



# WEEK FOUR

COLOSSIANS:



JESUS at the  
CENTRE

..... of Our Work

Whitehill Church of Christ

July - Sept 2016

# JESUS- The Centre of our Work

Whitehill Church of Christ

Pastor Craig Sadler

Sunday 21st August 2016

Sermon Notes

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**22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Serve them sincerely because of your reverent fear of the Lord.**

**23 Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.**

**24 Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.**

**25 But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God has no favourites.**

**(4:1) Masters, be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master—in heaven.**

**Colossians 3:22—4:1 (New Living Translation)**

**A] What is our **work** ?**

**”Co-operation with God in the **transformation** of the World.“**

**- Miroslav Volf**

***That’s why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.***

***Colossians 1:29 (New Living Translation)***

**Everything** and **whatever** we do is defined as the scope of our work.

*Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you.*  
*Ephesians 6:6a (New Living Translation)*

B] What is our **attitude**?

V22 – **sincerely**, work from the soul

V23 – **willingly**, with all your heart

*Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.*  
*Ephesians 6:7 (New Living Translation)*

*Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.*  
*Romans 12:11 (New Living Translation)*

C] What is our **inheritance** ?

Christ's reign over a New heaven and a New earth.

D] **Christ** is our centre!

The **Master** you are serving is **Christ** .

“First and foremost we are called to **someone** (God),

not **something** (such as motherhood, politics or teaching)

or **somewhere** (such as the inner-city or Mongolia).”

– Os Guinness, The Call

**Who** are we called by?

**What** are we called to?



# BIBLE STUDY NOTES

## (Home or Personal)

### **Discussion Starter:**

How do you see your work? Your life activity?

### **Bible Study.**

Read Colossians 3:22-4:1

Go through the Sermon Notes once again.

Which parts stood out for you the most?

### **BIBLE**

Read EPHESIANS 6:5-9 and compare it with what Paul writes about in Colossians 3:22-4:1.

How are those verses similar?

Brainstorm a list of jobs. Now In your mind do you attribute more value to certain jobs? If so why?

Work is “cooperation with God in the transformation of the world” – Miroslav Volf. If this statement how are we called to cooperate?

### 4 Mandates for life

Read Genesis 1:26-28—this is our cultural mandate—To cultivate the world.

Read Matthew 22:37-40—this is what we are called to do—Love God and neighbour.

Read Matthew 28:18-20— as followers of Jesus this is our focus—To disciple.

Read John 13:34-35—As followers we are encouraged to love– Love one another.

Discuss how you are or are not incorporating these four mandates into your life?

Case studies:

**Jen's a primary school teacher** concerned with naming it—with naming Jesus, and using her teaching toward getting colleagues and kids along to church so they might be saved. She doesn't see education itself as a calling ... that she can seek first the kingdom of God in the nature and context of her work, in the products and income from her efforts. Now, evangelism is key, don't get me wrong. **But she has succumbed to the Catholic distortion, a type of spiritual dualism.** Like priests of old, the only people who can speak of a "calling" are those in, quote, "the ministry". You know, paid "vocational" workers like pastors, perhaps Chaplains, but certainly not secular school teachers. So, Jen downplays her profession as "just a job". She ignores God's call in the everyday, only valuing this vocation inasmuch as she can achieve "spiritual" goods: getting people along to religious services, and souls saved.

**Ben is a real-estate developer**, seeking to "claim it all" for Jesus. He's "building the kingdom" with hard work, strategising for success, generously giving away much of what he earns, and looking to cultivate God's world that everything would flourish. And like with Jen's emphasis on evangelism, there's a lot of good here. Ben doesn't downplay his work as a secular distraction. Rather, he's baptised his career as a calling. Real-estate is his vocation.

Perhaps this is you. You're so preoccupied with the calling of work on your life, that it drowns out the call of family, of friends ... it occupies most every waking thought. Were you to lose your job, you'd feel lost, your identity shattered and your calling left in tatters. God's voice is lost in the noise, and intimacy with him, obedience to his still small whisper, falls in behind the boss's expectations, client demands, and your own relentless drive to succeed and produce excellent work and perfect outcomes.

**This is the Protestant distortion.**

Perhaps you're less like Jen with her spiritual dualism, and more like **Ben** with his secular fixation and temptation to idolatry of work.

**Discuss these two distortions and whether or not they are applicable to some degree in your perspective of your work.**

**PERSONAL:**

Are you responding to God's call? If so how? If not why not? How do you bring this to Jesus?

**PRAY**

Continue to pray for each other the way Paul prayed for the Colossian Christians.

# Jesus at the Centre ... of our Work

## Day 1

*Colossians 3:17 (NASB-U)*

*"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."*

### **MINE !**

I have only seen the Television advertisements for the Spelling Bee shows. I have no interest in them. It just takes me back to school days and the pressure of spelling tests.

It takes me back to spelling rules. "I" before "E" except after "C" (except in Seip) Longest word you can spell -- Antidisestablishmentarianism.

I read another word in one of my Bible commentaries that is difficult to use in a sentence – compartmentalization. Try dropping that word while you are having a chat! Should it have a "Z" or an "S"? When it came to faith, the apostle Paul was an anti-compartmentalizer. What does it mean? Let's break the word up.

A compartment is a box or slot or some sort of screened off area. To compartmentalize is to arrange things in your life into various sections or areas separate from one another. Paul was opposed to (anti-) the idea that Christians could pick and choose when and where their Christian values and beliefs should be expressed as if they would section off their "faith life" from their "work life."

In Verse 17 the apostle wants his readers to see the idea that there are no exceptions to the rule that everything should be in the name of the Lord Jesus. There are no areas in which we should exclude Jesus from having a say. There is no event, activity, endeavor, goal or dream that is exempt from the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

A theologian once wrote, "There is not one square inch in the Universe over which Jesus Christ does not say, 'MINE!' " There should be no such thing as compartmentalization. Everything is His.

In Bible times, someone's name meant much more than just their given name. It was about their reputation, their values and all that sums them up as people. Therefore, in the name of Jesus means all that Jesus is and does and stands for.

What difference would it make if you asked "Does this action or word reflect the fact I'm a Christian and that Jesus died for me and shows the world what that means to me?"

Reflect on your work rest and play – How can it be done in Jesus name?



**What did you hear?**

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**What did you think?**

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**What will you do?**

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**Now talk to God .....**

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# Jesus at the Centre ... of our Work

## Day 2

*Colossians 3: 16—17 (J.B. Phillips New Testament)*

*“Let Christ’s teaching live in your hearts, making you rich in the true wisdom. Teach and help one another along the right road with your psalms and hymns and Christian songs, singing God’s praises with joyful hearts. And whatever you may have to do, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, thanking God the Father through him.”*

### **DON’T WORSHIP WORK**

How do you fill your day? What do you do with the hours in your week?

Some people live very busy lives and some people struggle with loneliness. Some people could afford to drop some things from their schedule and others are looking for something to do.

Depending on our age and stage in life we allocate our hours differently. However, everyone has the same 24 hours a day 7 days a week. What attitude do we carry into the time we work, rest ,and play?

Someone once said that most people work at our play and play at our work. This was first said about a hundred years ago. But today the situation has changed. I remember World Expo 1988 in Brisbane (who went to that?) The theme was Leisure in the Age of Technology. It was thought that we would have so much extra time for leisure because of the advances that technology had offered us. It didn’t work out like that though.

Today I believe that the mix up of priorities has only got worse. Someone else has said now we worship our work, work at our play, and play in our worship. Ouch. That hits a little too close to home.

We can use work as worship and honour God through it but not worship our work. Work is a tough haul for many people. But how do we worship through our work? We do this by being conscious of what we do and how we do it.

It means doing good work that serves other people, trying to make a positive contribution and being a good steward to the creation that God has given us. It means doing your tasks consciously for the Lord as if He was your boss.

Whatever you do work rest play or worship, be conscious to do it for Gods glory, seeking his wisdom, his strength and his touch.



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**Now talk to God .....**

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# Jesus at the Centre ... of our Work

## Day 3

*Colossians 3:22-4:1 (CEV)*

*“Slaves, you must always obey your earthly masters. Try to please them at all times, and not just when you think they are watching. Honour the Lord and serve your masters with your whole heart. [23] Do your work willingly, as though you were serving the Lord himself, and not just your earthly master. [24] In fact, the Lord Christ is the one you are really serving, and you know that he will reward you. [25] But Christ has no favourites! He will punish evil people, just as they deserve. [1] Slave owners, be fair and honest with your slaves. Don't forget that you have a Master in heaven.*

### WORK

Passages like this bring up questions about slavery. If slavery was as brutal and barbaric as we imagine, how come Paul didn't use his influence to call for an end to it? Although we cannot give a lot of space to the question here, it is worth addressing briefly.

Someone has pointed out that this letter was written to the church, not to the leaders of society. If Paul had started writing things about getting the slaves to plot a revolution, it would have hindered the Gospel rather than help it.

And eventually, Christian men with strong Biblical convictions like Wilberforce and John Newton used their influence to overturn this horrible practice. Biblical truths like all human beings are created in God's image and even Paul's point that in Christ there is neither slave nor freeman but we are one in Christ, were the foundations these men had to build a new understanding of human life and value.

Paul couldn't deal with all these issues at a horizontal level. He wasn't in a position to. He was in jail himself. But he could talk at a vertical level. Although there is not a direct correlation between ancient slaves and modern day workers, and ancient masters and modern day bosses, enough of a link is there for us to apply principles to both parties.

In verses 22 some translations use a literal translation of the Greek as 'eye-service.' The idea is of an approach designed to attract attention (when someone is looking) and avoid hard work by slacking off when they're not. It is the thought that we shouldn't just work hard when someone (the boss) is looking. There should be the attitude that it is Christ we're serving, so He sees us all the time anyway.

But if the worker has a responsibility, then so does the boss. Verse 25 can equally apply to both parties. However in verse 1 of chapter 4 we see Paul directly addressing the other side. Masters may have the power and authority in this life, but they need to apply that rule with integrity and fairness. They have their own Master in Jesus and their treatment of others needs to reflect how Jesus Christ has treated them.



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# Jesus at the Centre ... of our Work

## Day 4

*Colossians 3: 22-24*

*“Slaves, obey your masters on earth in everything. Don't just obey like people pleasers when they are watching. Instead, obey with the single motivation of fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do it from the heart for the Lord and not for people. 24 You know that you will receive an inheritance as a reward. You serve the Lord Christ.”*

### MODEL GODLY CHARACTER

What do you want to be when you grow up? In the olden days when children were asked this question at school there were limited answers. Teacher, a fireman, a nurse, a policeman. As a child I guess you don't know any better. Choices were limited to what they were exposed to in their lives.

Someone told me recently that the most popular answers now are things like, I want to be famous, I want to be on TV, I want to be a movie star. It's quite sad really. The focus has changed from the helping professions to the selfish obsessions.

However it's not just children that need a change of focus. One of the main ideas this week is that if Jesus could be the centre of our work then we see our job and in fact everything we do as a vocation. We get a sense of God calling us into the things we do.

Even if our job is menial or not rewarding we might be able to model godly character in the midst of it. In tough times and easy ones, with difficult people and delightful people, you could show the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

If Jesus is at the centre of your work you could minister grace and love. There are many ways to do this, not only in practical care and kindness for those who need it, but through the way we respond in difficult and sometimes in ordinary situations. How do we engage with the check-out person, or the lonely shopper in the charity shop, or the new parent at the school gate, or do an appraisal with the other person's long-term interests at heart, not just the company's?

Is Jesus at the Centre of your work?



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# Jesus at the Centre ... of our Work

## Day 5

*Colossians 3: 22-24*

*“Slaves, obey your masters on earth in everything. Don’t just obey like people pleasers when they are watching. Instead, obey with the single motivation of fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do it from the heart for the Lord and not for people. 24 You know that you will receive an inheritance as a reward. You serve the Lord Christ.”*

### MOULD CULTURE

Remember when we were in the middle of the big drought that broke in 2007? Wivenhoe Dam went down to 17% of its capacity. One thing that strikes me about that time is how our attitude towards water has changed.

In my life I remember playing with the hose, leaving the hose running while washing the car on the lawn, hosing off the driveway. We treated water as a commodity that would never run out. We thought it would always be around. However we nearly ran out of it.

What happened was a culture shift. There was a huge change in how we saw water as a precious resource and what we should be doing to conserve it. The Government spoke out about water wastage. They passed laws about water restrictions. I changed. I found myself reacting when I saw someone “wasting” water.

When we put Christ at the Centre, we have an opportunity in a work setting to actually have a culture shift or mould the culture around us to one that reflects Christian values. It doesn’t need to take a crisis to change but Christians who are willing to step up. How do we mould culture? Culture is ‘the way we do things round here’. Although you may not be able to change the way your company or your gym or your parents’ association does things by next Monday, you may well be able to begin with a few people and a few small actions. What things bother you – and what are the values that underpin them? What could be done differently that would make it a better place for people to flourish? What would make it more like God’s will being done on earth as in heaven?

Perhaps at work or recreation you could be a mouthpiece for truth and justice? There will be times when being a disciple means speaking up against things that are unfair, unhealthy or untruthful, and speaking up for things that are true and just and good. It takes courage, wisdom and prayer.



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**Now talk to God .....**

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# Changing



# with Jesus



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church of christ

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