

Quarter One: Uniting Heaven & Earth: Christ in Philippians & Colossians

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Lesson 12—Living with Each Other

Tuesday: Work Relations

March 17, 2026

- **Last Week:** “Living with Christ”
 - Col 3:1 – 17 – how to live with Christ, live for Christ, here on this earth
- **This Week:** “Living with Each Other”
 - Col 3:18 – 4:6 (next week = Col 4:7 – 18)
 - Biblical principles for how to live with each other: family, church, work, community

Memory Text: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col 4:6, NKJV).

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** Husbands & Wives (Ryan)
 - Col 3:18, 19 – respect & love in marriage: wives submit, husbands are to love; what that looks like from a Biblical perspective
- 2. **Monday:** Parents and Children (John D)
 - Col 3:20, 21 – biblical principles for parenting; role of parents & children
- 3. **Tuesday:** Work Relations (Jill)
 - Col 3:22 – 25; 4:1 – biblical principles for employer & employee relationships; biblical counsel against slavery
- 4. **Wednesday:** Praying for One Another (Rise)
 - Col 4:2 – 4 – Biblical principles of prayer
- 5. **Thursday:** Walking in Wisdom (James)
 - Col 4:5, 6 –

Tuesday: Work Relations

Col 3:22 – 25; 4:1; Deut 15:12; Ex 21:2 – 6; Lev 25:39 – 43; Phil 16; Ps 34:22; Luke 17:10; 1 Pet 2:16

- What this lesson is not:
 - It’s not the Bible condoning slavery
- What this lesson is:
 - It is about Biblical principles for how an employer & employee should act
- The Bible & slavery
 - God designed us for freedom
 - Gave free choice in the garden of Eden
 - Free choice comes with consequences: barred from entrance into the Garden of Eden

- Deut 30:19, 20 – I have set before you life & death: choose life
- Josh 24:15 – choose you this day whom you will serve
- Israel & slavery
 - Mosaic laws prohibited Israelites from being perpetual slaves
 - Mosaic law stipulated 6 years the maximum term of service to pay off a financial debt
 - Ex 21:2 – 6; Lev 25:39 – 43; Deut 15:12
- Jesus on slavery
 - Jesus did not directly abolish slavery; however, the principles of His government; foundation of what He taught introduced -
 - Spiritual freedom
 - Luke 4 – Spirit of the Lord is upon Me... anointed Me to preach deliverance to the captives
 - John 8:36 – whoever the Son sets free, is free indeed
 - Love for one another
 - Foundationally opposite to owning another human being
 - Uplifting the oppressed
 - Gospel of Luke: for the outcast
 - The poor & outcast of society
 - Women & children
- NT Church operated within framework of Roman society
 - Roman law allowed for slaves (1/3 of the Roman Empire consisted of slaves)
- Paul on slavery
 - Paul did not directly call for slavery's abolishment, but he made a radical call to treat slaves as brothers in Christ & equals. This shifted the master-slave dynamic from absolute ownership to spiritual equality.
 - Phil 1:16 – Paul told Philemon not to treat Onesimus as a slave any longer, but as his brother
 - Gal 3:28 – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
 - We are all equal in Jesus
 - Past doesn't matter in Jesus
 - Race doesn't matter in Jesus
 - Gender doesn't matter in Jesus
 - Caste system doesn't matter in Jesus
 - All are one in Him
 - This principle of equality in Christ Jesus provided the moral & ethical framework for later abolitionist movements to dismantle the institution of slavery.
- What lesson is not: Bible condoning slavery
- What lesson is: Biblical principles for how an employee & employer should interact

- **8 Biblical principles: employer & employee** (Col 3:22 – 4:1)
 - Col 3:22 – “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.”
 - Eph 6:6 – “not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”
 - **Principle #1:** Employees are to follow the policies of the company (as long as it doesn’t conflict with God)
 - Obey your masters according to the flesh – according to policies & procedures
 - Doesn’t say you have to understand the reasons why
 - Walk in “obedience;” do your work honestly
 - **Principle #2:** Employees are to work for God (fearing God)
 - Not as “men-pleasers”
 - Don’t give into peer pressure
 - Don’t work different when you’re being “watched”
 - Don’t work for others accolades or censure: work for God
 - *Herod – Mark 6:26 – “...the king was exceedingly sorry; yet because ... of those who sate with him, he did not want to refuse her.”
 - **Principle #3:** Employees are to work with sincerity of heart
 - *In marriage: Greg – never once purposefully hurt me
 - Trust his heart
 - *In workplace, give their best – work with all sincerity of heart
 - Not manipulative
 - What can I get away with?
 - How can I best take advantage of my boss or coworkers?
 - With sincerity, fearing God
 - *Employee terminated, time card fraud (I won’t hold this against you)
 - Col 3:23, 24 – “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, (24) “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”
 - Vs 23, NIV: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”
 - **Principle #4:** Employees are to give 100%
 - Work heartily – with all your heart
 - Not substandard work
 - Not half-hearted effort
 - Give it your all
 - **Principle #5:** Employees work for God, not for mere humans
 - Do the work as to God, not unto people
 - The Lord sees; the Lord rewards

- Col 3:25 – “But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”
 - **Principle #6:** Employees can release any unfairness or injustice to God, who will judge righteously
 - We think we need to investigate; we need to see if it is fair; we need to question what we see as injustice
 - 1. We don’t know the other side
 - 2. We aren’t the judge, God alone is Judge
 - 3. We can trust God to bring vengeance, right the wrong, in His way
 - Rom 12:19 – “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”
 - God is the righteous Judge
 - He brings justice in His time & way
- Col 4:1 – “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”
 - **Principle #7:** Employers are to treat their employees fairly
 - Don’t show favoritism or partiality
 - Give them what you agreed to pay them (don’t cheat them or shortchange them)
 - Be honest with them
 - Be trustworthy & hold up your end of the bargain
 - **Principle #8:** Employers are to operate under the headship of Christ
 - How does Jesus operate as a Master?
 - Mark 10:42 – 45 – Jesus said, “...You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. (43) Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. (44) And whoever desires to be first shall be slave of all. (45) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.”
 - Don’t feel or act superior to others
 - Be willing to serve
 - Be willing to sacrifice for those under your care
 - Work and operate with the understanding that you, too, answer to God
 - Follow policies of Christ
 - Work for God – not others
 - Give 100% for God

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- Principle #2: Employees are to work for God (fearing God)
- Principle #3: Employees are to work with sincerity of heart
- Principle #4: Employees are to give 100%

- Principle #5: Employees work for God, not for mere humans
- Principle #6: Employees can release any unfairness or injustice to God, who will judge righteously
- Principle #7: Employers are to treat their employees fairly
- Principle #8: Employers are to operate under the headship of Christ
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