

Topic	The Gospel and Relationships
Reference	Col 3:18-4:1
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Sometime ago when I was growing up I use to go downtown and there was a hotel in town and it has got a big sign saying 'Jesus Saves'. Very few people would dare put a sign in downtown hotel saying 'Jesus Saves' and it is actually owned by Khoo Kay Peng. He is one of the 50 richest men in Malaysia. The sign was a reflection of his Christian faith. He became a Christian in 2009 and he claimed that Lord has healed him from a stroke and he became a devout follower of the Lord. There are other Christian companies and how they reflect their faith. For example, in the US there is a company called Forever 21 and they would reflect their faith by putting John 3:16 on the cover of their clothes. Then Chick-fil-A is a Christian company and they sell chicken sandwiches but they close on a Sunday to honor the Lord. However when we look a little bit deeper in the newspaper we can find Khoo Kay Peng and the wife in a bitter divorce struggle nowadays. It turned out Khoo Kay Peng has been abusing his wife for many years. He has got two children one of which has Tourette's syndrome and one is autistic and he does not even pay money to support them even though he is a very wealthy man, testified by the daughter who basically says that this man is very abusive person.

Now if you are a Christian shouldn't that affect not only the sign board on your hotel, it must affect every part of your life.

What happens when you come to know Christ? Things must change.

Lamin Sanneh is a professor of divinity Yale. He writes, *the turning of all of ourselves without leaving anything behind or outside toward God, a refocusing of the mental life and its cultural and social underpinnings and of our feelings, affections and instincts in the light of what God has done in Jesus Christ*

Because of what Christ has done for us in Christ Jesus it changes basically everything and it must also change the core things that in the life are important and it is basically relationships.

Today, we are going to deal with how the gospel affects relationship. How it causes the relationship to be built upon the new foundation, it basically focuses the relationship on a new direction and how it is rooted in a new hope.

Gospel causes our relationships to be:

1. Built upon a new foundation

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 provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. 22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye- service, as people- pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are servicing the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

1 Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven (Col 3:18-4:1 ESV)

So basically it is a new relationship with God in the center and this is basically the recognition of the original order.

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him (Colossians 1:16 ESV)

So in that way there is no such thing that says my life, my marriage, my relationship, my family and my job. It was all created through him and for him. All relationships belong to God.

Colossians 3:1-4 (ESV) If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.....4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory

Which means our activity should be focused on seeking spiritual matters; there is preoccupation with the way you think. There is a hope for in which your new life is anchored in. It is as radical as death. When you die it is over there is no vestige of your past with you and therefore it says

3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3 ESV)

So everything else in the past is finished and here it goes on

and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all (Colossians 3:10-11 ESV)

It is like they have rebooted your computer, new software, new operating system. It is completely new. Now you have got a new software, new foundation that is how you conduct your relationships, but is marriage like that. But if we look at marriage I find a lot of human relationships are basically conditional. It is basically transactional. Our love is nonvulnerable.

We put out something and we expect the other person to come halfway. All the time whether you are in marriage you got this tussle and William Vanstone wrote 'Love has Risk'. In chapter there is a passage

*Because we need to be loved like we need air and water. We can't live without love. That means there's a certain mercenary quality to our relationships. We look for people whose love would really affirm us. We invest our love only where we know we'll get a good return. Of course when we do that, our love is conditional and nonvulnerable, because we're not loving the person simply for himself or herself; we're loving the person partly for the love we're getting.*

The problem is human marriages are transactional. We do something for something in return and that's really very difficult. True love should be vulnerable, true love you should be happy when you spend yourself at the expense of somebody and when they are happy you are happy even though it cost you. Now where do we find that kind of love in the world? We cannot really find that kind of love in the world simply because we all need love and so therefore when we enter in marriage one thing to have our needs met and having love in return which many of us do, how are we going to do it? We actually miscommunicate all the time. First of all even in this transactional issue we communicate all the time, it says a man will spend 2 dollars for the 1 dollar item that he needs. A woman will spend 1 dollar on a 2 dollar item which she does not need. It is completely different idea of which people think. We come to marriage with whole bunch of expectations. If we believe marriage is a transactional kind of thing then what happens when you come in with whole bunch of expectations. The trouble is that you have got these huge expectations and after you get married suddenly you find out the fellow farts and he snores and he forgot my birthday. What happens is that in transactional relationships where transaction is the basis what happens is that you will crush your partner with your expectations and he will crush you with his imperfections that is the problem. All of us wind up, if you think you are looking very-very hard in life for a young person, for a person who is just the right person, your soul mate, bare this advice, you will always marry the wrong person as long as they are a sinner it is always the wrong person. That is why in the Bible there is not much emphasis on chapter 3, how to find good wife. Marriage is such an integral part of our lives and there are hardly any pages devoted to get good wife, must cook, must do that expect the Proverb 31 which is actually personification of wisdom anyway, it is not really about wives.

The Bible does talk about is how you live with your wife rather than how you choose your wife in particular. So there are expectations and imperfections and if you let that build up over the years then there is a lot of resentment in between because all the misconceptions will destroy the relationship. So therefore what we do in transactional love is we learn the language of love and you learn that to do the right things. The way woman think and the way man think are completely different so what we do in a transactional relationship, we alter the language of love. We can find different techniques that the world teaches us but Paul has also given us an approach

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

The Bible takes it the opposite way; it just skips that whole issue. What it does is that, basically Paul is saying in your marriage basically you are going to do things because it is fitting in the Lord. All of us need love and the beauty of the gospel comes in, God comes in and with unmerited favor and grace and He gives you all the love that you need so that you are then entering your marriage not as a needy person and wanting your spouse to fill all your needs but wanting the Lord having filled your needs then you are able to love and truly love because of what the Lord has done. So the foundation of what is based on what the Lord has done for you.

Nowadays some couples actually have their own marriage vows; I will do this if you will do that. I will do that if you will do this. Prenuptial is a sign of a transactional relationship between a man and woman but if we look at Christian marriage vows.

*to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy law, in the presence of God I make this vow.*

It takes it completely out. Paul says

Colossians 3:13-14 (ESV) bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

So the issue is the basis of the foundation of marriage is put back to the Lord. Whatever the Lord has done for you that becomes the basis of how you treat other people. So therefore God's grace makes the imperfect perfect. So therefore what happens when you marry a nonbeliever? The more nonbeliever will come into the marriage with a transactional idea of love. He/She will believe that you are his/her soul mate and there will be so much pressure put on you. How can you actually get married to someone who does not believe that the Lord will be foundation of relationship? If you take the foundation away, the marriage will fall apart.

### **Employer-Employee Relationships**

They are always like the race and then threatened to sack you. This is what bond servants are supposed to do.

Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye- service, as people- pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men (Colossians 3:22-23 ESV)

So the new foundation is basically working in your workplace as you will serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven (Colossians 4:1 ESV)

So therefore our works have been transformed from merely serving human masters or having human slaves or employees as to a transaction made in heaven as it were. So there is no more reciprocal relationships. Onesimus was a runaway slave, in Roman society if you run away from your master the punishment is death. Paul writes to Philemon and tell him about Onesimus and that is what he says to him

For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, 16 no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord (Philemon 1:15-16 ESV)

So he brings him back, instead of punishing him, he says you better treat him as you would treat a brother.

So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. 18 If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. 19 I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self (Philemon 1:17-19 ESV)

Paul is saying as you have respected me you must respect your own slave. As you owe me, you owe him as it were. So basically what he has done is that he has transformed the relationship and put whatever Christ has done for us as payment for all debts owed to us by every other person. So when we look at a person it is no longer on the merits of who that person is, but on the merits of what Christ has done and this is a revolutionary way on which we actually integrate with each other. When you come to church everybody is huddled into a table and you see every table has the same faces, because these are the people who get along with one another. They say the right things, they complement each other, they basically raise each other up and you are in that fellowship because you like each other, you get something in return. You wouldn't want to go to table where they are scolding you all the time. You don't want to be on a table with the people who you don't like but that is human relationship, it is transactional. What Paul is trying to tell us from now onwards when we look at each other as if we are dealing with the Lord in between because in the end of time when Jesus writes in Matthew 25, when he comes back how you treat each other is how you be rewarded.

Matthew 25:40 (ESV) And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

So all relationships are rooted on one foundational factor that everybody bears the image of God and we treat that person not on the basis of what he has done, his pedigree, what Job he has, how

much money he has, how handsome or ugly she looks like but basically who we are in the Lord and when you do that everybody comes to church on an even playing field as were.

## 2. Focused in a new direction

The center of all marital vows is this idea

**Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you** (Genesis 3:16 ESV)

This is the curse that comes after the fall of man, the great controversy where women and men are always struggling, in the old days not much of struggle. Roman husbands completely rule the household; the wife has no say in anything except the household. They rule and they often treat them harshly. Nowadays women react to that.

Christian marriages are defined by new direction. Down instead of up. This is there, the roles remain but the calling changes

**Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you** (Genesis 3:16 ESV)

**Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.** (Colossians 3:18-19 ESV)

Basically the roles remain the same but the direction is different. A woman desires to control the husband, he is asked to give this up and to go down. This is up, desire to control, first wives club, instead you are ask to submit. Man has control and rule but he is asked to love and love is a form of mutual submission because if you love someone, the happiness of that someone overrides your own happiness. It is submission.

**And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ** (Ephesians 5:18-21 ESV)

There is a mutual submission because we are filled with the spirit. So therefore there are two ways you can go, you can go the way where culture is coming up, Western culture tells us, you got to have your rights, your got your privileges, you got to have position, you got to have control, you got to influence, nobody owns you, you are free and it is like you are smoking a cigar and then women will turn to be like men, which is not the biblical norm. If we look in Christ, we are asked to serve each other, to submit, to obey, to serve, to love and to sacrifice because we are doing it for our Lord.

**Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they see your respectful and pure conduct. 3 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on**

of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— 4 but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. 5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening (1 Peter 3:1-6 ESV)

So the end result, if you are rooted in the cross and you go down instead of going up, it is a conversion of the husbands.

If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. (1 Corinthians 7:13-14b ESV)

Here is an opportunity if you stay with your spouse who is not a believer by your holy and chaste behavior the gospel will be made real, it will be embodied so that your husband or wife will come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged (Colossians 3:20-21 ESV)

In the same manner, it is mutual love. The fathers do not use their authority, they do not provoke their children and the children are to obey their parents because it pleases God.

## **WORKPLACE**

Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye- service, as people- pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men (Colossians 3:22-23 ESV)

Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven (Colossians 4:1 ESV)

Now people criticize the Bible because it is written at a time where there was great slavery. 70% of Roman population at that time had slaves. They were responsible for all the beautiful Roman forum architectures that you see today, it is all in the back of slaved labor. The Bible is against slavery but it does not come out directly and say, sell all your slaves. Paul recognizes slavery causes abuses, when Paul brings the gospel in he brings it into right into the heart of everybody and the gospel removes the abuses. When you remove the abuse slavery is removed. The abuse of slavery is you get someone and he works for you day and night and he works for you without pay. That is an abuse. When you ask them to treat them fairly which means eight years then the person is no longer a slave. The Bible approaches us by drawing the line to human heart, not by saying that there is no slavery but by regulating behavior instead.

1 Corinthians 7:20-22 (ESV) Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. 21 Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) 22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ.

So what he is saying is that through Christ we are now free to serve one another. There are really no slaves in Christ. Our pedigree of roles do not define us.

... 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all (Colossians 3:11 ESV)

When the gospel comes we are all equal, our pedigree, our roles do not define us at all. The Roman slaves use to have a medallion that they wear all the time. That means that they are on call for their master. They have to work for their master whole day. We all are slaves to a certain extent. The only difference is that we have voluntarily be doing stuffy. There are really no free people, because the only thing that we are slaved to is slave to what we want in life.

### **Tyranny of our own idols**

Michael Phelps is the greatest Olympian who ever lived. He got so many medals in the history of Olympics. His trainer told him, *'Michael, you have all the money that anybody your age could ever want or need; you have a profound influence in the world; you have free time - and you're the most miserable person I know.'*” Bill Bowman

The only person he is racing and trying to beat is himself. That is the trouble with us we are under the tyranny of our own idols. Benjamin Nugent is a writer who writes in the New York Times blog. He says, *“when good writing was my only goal, I made the quality of my work the measure of my worth. For this reason, I wasn't able to read my own writing well. I couldn't tell whether something I had just written was good or bad, because I needed it to be good in order to feel sane. I lost the ability to cheerfully interrogate how much I liked what I had written, to see what was actually on the page rather than what I wanted to see or what I feared to see”*

For many of us our self-esteem is so tied up, we are writing our poetry, our singing so much so that we are afraid to see, we cannot judge it fairly that is our struggle. There is a tyranny of our own inadequacy. David Bowie is one of the most successful singers of the world. He said, *“I had enormous self-image problems and very low self-esteem, which I hid behind obsessive writing and performing.... I was driven to get through life very quickly,” “I really felt so utterly inadequate. I thought the work” — songwriting, recording, performing — “was the only thing of value.”*

That drives him, you could have a billion dollars in the bank but the only thing that drives you is this sense of inadequacy and the worst thing we do to ourselves. So just like a slave we need to be delivered of that. We need to serve one master,

**23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men** (Colossians 3:22-23 ESV)

We have one master, so Jesus Christ actually liberates us to serve each other. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples to show them that serving each other does not mean you are lower. Service is a reflection of submission, service is a reflection that you are not as good as powerful as reputable or as worth and here you have the son of God, the one who owns a whole universe. He comes and wash your feet, so it tells you that service is not beneath anyone, service is what you were created to do and you serve each other out of love that is how relationships now work. When you are in relationship with your wife or your subordinate in work, you serve them.

**1 Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven** (Colossians 4:1 ESV)

When you serve it is not because you are any lower but because service is your new direction that under guts all your relationships.

### **3. Rooted In New Hope**

*An 85 year old couple, having been married almost 60 years, died in a car crash. They had been in good health the last ten years mainly due to her interest in health food, and exercise. When they reached the pearly gates, St. Peter took them to their mansion, which was decked out with a beautiful kitchen and master bath suite and Jacuzzi. As they "oohed and aahed" the old man asked Peter how much all this was going to cost. "It's free," St. Peter replied, "this is Heaven."*

*Next they went out back to survey the championship golf course that the home backed up to. They would have golfing privileges every day and each week the course changed to a new one representing the great golf courses on earth. The old man asked, "what are the green fees?". St. Peter said, "This is heaven, you play for free."*

*Next they went to the club house and saw the lavish buffet lunch with the cuisines of the world laid out. "How much is it to eat?" asked the old man.*

*"Don't you understand yet? This is heaven, it is free!" St. Peter replied with some exasperation.*

*Well, where are the low fat and low cholesterol tables?" the old man asked timidly.*

*St. Peter lectured, "That's the best part...you can eat as much as you like of whatever you like and you never get fat and you never get sick. This is Heaven."*

*After hearing that the old man went into a fit of anger, throwing down his hat and stomping on it, and shrieking wildly. St. Peter and the wife both tried to calm him down, asking what was wrong.*

*The old man looked at his wife and said, "This is all your fault. If it weren't for your bran muffins, I could have been here ten years ago!"*

The problem is many of us, older people especially we are like this we try to cut the carbohydrate, we certainly realize that life is passing us by and unless we actually preserve some of this we are going to go too fast and whatever we do ultimately we all will die and basically what actually motivate us is actually hope. If you got the correct hope in life and hope takes us past the nature of work. Paul says,

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality (Colossians 3:23-25 ESV)

Hope takes us past the nature of work

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil (2 Corinthians 5:10 ESV)

### **Non-Christian View of Work:**

All work is a necessary evil to be avoided. Because this whole idea of hope is lost them. The best thing is their job. David Beckham says, *'what do you want to do when you're older?' I'd say, 'I want to be a footballer.'* And they'd say, *'No, what do you really want to do, for a job?' But that was the only thing I ever wanted to do."*

I remember years ago I was in Sydney and for the first year I had to look for a job to support myself. So I got no jobs and the only job available to me was a factory job in a place very far away. So I take two buses and one train there and we do the job and my job was in a factory line where my job was actually take a toothbrush and polish all the lipstick cans and there would come off 100 and 1000s and millions every day. The highlight of the day was when the foreman, 'hey Peter you must go toilet.' I said I am okay, but he forced me to go to toilet. It was a beautiful toilet with a huge tag of Time magazine at a side, there was a music and cushion and all that you sit. Any one time everyone is sitting on the toilet, they are not working. The work is so boring and there is not much hope involved and I was only earning 3 dollars 98 cents an hour then. If I was earning 100 dollars per hour, I would have never went in.

Nature of work changes because of the reward. The reward is all there is. Hope is extremely important; it transformed us when we put our work in an eternal perspective. So it does not matter if you are a slave as Paul says

Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. 21 Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) 22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the

Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. 24 So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God (1 Corinthians 7:20-24 ESV)

So the gospel will affect every part of our relationships, in our lives, in our children, in our workplace but the gospel must form the foundation of our lives, focus on the new direction in which we serve. Whatever jobs that we have when we start of this New Year it is rooted in the hope of God's eternal reward for us whatever we do. So lastly, there was another factory in Israel and this factory does not have a big sign like Khoo Kay Peng's hotel 'Jesus Saves'. It just has the name of the company called Galtronics. Galtronics is run by an American entrepreneur called Ken Crowell and he describes that

*"The calling was first to go to an area where there was little or no Christian witness, to give employment to believers and nonbelievers in a safe working environment, and to support the building of a local church."*

That is his mission statement. So he goes to Israel to Tiberias and he actually builds a factory there.

- 300 workers Arabs Jews Christians in Tiberias, all you can eat lunch buffets, Good incomes.
- Sold 2 billion antennae to Samsung and Motorola
- 400 member church
- Plants in china and Korea

They did not put the sign 'Jesus Saves' up there but they actually changed the lives of the workers in that particular plant.

Randy and Trish McGrath owned a bakery and one day a gay couple came to the bakery and said, you must bake this cake to celebrate our gay wedding. They refused because when they do cakes what they put on that matters because their work belongs to God. They said,

*They won't create cakes that fall in line with certain themes or that promote certain behaviours they consider harmful or detrimental to society or God's order of things*

They actually were sued and they lost their business.

Brothers and Sisters if conversion in Jesus Christ is real in our lives it will affect our families, it will affect our dreams, it will affect our occupations, it will affect our company. The only way we can do it is to surrender to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is what Christ has done for us and our response is basically a response to that.