

Topic	Cultivating Healthy Holistic Relationship
Reference	Colossians 3:12-17
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There is a company called Next Jump. It is an interesting company, they turnover 2 billion a year in their transactions. It is an ecommerce company. They don't do staff appraisals quarterly, they do it weekly. It is very interesting, they tag you with people when you come in, everyone is given a mentor. A mentor works with you. It is a completely different way of doing workplace culture. The founder of Next Jump, Charlie Kim said,

When you work for this company and you sign on the dotted line, it is a lifetime employment. They don't fire people, unless the company goes under. You could steal from the company, do CBD and they won't fire you. It was such a radical change and it was a change that was so thoroughly thought off, they documented it. In an interview the reporter asked Charlie Kim about this. He gave a very profound example. He said, "if your son or your daughter had a problem, would him kick him out of the family". The reporter said, 'no, unless it is really bad, but you won't.' If someone in your family wasn't doing well, was a real black sheep, would you get rid of that person. No. Don't we always say that your company is your family. The reporter said, yes. Do we practice that? So, what he is doing is, he is taking a family value, a value from the culture of the family and transposing it to work in its most ultimate sense.

The point is that, the company build a business model on a family model or we can call this a holistic relationship, how your family values goes into your work?

In the case of Next Jump, it is family values that went into work and this morning I want to purpose something. How does your church relationships effect your family, your work and your personal life? Is there that holistic connection?

Quite interestingly, at the end of chapter 2, Paul talks about dying with Christ and he opens chapter 3 with being raised in Christ. Now, let me just give you a few words to give you a big picture. You have your heart, you have your mind. Verse 5 onwards is Paul's list of things you don't do. Interestingly, the things you don't do involve what you say and what you do. So here we have your heart, your mind, what you say, what you do and he counterbalances in verses 12-14 in what you say and what you do. Then there is relationship with everybody,

extreme people, all sorts of people and then in verse 15 he talks about, now he shifts to the third voice. If you look carefully from the second person to the third person. So here how it goes. Your heart, your mind, what you say, what you do, how you relate to one another, how you relate in a group, how you relate in a family and how you relate at work. You don't get more holistic than this, you completely do not. It is probably the single chapter in the whole New Testament that wraps everything. Your mind, your heart, you in one person, you in a group, what you say, what you do, family, work, church and the linchpin is the middle verse.

This is what you and I are every day and let me ask you what goes in the middle. What's that middle question mark? Why would you put there? Now the cliché answer is 'me and church.' I propose to you, that's wrong. It is not me and church. It is 'we', emphasis 'we'. How you and I relate in church is the cornerstone, completely misunderstood, completely underestimated. You know why you have problems at home, with boss, why your family is not doing well, because you didn't join a life group. It is true. It is we as a family, building each other up, loving each other and here the verse is very clear

14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

That's the holistic foundation. Today, we are going to see how the church as a family effects every aspect of your life, but more so that's the purpose of the gospel. Now the Greek rendering of the word salvation is more than saving you from hell. It is about renewing you. That's the Isaiah prophesy. It is taking you from death to life. Chapter 2 of Colossians to chapter 3, renewing your mind, your heart, your words, your actions, you in the family and you at work. How do we know this? Because if you look at the end of Chapter 2, he says this in verse 20, since you die with Christ and then chapter 3 verse 1 opens since you have been raised with Christ. That's the gospel. Let's see how that works out. So, there are three things we want to look at today:

- God's purpose for our church relationships.
- God's values in our church relationships.
- The practice of holistic church relationships.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR OUR CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS:

God has a higher purpose for our relationships, whether it is family, whether it is work, whether it is church than personal happiness. The reason why human beings very simply go into relationships is personal happiness. We are wired for

intimacy. Some people keep dogs, why, because they call it man's best friend, because you go home, you don't want to go home to an empty house. Why is it a baby brings a smile to you? Why is it you are tied to family members? Why is it everyone has this innate craving to find a life partner? Why is that the body releases oxytocins in this kind of things. Because that is your DNA. On a subconscious level, all of us go into relationships, whether it is your children, whether it is parents, your spouse, church, it is about meaningful relationships and because we want to be happy.

When we make our personal happiness our goal, whether it is your family or your spouse, or you at work, that happiness has a cost.

If it isn't personal happiness, it isn't a happiness of my family, of course the Christian answer is, 'I am doing it for God.' What exactly does that mean? So here is one text which is really interesting and highly misunderstood, never picked up, because this text explicitly tells you, your main goal, why you come to FBC, the big picture of our purpose statement is to love each other as God loved us. We can sing that but how do you narrow it down to a position or a practical reality and here is what Paul says.

He says in verse 15, there is a section in verse 16, you teach and admonish one another. When Paul says teach and admonish one another, he is referring to all of us. So here is the purpose of relationships. You are to teach and admonish one another. Your job is to change me, my job is to change you, not for my or your sake, but God's sake. All of us are people who need to change others. That's your mandate. Now you do it in two ways, teaching and admonishing. Now the moment I pose that to you, your first reaction is 'not me.'

Churches always have a big front and back door. In the last few years, I have seen people coming to our church and they ground themselves in our church, they serve, they have a moment where they feel they belong and then they throw themselves in the church. They serve in many ministries and I began to track it. They were settled for two years and then at the end of the one year plus, they are not very happy and then there is a complain. After two years, we don't see them very often, they moved to another church. Now the other thing is, there is a quite of lot people from other churches who come here. Now, we are not here to judge anymore, but I think there is a question that we want to ask, because why do people move. They are looking for a church to suit them. Maybe it is not so much that you need to find a church to suit you, you need to change and the problem with churches is that, we are so consumer driven, we can position the church to get us in the crowd. **The issue is do we want to change.**

A lot of us are involved in transactional relationships. I give you something, you give me something back. It is because of our sinful nature. Because our sinful nature is centered on self. So, when I come to church, the first thing I ask is, what can I get? If I can't get it, I go to another church until I find something that I can get. Maybe I don't like the worship here, maybe I don't like the way the preaching is like, maybe I don't like the way the church is run, maybe I don't like the people here, so I move and move and move and finally I find somewhere I can fit in and I fit in. After a few years, I am not satisfied, and I move to another church. Then I move, after I get tired. I settle in the church and I sit at the back. That's painful, but that's the truth and the truth hurts and that's why your family life, your work life, your personal life is disconnected, because you have no spiritual deep roots in a family that help you support in these areas. Because on a subconscious level, all our relationships are transactional.

Now here is another thing about transactional relationships. It is based on perceive self-value. It is your net worth. It is not in terms of money, it is how you value yourself.

We come to church with a mindset, with two extremes. I am hurt, I am coming to church to see how you can help me overcome my hurt. We have expectations and we come to church. Then we leave the church not feeling satisfied and we move, and we move, and we move. Paul wraps the entire message in Christ.

13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Sometimes when you get unhappy in church, you pause, and you go back to why you became a Christian. It is because God loved you, He loved you because of what he did, not of what we have done or our self-value or what deeds you have done. You came to Christ because of grace and so God says, you stay in the church because of grace. You stay in a church, you bear with each other and together we work it out. Henry Nouwen probably the most simplest.

We are all healers who can reach out and offer health, and we are all patients in constant need of help.

So even if we are in financial trouble, your emotional need, your marriage is messed up, you have a disease, you are here to teach and admonish each one of us. You are here to teach and admonish me, you are here to change me. I am here to change you. If we fail to do that, we are not church, it is a simple truth.

How do we do it?

Here is a simple way of doing it, join a life group. Be part of the change. Why the church is not in your center, because if you don't have that you will struggle with your work, you will struggle with your marriage, you will struggle with your personal sins because there is no one to support you. So, I am going to encourage all of you to consider visiting a group at least. After then if you are happy come and talk to us.

GOD'S VALUES IN OUR CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS:

Paul says, you clothe yourself with five qualities; compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience and these five qualities go to your family life, because the rest of the verse, verse 19 is about family, you clothe yourself when you are at work because it talks about slaves. It is the same thing, you clothe yourself when I talking to you, you clothe yourself of this when we are in a big group, you clothe yourself with this when you talk and when you do, five qualities you clothe yourself and it has got to be so embedded in you, it is subconscious. It is a simple truth, but very difficult to practice.

People say, it's the little things we do (or don't do) that reveal our real selves. There might be people in the church that you and I don't like, but because Christians are supposed to love one another, when we see each other, we say hi, how are you and that's it. Now is that biblical? Because scripture here is about teaching and rebuking everyone. We all have our baggage, we all have our perceived hurts. For a lot of us the best way to keep peace is separation. This is not biblical.

As Christians we do not know how to engage with people whom we have difficulties with? In simple English, we don't know how to love people we don't like. You can't even get on with someone you don't like, how are you going to love your enemies.

The reason why people cannot practice Matthew 18, is because it is not in the spirit of the second great commandment. We don't know how to love people the way God loves us. Because when you go to an issue with another person, each person wants to put across his view. So, if I come to you and say, I don't like the way you do things in church worship, too noisy, so the other gets defensive. A lot of people don't think, it is noisy only you think it is noisy.

So here is the first thing that Paul tells us and if we can repeat this in many scenarios, the first thing is that space that both of you open your mouth is

sacred. Paul says here in the context of chapter 3, it is not just what we do, is what we say that's the context of it. So, let me connect the two. If you got to teach and admonish one person, number one, you clothe yourself with these things and number two, you learn to bear, you learn to forgive, and you put on love. Now this is something we know here but we don't practice it.

There are two ways in how we can rebuke each other, and I think it is something we all struggle with. Here is the first thing which the text is telling us.

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

Paul reminds you of your identity and from that identity he breaks down the quality of identity. There are five qualities and then he gives a demonstration of what that has been practiced. So here is the first thing we often forget.

How is your rebuking making the other party see what God wants them to see, instead of what we want them to see? There is such a subtle difference. You see, you mash two people who go into an argument. One guy knows the Bible very well, the other person doesn't know the Bible very well, but comes from a corporate background. In a fight like that, you move it to the arena you are most comfortable with. So, the guy who knows the Bible will keep quoting verses. Actually, he is trying to intimidate you. The other guy will shift it to corporate governance because that is his area of expertise. After the fight, nobody wins. In fact, you leave that discussion with a bitter taste in your mouth. If we pause before we open our mouth and see if what I am saying, is that person going to live closer to God that governs what you say and that's so-so difficult to do. So, Paul says, you subconsciously soak yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. So, it comes out easier.

Here is a second thing that we don't do. Is your rebuking proclaiming or shaming the gospel?

You are getting involved in a discussion, you are getting so heated up and you are complaining. You can have a conversation and argue about anything under the sun, always know people will look at you. So here are simple little things, you do it right.

Let's go to a way of not pushing the bar. Let me just tell you the practice of it, there are two ways that Paul brings up and they are not completely unrelated, but they are very connected. The first is intentional relationships, with those outside your comfort zone. The second one is even more unnoticed, it is worshiping. In fact, that is front and center.

Paul grounded this verse in verse 11, here

11 Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

So, verse 15 grounds itself in verse 11. Now when you read verse 11 and those of you who are Bible scholars and you read Galatians chapter 3, have you not heard a verse that similar in Ephesians and you also use the word clothe. Let me give you two other parts of the text which says the same thing. Look at Galatians 3,

*27 for all of you who were **baptized into Christ** have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3: 27-28*

*13 For we were all **baptized by one Spirit** so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 1 Corinthians 12:13*

In simple English, all of us are equal. He is completely taking the whole opposite and saying this is church, you don't have that, you are not church, you are a social club. That's the first point here. The second one which is quite interesting goes to identity. In the Galatians text and the Corinthian text, both talk about baptism.

Paul is saying about identity. The problem why we have problems in church, is our identity is unclear. Once you are very clear, you are called to God and you look at someone else as a brother, someone has God has called to, the differences fade away a bit.

Peter comes to Cornelius, a person he doesn't want to go to. By nature, Peter is a racist, we find it in Galatians. So, to put in simple English, it is like a Chinese who is racist towards Indians. They will never tell you that are racist. What happens is this, when he goes outside his comfort zone and he goes to meet Cornelius and the text is very clear of going all the way to meet him, he says something which is really interesting. Now, I know God shows no favoritism.

What has happened there is a very simple profound truth. When you push yourself outside your comfort zone, when you after church service don't run away, when you after church don't go to the Garden Café and sit with your friend, but if you intentionally find people you don't like, people you are uncomfortable with and when you go to that line, that line where you are uncomfortable with, God does something to you. He teaches you something about yourself. Now I know, and suddenly Peter learned something about himself. That's why we go to life groups. Not that we want to because it changes us.

When you are in a life group, you invite people and you say, I don't feel like inviting that person, but God says invite that person and when you invite that person, when you get to that line, God teaches you something. All of us have people we are uncomfortable with. You may look at one community and says, I am not comfortable with the community, God says you go and when you go there, God teaches you something about yourself. When he teaches you something about yourself, you find later on changing other people and changing yourself becomes easier.

Unless we are used to mixing with people who are different from us, you will not go out to the world. You will not reach out to communities like this and show love. You will be inside your very moralistic conservative group and the world will pass you by and God will call each one of us to accord, why you didn't go to those you consider unclean. They are the words God gave to Peter.

16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And 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.

We teach and admonish one another generally through anything, in small groups, in what we say, in your actions in what people see, but specifically you teach through singing together. Why because Ephesians says this

19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord. Ephesians 5:19 NIV

In the end, why do we go into relationships, because we are wired as I mentioned for intimacy. Now there are two ways of finding intimacy with God, one is when you are alone and be still and you hear the voice of God, as you open scripture, but how do you find intimacy in the church.

When people are here, and they sing together, and they raise their hands and they look around and they are aware of each other next to them, singing, they remember heaven. Suddenly, your neighbor who is an Indian or a Chinese or a Sabahan, suddenly it disappears. You are now in Christ. When you sing together, and you raise your voices, suddenly the other person who you cannot tolerate, suddenly the feeling comes down.

How do you worship together?

Simple thing, you need to hear the other person. If you cannot hear the other person singing, is not worship, it is a performance. So, the key is you have got to hear the other person singing.

Scripture tells us, when you worship, and you are sensitive to the person next to you and you hear them singing to God and to you, you are reminded of that intimacy you have with yourself as family and with God.

CHALLENGE:

If someone ask you to describe the church using only the Bible, how would you answer?