

## COLOSSIANS 3:18–4:1 - Spiritually Mature Relationships

### THE CONTEXT

- \* As people who long for LOVE, it's our BROKEN relationships that give us most DISCOMFORT and cause the greatest ANGST.
  - \* If Christ has been allowed to take His RIGHTFUL PLACE in your life, as GOD & LORD, and if you're living in the reality of your NEW IDENTITY as laid out in the natural flow of Colossians 3, then you can have WHOLE & WHOLESOME relationships.
- *How significant is the placement of this section, straight after the other practical teaching in Col 3? How does it naturally flow from that material? How does our understanding of the lordship & deity of Christ affect how we read this section?*

### IF YOU REMAIN CARNAL

- \* Instead of SUBMISSION, you'll have DISRESPECT, DISHONOUR, even REBELLION.
  - \* Instead of LOVE, it'll be TAKING, CONSUMING, ABUSING.
  - \* Instead of SERVING, people will resort to DEMANDING, SELF-SEEKING, ENTITLEMENT.
  - \* Instead of ENCOURAGEMENT, you'll have DISCOURAGEMENT, CRITICISM, EMBITTERMENT.
- *What is the difference between a carnal person and a spiritually mature one? What are the contrasts between the relationships of carnal people and those between the more spiritually mature?*
- *"In the world today, we see so much dishonour, abuse, entitlement & graceless discouragement. That because people are carnal. They simply haven't opened the door wide enough to really let Jesus in." Discuss!*

### 1. SUBMIT

- \* To HONOUR, RESPECT & DEFER wherever it is due.

### 3 PLACES WE MUST SUBMIT (Romans 13:1, Hebrews 13:17, Ephesians 5:21)

1. Where GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY has been appointed.
  2. Where SPIRITUAL HEADSHIP has been delegated.
  3. Where LOVE REQUIRES it.
- *Why do each of those situations demand submission? Do you find it easy or hard to do so? When does love require submission and what does that look like? Can you give a couple of possible examples?*
- *What does the word 'submission' mean to you? Do you view it as a positive or negative word? Does your flesh like submitting? Is that different when your spirit takes over?*
- *What are the dangers if we fail to submit where submission is due?*

### WHAT DID JESUS SAY? (Matthew 20:25-28)

In upside-down Gospel world, submission, leadership & followership are not about the exercise of POWER or demanding of RIGHTS. They're about FACILITATING someone being able to STEP INTO their spiritual ROLE / CALLING, so they can SERVE YOU unhindered. If you RESIST rather than submit, you create a BLOCKAGE so you can no longer RECEIVE from them what God has APPOINTED & ANOINTED them to give you.

→ *How did Jesus redefine submission, leadership & followership? What struggles did his first disciples have with what He was teaching? What did it finally take for them to get it?*

→ *How does 'resisting' create a blockage? Can you receive from a leader you're unable/unwilling to submit to? What changes if you do submit fully?*

### 2. LOVE (Luke 6:27-31, John 15:12-13)

- \* Spiritual maturity GIVES, SERVES, YIELDS & LAYS DOWN.
  - \* Carnality TAKES, DEMANDS & DIGS ITS HEELS IN.
- *What radical things did Jesus teach about love? How are they proofs of spiritual maturity?*

### 3. SERVE (Luke 22:27, Mark 6:35)

- \* Carnality is all about what I can GET for me, what's BEST for me, makes me COMFORTABLE, gratifies my DESIRES.
  - \* Spiritual maturity is all about what I can GIVE, how best I can LOVE & therefore ultimately how might I SERVE?
  - \* How JOYFUL & PAINLESS it is to SERVE OTHERS is the true indicator of spiritual maturity.
- *"Jesus taught maturity is not based on how much you know or how impressive you look or how willingly you can get lots of people to serve you, but how joyful & painless it is to serve others." Do you agree?*
- *Is serving others easy for you, as a rule? Is serving your spiritual gift? (see Romans 12:3-8) Has serving become easier as you've matured? If you are or have been a parent, how did that soften your heart & teach you to serve?*

### 4. ENCOURAGE

- \* As parents, our INFLUENCE is IMMEASURABLE The danger is, we inadvertently CRUSH, rather than NURTURE ... EMBITTER, rather than EMBOLDEN ... Cause our children to WITHDRAW rather than STEP OUT ... Teach them FEAR, rather than FAITH.
  - \* The world is already full of CRITICS; what your children need desperately is a CHEERLEADER.
- *"I reckon people's default state is discouraged." Do you agree?*
- *"The carnal tend to overreact, jump to conclusions or lash out thoughtlessly, & thus do unintended, but untold damage. The spiritually-mature, by contrast, are positively positive & always full of grace: on lookout for ways to build up confidence, feed faith, inspire hope." Discuss!*