

SACRED INTENT



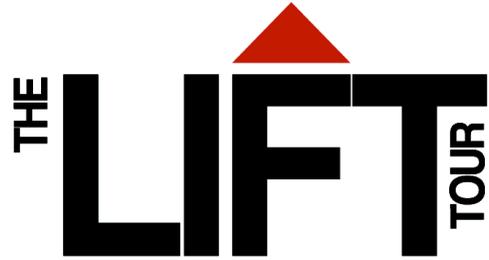
THE **LIFT** TOUR

2016 LEADER GUIDE



Dear Youth Pastors, Bible Study Leaders, & Host Home Leaders,

I just wanted to say a massive “Thank you!” Your willingness to be a part of this event consists of sacrificing and simultaneously dedicating your time, energy, and effort to bring about life change for the sake of Jesus for which we are eternally grateful.



In planning for the weekend that we will share together, I wanted to give you the reason why we believe that you are the unsung hero for this event. First, to create unity, we felt that it was important that what happens in the large group gatherings carry over into the small group sessions with you. Your ability to translate what takes place in the main sessions to the small group sessions is more than important - it is essential. The reason being, the moment students walk out of the large group session where a communicator shares a Biblical message, it has a tendency to be lost because of the transition from the event center to the small group gathering. Therefore, you have possibly the greatest challenge ahead of you in getting students to reengage the topic at hand. This is why I feel like you are the most important component to this event. So, I encourage you to come to each and every main session with the question of “What is the takeaway from this main session?” The curriculum that we provide you with is simply only a guide and does not serve as the “be all, end all” for the weekend. We encourage you to take copious notes while listening to the sermon and ask God to give you a point of discussion for each small group session. The goal is not to complete all the questions for the sake of accomplishment, but instead the primary goal is to create a connection that leads to application. Be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit as He guides you! You will find this time actually quite liberating versus intimidating since you are not being asked to teach a lesson, but actually facilitate conversation.

Second, while spending time with your students, we ask that you look for ways to engage in spiritual conversations leading to discussions concerning their salvation. Look for these “divine moments,” not just within your session, but in all points of the weekend. Once more, the goal of this weekend is to make passionate followers of Jesus Christ that will honor Him all the days of their life, and we hope that the theme “*Sacred Intent*” ignites a holy passion towards this end. Thank you once more for your commitment and willingness to share your talents, gifts, and abilities for the kingdom of God.

Important Note: During this event, there will be a clear Gospel presentation. Therefore, our Bible communicators will extend an opportunity for those gathered to “pass from death to life” and become Christ followers. The invitation to do so will not be given in an effort to intimidate or manipulate anyone to make a decision solely upon emotionalism. Instead, with full integrity and helping all to understand the cost of following Jesus, this invitation will be extended. Your help in this “life changing” moment is beyond welcomed. We would love for you to be ready and available to be present in the counseling of making sure your student understands the decision they are making.

We are asking God to change lives forever, including yours. My hope is that this weekend will transform the way you see God and how you pursue Him with a sacred intent!

Praying for you,

Ed Newton
Executive Director of the LIFT TOUR

SACRED INTENT Theme

Life is a lot like being a passenger on an airplane during take off and landing. We do not choose when or where we would be born and we do not control when life will come to an end, but there is a lot we can do with the moments in between. We decide how the pages of our story will be filled. And oh! How important those decisions and moments are! C.S. Lewis described the moments of life as the title page for eternity. Or rather life is just the introduction chapter to the greater story that will never end. The question we must seek to answer is how to make all the moments of life matter with a sacred sense of intentionality...
yes with a sacred intent.

Practical Instructions for Facilitating Discussion:

- Remember, you can never teach a person anything; you can only help them discover it. This is the purpose of the discussion questions. It is an opportunity for you to guide the students to discover the truths revealed in the passages. This is most effective when they are given the opportunity to answer the questions rather than being spoon-fed the answers.
- You can follow the curriculum just as it is laid out. 1) Read the passage (allow students to read as much as possible). 2) Present the discussion questions. Allow time for students to come up with the answer. If it's quiet at first, it's likely that they are thinking. This is what you want.
- After they have given their answers, you can share your own. Don't get caught up or waste a lot of time on a question they may not understand. Just go on to the next question.
- There is not necessarily one right answer for each question; however, you want to listen to the answers. This will help you get an idea of the level of understanding for each student who participates.
- Don't ignore wrong answers, but do your best to be diplomatic in pointing toward the truth. You can say something like, "Hmmm, that's an interesting thought but what if we look at it this way..." You want to do your best not to embarrass anyone, but some in your group may not know the Lord as Savior. You want to listen carefully if their answers reflect that.

Small Group Discussion Questions

These questions correspond to the messages from the Lift Tour sessions. The focus here is to help your students process what they have heard and how to apply it to their lives. These questions will also be printed in your students' listening guide for the weekend.

Session 1

Colossians 3:1-11

- What does it mean to embrace heaven? In other words, what is Paul communicating to us when he writes the following in Colossians 3:1-4:
 - *You have been raised to new life...*
 - *So set your sights on the realities of heaven*
 - *You died to this life...*
 - *And your real life is hidden with Christ in God*
 - *Thus Christ is your life*

- How does embracing the message of heaven, which is to find life in Jesus, enable us to win the battle over sin in our lives?

- What is Paul's attitude toward sin in Colossians 3:5 & 3:8?

- There are a lot of different kinds of offenses and disobedience mentioned in Colossians 3:5-9. Read through all the outward and inward offenses and answer the question, "How am I my own worst enemy? Or what needs to be 'put off' or 'put to death' in my own life as I follow Jesus?"

- What does it mean to be a "new" person in Jesus?

- As I move forward in my life, what does it look like to live like someone who has been made new in Jesus?

Sessions 2 & 3

Colossians 3:12-17

- In Colossians 3:12-14, Paul uses the imagery of a wardrobe to discuss how a Christian is clothed in righteousness. This could easily be referred to as the wardrobe of grace. Based on the text, what are the different elements of our spiritual attire?
- If the phrase “put on” refers to what it means to have our life hidden in Christ, then what element of the wardrobe of grace completes our life?
- Based on Colossians 3:15-17, what are the three determining factors that impact how a Christian lives on a daily basis?
- Describe what your life would look like if the peace of God were ruling in your heart.
- Describe the impact the Bible, “the word of Christ,” can have on your life. (Hint: Feel free to turn to 2 Timothy 3:14-17.)
- What is the outward expression of someone who is living out, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”?

Session 4

Colossians 2:6-7

- What does it mean to “receive Christ Jesus the Lord” (Colossians 2:6)?
- How do we walk in Jesus?
- What does it mean to be “established in the faith”?
- When one is walking in Jesus, and being rooted and built up in Him, then what is the abundant expression of our lives?
- List some tangible ways you can be deeply rooted and built up in your faith.
- What is the outward expression of someone who is living out, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”?

Expanded Resources for Leader Study

This section is designed for you as a youth pastor or small group leader to do further background study into the text for the Lift Tour weekend. You can incorporate the content or questions into your small group discussion time as appropriate for your students. This section will not be printed in your students' listening guide.

Session 1

Read Colossians 3:1-11

Colossians 3:1

During this session, we discovered that as believers we were included in Jesus' death and resurrection. We died when He died on the cross. And in His resurrection, we also were resurrected to new life with Him. Paul reaffirms our position in Christ in Colossians 3:1. Often the New Testament writers will tell us who we are in Christ, before they tell us what to do. And that is exactly what Paul has done in his letter to the Colossians. By revealing that the believer has a new position, a position that places us "in Christ" before the Father, that new life is going to set us on a new course, a new way of looking at things. We are changed on the inside, and our character and behavior will reflect that change in the way we live in this world. Our affections are going to change, too. Increasingly, we will love the things of heaven more than the things that are on the earth. Though we exist here on earth, we are more like visitors, understanding that this is not our home. Paul said it this way in Philippians 3:20, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Colossians 3:1 reveals where Jesus is today. He is seated at the right hand of God. What can move Him? Your lack of faith? A culture that mocks Him? Another religion? Though the faith of everyone around you might waver, why does this truth, that He is immovable, strengthen yours?

Sample Answer: Jesus' position is secure. My lack of faith, a culture that laughs at Him in disbelief, or other religions (all based on works) do not threaten Him. All the unbelief in the world is not enough to knock Him off the throne. This strengthens my faith because He is the object of my faith. If I allow my eyes to focus on the faith of others or the whims of culture, then my faith might waver, but as long as He is the object of my faith and my eyes are on Him, then it remains immovable and unshakable, because He is immovable and unshakable.

- While our position as co-resurrected with Christ secures our future and our citizenship in heaven, how will it also impact the way we live our lives here on earth?

Sample Answer: Our motives move from what pleases self to what pleases God and actions come from that new desire. We say no to sin and yes to righteousness. We know that our lives here are temporary but our citizenship in heaven is eternal. We now live for eternal things. We understand that even small things done for the glory of God can have eternal significance (as we will see in the next session).

- Why is worry or anxiety a red flag that we are not seeking the things above?

Sample Answer: It reveals I have allowed my eyes to become focused on a situation rather than on God and that I am not trusting that God is in control and working all things for my good.

- Consider some of the options that this life proposes: popularity, wealth, sports, music, hiking, etc. What is the difference between enjoying these things and making a treasure out of them? (Read Matthew 6:19-21.)

Sample Answer: We enjoy these things as visitors on this planet, but we do not mistake them for home (heaven). If any of these become an obstacle to our obedience to God, then we have made a treasure out of them and we are storing up things on earth where moth and rust can destroy. As we value Christ as our treasure above all else, these other things become tools in His hands to work His will in our lives.

Personal Application: Think of one thing you love. It could be something you do or something you're good at. It could be a possession or a person. Be honest before the Lord. Do you treasure this thing or person more than Him? Are your thoughts and energies consumed with this more than Christ? How can you enjoy this ability, possession, or person without making a treasure out of them?

Think of something that has you worried. Now imagine that you are seated with Christ at the right hand of God. Now look at this thing that has made you a bundle of nerves. From heaven's view, how does this help to calm your anxiety?

Colossians 3:2

This verse reveals that there are two options for the mind. It will either be fixed on the things above or it will be fixed on the things of the earth. This is *your* choice, believer. When Paul says "set your mind," he is describing something that involves an act of the will. It is impossible that a mind consumed with things like self, jealousy, envy, greed, and hate will in the next moment be dominated by thoughts of Jesus, joy, generosity, peace, and love. Our thought life is going to follow one track or the other. And this verse reveals it is our choice. And for the Christian there is but one choice!

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Why is "setting your mind on the things above" so important to having a Christian mindset?

Sample Answer: Because we are not of this world, and we are preparing for eternity with Jesus.

- Why is "setting our minds" on heaven something altogether different than positive thinking or mind over matter?

Sample Answer: Because positive thinking is focusing on a *possibility*, but setting your mind on heaven is focusing on a *reality*.

○ What tools has the Lord given you to set your thoughts on heaven?

Sample Answer: A mind and will. Scripture.

○ As you set your mind on heavenly things, how will it impact your affections, your love of Jesus, and the things He values?

Sample Answer: It will cause us to focus on that which stretches into eternity and not just temporal things.

Personal Application: Does the concept of thinking about heaven all the time sound boring? Why? Yet if you're truly honest, aren't you bored most of the time anyway, especially when left alone with your thoughts? Aren't these the times when you grab your phone and search the latest apps or begin a text exchange with a friend? In reality, don't these distractions leave you just as bored in the end? Maybe it's possible that thinking about God and the things of heaven isn't boring at all.

Close your eyes right now and take one minute to imagine Jesus, seated at the right hand of God. Notice that in all His perfection, there are scars in His hands. Look at your hands. Acknowledge that His hands have scars because they were pierced for you on the cross to pay the price for your sin. You have just spent a few moments setting your mind on the things above. How has thinking of Jesus and His nail-scarred hands not only lifted your mind but also lifted your heart? Though it was a discipline, an act of the will to think about such things, was it boring? Why or why not?

Colossians 3:3-4

Once again, Paul reminds his readers that because they were included in Christ's death, their position is secure in Him. The same is true for you today, believer. You died 2000 years ago when Jesus took your death by His death. This is not a death that you experience over and over. It happened once for all time. So just as you are included in His death, He has secured you in His life. When Paul says that your life is hidden in Christ, he is speaking of a life that is beyond the reach of the enemy or anything else, even you. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:27-29). What can pry open the hand of Jesus and loosen His grip on you? What could persuade the Father to let go of the life hidden in Christ? *Nothing. Not a thing.*

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, not depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39

Your resurrected, hidden life is not something you accomplished. It is something Jesus accomplished, and He has secured it for all time and eternity.

When Jesus came in the flesh and walked among us, the Bible says that the world couldn't comprehend it. This also speaks to the hidden life in Christ. The believer sees the world through a new lens and embraces a new value system and the world cannot understand it. It looks with skepticism as the believer honors his or her parents when everyone else rebels. It remains suspicious as faith secures inner peace for the believer when others are overcome by fear. And though Jesus was visible to the world when He walked this planet, the Bible says the world didn't get it. "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him" (John 1:10). The world doesn't understand us because it didn't understand Jesus. But Colossians 3:4 says that one day when He returns all will be revealed. Everyone will recognize Him and we will be revealed with Him in glory and we will glorify Him.

"So that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:10-11

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Death of the old life is a fact of something *accomplished*. Life hidden in Christ is a fact of something *continuing*. Do feelings change these facts? Why or why not?

Sample Answer: We find our position in Christ from what God has gone on record to declare about us in His Word. We need not consult our feelings. We do not evaluate circumstances. We just calculate what God did for us in Christ.

- Even as Jesus secures your eternal life, how does He also give meaning and purpose to the life you now live here in the flesh? Think, what would your life be like without Him?

Sample Answer: He is our life. His will and purposes become ours.

- If we are now hidden in Christ, what does this guarantee for our future according to Colossians 3:4?

Sample Answer: We will be with Him in heaven.

- If your life is hidden with Christ, the facts of your old sinful life are replaced by the facts of His perfect life. You have a completely new identity. Though our actions in the moment may contradict the facts, why can our actions not change the facts?

Sample Answer: Because Jesus has secured us as His own.

Personal Application: “Your life is hidden with Christ.” No one can kidnap you. No one can snatch you away. Nothing can touch the life that is hidden with Christ. You have a hidden life with Christ. How are you investing in that hidden life? How are you allowing Jesus to invest in you? Do you have private time carved out in the day for you and Christ alone? It does not matter if you are alone in a room or one among 100, you are still hidden in Christ. Why not cultivate time alone with Him for prayer and Bible study, for listening and receiving from Him? What time in the morning do you set the alarm during the week? What time would you have to set your alarm to spend ten minutes with Him in prayer and Bible study? Just ten minutes? Hey, it’s a start! Commit to waking up ten minutes earlier than usual just one day this week. Make it early in the week, and you might find you wish to extend it to a second day!

Colossians 3:5

Additional Discussion Question:

- Imagine for a moment that the (literal) clothes you are presently wearing were once the clothes of a corpse. Envision that they were the burial clothes of a dead person whose grave had been robbed. Take a look at your clothes right now. Think of them as having come straight from the grave, unwashed, dirty, and contaminated. What would be your impulse? Would it be enough to just put on a new garment over the grave clothes you now wear? Would that make you feel better? How likely do you think the fresh smell of the new clothes would be able to cover up the stench of death underneath?

Sample Answer: I would not only want to remove the clothes as fast as possible, but I would immediately want to hop in the shower and try to get rid of any memory of wearing grave clothes worn by a corpse!

During the next session, we will take a look at these new clothes fashioned for the new creation that you are. But before we can put on the new, we must remove the old. Paul begins to expose the nature of the old life by laying out specific sins listed in this verse. This is not an exhaustive list and focuses primarily on sexual sins. In a few minutes, we will look at a couple of verses that focus on social sins. Paul’s emphasis is that all sin is bound to the old self and the old self was crucified with Christ on the cross (Galatians 2:20); therefore, we must consider ourselves “dead to sin.”

Immorality: This term refers to all sexual immorality. It includes all extramarital, unlawful, and unnatural sexual intercourse.

Impurity: This term is most often associated in Scripture with sexual sin including immoral thoughts, passions, ideas, fantasies, and every other form of sexual corruption. Jesus also used this term to describe the rottenness of decaying bodies in a tomb (Matthew 23:27).

Passion: This is a driving force that does not rest until it is satisfied.

Evil Desire: Evil cravings become the dominating force of a person’s life.

Greed: Insatiable selfishness. This includes a wide range of sins and speaks to motive as well. It is an irresistible desire to have something that we have no right to possess. This could lead to theft. It could lead to adultery. Greed is willing to trample on anyone to get its way or have what it wants. It has a warped value system because it places value on things over people and only values people as objects or a means to gain what one wants.

Idolatry: The more greedy we become and the more we accumulate, the more we cling to things of the earth rather than to God. This is the essence of idolatry, looking to something else to do for us what only God can do for us. If we look to riches to satisfy us when it is only God who can satisfy, then we make an idol of riches and they never satisfy. This is true of anything we run to instead of God. We make an idol of people when we look to someone to do for us what only God can do for us. No one and no thing has the capacity to be God for us except God alone.

Additional Discussion Questions:

○ Is it possible even for a virgin to be guilty of sexual impurity? How?

Sample Answer: Yes, by one's thought life or by making an idol of virginity.

○ Why is sexual temptation often the most difficult for students to overcome?

Sample Answer: Because our culture is saturated with sexual messages and pressures.

○ In light of your answer, what wisdom do you see in Paul listing them first as markers of the old nature and placing emphasis on our need to deal an immediate deathblow to all sexual sin?

Sample Answer: Jesus changes everything, so as we are made new, even our approach to sex is conformed to Christ's plan for purity and blessing.

○ How will our relationships benefit if we see all people as brothers and sisters rather than as sexual objects?

Sample Answer: When we treat people as brothers and sisters, we are looking out for the interests of each other. When we treat people as sexual objects, we are selfishly serving our flesh.

Personal Application: Read 1 Timothy 6:10. This verse speaks to greed. Money seems to provide all the answers. More money seems to provide more answers. But what does this verse reveal is the truth about money?

Read 1 Peter 2:11. This verse speaks to sexual lusts. What is the danger of giving in to sexual lusts according to this verse?

Which of the above do you most need God's help with right now? Greed or sexual sin? Admit this to Him right now. Acknowledge that without Him you cannot overcome this. Thank Him that He has given you the power to overcome this sin. In prayer, give this sin to Him now and don't take it back. Today, get up and walk away from it and don't look back!

Colossians 3:6-7

The wrath of God as revealed in Scripture does not give us a picture of a god who flies off the handle in a fit of rage over people who rub him the wrong way. It is not the image of a god who gives into anger for lack of self-control. A better comparison for the wrath of God would be the way a disinfectant reacts to germs. It is in the very nature of the disinfectant to destroy any germ with which it comes in contact, not because it is angry with the germ but because of its make-up, it can do nothing else. The disinfectant must act consistent with its nature. This moves us toward a more accurate thinking on divine wrath. God must act consistently with His nature for He is holy. So His wrath is a righteous loathing toward all that is unholy. His divine wrath is actually a function of His divine love as well. He loves all things holy, true, and just. He loves purity, peace, and perfection, and His wrath is directed toward anything and anyone who defiles what is holy.

Until we understand that we deserve to be the object of God's wrath because of our sin, we will never comprehend forgiveness nor even see our need for it. As we understand that our sin invites serious consequences and God has every right to punish us as guilty sinners, but instead He takes drastic action to pardon us, only then do we comprehend grace. Without God's wrath there is no need for grace. And we cannot understand forgiveness and grace without the backdrop of divine wrath.

Paul reminds the Colossians that this is how they formerly walked. He is giving a sort of panoramic view of the entire unsaved life as nothing but sin. This is how they formerly walked. This is the way of the spiritual corpse. It provides us with the same kind of accountability today: an acknowledgement of where we have been, a reminder of Who made us right, and the new life we are to pursue.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Describe the difficulty of walking in the presence of evil without allowing it to rub off on you—of being in the world but not of it.

Sample Answer: It is hard not to mirror things you constantly see or hear.

- Why are Christian friends and consistent church fellowship crucial to remaining strong in your faith as you interact with and evangelize non-believers? (Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33)

Sample Answer: Because friends influence us. Just as a fire burns bright with many logs, so a lone burning log goes out more quickly. God wants us to gather with other believers in fellowship because it is good to "sharpen" each other (Proverbs 27:17).

- In Christ you no longer face God's wrath. His wrath was poured out on Jesus; however, as His child, the Father loves you too much to let you continue in sin if you choose it. Read Hebrews 12:6-11. How does God respond to sin in His children? What motivates His actions? How does His response confirm that we are His children? How do we benefit from His response?

Sample Answer: He disciplines us for our good that we may share in His holiness.

Personal Application: God disciplines you more to train you than to punish you. His discipline comes from love. Think of a recent trial, suffering, or loss that you have experienced. How has the Lord used it for good in your life, for training you in godliness? How do you think He wants to use it even more to reach that end?

Colossians 3:8-9

Paul continues to emphasize the putting off of the old man. The New Testament also refers to this as repentance. Repentance requires that you reject the old sin pattern—turn your back on it and begin walking in the opposite direction of the new life. This is absolutely crucial before you can put on the new self, and this is why Paul repeats it. Think of how ridiculous it would be if when you went to buy a new suit or dress you refused to take off the one you had on, but rather insisted that the new one should be tried on without taking off the old one! This is what many Christians do. They think they can wear the garment of a new life while still embracing the old. We must lay aside sin first, then “put on the new man.”

In verse 5, Paul helps us think of the old man with specific sins of sexual passion. In this passage, he shows how sin surfaces in other ways. What we begin to understand is that sin is crouching at the door at every turn, and we must deal the deathblow to it in the power of the resurrected Savior who overcame all sin once for all! The following is a brief description of each sin listed in this passage:

Anger: This is a deep, smoldering, resentful bitterness housed in the inner self.

Wrath: Wrath or rage is the boiling over of anger. While anger is more the inward feeling, wrath is the active emotion. When you see someone lose their temper, you are seeing wrath on full display.

Malice: Malice is the bitterness that seeks to deliberately hurt other people. Not only that, but malice rejoices in their hurt. Malice is vicious and hateful.

Slander: While malice directs its hurt toward the victim, slander speaks hurtful things about the victim to someone else. It is hurtful speech that seeks to defame a person’s character. It often distorts the truth to make another look bad.

Abusive Speech: This refers to all speech that is generally considered in poor taste, obscene, filthy, or dirty. Profanity and vulgar language would be included here.

Lie: This means to cheat, defraud, falsify, and to communicate what is false, with the purpose of misleading. Satan is called the father of lies. Interesting that this is likely one of the first sins we commit as children.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Remove the old; put on the new. What are examples in the physical life where such a regimen produces success?

Sample Answer: Getting in shape. Stop eating what is unhealthy. Put aside inactivity. Start eating healthy. Start exercising.

- When compared to the sins listed in verse 5, those listed in verses 8-9 have often been described as the “sins in good standing.” In other words, those listed here are often more acceptable in Christian circles and perhaps easier to justify. But compare the lists and think about your own observations. Why do both lists carry equally the stench of the rotting corpse?

Sample Answer: They are all a part of the old self, which is dead to sin.

- Read Proverbs 6:27—What is the danger of making an exception of even one sin by holding onto it and keeping it and not putting it aside with the rest of the grave clothes?

Sample Answer: God has built-in consequences for sin which we cannot avoid.

- Why will an angry temper hinder the witness of the believer even if that believer lives an otherwise moral life?

Sample Answer: Because uncontrolled anger reveals a lack of self-control that will ultimately lead to disaster.

Personal Application: If you’re angry, it’s going to become evident. It may be through what you say or how you say it. Or it may not surface at all as you punish someone with the silent treatment. Perhaps it’s sarcasm or slander. Maybe your sin falls under “abusive speech,” and your words are suggestive and full of innuendo. Or could it be that you like to indulge in gossip and are entertained with other friends at the expense of another person? Write the sin that the Holy Spirit has singled out within your heart from your study of this passage. Repent. Give it to God, and in His strength and for His glory, do an about face and walk the other way.

Colossians 3:10

This verse is a statement of fact. It does not describe something that might take place in the believer. It is not a portrait of the self being renovated. Rather it reveals a self that is entirely new in character. It is the certainty and constancy of being renewed. The literal Greek reads, “according to what God is.” Wow! This is the spiritual DNA of the new self, that we are made like God. Galatians 3:27 says, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” We exchanged the old hand-me-down grave clothes of Adam (the sinful self) for the righteousness of Christ. Positionally, before the Father, we are perfect in His eyes. We are declared righteous in Him because when the Father sees us He sees His perfect Son.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- What is the old man and what is the new man?

Sample Answer: The old man lives according to the flesh, and the new man lives according to the Spirit.

- Are you a combination of the old man and the new man or are you just the new man?

Sample Answer: When I became a Christian, the old man was terminated, and I became the new man. I am not the old man anymore. I don't have the old man anymore. There are not two sides to me. There is one new creation—Christ's life in me. And because I am the new man, the habits and practices of the old man--the old grave clothes--don't fit anymore and are suddenly peculiar to me. Since I am a new man, I am to clothe myself in the characteristics that are Christ like because that is who I am.

Personal Application: Physically, you carry the same DNA you were born with and you will carry it until the day you die. The potential of what you are today was there at your birth and will continue to come to pass until the day you die. Spiritually in Christ, we have a new DNA. Even if you are a very new Christian, all of the potential of Christ's life is within you already. The Christian life is simply becoming the new creation that you already are. It is what the Bible calls being sanctified. Your life becomes set apart for Christ. What is a specific character quality in your life that is already there potentially, but you have not seen in reality? Thank Him for not only revealing this to you but for granting it to you.

Colossians 3:11

Jesus does what nothing else can do, no government, no king, no moral code. He takes the elites and the outcasts of the world and makes them one. As people seek answers to the problems of the day through education, legislative initiatives, globalization, income equality, etc., in the end, they accomplish little and make the lines that divide even more distinct. But Jesus breaks down all barriers. At the cross, all differences are cast aside. Outside of the cross, there is no solution to the injustices of our day. At the cross, all are one in Christ Jesus.

As His church, we must protect this oneness at every turn. No separations within, no disunion...separation from all the world, yes, but not separation from each other for we are all one in Him. Notice the types of people Paul includes. The Jews and Greeks had nothing to do with each other. The Greeks were the aristocrats of the Roman world and claimed superiority over anyone who was not Greek. The Jews looked down on the Gentiles (the uncircumcised) because they were outside the promises. The Barbarians were demeaned as crude in speech, coarse, and savage. The Scythians were notorious for their savagery as the most barbaric of all. Your past doesn't matter. Your pedigree doesn't matter. What matters is your new identity in Christ. The identity for the individual is the same for the entire community of Christ. Paul wraps up this verse by declaring that identity. Christ is all in all!

Additional Discussion Questions:

- When you consider the differences in the people groups described here and how Christ had made them one, what does this suggest is the power of the gospel today?

Sample Answer: He is our only hope for peace.

- Think of the friend groups at your school. Why do you think it is the tendency of people to include some people and exclude others?

Sample Answer: Friend groups are usually more about who you like rather than who needs to be liked.

- Do you find the same divisions at church? Why should this not be?

Sample Answer: Yes, sometimes. It shouldn't happen because Christ finds every person valuable.

- How will a community function differently when Christ is all, as opposed to when "self" is all?

Sample Answer: That community will meet the needs of others because it truly cares about people.

Personal Application: Identify some of the things that seem to divide people within your youth group. If Jesus is present, you have everything you need for perfect unity! Begin today by doing one thing the way Jesus would do it. Serve. Pick someone to whom you may be tempted to feel superior—someone who is younger, who hasn't been attending as long, maybe someone who is arrogant and pushes your buttons. Remove yourself and let Christ be all in this situation. Unity begins with Jesus and extends through you!

Sessions 2 & 3

Read Colossians 3:12-17

Colossians 3:12-13

In our previous session, we talked about removing the “grave clothes” of sin that ruled our lives before we embraced Jesus as Savior. This session begins with putting on the new clothes, the new characteristics that are the result of the new life within us.

Paul continues reminding the Colossians of who they are, “Those who have been chosen, holy and beloved.” Take another look at that phrase. If you know Jesus as your Savior, this is the banner of your life, the description of your soul. In these verses, Paul is not going to tell you how to act to *become* chosen. He is telling you what will be the overflow of Christ’s life inside you because you *are* chosen, because you *are* His holy and beloved.

Because of who you are in Christ, and because you have cast aside the clothes of the spiritual corpse, Paul reveals what to “put on.” “Putting on” is one of the first things you do in a day. You put on clothes. Paul describes specifically what these spiritual clothes--godly characteristics--are and look like: heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness. (This is not an exhaustive list; in fact Paul will expand it in the next few verses.) These are already *your* “clothes,” *your* characteristics. Jesus purchased them for you with His life. You can let them “hang in the closet,” so to speak. It does not change the fact that they are yours. No one is going to take them away from you. It is, however, your choice as to whether or not you will put them on. So you are not to “work up” these characteristics in the strength of your flesh. You are to embrace them in the power of His resurrected life within you because they are already yours.

Let’s take a look at these characteristics and gain a better idea of what the original language reveals about them.

Put on a heart: The ancient writers regarded the heart as the seat of affections and emotions. It refers to that deep, internal caring; the way that we might express as “broken hearted” or “gut wrenching.”

Compassion: This is more than to feel for the needy. It is a compassion that calls us to action, where we care enough to become involved and do whatever necessary to put the oppressed or afflicted on a fresh course.

Kindness: This is the action that results from sympathizing with another person. It causes us to take the initiative in something as small as a sincere smile, a kind word or a pat on the shoulder, as well as offerings of help and labor-intensive acts of service.

Humility: The original Greek language did not include a word for humility. Their culture had no concept of the idea. Imagine that. The same was true for the Romans. And yet this is one of two characteristics that Jesus uses to describe Himself. (The other one is gentleness. See Matthew 11:29.) So if Jesus is humble of heart, we must be humble of heart. Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It’s thinking of yourself less: even better, it’s not thinking of yourself at all. Your thoughts and attitudes are consumed with Jesus and others, not you.

Gentleness: Gentleness is controlled strength. Gentleness describes the person who doesn't sin in anger when personally wronged but who is righteously angered when another is wronged. The gentle person is free from revenge and demonstrates a patient trust in God in the middle of difficult circumstances. It is simply power under control.

Patience: Patience means taking a long time to burn. It is the ability to remain gracious in the face of folly, perversity, ingratitude, even cruelty and insults. A patient person is able to hold one's feelings in restraint when being provoked. Patience does not get irritable or resentful when others behave badly or are unable to comprehend a matter.

Bearing with one another: A bearing spirit errs on the side of hope rather than judgment. Even on the worst day as another struggles with trial or sin, the bearing spirit makes allowance for and expects that the person will come to do right.

Forgiveness: Forgiveness releases a person from obligation of repaying what is owed and cancels the debt. It removes any penalty associated with the failure to pay it. The believer forgives another as Christ has forgiven them. It also releases the hold of bitterness, resentment, anger, and animosity that often destroys the soul. Forgiveness is not an option for the believer. "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matthew 6:15). Perhaps here, more than any other area, we need to admit our weakness and inabilities and ask the Lord to help us forgive!

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Which do you think is more like Paul's intent here...
 - A. To get the believers to behave in a certain way.
 - B. To encourage each believer to live out the new life already within them.

Sample Answer: B.

- What is the difference between A and B in the question above?

Sample Answer: The difference is that A can be done insincerely while B can only be done out of sincerity.

- Though the source of these godly characteristics is the life of Jesus within us, "putting on" also suggests that these characteristics are clearly seen outwardly. It is not the attitude of, "Well, if someone would just take the time to know me they would see that this is what makes up my heart." No, these characteristics are to be seen. As Jesus says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). With this in mind, why is it just as important to overcome something like shyness as it is something like rage?

Sample Answer: Neither our sin nor our personality traits should be an excuse for others not seeing Christ in us.

- Think about the cross. Close your eyes and picture Jesus hanging there in your mind. How does this image confront the unforgiveness that you may be harboring in your heart?

Sample Answer: If Jesus would suffer so much to forgive me, then certainly I can forgive others.

- Why do you think Paul focuses mostly on characteristics that are essential to how we relate with each other as evidence of the new life within?

Sample Answer: Because our new life is more about serving others than ourselves.

- Look again at these characteristics in this passage. Why would you want to be a part of a community that demonstrated such devotion to each other? Can you think of any reason why you would not wish to be a part?

Sample Answer: Everyone was created to love and to be loved and to know someone cares about them.

Personal Application: When you see a certain kind of clothing or uniform, it tells you something about the person wearing it. It could be clothing associated with a certain religion or a team sport. List some of the clothing below that reveals something about that person. Some people wear clothes and others want to copy their style. Paul reminds us in this passage that physical clothes do not identify believers, but rather characteristics that are Christ-like. Have you given more care and attention to your style of dress rather than what identifies you as a follower of Jesus? Read the list of virtues in these verses. Which of the characteristics do you hope others will see in you and be drawn to the One who fashions them in you?

Colossians 3:14-15

After studying the characteristics in the previous verses, you might conclude that it is an overall description of love. And many of these attributes are used to define Agape love, which is the kind of love used here in verse 14. (For a complete description of Agape love, read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8). However, Paul makes a point of listing love separately. In fact, he places special emphasis on it. “Beyond all these things put on love.” Without love, the other graces listed here would be fragmented and incomplete. So he tells us that all godliness is to be wrapped up in love. A few verses earlier in Colossians 2:2, he describes the oneness of their hearts as being “knit together in love.” Love is the thread that connects these characteristics together, that unites our hearts together in a “perfect bond of unity.”

Jesus said the whole law was dependent upon two commandments. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And the second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39). Jesus said love would identify those who are His disciples: “By this all men will know you are My disciples if you have love for one another.” So love not only brings the virtues of godliness together, it brings people together, and is the distinguishing mark of those who are His.

The peace Jesus gives not only occurs when there is no conflict between people, but it also describes a sense of wholeness and well being in the individual. It is the very presence of Christ Himself. He said, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled nor let it be fearful” (John 14:27). When Paul says, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,” he is saying let His peace decide as an umpire in the conflicts of life. As you make decisions in obedience to the Lord, He will give you a sense of peace that what you are doing is right.

Thankfulness is declared appreciation for who God is and what He has done. Be thankful. You may think you have to wait until things are going great and you feel happy before you can express thanksgiving to God. But actually the Bible reveals that hard times are as equal an opportunity for gratitude as the good times. “In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Anytime you express thankfulness, you are fulfilling the will of God. We will see specific ways we may express our thankfulness in the next verse.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- If a person is compassionate without love, they might only be moved to action when someone is sick or injured or hurting emotionally. But love cares for the whole person. While it, for example, directs compassion to minister to those described this way, it also cares for other aspects of a person’s life, such as their overall well-being, their future. Love shows genuine happiness in another’s success as well as grieving when they mourn. Look at the characteristics listed in verse 13. It is possible to demonstrate, let’s say, humility without love but why is it impossible to demonstrate love without humility? (You could substitute any of the other characteristics for humility here.)

Sample Answer: Love is made up of these other qualities. If it lacks them, it isn’t love.

- What do the following verses reveal is the importance of love in the believer’s life?

1 John 3:14 **Sample Answer:** It is a sign of true life.

1 John 4:7-8 **Sample Answer:** God is love. To not love is to not know Him.

1 John 4:40 **Sample Answer:** It is impossible to say we love God and to then not love our brother.

- Read John 16:33—How does Jesus contrast what He offers with what the world offers?

Sample Answer: He offers peace while the world offers tribulation. He actually provides what the world promises but can never bring about.

- Why must we focus our thanksgiving toward God, not only for what He has done for us, but also for who He is—His divine perfection?

Sample Answer: Because we are to be like Him. And in Him we see what we can be through Christ.

Personal Application:

List people in your life who would describe you as loving this way.

List people in your life who would say that you don’t love this way.

To whom is it most difficult for you to demonstrate love? Someone at home? Someone at school? Someone at church? Is there even a whole group of people you have written off? Jesus has already given you the capacity to love them, not by working up your emotions but by admitting you are weak and cannot love this person or group without His help. Admit this to Him right now. Thank Him that He loves this person or group perfectly and that He loves you perfectly. Ask Him for the will to obey in loving them. Write a small gesture or act of kindness that you could initiate with this person that would set your relationship on a new path.

Do you often find yourself in the middle of conflict? If yes, it is likely you are not an innocent by-stander. Be honest. Do you find little spats between friends entertaining? Do you like seeing others react to drama? Do you create it? Even when you are the victim of conflict and someone is malicious and hurtful, do you demand that others take sides or do you take your hurts to the Lord? Proverbs 26:20 says, “For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer contention quiets down.” Are you the whisperer that fuels other peoples’ hurts and anger or do you hold your tongue and allow controversies to die a quick death? Think of an ongoing conflict among your group of friends. (If there isn’t one presently, try and think of a recent one.) How were you part of the problem? How were you part of the solution? What part do you want to play when a conflict arises next time?

Colossians 3:16

As the resurrected life within us impacts our relationships with each other, especially those within the church, Paul is going to reveal some things that we will enjoy doing together. In fact, for the Christian community—His Church, we are mandated to do these together. He begins with the Word of God and the place it should hold in our hearts.

Paul says that the Scriptures should find a home in your heart, your innermost being. “Let the Word of God richly dwell within you.” This means a deliberate and consistent intake of the Word. In addition to hearing and reading the Bible, study it. Meditate and memorize it. The Lord will use it to purify your heart, mind, and soul. The Word of God is powerful. It even gets into your bone marrow! (See Hebrews 4:12.)

The more we know the Word, the more wisdom we have to share. The Lord also uses it to equip us for teaching and admonishing each other. Admonishing means to warn. We admonish someone when we help them understand how to apply what the Bible teaches. Our song choices can help us with this too. “With psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” When we sing and read Scripture in community with other people, we are obeying what the Bible tells us here. A Psalm is a testimony of deliverance and mercy received. A hymn is a direct address of praise to God. As our relationships improve and we experience with other believers our oneness in Christ, the natural overflow will be our joining with other hearts and voices in praise and thanksgiving to God.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- You can read your Bible, sing to the Lord, and raise your voice in thankfulness to Him. You can do all of this alone, in isolation of other people. In fact, we should seek private worship everyday! But how does this verse call us to collective worship?

Sample Answer: We are to build each other up through these worship elements.

- Think of the last sermon you heard, maybe even at this conference. How about the last one you heard in church? What do you remember about it? Is hearing the Bible preached at church enough to allow the Word of God to find a home in your heart, a dwelling place? Why or why not? How would you like for it to dwell in your heart more?

Sample Answer: I think the Scripture has to saturate my songs, prayers, and thoughts, so that I may become someone who lives it out.

Personal Application: Think about the Scripture intake you receive in a given week. What is something you can do to increase it even more? If you hear it only at church, maybe you can read it twice at home during the week. If you already read it at home, maybe you can begin to memorize verses. Write how you will increase your intake this week. Honestly, a great place to begin is to simply read it! Tell your youth pastor or small group leader about your desired increase for Scriptural intake and ask for help. This verse reminds us we are not alone. We need the input of others in our lives to help us grow spiritually.

Colossians 3:17

This is the most comprehensive description of how our new self in Christ is to be occupied than perhaps any other passage in Scripture. When we live by His authority and His approval, everything we say has meaning; everything we do has an eternal perspective and reward. This is what you were created in Christ to do. This is God's will for you in Christ Jesus that every word you speak and every act you do brings glory to His name. Get busy doing it! It is never wasted!

Additional Discussion Questions:

- As we face life's challenges and opportunities, it is often clear what pleases God and glorifies Him. But sometimes it is not so black and white. Sometimes a situation may arise and we are not sure how to handle it. Sometimes we face a crossroads and we do not know which way to choose. How does this verse help us to determine the right approach or course?

Sample Answer: We can ask the questions, "Which of these two choices is most worthy of bearing the name of Jesus?" "Which will bring more glory to Him?"

- As you consider this verse, you may be thinking, "What areas of my life does this include?" Why is it better to ask the question, "What areas in my life does this *not* include?"

Sample Answer: The verse literally says, "Whatever you do," so it is comprehensive.

- Why will thanksgiving be the attitude that accompanies deeds done in His name as opposed to an attitude of, let's say, grumbling?

Sample Answer: When the Lord entrusts me with an opportunity to serve Him, it is an opportunity to be grateful.

Personal Application: Complete the following sentences in light of Colossians 3:17:

- A. My attitude as a student in school is most reflective of Jesus when I ...
- B. My choices for entertainment and fun are most representative of Jesus when I choose ...
- C. My use of money is most honoring to Jesus when I ...
- D. My participation in church is most Christ like when I ...
- E. My response to those in need bears His image most when I ...
- F. When someone offends or hurts me, the world will see Christ in me when I ...
- G. I am most useful as His mouthpiece when my speech ...

Session 4

Read Colossians 2:6-15

Colossians 2:6

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” Paul reveals that the fundamentals of walking with Jesus are the same fundamentals for salvation. God saved you when you admitted that you couldn’t save yourself. As long as you tried to save yourself through your good works or deeds, God allowed you to try and save yourself. It wasn’t until you agreed with Him, that because of sin you couldn’t save yourself and you waved the white flag of surrender, that He stepped in and gave you the gift of salvation. *Walking with Him means embracing this principle every minute of the day.* John 15:5 says, “I am the Vine; you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” Jesus says that apart from Him, not only can you not save yourself, but *you can do nothing else either.* In Galatians 3:3, Paul asks a very important question, “Are you so foolish having begun in the Spirit are you now being perfected in the flesh?” The flesh doesn’t have the capacity to walk with Jesus and obey Him. Only the Spirit has this capacity and the Spirit lives within you.

This begs the question, “How do I know when I am trying to accomplish something in the flesh or when am I allowing the Spirit to do it in me?” The answer to this is actually pretty simple. Let’s imagine there is a habitual sin that has become a stronghold in your life. Maybe it’s foul language or gossip and no matter how hard you try to stop, you keep giving in. Maybe there is someone in your life that you have found impossible to love no matter how hard you try. As long as you try to overcome sin in your life in your own strength, the Lord will allow you to try and overcome it. It is not until you admit to Him that without Him you cannot stop gossiping, that without Him you cannot love, that He will empower you to do what He asks. So you see? You became a Christian when you surrendered, waved the white flag and admitted that you couldn’t save yourself. Your walk with Jesus is the same. As He reveals areas where He wants you to obey, instead of taking it on in your own strength, you surrender, wave the white flag and admit that without Him you cannot accomplish the specific thing He is asking of you in that moment.

This is so important to understand before you go any further in the Christian walk. It is the difference between victory and defeat. Only Jesus can save you; only Jesus can equip you to walk with Him through His Spirit who indwells you. So admit right now that His work on the cross was sufficient to save you and His work on the cross is also sufficient to help you walk with Him and be like Him.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Though we understand that *salvation* is something Jesus accomplished, why does it often seem like *walking with Him* is something we accomplish?

Sample Answer: Because we have to make choices every day. We are in the habit of accomplishing things by “doing” not by surrendering. It becomes a discipline to learn not to do things in our own strength.

- When do our emotions or feelings lie to us about the facts of our salvation?

Sample Answer: When they suggest that we can’t live it out. When they try to tell us that God is far away when He is actually with us. When they get our eyes off of Jesus and onto our works or lack of works.

- Why must we not let our emotions or feelings be the basis for an obedient walk with Jesus?

Sample Answer: Our emotions are fickle but His truth is reliable.

- As we acknowledge our weaknesses before Him, why will this guarantee success in our daily walk, rather than focusing on our strengths and what we can accomplish without Him?

Sample Answer: When we trust in Him we are always stronger than we are on our own.

Personal Application: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord.” This is the only way to begin this journey. The rest of this study is not going to mean much until you have personally received Jesus as Lord. If you do not know what this means, then ask your leader to help you. Basically this is the way you become His child, by receiving Him as Lord and Savior. The Bible says that as sinners it is impossible to please God (Romans 3:23). Before you can receive Him you must admit that you are a sinner and repent (turn away) from the sinful life (Acts 3:19). Then you must receive Jesus by faith. The Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Acknowledge that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9-10)! Ask Jesus to be the Savior and Lord of your life! John 1:12 says “But as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become the children of God even to those who believe in His name.” God loves you and wants you as His child (John 3:16)! Today is the day of salvation.

Write an area in your life that seems to have become a stronghold, maybe a sin that you have tried to overcome but you keep giving in. Bring this before the Lord and determine before Him that you will no longer try and overcome this in your own strength. Admit to Him that without Him you are weak and unable to stop sinning in this area. Thank Him that He has taken it from you and that by His strength you can obey what He is telling you to do.

Colossians 2:7

Unless a newly sprouted seed has plenty of water and nutrients on the surface level, the plant will die before it has barely begun to grow. The young plant needs an adequate amount of water so that the new root system has a chance to take hold. Inevitably, though, as the plant grows, the topsoil will become less favorable under the hot afternoon sun. The plant begins to wilt under the harsh climate; and yet this forces the root system to search out water and nutrients far beneath the surface. What appears at first to doom the plant actually makes it stronger and able to face harsh weather through the course of its life, as the root system weaves its way deep into the soil. As Christians, this verse tells us that our root system must go deep into the soil of faith.

For a time, the Christian life may seem easy and fun. You are surrounded by other believers who love, encourage, and pray for you. You read your Bible, memorize verses, and pray for others. Your root system takes hold and then...a fellow believer hurts you, intentionally or unintentionally; you feel alone. You find that some of the things Jesus asks of you are in direct opposition of what you want to do. God *feels* far away and your emotions cause you to doubt. Former friends begin to reject you because of your faith. You begin to wilt under the trials and testing. In spite of your feelings, you make the choice to turn to God and cling to Him. You apply the things He has been teaching you. You become firmly rooted, built up, and established in your faith as this verse describes.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- What contributes to a healthy root system in the Christian's life (Psalm 1:1-3)?

Sample Answer: Planting ourselves in the Word and His ways and among His people.

- How can times of testing and trial become opportunities for your root system to go deeper?

Sample Answer: Testing and trials distinguish between what we believe and what we say we believe.

- Why does this verse indicate that thankfulness or gratitude is a fruit of a healthy root system?

Sample Answer: Anyone established in Christ is thankful for His work in his or her life. It is the natural fruit or overflow of a healthy walk with Him.

- Is thankfulness a feeling or a choice? What's the difference?

Sample Answer: It can be both. However, it is often a choice during trials or even difficult times. Thankfulness as a choice is a statement of purpose even when circumstances might convince you to be ungrateful. Feelings should never determine gratitude but they can be the result of a thankful heart.

Personal Application: Consider the spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, private worship, Scripture memory, fellowship. Which discipline have you neglected most in your walk with the Lord? How would this discipline help your spiritual root system go deeper?

Colossians 2:8

As we continue in our walk with Jesus, Paul confronts us with another area where we must cling to God. He warns that many will try to carry us away from the truth, through philosophies and teachings based on degenerate and sinful minds. The Colossians were confronted with Jewish false teachers who elevated knowledge above faith, not in the denying of Christianity but by trying to explain it through human intellect. Paul says here that the best they could offer was teaching based on traditions of men and the "elementary principles of the world." When it comes to spiritual depth, such teachings could not bring them beyond the alphabet. And yet such ideas tickled their ears and appealed to fleshly lusts so that the believers were carried away - literally taken completely over and held as slaves.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- What is the difference between seeking a religious experience and seeking Jesus?

Sample Answer: Seeking Jesus means seeking the truth and not just a cool experience.

- What is the danger of trying to determine ultimate truth through human intelligence and reasoning alone, without the help of God?

Sample Answer: Ultimate truth doesn't exist apart from God. You cannot omit Jesus from your search for the truth. They are one and the same.

- What are some examples that today's culture uses Jesus to give credibility to an agenda that is actually contradictory to what is commanded in Scripture? Can you think of some specific examples? In such instances does culture desire to serve itself or Jesus? How does this question help expose the truth and the lie?

Sample Answer: Everyone seems to respect Jesus, so they use Him or the Bible to support their own agendas. The world will use Jesus' words about not judging others in order to do whatever they want without rebuttal. This is a misuse of Scripture and a distortion of Jesus just to support personal freedom in moral choices.

- "I would never be carried away from Jesus by false teaching." How does 1 Corinthians 10:12 confront this notion?

Sample Answer: We should always be careful to examine everything according to the truth of Scripture, unless we find ourselves seeking our own good and not the purposes of God.

- As the believer becomes more and more immersed in the truth, how will he or she more readily recognize a lie?

Sample Answer: The Spirit of truth prompts us, and we become more discerning.

Personal Application: Read Isaiah 5:20. How has contemporary culture in the United States achieved what this verse describes? How have you been tempted to conform your belief system to the world's standards? Why is it important that you stand firm with Jesus, even if you stand alone? Remember the Pharisees of His day thought that Jesus was a sinner and that they were righteous! Do not be surprised if the world tries to turn the tables on you in this way too! Cling to the truth. It does not change!

Colossians 2:9

This is the most concise description of Jesus as the God-man in Scripture. Jesus Christ is as much man as though He had never been God. And He is as much God as though He had never been man: fully God; fully man. Paul is not saying that Jesus has God in Him or that He represents God or merely points us to God. These are gross understatements of the fact that Jesus *IS* God. Anything less is to deny Him! This is the basis for His Rulership in the world and His Lordship in your life! And all truth begins with this fact: Jesus is God.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Why is Jesus worthy to be Lord? Why does He have the right to be Lord?

Sample Answer: The fullness of God dwells in Him.

- Why will any discussion of truth always center on Jesus? (Consider also Colossians 2:2-3)

Sample Answer: All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him.

- Jesus asked His disciples in Matthew 16:15, “Who do you say that I am?” Why is the answer to this question the dividing line between true and false teaching? How would Paul answer Jesus’ question as you consider Colossians 2:9? Why must we come back to this central truth again and again even when we are tempted to be distracted by lesser things?

Sample Answer: Paul would say, “You are God in human flesh.” I can trust God for the truth. The closer I remain with Jesus, even as the topic of a spiritual conversation, the closer I remain in the truth.

Personal Application:

Have you compartmentalized certain areas of your life? Are there some areas of your life where you have surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus and others you have held back from Him? Consider these areas: dating life, future, finances, church attendance/participation, school, free time, family, job. Are these areas serving you or are you using them to serve Him? Is He Lord of every area of your life or only some areas? As you surrender each area of your life in recommitment to His Lordship, acknowledge to Him why He is worthy to be Lord of your life.

Colossians 2:10

The One who is fully God and fully man, Jesus, fills us. He completes us. 2 Peter 1:3 says, “Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” Anything we need for life and godliness is found in Him. Jesus promises abundant life (John 10:10). He reveals that He is the Life (John 14:6), not an alternative to life. Apart from Him, we settle for something less than life. In fact, we settle for what can only lead to complete and total death and destruction (John 10:10). Trust Him with every dimension of your life, for in Him you have been made complete!

Additional Discussion Questions:

- When we are feeling empty or sad, why is it our tendency to run to other things to fill us up rather than running to Jesus?

Sample Answer: It is easier and seems more immediate.

- What is the danger of running to other things: relationships, people, entertainment, academics, work, etc., to provide for you that sense of completeness or fulfillment that the Bible reveals has been given to you in Christ alone? (Consider Jeremiah 2:37.)

Sample Answer: They will usually fill the void in the short term, so we run the risk of believing they will truly satisfy forever. And we set a pattern of running to things other than Jesus.

- Why is Jesus superior to anything we might be tempted to seek before Him, according the last half of Colossians 2:10?

Sample Answer: He is the ruler and head of all things.

- How do we become the victim of other sources (people, authorities, etc.) who often take advantage of our need for completeness and significance? When could you make a victim of another person who seeks completeness or significance from you? Why is there no such risk in seeking Jesus in this way?

Sample Answer: Jesus seeks our good. Others may be helpful in encouraging us, but they cannot complete us or give us significance. Only Jesus can accomplish that.

Personal Application:

Only Jesus can complete you because only Jesus is God. When you look to others to be God, you are seeking from them something they can never be. People are not omnipresent (present everywhere) so they will eventually leave. People can love you, but not perfectly. People can know you to a certain extent, but they can never be intimately acquainted with all your ways the way that God is; He alone has perfect knowledge (omniscience), and therefore He alone knows what is best for you. Every person you know will die. God is eternal. When you expect people to take the role of God in your life, you make an idol of them. List people you seek to meet needs in your life that only God can meet. Thank Him for loyal friends, a loving family, but acknowledge that only He can be God in your life!

Colossians 2:11-13

Paul continues his emphasis that our completeness, our redemption, is found in Christ alone and not something accomplished with human effort or human hands. We must not read here that circumcision and baptism help form our completeness. That would contradict Paul's statement that Jesus alone makes us complete. Instead, New Testament baptism, as Old Testament circumcision, becomes the first step in obedience for a covenanted people set apart for God's purpose. Circumcision follows eight days after the physical birth of the male Jew. Baptism follows the new birth, the spiritual birth for the believer accomplished in Christ alone. And both, circumcision and baptism, are symbols of how Jesus effects that completeness.

Paul explains it this way, "And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands." In Christ we have the removal of the entire flesh, the instrument of sin. By His death, Jesus has cut away sinful flesh in the individual. And this verse is clear in saying that we are included in Christ's circumcision.

Likewise we are also included in His burial, which baptism represents: the burying of the old self, that old flesh. Even as we are included in His death and His burial, we are also included in His resurrection, by faith. He has included you in His work. He has included you in His history. You are included in His work, His death, His burial, His resurrection. Not by the works of your hands or any other self-effort, but faith in His work.

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Though the work of human hands could never make the heart right, how does the circumcision of the heart, the purification of the heart through Jesus' work on the cross, purify the work of human hands?

Sample Answer: We cannot save ourselves, but through the salvation Jesus gives, we can do works of righteousness that honor Him.

- A physical corpse cannot enjoy or even perceive anything going on around it. It cannot see beauty, hear music, taste food, etc. It is dead. When Paul says in verse 13 that you were dead in your transgressions, he is speaking of a spiritual corpse (1 Corinthians 2:14). Why is a spiritual corpse unable to understand spiritual truth, hear the call of God, seek His will, etc.?

Sample Answer: It is spiritually dead until God awakens it.

- When you realize that a sinner is not simply unmotivated in regard to spiritual things, but that he is a dead man, a corpse in regard to spiritual things, how does it help you understand that your work in evangelism is limited, that it is ultimately the work of Jesus? That He must "make you alive together with Him" and that it cannot be the work of human hands, human reason, human persuasion or human intervention? (Also consider Romans 8:11.)

Sample Answer: I can share Jesus with others, but it is the Spirit of God who speaks to their heart and draws them to God. In recognizing that my role in evangelism is limited, I am in no way downplaying the importance of it. In fact, it is one of my primary responsibilities as a Christian. I am simply acknowledging God's ultimate role in the salvation process.

Personal Application: What sins of the old, decaying, spiritual corpse are you still trying to carry around? Why is the term "dead weight" an accurate term for the way these sins impact your life? Repent!

Colossians 2:14-15

The Psalmist writes, “I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love. And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments which I love; and I will meditate on Your statutes” (Psalm 119:47-48). Proclamations like this are made throughout the Old Testament, a sincere sense of gratitude that God granted His people the knowledge of His will through the law, guiding man as a lamp to his feet and a light to his path (Psalm 119:105). But in Colossians 2:14, Paul reveals something else. Though the law tells us what to do, it places within us neither the inclination nor the power to do what it commands. On our best days we fall short (see James 2:10). Because of our sin and rebellion, the laws of God become a deadly witness against us in the courtroom of heaven. With our debt too great, we have no way of escape. The law can only condemn us, judge us, destroy us. The law is our enemy because we have no way to satisfy it. But Jesus did satisfy the law! He fulfilled it, and through His death, Jesus takes all of the hostility and condemnation that the law heaps upon us and nails it to the cross!

Not only that, but on the cross, Jesus also “disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them.” The cross becomes a public witness that Jesus crushed the serpent’s head. Long ago, our fellowship with God was taken away and replaced with misery, suffering, and death due to sin. Jesus disarmed these powers and principalities that reigned over us and on the cross and made a show of them openly. Meditate on this verse (Colossians 2:15) for any amount of time and you might just hear the demons screaming. He has crushed them!

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Without Jesus, the law is an act of duty (which we can never fulfill). With Jesus the law is an act of love. What is the difference? (1 John 5:3; John 15:14)

Sample Answer: The love and respect we have for the one asking us to abide by it.

- In Christ, do you obey God to gain His approval, or do you obey Him because you already have His approval? What is the difference?

Sample Answer: Because I already have it, I serve Him out of gratitude for what He has already done, not for what I hope He will do.

Personal Application:

Reflect for a moment on what Jesus has done for you as described in these verses and emphasized in our discussion. Wrap up this session by writing a few words below that describe the gratitude in your heart.

Curriculum provided by Kim Harrison.

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