

Message Series: **'Moving Forward: what does that look like for you?'**

Message Title: **'Strengthening Your Family'**

Scripture Source: **Colossians 3:18-4:1**

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You and Your Family

The very word 'family' generates a mix of feelings and thoughts in our minds and hearts today. The thought of 'family' can both warm our hearts and chill our spirits...sometimes during the same day! Think about your family...your family of origin to begin with. I can only imagine the wide range of emotions and thoughts sweeping through the sanctuary at this very moment. How important it is to seek to come to some measure of peace with our family of origin. That is a whole other topic. Now, think about your family. That mix of individuals that make up your unique family unit. See their faces and say their names in your mind. Your family matters deeply to God, and to you.

We want our families to be growing stronger, wiser, and healthier. We live in a culture with many families experiencing deep brokenness and alienation. Some of us know this from all too personal and painful experience.

Families come in all sorts of sizes and shapes. The days of 'Leave it to Beaver' as the pervasive norm for family life is gone. The increase of blended families and single parent households continues to be a cultural and social reality. The number of same-sex family households continues to increase. The number of children raised by grandparents continues to increase. Share some Census stats.

God's 'Take' on Healthy Family Life: Colossians 3:18-21

This passage teaches about core family relationships and responsibilities. Your family reality may lead you to ask, 'how does this apply to me?' Stay with me and let's examine God's heartbeat and mindset on the crucial reality of 'family.' As we go through these words, ask yourself...what does 'moving forward' look like for our family and what crucial contribution can I make, must I make? We will look at these verses and the action verbs stated...6 verbs in the whole passage.

1. **Submit: Colossians 3:18:** This is one of the 'hottest' words in Scripture as pertaining to husband-wife relationships. This word has been used as an ironclad directive for husbands to boss their wives around and live with a superior mindset. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The husband-wife relationship is not an authority based relationship where the husband is superior to his wife. It is a relationship rooted in a shared relationship with Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and where each is directed to express their 'one-flesh' relationship in attitudes and actions of mutual and loving servanthood. Submission: not obedience to a boss; rather respectful cooperation with one who is an equal. (Galatians 3:28) Equality based creation (made in God's image and redemption, on the same ground, male and female through faith in Jesus.)

Compare: Ephesians 5:21-33 God's intent is that a wife would live respectfully and responsively to her husband, out of love for Christ. The word 'head' is often translated as 'source of authority or ruler of another.' Yet, in the New Testament, 'head' often means 'source of life', 'fountainhead of life.' As Jesus is to the church. When Paul writes to husbands and wives, he uses the example and behaviour of Jesus and his church...and it is not an authority based example. How is Jesus pictured? A servant of others who pours his life out in ways that nourishes and builds up others. This is amazing. And potentially a catalyst for healthy transformation in marriage relationships.

Reflection Questions: Wives, is this a day to move forward in gaining a clearer understanding of what submission is and isn't? Is this a day to commit to cultivating a deeper respect for your husband that is manifested in healthy servanthood?

2. **Love: Colossians 3:19:** The language of sacrificial love and service ought to banish from every man's mind the concept of being the boss and demanding that one's wife lives for your pleasure and thoughtlessly obeys your dictates. Compare again Ephesians 5:25-29.
As a husband I am directed by Jesus to love my wife thoughtfully, respectfully and sacrificially, for her well being and growth as a woman created in God's image. No room for 'barking out' orders when the towel is draped over your arm.
Reflection Questions: Husbands, what will moving forward look like for you in your marriage? What do you need to unlearn and relearn? How could servanthood look today?
3. **Obey: Colossians 3:20:** This is a relationship of direction and authority wisely, firmly and graciously lived out. Children, living under a parent's roof are to be marked by thoughtful compliance with the directives of a parent, as long as the parent's direction is appropriate.
Compare: Ephesians 6:1-3. (Deuteronomy 5:16)
Reflection Questions: young people at home...how goes the respectful responsiveness? What does moving forward and strengthening your family life look like for you?
4. **Don't Embitter: Colossians 3:21:** Again, these biblical directives were radical to their first century ears. Parents are to engage with their children with a mix of gentleness and firmness. This requires self-discipline emotionally, verbally and physically.
Reflection Questions: Parents, any apologies required? What does moving forward look like for you as related to this point?
5. **Obey: Colossians 3:21-25:** Friends, this is a whole discussion in and of itself. I will make some brief comments about the cultural reality of slavery in NT times. Clearly there was an allowance and acceptance of slavery. That can be hard to swallow, yet, degradation and exploitation were not to be tolerated or practised by Christ followers. Slaves were to be respectfully cooperative, doing their work as unto Christ.
6. **Provide: Colossians 4:1:** A word to masters, provide graciously and generously, remembering that you too have a heavenly master.

Moments of Honesty:

1. What 'word' stands out to you? Especially from the first 4: submit, love, obey, don't embitter. What work of understanding and maturing do you need to engage in? Circle the word in your insert.
2. Moving forward often requires strength and courage. And, the help of a good and wise God. Moving forward requires identifying fears and faulty thinking and then making adjustments while moving forward. What fear or faulty thinking do you need to identify and move beyond. What conversations do you need to engage in to move forward with purpose and resolve?
3. Moving forward requires that we confess our relational and behavioural sins to God and humbly accept his full and thorough forgiveness. 1 John 1:9, Proverbs 28:13
4. Moving forward, starting on the home front, requires a growing dependence and cooperation with Jesus, energised and enlightened by His strong and wise Spirit. 2 Peter 1:3-4, Proverbs 24:3-4.

Let nothing stop you from moving forward in the strengthening of your family.