

Equipping Families During COVID-19: The Loves Behind Our Fears

A Practice of
The Colossian Way

THE
COLOSSIAN
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Hope in Practice





Start

EQUIPPING FAMILIES DURING COVID-19

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection (maturity) in love. We love because God first loved us.” **1 John 4:18-19**

When we're in the middle of difficult times, anxieties are heightened, and relationships can become strained. It's important to understand the relationship between anger, fear, and love to live out the Christian life in ways that maintain the unity of the Body amid disagreement.

The Colossian Way in Three Steps: Gather, Practice, Witness

You can use The Colossian Way to engage conflicts in your family, church, business, or friendships. These three steps are based on the long-standing, scriptural practices of the Church. They can help structure conversations, keep focus on Christ, and help you make progress toward understanding others better and decision-making.

1. Gather in the name of Jesus.

Remember: When we gather as Christians, even in a living room or on a video call, we have the opportunity to gather intentionally in the name of Jesus. By doing that, we reclaim our identity as members of the same Body. We aren't gathered as Jew or Gentile, or as Republican or Democrat. Instead, by gathering under Jesus' Lordship, we presume the best of each other, even as we disagree. We are called to hope together that the other person is intending to be faithful, even if that person is pursuing a course that we think is wrong. In fact, when we do this, we are able to disagree *better* by appealing to a shared goal: faithfulness to God. Therefore, by gathering as Christians, we remind ourselves—and each other—that we are united by something even more important than our positions on any given topic.

Do: Affirm out loud that you are gathered in the name of Jesus. Commit to your unified goals to surrender to God's will, to serve God's kingdom, and to follow God's commands to love him and each other.

2. Practice discussing a tough COVID-19 decision.

For example: when and how to resume visits to immunocompromised family members once stay-at-home orders lift.

Remember: Often, when we defend a position or belief we care about, we get passionate and sometimes angry. This passion may be a result of an underlying fear—a fear that something we love is being threatened. We are trying to protect what we love by taking a stand in defense of our position. While our concern may be reasonable, and our loves might be noble and good, this fear can also cause us to treat someone we love in harmful ways. We must remember that the other person’s reaction has a fear and love behind it, too, and we have to *practice* discerning that fear and love together.

Do: Use the following questions to practice listening, loving, and telling the truth.

This exercise should take approximately 20-30 minutes. Pick two questions, then give the group a few minutes to make notes in response. Then, give each person time to share their responses aloud. Afterward, make time to ask each other questions about what others have shared.

- Ask each other what you are afraid will happen if you don’t handle this right? If you don’t make the right choice here, what could be the negative result?
- How does that fear reveal what you’re each actually concerned about here? What is the love underneath each of your fears? What are you each trying to protect?
- Having heard what the other person loves, do either of you see how your love might need to be refocused, expanded, or oriented more fully toward Christ?
- Do you share loves? Are your loves related or connected?
- How might you pursue your shared loves together, even while recognizing and still disagreeing with how the other person might pursue those loves?
- What’s one thing you hope goes right as you look to the future?
- What’s one thing you can’t fix?

Hint

Sometimes, asking someone, “What are you afraid of?” will shut down conversation. Most of us don’t like to admit we’re afraid. Instead, consider something like, “Here’s my idea. What do you think goes wrong if we do that?” Often, that will give you insight into what the other person truly values.

3. Witness the Body of Christ built up.

Remember: Practices form habits, and habits form character. It takes time for our beliefs to shape our lives and character through practice. We have to exercise the “muscles” of engaging conflict in Christian ways. One good conversation probably won’t product better habits, just as one day of jogging won’t get you ready for a marathon. But as you faithfully practice The Colossian Way, you and your brothers and sisters in Christ will begin to see your focus naturally gravitate toward Jesus’ Lordship. You will become more effective at working to understand someone else’s fears and loves, eventually developing habits for when you disagree. As you build that habit, you need to reflect on what’s good, what’s bad, and what you hope will get better.

Do: Praise, lament, and hope together as a way to practice recognizing the work God is doing in your life and our world. Use the prompts below to witness and testify to God’s work in our midst. Do this together.

- **Offer a Praise** for something you are grateful for in these circumstances or this conversation. For example: *“I thank God that we were able to be honest with each other.”*
- **Offer a Lament** for something that grieves you in these circumstances or this conversation. For example: *“I lament that I got so angry as we talked.”*
- **Offer something you Hope for** in the future as you practice living faithfully in this moment. For example: *“I look forward to the day when God wipes every tear from our eyes.”*

Our Vision:

A Christian community that acts Christian,
especially in the face of conflict.

Our Mission:

To equip leaders to transform
cultural conflicts into opportunities for
spiritual growth and witness.



The Colossian Way equips Christians to experience the transforming power of conflict. An innovative method based upon traditional Christian practices, The Colossian Way helps Christians practice loving each other and God while engaging difficult problems. Set in an intimate worship context, each small group session follows a five-phase structure that creates space for the Holy Spirit and an authentic formation experience.

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