We are to love regardless of whether we are loved back. We are to forgive and suffer wrongdoing even if we suffer great injustice or injury. In this way, we will demonstrate to the world the new life of Jesus through our relationships. And we ourselves will experience the joy of unity and peace within the church.

This happens when the husband understands the wife to be someone who should primarily be serving him, rather than the other way around. The husband grows resentful or withdraws their love when they feel their spouse is not behaving in accordance with their expectations. The husband should be like Christ, who loves and serves the church no matter what irrespective of how she behaves and regardless of whether or not she loves him back. But instead the husband ends up loving the wife on condition that she first meets his demands. Paul sets the men straight. They are to be like Christ – “Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.” No exceptions. It begins with the husbands.

Wives are then to respond to their husbands love by simply receiving it freely. This is harder than it sounds as it strikes a nerve with our sense of pride and dignity. Our sinful pride likes to earn merit rather than receive charity. We like to consider ourselves worthy rather than unworthy, deserving rather than undeserving. However, when we act like this we end up spurning the offer of love rather than enjoying it. We see this all the time in the life and ministry of Jesus. Those that thought they could deserve God’s love and favour because of their own “righteousness” were the ones who despised Jesus most. Conversely, it was those who humbly accepted their unworthiness that were able to receive his love and friendship.

It is a very hard and unhappy life to believe one must earn love. Unfortunately wives can often feel they must continue to please their husbands in order to keep them “in love” with them. Therefore, husbands must love their wives, as Christ loves the church, and wives must submit to their husbands love without trying to earn it, as the church submits to Christ.

The new life: Parents and children (3:2—21)

As with marriage, the relationship of parents to their children reflects the relationship between God and his children. Again, as with marriage, sin has disrupted the perfect harmony within this most fundamental relationship of parent and child. Abusive parents rather than protective, and rebellious children rather than obedient. This is the pattern of sin. When we observe the relationship between Jesus and God his Father, we see what the parent-child relationship should look like. Jesus demonstrated remarkable obedience to the Father, and never questioned his motives, care, or wisdom. Even in the anguish of the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus chose obedience to his Father’s will rather than his own (Luke 22:42). Jesus was able to do this because he knew how much his Father cared for him, and always had. The Father loves the Son, and does all things for the good of his Son. Even creation is a gift from the Father to the Son (Psalm 2:7-9).

Human parents also want their children to be obedient, but rather than gaining their trust through self-sacrificial service and love; they resort to obtain obedience through control and force. Instead of receiving obedience they experience resistance and rebellion from their children. Paul warns parents not to embitter their children in this way as it will result in them feeling discouraged and unloved. In the end it will achieve the opposite effect.

4: **3:18 – 4:1.** Paul talks about our relationships in three key areas of life. What advice does he give in each of these, and how does the gospel shape our relationships in these areas?

- Marriage
- Parent-child
- Work – bosses (masters) and employees (slaves).

5: What about when our spouse, parents/children, or boss/employee, aren’t Christians? How can we still witness to the new life in Jesus as individuals, and as the church community?

6:



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG78: Living In Christ (5/6) *Christ In Your Relationships*

Colossians 3:12 - 4:1

Home Group Sermon Notes

4th November 2012 - Revd Tom Loh

Introduction

Last week we saw how the Christian believer has died to their old way of life - which was full of conflict, anger and immorality – but now lives a new life through Christ. Since we have this new life through Christ in heaven, it is only right that we put away everything that belongs to our old life and old nature. We are to live life now in such a way that is consistent with the kind of life we will be living in the future kingdom of Christ. In this week's passage, Paul goes on to explain what this new life looks like in practical terms regarding the different kinds of relationships we have with other people.

Motivation to live like Christ(3:12-15)

Paul is not telling believers to live better in order to please God. The truth is, God is already pleased with us, and could not be more pleased. This is because as Christians we are hidden in Christ (3:3). Therefore, because of Jesus believers are “chosen people, holy and dearly loved” by God the Father (3:12). In other words we are to live new lives because God is already pleased with us, in Christ. Our motivation for doing this is not in order to receive forgiveness from God, but because we are already forgiven by God (3:13).

The Emperor's New Clothes

In 3:12 Paul tells us to “clothe” ourselves with this new life of compassion and love. Like taking off an old grubby coat and putting on a new clean one, so we are to put away our old lives and put on the new one. Just as we are “clothed” in Christ (Gal 3:27), we are to clothe ourselves with his new life also. As Christians we are freely given the Emperor's new clothes.

What do the New Clothes look like?

Paul sets out a wonderfully attractive vision of this new life that is ours in Christ. It is entirely the opposite of the old self. Rather than anger and malice we are now to be filled with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Notice that all these virtues are relational. They all have direct relevance to how we treat other people. This is because we worship a relational God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When God's people live a life of humility and gentleness rather than pride and aggression, we will begin to establish real friendship and intimacy with one another.

Rather than looking to see what we can gain from each other, we will be looking to see how we can carry one another's burdens and forgive each other any wrongs we are done (3:13).

Forgiveness is a big one for Christians. Our ability to forgive people who have wronged us reveals the nature of our own relationship with God. Jesus really demonstrates this when a Pharisee challenges Jesus for allowing a sexually immoral woman to wash his feet with her tears, in Luke 7:36-50. Jesus explains that when a person is forgiven much they will love much, but when a person is forgiven little will love little. In his own eyes, the Pharisee had little to be forgiven and so loved Jesus little. Likewise, when we find it hard to forgive people it is because we are righteous in our own eyes, and do not see how much offence and hurt we have caused God and other people. That is why the new life of Christ will be marked by humility, love and forgiveness. If Christ has forgiven us for nailing him to a cross, we can surely forgive others the wrong they have done to us. When a community of Christians put on these new clothes of Christ then it will be a community that is in perfect unity. There will be peace (3:14-15).

How to keep the home fire burning (3:16-17)

Paul is not saying that this new community of believers will stop sinning, nor cease from wronging each other, but rather that our love for one another will be able to overcome these sins. Just as Christ overcame sin with love, now we must also do the same. Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs (Prov 10:12, 1 Peter 4:8). This is what real love is all about, not that we are all perfect humans who never hurt each other, but that when we do we have the capacity, compassion and love to forgive.

So Paul tells us to have the word of Christ dwell in us richly, to admonish each other with the gospel, and sing to each other about our saviour (3:16-17). In this way we will keep ourselves close to Jesus and the hearth of his love will kindle our own hearts. As we remind ourselves of the love of Jesus we will find our hearts being ever more thankful to God for his salvation. If we stop doing this we will quickly grow cold of heart and unforgiveness, pride and division will soon return.

The New Life: Marriages (3:18-19)

The old life of sin is epitomised by bad marriages. Think about the Garden of Eden. The first thing to go wrong was the marriage between Adam and Eve. Instead of harmony there was division and antagonism. In Paul's theology marriage is supposed to be a reflection of Christ and the church (Eph 5:22-33), where Adam represents Christ and Eve the church. This is why Paul advocates that wives should submit to their husbands, and husbands should love their wives. Christ is the instigator of love, and the church the recipient. Things go wrong when the church tries to earn or deserve Christ's love, and likewise when a wife tries to earn her husband's love. Paul wants husbands to love their wives without condition, and for wives to accept their husband's love without pride or resistance.

This is a big challenge for both husbands and wives. Husbands can all too often place conditions upon their love for their spouse.