

Resonate

BIBLE STUDY

**“THE TIME OF OUR LIVES:
FAMILY TIME”**

Each family offers a unique set of pressures. Managing families while keeping up with the demands of our schedules often requires more than what we have to give. This week we will discover balance in the midst of priorities.

DAY
1

Today's Scripture:
Colossians 3:12-14

The Word

When I review my past, I can readily see that the people who have frustrated me the most have been my family. Not only that, they have received the backlash of my negative emotions over the years as well. You probably can relate. Families seem to bring out the worst in us, yet they are the ones we love the most. What needs to be our attitude towards our family?

Colossians 3:12-14

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Verse 12-14: There are seven virtues which need to be apparent in our relationships: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. Here is a definition for each:

Compassion: Mercy, the aspect of God's love that causes Him to help the miserable...because God is merciful, He expects His children to be merciful.

Kindness: God's loyal love and favor toward His people...God's long-suffering love-His determination to keep His promises to His chosen people in spite of their sin and rebellion...Because God has been gracious toward believers, they should treat all people with kindness

Humility: A freedom from arrogance that grows out of the recognition that all we have and are comes from God...Jesus is the supreme example of humility

Gentleness: Kindness, consideration, a spirit of fairness and compassion...Christians should have a spirit of gentleness toward all people

Forgiveness: The act of excusing or pardoning another in spite of his slights, shortcomings, and errors. As a theological term, forgiveness refers to God's pardon of the sin of human beings...God's forgiveness of us demands that we forgive others...

Love: A high esteem which God has for His human children and the high regard which they, in turn, should have for Him and other people.

(Taken from: *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*)

Did you notice how God has these qualities and showcases them towards us? He is asking us to treat others in the same way that He treats us. Because we have received: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, forgiveness, and love from Him; we need to pass it on.

This sounds so simple, "just pass it on", but we know that it is the hardest thing to do. We give the advice so easily. A friend of mine is struggling at work. I told her that she needed to forgive the antagonist and act with kindness. Well, only a few days later, I was on the receiving end of a difficult situation. How did I respond? With irritated words, a bad attitude, and with much criticism. Advice was easy to give but not easy to live.

How do we live out this truth? It all comes down to focus. If we focus on God and what He has done for us and His feelings towards us, we can pass His ways on. If our focus is on the person who irritates us, drains us, or is just different from us; we will react from our ways (anger, avoidance, criticism, etc) instead of from the heart of the Lord.

Improving our family relationships begins with changing ourselves, not by attempting to change others. Only the One who is completely compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, forgiving, and loving can change others and that is up to Him alone.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you to evaluate your interactions with your family.

What attitudes do you have towards your family instead of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love?

What godly virtues do you need to replace your bad attitudes with?

Who do you need to ask forgiveness from because of your previously wrong attitudes?

How will you nurture change in your life?

DAY 2

Today's Scripture:
Colossians 3:15

The Word

Rules govern every game. The rules keep playing fair. When rules are broken, the integrity of the person is ruined. For athletes, mistakes made can follow them throughout their career. Pete Rose is more famous for gambling than winning. Barry Bonds is on the news just as much for his supposed steroid use as his home runs. Broken rules leads to broken reputations.

There is a rule that governs relationships. This one rule protects our integrity more than anything else. The rule is peace. Without peace, we can do things, say things, and react in ways that can hurt our relationships and our reputations.

Colossians 3:15

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Verse 15: To understand peace is to understand its antonyms. The opposite of peace is fighting, arguing, and strife. These outward actions stem from inward attitudes or thoughts: my rights have been violated, that person was rude to me, I didn't get what I deserved, I want more out of life, etc. Countries have gone to war because they have refused to be governed by peace. True peace is not a signed treaty but an attitude of the heart.

We are unable to keep countries from fighting but we can control the "wars at home". To minimize arguing with others, we need to allow peace to reign over our lives.

I want to expel a false idea about peace. Many assume peace is avoiding confrontation or ignoring problems or even just keeping your thoughts and opinions to yourself. None of these are true. Peace is not hiding the truth but bridging to others in truth. For example, we sinned against God. When Adam and Eve ate that fruit, they declared war against God. Because of sin, we are eternally separated from the Lord. But He loved us so much that He sent His Son as a sacrifice. God wanted peace between us so He was willing to die so we may live. He did not lower the standards of truth, sin is still sin. However, He made a way for us to be in a relationship with Him. Peace cost Him everything; it was not the easy way out.

On a smaller scale, we are to be peacemakers. We are to sacrifice our "rights" for others. When I am offended, I do not force the person to "repay" me. I do not hold a grudge or demand retribution. Instead, I forgive the person so our relationship can be ruled by peace. I do not deny that the person has sinned against me yet I do not focus on the sin but instead turn my focus on reconciliation.

Part of this focus on reconciliation may be confronting the person on his or her sin. This should only be done after prayer and with a heart of love. God is our example of this. He confronts us in our sin not because He gets pleasure in showing us our shortcomings but because he wants us to repent of our sin to have greater intimacy with Him. The purpose of confrontation is not “look what you did” but “look who you can become”. It wants to help people grow in Christ.

Sadly, this truth of confrontation has been lost in the church. I knew a man who was head of a committee on a church board. Many ministers came and went who complained, gossiped, and whined about this man and his sin of power and control. Yet no one spoke to him about it. I remember a “celebration” took place when this man was rotating off the committees. I said, “Should we not discuss with this man about his sin so he can grow in the Lord instead of manipulating behind the scenes for his removal? Isn’t our responsibility to help him? He may not even know he is doing anything wrong.” I was told that his no longer being on a committee was a “handling of the problem”.

True peacemakers loves others more than ourselves. If this church staff truly loved this man, they would have risked being uncomfortable and confronted him so that he could be at peace with God and with others. When we love ourselves over others, we will not risk our reputations, our comfort zones, our security, our need for approval or anything else to bring peace into our relationships. Seeking peace is always a risk. God chose to seek peace through His Son Jesus Christ even though He knew many would reject Him, yet He sent Jesus anyway.

Our families need to be ruled by peace. If you look at the verse again it states “since as members of one body you were called to peace”. Can you imagine if all the parts of your body decided to go in its own direction? You would be torn apart. But because the body is controlled by the head, your body works together and keeps you together. The same is true for a family. In order to keep from being torn apart, you need to allow peace to rule over you. Peace will guide everyone in a direction that is beneficial to all and will knit your hearts together.

Up Close and Personal

Confess any relationships in your life where you have not allowed peace to reign.

Summarize your thoughts about peace.

What false notions did you have about peace? For example, did you think it meant avoiding others?

How can you allow peace to reign over your family and other relationships?

DAY
3

Today's Scripture:
Colossians 3:15

The Word

Yesterday we learned about peace. I hoped you were as overwhelmed as I was about cultivating peace in all relationships. But the Word of God has never commanded anything that it was not willing to help us achieve. The Word has given us a way to nurture peace with others.

Colossians 3:15

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Verse 15: More than any other discipline in life, thankfulness will help you live in peace. When you turn your attention on what to be thankful about instead of what irritates you, you can enjoy your relationships instead of dreading them.

Most homes are broken because the negatives have been magnified and the positives minimized. When all you look for is the bad, then all you will see is the bad. But if you will turn your attention on what is good then more good will be apparent. Instead of criticizing others, we need to look at reasons to be thankful. For example, my grandparents have an opinion on everything and if you disagree with them then they believe that something is wrong with you. I often get frustrated with their need to tell me how life should be. When I focus on their abrasive ways, I want to avoid them. But when I search for things in them to be thankful for (they love animals; they like to laugh; they give me magazines) then I can once again enjoy their presence without pent up irritation or anger.

I don't know who you may be struggling to live in peace with. Maybe your husband frustrates you because the projects around the house are left undone. Suppose you quit focusing on what he is not doing and begin thanking God and him for what he is doing: like working, or spending time with the children, or going to church, etc. Or maybe your child is going through the "my parents are stupid" stage. You can begin thanking the Lord for this transitional phase of your child learning to go from

dependence to independence. Thank your child as well for anything positive you see in him. Cultivating thanksgiving will build peace in the home.

Now I want to make a disclaimer: you do not have to be thankful about every person. Some of you have experienced terrible things at the hands of another. Others have been wounded in deep ways. You do not have to be thankful for evil people or their evil intentions. However, this does not excuse you from being thankful. Instead it just changes the focus. For example, Beth Moore, the famous author and speaker was abused as a child. She will never be thankful for the person who victimized her. Yet, she has expressed her thankfulness to God that He now allows her to minister to women all over the world who have suffered in similar circumstances. She is thankful how the Lord has healed her from her past and now she can teach others how to overcome their pain. By being thankful for what God has done, she can let go of the anger and live in peace within herself and teaching others the way to peace.

Every day we can choose strife or peace. The road of peace is paved with thanksgiving. Begin to pour it out today.

Up Close and Personal

Thank the Lord for the people in your life.

What specific ways are you thankful for your family or other relationships in your life?

How can you focus on these positives instead of negatives?

When will you express your positive thoughts to them?

DAY

4

The Word

Today's Scripture:

Colossians 3:16-17; Proverbs 22:6

How would you feel if a teacher in your child's school never was prepared to teach the children anything? Instead, she put on videos all day and just let them hang out and eat snacks. What if you confronted the principal about it and he said, "Well, she's doing the best she can." Would you remind the principal that a teacher is supposed to teach and not baby sit? Would you remove your child from the class?

If you are a parent, then you, too, are a teacher. How would you evaluate the lessons that you are teaching your children?

Colossians 3:16

¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Verse 16: To teach the ways of God, you must know the ways of God. We are commanded that the word should dwell in us "richly" or abundantly. I have heard people complain that they do not have the time or the ability to study God's Word. Yet, these same people can tell me all about the latest T.V. shows, sport statistics, movies, and so much more. The time and ability is there, however, it is channeled into everything else but the Word of God.

God wants us to know His Word so that we may teach and encourage one another with it: parents to children, children to parents, friends to friends, teachers to student, students to teachers, everyone knowing and sharing the Word with one another. At the end of our lives, that is all we will be held accountable for-knowing and living the ways of God.

So, teacher, how are you doing? Can your children say they are learning the ways of God from you? Not only are you to teach the ways of God, you are to sing it as well. Look back at the verse: "sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs". Is your music reflecting Christ? What about the music videos you watch?

Does this standard seem high? The next verse raises the bar higher.

Colossians 3:17

¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Verse 17: In every thing we say and do we are to live for Christ. Let's get a little more personal: the way we talk to our children should reflect Christ. The T.V. shows we watch should be pleasing to Christ. The activities we are choosing to be a part of should honor Christ. The language we use should not embarrass the name of Christ. (By the way, the phrase "Oh my God" is taking the Lord's name in vain and is sin.)

Are you overwhelmed? You should be. This is impossible on our own. But we need to make steps towards Christ-likeness. In order to do that, we need to be realistic about where we are and choose to take specific steps towards change. In order to do this, we must stop justifying (it's not that bad) or rationalizing (I'm the only one this effects). Instead, we must face the truth that God is calling us to Himself for transformation.

Your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren, your great-great grandchildren are affected by you. People you will never meet are influenced by you because you are handing down lessons. Are the lessons you are teaching drawing others closer to or farther away from God? This is serious business.

Proverbs 22:6

*⁶ Train a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

Verse 6: You have the responsibility to train your children. What are you training them to be? Godly parents will invest the ways of God into their children who will in turn grow up to be godly men and women. But to teach godliness, you yourselves must know the pathway of godliness. Children will learn more from your actions than your words.

Turn to God and ask for His help in this process for you cannot do this alone. He will help you and guide you. But you must be willing to invest time into this new way of life. You can't just act godly one day and speak the Word of God to your children for one day and expect them to totally change. You must commit for the long haul.

For those of you whose children are grown, you cannot change the past but you can determine to make a better future. Choose to change your ways and it may still influence your children. Not only that, there may be grandchildren you can encourage in the ways of God.

Some of you do not have children so you think you are off the hook. Reread verses 16-17. This is a calling for all of us to know the ways of God and to teach and encourage one another in it. I just focused on families but it applies to you as well.

I hope all of us will be encouraged to take steps towards letting the word of Christ dwell richly, as compared to poorly, in us. How rich or how poor are you?

Up Close and Personal

Thank the Lord that His Word can transform our lives.

Are you rich or poor in the Word of God? How can you increase the "treasure"?

Who can you teach and encourage?

What needs to be cut away from your life so that you can make time for God?

When can you teach your children (or others) about the ways of God?
How will you incorporate teaching your children (or others) on a daily basis?

There are many practical resources in helping to do this. On line you can go to Focus on the Family for practical tips, books, and so much more. In fact, they have a handy resource called “Plugged In On-line” which helps parents screen movies, T.V. shows, and music. This may help in discerning what is more appropriate for the family. If you know of any other resources, please share them with your group.

DAY
5

Today's Scripture:
Colossians 3:18-21

The Word

When I was in school, I was one of the few who enjoyed reading every book assigned in English class. Most of my friends would buy the cliff notes and considered that a hard enough read.

Today we are going to do the “cliff notes” of family relationships. We will look at the summary of the roles and responsibilities of the family. While this is not all encompassing, it gets us started in having quality family time.

Colossians 3:18-21

¹⁸*Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

¹⁹*Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

²⁰*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

²¹*Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

Verse 18-21: If you want to evaluate whether or not you are doing your part for the family, reread those verses. Put it into question form:

If you are a wife: Did I submit to my husband today?

If you are a husband: Did I show love and kindness to my wife today?

If you are a child: Did I obey my parents today?

If you are a father: Did I encourage my children today?

If you can answer “yes” then celebrate the Lord helping you to be like Him. If you answer “no” then confess your sin to God and make it right with the person you offended. Then ask the Lord to help you be more like Him tomorrow.

Harmony in family relationships will happen when you do your part. That is the only thing you can do because you can't force anyone else to change or to treat you in accordance with God's Word. But at the end of your life, you will be held accountable for what you did or did not do.

The pressure of family relationships can wear on us. Hopefully, our “cliff notes” will help us to focus our attention on improving the area we need to improve. Maybe this will improve the home atmosphere which may relieve some of the pressures. Begin today in being the family member God has called you to be.

Up Close and Personal

Confess your family failures and ask the Lord to help you be the wife or husband or child or father that He wants you to be.

What changes are you feeling led to make?