

## Christian Parenting

Pastor Carl Hargrove, October 1, 2017

So this is what I'm gonna do. I just want you to know ahead of time. Let's think about this message in two parts. The first part will be about parenting. And I'm gonna look at some essential texts and not really go to them expositively like I normally might, but just highlight some key thoughts from it. They're all gonna be familiar to you, but I do want to give you some practical principles for parenting. We're gonna go through those and almost in one sense catch our breath a little bit. And then we're gonna go to Colossians chapter 3 and walk through verses 1 to 17 and apply that text to marriage and to just life in general. So really two parts, although I won't spend much time in between. If you gonna put it up in the website, you could probably just splice it after the parenting part and start over again when we go to Colossians chapter 3.

I'm excited about what I'm sharing with you because it is from the word of God, but also I'm excited because I look in your faces and I see people who like to hear the Word of God. That's always an encouragement to a minister, a preacher, when they can look out and see people that want God's Word and want to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Before I say anymore, let's just pause and ask God's blessing on our time together.

Father, thank you for everything that we've heard. Songs that we have lifted up, I pray, from hearts of worship and just for this first family camp here, for this dear fellowship that you would continue to give them more, that everyone here would grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. If there's anyone here that truly doesn't have a saving relationship with you, that their eyes will be open, they would see their need for Christ that they would be saved. So give grace. We thank you for Your mercy. In His name we pray, amen.

Okay. Now, let's think about it this way. What are some foundational commands for parenting, foundational commands for parenting? Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers do not exasperate your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." There's Proverbs 22:6, familiar text that tells us to train up a child in the way he should go, "Even when he is old, he will not depart from it." We go to Deuteronomy and Deuteronomy is this call for the people of God to hear to God's words, to recognize who God is, but to also pass it on to the next generation. "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words which I'm commanding you today" - you shall do what? – "they should be on your heart. You should teach them diligently to your sons and talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." What are the highlights that we can learn even from these foundational commands for parenting? And note that I say that these are commands and next we're gonna talk about principles.

The commands first, notice, it is directed to fathers. "Fathers do not provoke your children" (or some translations will say) "Fathers, don't exasperate your children". First, we ask a question, why is it directed to fathers? Well, in the Greco-Roman culture, the primary responsibility for rearing his children would have been with the father. Now, we think about this from a Biblical standpoint, and it's obvious that both should be involved. It's clear from the Proverbs, Solomon

speaks to the princes of Israel, and he speaks to his sons, but he also says, "Listen to your father, but also listen to your mother." Both are doing it together, but that responsibility to set the tone, if you will, comes with the father. Although, because a father being out, if you're in a household where the father is out more than the wife working outside of the home, then, she may have more time with the kids. And even if both are outside the home working, just because of his schedule, she may have actually more time with the kids, but yet, he is setting a pace. There is a culture where he wants his children to know the Lord and be informed in the things of the Lord.

And notice what he says here, "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord". This is really important. So the sense of discipline we see through Scripture is the idea that it involves order that brings about a fruitful result. You see it used in Hebrews. In Hebrews, it says that "Every son whom He disciplines". But every son who He disciplines He brings about something, "the peaceful fruit of righteousness." So think about that for a moment, because initially, someone may say, "Well, discipline is always harsh. It's difficult." No, discipline in this sense means that there has to be a sense of order, direction. Think about it this way when you consider pruning a bush. I remember the first house that we purchased, and there were some rose bushes around it. They hadn't been taken care of for a while, and I remember Joanna telling me, "Just dig it up and throw it away." And initially, I was in agreement with it 'cause they were pretty not very attractive. Put it that way. But I decided what I would do is prune around it. I pruned it, I dug around it, I fertilize it, and if you were to now come to that house in that next season, you would see that it was now blooming. It was producing something. And when we think about disciplining children, it's not so much as we're thinking about chastisement, punishment for something wrong, but giving them order in life.

And here, Paul also says, "instruction of the Lord." That is to put sense into the mind, to admonish. When we instruct or when we admonish someone in a literal sense, it means that the word carries the idea to put sense into. And we all know that we are all born in need of someone putting sense into our mind. We had our own ways, and children have their ways and their tendencies, and it is the responsibility of the parent to instruct them in the ways of the Lord. And then in the Proverbs tells us to train up that child. So here is this thought again.

Now, there are some that differ on the translation of this, one interesting translation would be speaking at it from a negative standpoint. And they would say that they believe what Solomon is communicating if you train up a child in his sinful way when he is old, he would not depart from that sinful way. So it's a statement of negative to make sure that your training is the opposite of his way, because if you train them according to his way, he won't depart from it. Interesting possibility, but I don't really think it's viable. I think it's the plain sense of what the text has in our English translation, "You train them in the way. The things of the Lord." And that's obviously ... But really broad because there're so much that you need to instruct the child in. And even when he's old, he will not depart. So, we have here truism not an absolute because there are times when a child can be trained in the things of the Lord, and you can invest in their life, and they'd become that prodigal child and they can go away from the things of the Lord. But that's what the Proverbs are saying, "Hear these truisms. If you follow them, they're gonna be occasions. If you follow this, they will be often, often true in your life. But not an absolute." But what is true, if you do not follow them, and if you do the opposite, the consequences will be grave. And what's beautiful about even what Proverbs is saying, there maybe a period of time when a child may go

away from it but if we planted those seeds of the Word in their heart, then we can pray that God can turn their heart and bring them back to the Lord.

And then in Deuteronomy. It's obvious what is being communicated here. That first, there's a statement that Moses wants the people of God to hear that the Lord is one God. Who is God? That's where all the instruction begins. Who is the living God? Do we have a Biblical view of God? And then, teach them to love God, to be a lover of God, and in order for that to happen, it has to be something we pause for a moment and I say this "It has to be something that's on your heart." Is that your belief? Is that your conviction deep inside? Do you have a loving and intimate, and growing relationship with the living God so that you can pass that on even to your children? And then it requires this obvious, there must be diligence that's involved. You cannot be passive in it.

So we ask this ... So ask the question, yes, we look at this foundational texts, perhaps, you may even be familiar with them, but how do we flesh this out? I want to transition now and give you some practical principles even for parenting. Number one would be this: we have to avoid inconsistency. Why? Because this will confuse and discourage a child. When there is inconsistency in values that are manifested in the home, how you make decisions, that's gonna create confusion.

Number two is this: you have to avoid obviously hypocrisy. This is going to exasperate and even harden the heart of a child - hypocrisy. That is we can or a person might live a certain way when they're at the Christian environment when others are around them but yet that person is a different individual at home. They are a different individual when it comes to how they use their resources, how they manifest themselves in different environments. So there's hypocrisy, and what does a child see? "Wait a minute, you're telling on one hand, we're learning and quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-7 and Proverbs 22:6 and Ephesians 6:4 and any number of other texts, but yet I see inconsistency in you." Hypocrisy will exasperate and harden a child's heart. Think about it for a moment. There's a responsibility that you have to stand before the living God, and if that child's heart is hardened, you in part, are responsible, even for their eternal destiny.

Number three is this: model proper roles to prepare them for relationships and marriage. What do I mean by that? There must be proper roles to model in the home so that kids are prepared for relationships in the future. If there's confusion about leadership in the home, if there's role reversal in the home, then they're gonna be confused in their own relationships and also in their marriage as well. I've talked to any number of couples over the years because they didn't see leadership from their dad in the home and especially with young ladies, that's what they saw. They saw a mom that was overbearing. She was the decision maker in the home and then they take that into their marriage and that can be difficult. So model it for them.

Number four is this. strive for first time obedience to prepare them for spiritual living. And I have a note there. What do I mean by leave countdowns to NASA? What do you think I mean by that? Someone tell. We're gonna interact this family camp so we can do that. Go ahead.

Audience: Well, it would be like not saying them, ask them to do something at the count of three. Carl: Yeah, I know. Stop with the countdown parenting please. How many times have I seen that before with parents, right. "Now Johnny, I told you stop hitting your sister, right? Okay, I'm

gonna count now, three, two, two and a quarter, two and a half, two and three quarters, two point nine eight", right? Come on. It is time to take that kid to the back room. And it's not to go watch a video movie, okay? So leave that to NASA, okay? When they're launching a rocket or something like that, don't do it. First-time obedience. Now is there a reasonable time to transition, sure. You ask the child to do something and a reasonable time to fulfil that, but no counting down. How many times, I've been so frustrated, I've seen it in church, I've been out in the stores and there were times when I've had to show self-constraint and not intervene. And then the parent starts over and they get down to zero, right? And they should be blast off, which means maybe they need a little blast, right? But then they start over again, "Now I'm gonna tell you again not to do that". Now if you're involved in NASA-like-parenting, stop it today, okay? Alright. I think we get the point, don't we?

Move on, number five: never tolerate the manipulation of a child; the divide and conquer approach. How many of you attempted to divide and conquer when you were a child? What do I mean by divide and conquer? If Dad said no, then where would that child go? Where did you go even as a child? Mom. 'Cause mom will just melt away. Or, sometimes, it's the opposite. Mom is like, "Nope. It's not gonna be that way." Then he'll go to Dad and he'll give Dad that little look on their face, right? And he'll cry crocodile tears ... we say it, right? "Oh, sure you could have that. Do you want to check book of course you can have it. What is Mom thinking, right? Visa, Mastercard, American Express, it's all yours." Manipulation. It may look cute but it's manipulation. And there's certain things that if you don't stop in their heart then they take that as a teenager and they take that as an adult and they take it into life. So don't tolerate it.

Number six is this: avoid the child-centred home. Avoid the child-centred home. We have to remember this principle. Permanent, Temporary, Permanent. PTP. You married each other. A permanent relationship, 'til death do you part. The kids come along at some point of time. And I'm not saying you're no longer obviously their parent, but the time which you invest in them, they will leave one day. And then now you're back to that permanent again. Now the permanent goes through out. But if you have a child-centred home, what is going to happen is this. You're gonna invest all the time, all the effort, all the attention into the child.

And then the relationship, the marriage, and once it's put to the side for a period of time ... and then when the child leaves, all of a sudden you're asking yourself "Who are you? We've not really had a relationship for the last 18 or 20 years because everything was poured into the child." Now, of course you do that together and the Scripture is clear we're supposed to invest in our children and rear them in the fear and admonition of the Lord, but when everything centres around them, their social life and there's no social life for you as a husband and wife, we have to get our kids used to saying to them "Mom and dad are leaving." "Where are you going?"; "We're going out.>"; "Where out?" "Is that your business, you're the child? No, we're going out on a date. We're gonna go have fun.>"; "Oh, who's gonna be here with us?"; "You're old enough now. You can be on your own." Or even when they were younger than that, much younger, have someone come over and baby sit, for them, so we could go out and enjoy one another. But I've seen couples, particularly younger couples ... They are so protective of the kids, no one can watch them, no one can be around them. Then all of a sudden, they've invested so much time, and the home has been centred around them that they're not nurturing their own marriage. So it's great when we ... Now, three of the kids are adults now so that's not an issue, but the high school is

still there. And even before then. It was like mom and dad were leaving, we'll see them in a while. And we had a 20th anniversary and, "We'll see you. We're gone for a couple of weeks.>"; "May we come?"; "No you may not." Are you kidding me? Can you imagine that like on a cruise, on a balcony, your kids are there? Maybe I offended someone there just now when I said ... Do you think ... Oh wait a minute, our kids are with us! Right there in the honeymoon suite. (Well after obviously.) No child centred home.

Number seven: avoid living your dreams through your children. There maybe something you had aspired to, you wanted to achieve, and you couldn't. And now you see your kids as a way to live it through them. Now, other times on a course, you pass on things, you have one of your kids are sort of like you and you say "You know, you're sort of like me, why don't you continue this dream, continue this business, I'm passing the baton to you!" That's acceptable, totally acceptable. You see it happen all the time. But be careful, when it's something like perhaps you didn't quite make it in and you're gonna try to live it through them. I've seen that often in parents.

It's this, another principle: avoid unfair expectations of your kids. And that's why you can exasperate them, because you haven't assessed who they are. You need to understand your kids. And then what you can do is have proper expectations of them.

Number nine is this: create moments of family fun with your children. Enjoy them! Have fun with them. Have moments of laughter with them. Now, Obviously the Scripture is clear, the fear and admonition of the Lord, the discipline and instruction of the Lord. But there are moments when you can have family moments and you still can be instructing them, in those moments. Create memories for them that they can look back on, moments of laughter. That they don't see Christianity as something that's just sterile, and religious, but it's an enjoyment, it's relationship, it's enjoyable.

Number ten is this: never unfairly compare your children. "I wish you were like ... If you would be more like ..." And sometimes, this can absolutely exasperate a child particularly if it's between siblings. Be careful of that. Never unfairly compare your children.

Number 11 is this: do speak plainly about the depravity of your children. Speak plainly about them, because the Scriptures speaks plainly about them. What do I mean by that? And I've seen this often with kids and younger families because of my fellowship group at Grace Church, I have a number of younger families there. And what do I mean by speaking plainly about your sinfulness? Isn't it an amazing question for you, all of you that have kids right now. Did any of you have to teach your kids how to be selfish? Any of you have to instruct them on that? They're born that way! And in some point time that will manifest itself in a sort of a sibling rivalry. The things that they don't want to share, the things that they don't want others to hold and to touch, they don't want others to see ... It's an amazing thing! And that's called total depravity, we're all born that way. And to speak plainly about that! And at times I've seen parents and every time the kid is manifesting that, it's an excuse, it's "They're tired!" It's tired? Of course the kids are tired and they can get cranky just like adults can get cranky. But speak plainly to that.

Number 12: engage in genuine worship to inspire and evangelize them; that you are a family who can worship the Lord together and that'd be genuine; that that they can see that this is

something that's on your heart. This is not just religion, it's not just you show up here because you feel an obligation. But you're engaging in a personal relationship with God. And that will inspire them, and even be an opportunity to evangelize in. So do that as well.

The next principle is this: accept the reality of the observants versus instruction with children. What do I mean by that? Here is the reality. When we are parenting, our children will learn a great deal, and even at times more through what they see than what they hear. Observers. They will observe how you respond to circumstances of life. They will observe how you respond to difficulty. They will observe your priorities, how you use your resources, your efforts, what excites you, where do you find joy, where do you find peace, how do you prioritize life. They will see that in you and learn lessons from it. That is a reality, so we have to accept that reality.

Next is this: engage in age-appropriate chastisement for your children. Of course, kids grow out of certain things. And now, with my kids that are adults now, I don't have any chastening role in their life. It's a role of admonition still, it's a role of exhortation. I'm still involved in their life. The other kids, they are still having privileges taken away from them. And as they grow, and I might even say this, as they grow differently, that age-appropriateness will change with them. Because the kids that I have, my children, they are all different. All five of them are different. Their makeups are different, even the twins that are at 15 minutes apart, but they are different. And we had to realize that, "Okay, my approach to this child had to be different than my approach to the other." But that takes time and effort as well.

Consider this: instil in them the need for recognizing authority. And that authority starts in your home, preparing our kids to be people who can submit to authority.

Number 16 is this: live to debunk the myth of quality time versus quantity. Interesting article that was in Newsweek magazine some years ago. And it was entitled "The Myth of Quality Time." And what they were doing was a study, and what had been proposed before is to say to parents, "Don't feel so bad about your busy schedules. It's not so much the quantity of time but it's the quality of time." But what happened later on, even in the secular realm, they realized that really is a myth itself. Children do need quantity time as well. And what that article that was initially written, it was really just in it to appease a society where parents had become too busy to actually rear their children, because their priorities were out of order. And so some of the parents attached themselves to that thinking by saying, "You know what? It really doesn't matter about the amount of time I spend with him as long as it's quality time." Well, for a child, quantity is quality. Now, there will be moments when you cannot invest as much time, but still we strive for both.

The last thought is this: develop relationships so that your parenting continues into adulthood. It won't stop. And some of you are dealing with the parenting stage of the kids that are outside enjoying it, just jumping in the water, and having a good time, and making a mess of things. Or they have an accident and there's a knot on their foreheads because before camp even starts, right, they've taken a fall. You're in that stage. And others are in a different stage in life, they're asking questions about relationships, and when can they date, and when will that be appropriate, and things like that. And then some of you are in another stage because now they're outside of their home and they're asking other questions about marriage, and even about their marriage, and

about their family. But if we don't have a relationship then that is going to be cut off. Because once they leave the home, now they begin to make their own life. And if there isn't a relationship, your influence won't be there. We want that. We want to continue influencing their lives. Do you not? But here is the question for us, and I want us to transition now like I said to Colossians chapter 3. Look with me Colossians chapter 3. Some parenting principles for you to consider along with those key texts. But in Colossians 3, I'm gonna spend perhaps maybe 20 minutes or so looking at this passage and relating it primarily to couples and to marriages. And it's a great passage for us to consider.

And we might title it this, "Marriage Looking to Christ to Last a Lifetime." In Colossians 3:1-17 ... a wonderful passage ... and I want us to relate this passage to our marriages. And it could relate to parenting, and really we might even say this: this passage relates to just living the Christian life. You might even say this passage is sort of a passage on pre-life counselling. How do I live life? Well, we can properly order our lives when we looked at this passage and apply it to every facet, any facet of our life.

Now if we go back to the vows that I said that I would often use when officiating a wedding, and here they are. And I would have that couple say, "This ring I give you as a token and a pledge of our constant faith and abiding love, and I do promise in covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful spouse in plenty and want, in joy and sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live." Both shall live. And I've done it so many times before and it's a great thing to see these two couples come in together and this is what they're committing to. But what is interesting when you think about that last part, "as long as we both shall live," what is the motivation and guidance for that? "As long as we both shall live," how can we be properly inspired and motivated to live this way?

And what I want to do is walk us through ... there are four guidelines that I want us to consider, four guidelines. We already looked at this passage Psalms 136 from yesterday, that on each refrain throughout the psalm, there is a statement of God's covenant love is everlasting. We see even in Jeremiah God says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you." In Jeremiah 50 verse 5 as well. This everlasting covenant you see it in Ezekiel, an everlasting covenant. So when we say before God and witnesses "it's an everlasting covenant," it should mean just that. What are these four guidelines that we can find in this passage for lasting marriages, for lasting any type of relationship?

It says, number one is this: we would say that the resurrected couples (and I use the term resurrected couples because I'm saying those that know Christ must look to the right hand of power, that is we look to God, and this is what Paul is saying to those who are reading his letter) that if you have been raised up with Christ, that is if you are believers in Christ, "keep seeking the things above where Christ is, who is at the right hand of God, set your mind there, not on the things that are on the earth". So this should be our focus. We've been raised with Him, that is we're believers now we should seek the things where He is, where He is seated and set our minds not on the things on this earth but on the things that are above. We look above first to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We might say this: resurrected couples must realize that they are dead to the power of the past. We all have in our marriages ... hopefully we are growing and continue to grow in our marriages ... and what can hinder them at times are the attitudes, the habits of our past. Because as we go through sanctification, what is happening, we are being changed from glory to glory, we are being changed more into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. But yet, at times our past can creep in. That's why Paul tells us in Colossians, tells us in Ephesians what to lay aside and what to put on, where to refocus our life. So he uses language that is strong here in verse 3, "For you have died ..." So we realize that we have died, that has to be my mindset. We also realize that my life is hidden with Christ and God. Also at the latter part of verse 3, I have a new life and that life is secure and it is in Christ.

What else do I need to realize? That focus, this focus must be on Christ, notice, "with Christ". Now what do those numbers mean right there? Those are important numbers because in the book of Colossians you'll find there 95 verses in Colossians but 54 times you'll see mentioned, Christ being mentioned, Christ being mentioned, Christ being mentioned, 54 times in 94 verses. And what is also interesting, from chapter 1 verse 1 up to chapter 3 verse 4, 56 verses and in those 56 verses, 46 times Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ is being mentioned. And what's interesting for the rest of the book, the other 39 verses for the rest of the book, obviously from 3 to the end, only 39 verses but only eight more times do we see Christ mentioned.

So what has Paul done, he's front loaded it, to say you must look to Christ as your example. You want to live your life? You want to have the marriage that God has intended? You want to be the parent God has intended? You just want to be this, the Christian person that God has intended? You must look to Christ. So, he's front loaded the epistle to say, "Here is the person that you look to, here is the example, we look to Christ. And Christ is gonna be revealed, and we will be revealed with Him." All will come together so our mindset has to be: "I died, I have a new life, Christ is my example. I'm gonna be revealed with Him in heaven."

And also, we should also consider this, there is also gonna be a revelation of our life and what our life meant for the Lord while we were here. Here's a third guideline that says resurrected couples must put to death their formal ways. Notice verses 5 through 11, and this is obviously what would be true for us all, not just directed to couples or to the married or to parents but for any person that's a believer, 'cause that was Paul's intention when he wrote it. Notice what he says here, what are some of the vices. We can say it this way, "What are some of the vices that would destroy marriages or any relationship?" Well we see them right here in verse 5, Paul says that you need to consider the members of your body as dead. And what's interesting about this, the NASB says "consider", and it really isn't strong enough. That really doesn't capture what is being said, really. We can read it this way, "Therefore, put to death ..." You're engaged in a spiritual warfare. The habits of your past, they want to come back again, they want to resurrect themselves again, but you must put them to death. And in order to put them to death, it means that it is a daily battle even at times. That means that it is a concentrated effort. See these vices will destroy any marriage. They will destroy any relationship. What are they?

Immorality. Even in our time of purity discussion yesterday with the men, we talked about how we as men must guard ourselves against the temptations that are in the world. Obviously immorality is going to destroy any relationship and marriage.

Impurity. And not just in action, but also impurity that is in thought.

Passion. "Passion" is a word that can be positive or negative - passion - to have a passion for Christ. But here, Paul is talking about a passion, a sense of one's earthiness, if you will, that is not controlled; evil desires, greed. And he says, notice what he says, it all amounts to our dollar tree. Why would he say it amounts to a dollar tree? Because you've made all of these other things your god. You put them first before the living God. They will destroy the marriage and we all want our marriages to last as long as we do.

Consider a fourth guideline it's this: resurrected couples must put on a new life for perseverance. Notice verses 12-17, there is a calling that really sets the standard for us. He says "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of ... " Now he talks about these virtues that should replace the other vices that we may still struggle with. And really, it's a statement that says this. This is ... it's a statement of who I am, and who we are (and I said this yesterday) will determine how we live. So our mindset must be in my marriage, in my parenting, in my Christian life: chosen, holy and beloved. I've been chosen by God to live a different life. A life that is holy. And the Scripture tells this plainly, right, That God is holy and therefore we should be holy. That is, set apart, distinct, unlike the world.

But notice what else he says, this third recognition: "you are beloved", to be beloved by God. In our discussion with the men yesterday, we all had agreement it was a good time. I think we probably could have talked for another hour about the things that we were interacting on, and this idea of beloved, being beloved by God, that God has loved you enough to die for you, enough to set you apart. And we were talking about the motivation at times that we need to have to resist certain temptations. And the motivation, think about your loved ones, think about those that you influence as a leader, think about the people that sit under your leadership. Let that go through your grid. And I use that as a motivation for myself at times. And I said it to the men and I'll say it now, I would hate for me to make some decision and instead of me coming back to visit again, you would have to make an announcement, well he's disqualified, he would never come back to us again and preach the Word of God. That's heart-breaking. I mean it's heart-breaking for all my students throughout all of the years that it would have to be "Yes, professor Hargrove could no longer teach here." From my kids who love me, "Dad why did you do that?" From my wife, for these 24 years that we've been together, "Why did you make that decision?" You have to think about the people that love you. And let that influence your life. Let that be a motivation for you, and it begins with thinking about the God who has loved you enough to sacrifice for you.

Here is something else to consider. There these virtues, there are six virtues that will help sustain any marriage. Six virtues that will help sustain any relationship, and they're right there in the text itself. So he says now, "Put off these things." He said in verse 8, "Put them all aside, anger and wrath and malice and slander and abusive speech, put those all aside." And we know how anger can destroy a relationship and slander can destroy a relationship and abusive speech can destroy a relationship. But put these things on instead. And what are these six virtues?

Number one is: compassion. Every relationship requires compassion. And what is compassion? It's a heart of pity. When you see those in need, it's a stirring even of the inner being. So have compassion. Even when someone has sinned against you, to show pity towards them.

Number two is this: kindness. Kindness means to be useful to others, a sense of goodness. Kindness is a word that means that you actually practically help people. In a relationship, I want to show kindness to my spouse, kindness even to my children, kindness to those to whom I'm in relationship. Kindness.

Here's a third one: humility. This idea that we are free of self-importance. That we think more of others, we have a willingness to help others. I think we would all agree that in any relationship it can be infused with energy once there is humility that is manifested towards that other person. When you think about the original sin manifest, is it not pride? And obviously the opposite of it is humility, to think more of other people, to defer to prefer, humility.

It's also this gentleness. It means to be free of harshness and crudeness. In the relationship, how do I show gentleness towards that person? Even as a parent, how do I chastise, but I don't do with harshness or with crudeness? I can still chastise with a sense of gentleness, to speak in a tone. Even at times our God speaks to me say, "Let Me correct you in this area."

Number five is this: patience, to be a person of long suffering - a very interesting word. And this interesting word in the Greek is, *makrothumia*. *Thumia* or *thumos* is this word that deals with suffering. And the *makro*, the first part of it is saying, that it's long of suffering. And so, there are gonna be times in any relationship where we go through perhaps difficulty and we must show patience in it. Patience.

Here's another virtue: love. But look, I want you to notice how love is communicated in reference to all the others. Because he says, "Okay. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving one another, just as the Lord forgave you." But notice what he says in verse 14. In verse 14 it says, "Beyond all these things, that is, what I've just communicated to you. Even beyond compassion, and kindness, and humility, and gentleness," he says, "What you must do, is put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." What he's saying is that love brings all of these virtues together. And what is love but an absolute commitment. What is love except for to say, "I will give myself to the other person."

There's a final note. Verse 17, if you'll look there with me. There's a final challenge in verse 17. What does it say? "Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." The final challenge is I have to ask myself, "In all the things that I do in life, am I doing it to the glory of God?" Notice what it says, "In word or in deed." Anything that you do in life, do it all in His name. What does it mean to do it in His name? Is it consistent with the person, the principles, the commands, the objectives of the Lord Jesus Christ? And how I deal with my spouse, and how I deal with my kids, and how I deal with others around me. Is it consistent with Him? And if we can say that, then that means that we're living to the glory of God. We look to Christ, we put away the things of the past, we put on the things that are new, and we ultimately ask ourselves, "Can I do this in the name of the Lord Jesus

Christ?" And if we can live that way, every relationship that we have will be a God honouring relationship.

I do want you to notice one other thing, just in context. The reason I said it's sort of like pre-life counselling, because Paul says all of this in verses 1 to 17, and then he says, "Now, having taught you that," in verse 18 he says, "Now practically wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves this is how you're to behave." But you really won't be able to live that out until you understand verses 1 to 17, first.

Lord thank you for these words that You give us. I pray that they will be an encouragement, that we can meditate on them and think about how they should affect our lives, in whatever relationship we find ourselves. Give grace. We thank you for Your mercy, in Christ's name, amen.