

DISCUSS

Before we dive into this session, let’s review the cultural context of the Colossian church. **How did Louie describe the situation in Colossae, specifically about women and slaves?**

Women had significantly fewer rights than today and slaves were part of the norm in the Roman Empire. Louie talked about how the Bible isn’t condoning these practices. Instead, it’s speaking into the cultural moment to teach how to apply biblical principles in everyday life.

Do Louie’s points impact the way you view the passage we’re looking at today? If so, how? What biblical principles, specifically from the previous session, could relate to this session? (The last session talked about putting on the new self. This passage shows how putting on the new self and all that comes with it—love, peace, unity, worship, and gratitude—works itself out in specific relationships.)

Louie said God wants to speak into our situations to cause internal transformation. He said, “it doesn’t necessarily require the circumstances changing for God to revolutionize you right in the middle of the circumstances.”

Do you expect God to change your circumstances? How do you typically respond when He doesn’t?

How have you experienced God changing you internally through a difficult situation?

It’s true that God doesn’t always change our external circumstances. This passage might be especially difficult for us to swallow because of a broken marriage, a prodigal child, or a cruel boss. Or maybe the sting comes from not being in that particular season of life—being single, childless, or jobless. But we can take hope in the fact that God is working in us to make us into the image of Jesus. There’s something in this passage for everyone. With all that in mind, let’s dive into the text.

Read verse 17.

What does this verse say about how we should act? Should our circumstances change the fact that we do everything for Jesus? Why or why not?

Horizontal lines for writing.

For those who are married, what’s difficult about putting your spouse’s interests above your own?

What does it look like when it’s done well? How do you feel when your spouse loves and serves you well?

Regardless of your marital status, what are some examples of marriages you’re familiar with that personify the selfless service Paul talks about in this passage?

Paul shifts to the second example: parents and children.

Read verses 20–21.

What was it like to obey your parents as a kid? What does that look like to honor them today?

For those who are parents, how do you feel when your children obey you? What about when they don’t?

What do you think it means to not embitter or provoke your children? What are some ways you can encourage them?

Even if you don’t have kids, what are some ways you can model the selfless love of Jesus to those who are younger than you?

Paul concludes his argument by talking to slaves and masters. Slavery in those days wasn’t based on race. Rather, people could sell themselves into slavery to pay off debt. They were seen both as people and as property. They could work for and earn their freedom in some cases. Paul doesn’t urge slaves to leave their masters, instead he tells them to honor Christ in the midst of their situation.

Read Colossians 3:22–4:1.

What do you think would be difficult about these instructions for slaves? What about for masters?

How does Paul encourage the slaves to act? How do you think having a holy mindset would change the way they worked?
