



LC STUDY GUIDE

“Thrive” Series

The Passage: Colossians 3:18-21

October 17 – October 31

Intro: Welcome back to the third study in our *Thrive* series. Here in Colossians 3:18-21, we pick up the tricky subject of family life. It’s a loaded topic for many of us. It could be a mix of highs and lows, or it could be a particular dynamic or circumstance that has brought stress, grief, or pain. Yet, many of us have also experienced the beauty and love that comes from the blessing of family. Today we want to look at this central idea:

Central Idea – Paul is giving counter-cultural teaching to women, men, and children that leads to the flourishing of a family that is centered on Jesus.

Note to leader: If your group has a strong connection with each other, perhaps open by asking what their favorite family memory was or to describe the family life they were raised in.

Transition to the passage by saying something like:

As we have shared honestly about our family life, it would seem that there was a fair amount of dysfunction and pain in the families that Paul was writing to. Let’s look at Colossians 3:18-21 to see how this is acknowledged and what he is pointing them towards.

Colossians 3:18-21 New International Version (NIV)

18 Wives, submit yourselves 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.

O – For some of us, these words of Paul feel degrading toward women and children. What thoughts and feelings do you have or might someone have at seeing these verses without context and without a cultural understanding of first-century Colossae?

I – The context of passages like these are necessary in order to appreciate the “why/what” that Paul is saying. “Household codes” such as this were important because in a patriarchal pagan culture like Colossae, women and children were regarded more as property. The feelings and treatment of women and children were not considered. In light of this understanding, how does Paul’s words **affirm** women and children? What’s the key message he’s communicating to men?

(Paul’s words to love their wives and not be harsh with them or their children would have

been both counter-cultural and staggering personally. This is how they were raised, and this is how they were living now. In Col. 3, the entire context is putting to death our old way of life and because we have been raised in Jesus, there is a new reality to live in. It's a spiritual reality, a communal reality and it also changes the reality of our family life. Side note: the charge to wives would have been significant as well. In a culture where young women were arranged to be married to older men, and endured a harsh treatment, it would be understandable how a woman might not be in love with her spouse. Paul is pointing to a new reality, a new household code where the love of Jesus is embraced, imitated, and shared.)

I – What is the significance of Paul addressing, wives, husbands, children, and fathers separately?

(Picking up the tone of Colossians 3:11, where the gospel is for everyone and everyone is welcomed into community, here everyone has a place and a role in God's vision of family community. Second, it was a clear affirmation that Paul was including women and children in his heart when writing to them. In not only writing to the men, he was doing something both counter-cultural and consistent with the work of Jesus and the early church—welcoming and honoring women and children to the gospel.)

A – Most Christian men in Colossae would have needed to reorient their lives considerably to apply Paul's teaching here. Though our current Western American culture has come a long way since Paul's time 2,000 years ago, what comes to mind in how we can apply the spirit of Paul's household codes here?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
 - b. Complement these questions with "process questions" (what else? what more? what do others think?)
 - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don't rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
 - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
 - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into "teaching" rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.