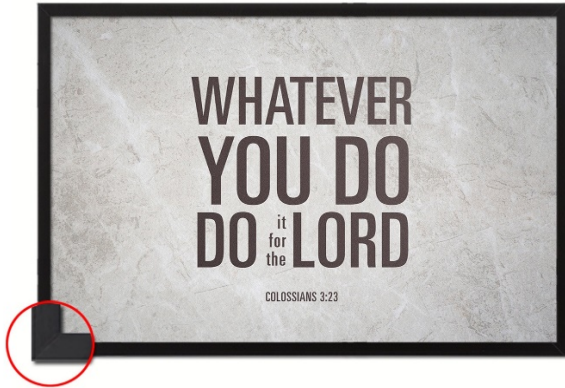


Three R's for Growing Christians



Colossians 3:18-21 4:1-6 (NKJV)

¹⁸ *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*
¹⁹ *Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.* ²⁰
Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. ²¹ *Fathers do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*

INTRODUCTION

Just as the basic lessons in school have been summarized as “the three R’s,” so Paul offers three basic Principles for growing Christians.

I. RECIPROCAL OBLIGATIONS (3:18–21)

A. To have a home as God wants it to be, we must follow the guidelines in His Word. William Barclay observes that the “**Christian ethic is an ethic of reciprocal obligations.**”

1. Reciprocal describes something that's the same on both sides. The word mutual is a near synonym in most uses: reciprocal/mutual friendship, describing, a relationship in which two people feel the same way about each other, or do or give similar things to each other.

2. Submission is to put oneself under another's authority. The Greek word Paul uses here is a military term meaning to put oneself in rank under another. God has ordained the principle of authority and submission in a number of different spheres: **Citizens are to be subject to civil authorities** (Rom. 13:1; Titus 3:1); **slaves to their masters** (Col. 3:22; Titus 2:9); **church members to their leaders** (1 Cor. 16:16; Titus 2:15; Heb. 13:17); **children to**

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their parents (Col. 3:20); **and wives to their husbands** (Eph. 5:22, 24; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1).

3. We may not like the idea of submission to authority. Whenever God grants authority, it is always for the blessing and protection of those under authority and never for the advantage of the ones in authority.

B. In the text, each of the parties mentioned always has a responsibility to the other: wife/husband, parent/child. Neither can point an accusing finger at the other and say, "You must do this!" When one finger is pointing at another, three are pointing back at you! We must be concerned that we do our part in the home.

II. RESPONSIBLE OCCUPATION (3:22–4:1)

Colossians 3:22-25 (NKJV)

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. ²³ 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. ²⁵ But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Colossians 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

A. While some of the words in the text apply to the situation of slavery which was common in the ancient world, the principles are obviously valuable for everyone in the workplace today. Workers are to obey the rules, be honest, work as unto God, and put their trust in Him.

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- B. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done:** When a Christian worker does poorly in his job, he should not expect special leniency from his boss, especially if his boss is a Christian. Being a Christian should make us more responsible, not less responsible.
- C. Those in places of authority are also responsible to provide workers what is “right and fair.”** Both must remember that they are each responsible to God, and He shows no favoritism (vs. 25). One day both employee and employer must answer to their “CEO” in Heaven.

III. RELIGIOUS OBSERVATIONS (4:2–6)

Colossians 4:2-6 (NKJV)

² Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³ meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, ⁴ that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

- A. All of the responsibilities outlined previously have one thing in common—they are one's Christian duty.** Note the use of the Lord's name (3:18, 20, 22; 4:1). Whether at home, work, or with friends, these principles should govern our lives.
- B. Now the apostle mentions two specific aspects that relate directly to God: prayer** (vss. 2–4) and **wisdom** (vss. 5–6). Prayer for others is appropriate, as well as for self. Using each opportunity to witness for Christ is also essential. One's words can be blessed of God.
 - 1. The inner life of prayer and the outer life of witness.**

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Illustration:

Consistent Living

A Florida newspaper reported that Floyd Martin dropped a \$13,000 cashier's check outside the Pensacola Moose Lodge one Saturday night. It was from his family's savings account. Cab driver Bob Read found it and turned it over to authorities. Read said he never dreamed of taking the money for himself. "I'm a part-time cab driver, and part-time body builder, but I'm a full-time Christian."