

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

The Discipline of Right Living
Colossians 3:1-14

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Before the day of worship ask people attending to bring donations of clothes for a local charity clothes closet. Be prepared to give a piece of used clothing to those who may forget. Set up a place for the clothes to be placed as an offering for the close of the Gathering Time.

Prepare the words to the song or chorus you will sing if they are unfamiliar to the worshippers.

Bible Study Leader:

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Youth, Take Ten: The youth/adult Bible Study leader or one of the youth should gather catalog and magazine pictures of current youth clothing styles. Provide poster board, scissors, and glue for the youth Bible study application time.

Worship Time Leader:

Worship Time: Prepare the words to any music you may use in the worship services (see music resources).

Music Sources:

“Light the Fire Again” Words and music by Brian Doerksen. Mercy Me/Vinyard Publishing, 1994. Great theme song for the unit on disciplines. From the song “... I need Your Discipline ...” From WOW Worship Songbook. Integrity Inc., 2000.

“Because He Lives” Words and music by William and Gloria Gaither. 1971.

“Lord I Want To Be A Christian” Public Domain.

“God Will Make A Way” Words and music by Don Moen. Integrity's Hosanna! Music, 1994. From WOW Worship Songbook. Integrity Incorporated, 2000.

“He Knows My Name” Words and music by Tommy Walker. Doulos Publishing, 1996. From WOW Worship Green Songbook. Integrity Incorporated, 2001.

“Jesus Is Alive” Words and music by Ron Kenoly. Integrity's Hosanna! Music, 1987. From WOW Worship Songbook. Integrity Inc., 2000.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***The Discipline of Right Living******Focal Text***

Colossians 3:1-14

Background Text

Colossians 2:20-3:17

Main Idea

Because of the relationship that we, as Christians, have with Christ, we must stop living in ways that bring dishonour to Jesus and begin living in ways that bring honour to him.

Questions to Explore

What difference does Christ make in how you live each day?

Teaching Aim

To help participants decide individually on at least one change they will make in the way they live so as to honour Christ.

Gathering together:

Preparation: Before the day of worship ask people attending to bring donations of clothes for a local charity clothes closet. (See “**Prior to this Coming Session**”). Be prepared to give a piece of used clothing to those who may forget.

Assign one person (man, woman or child) to greet people as they arrive. Ask them to keep their piece of clothing for the end of the gathering time.

As people arrive, you can set the mood by softly playing some Christian music.

Sing one or two hymns or choruses (see music resources) as a signal to begin the gathering time and to prepare for the First Thoughts.

Share any announcements, ministry opportunities, or ministry activities at this point.

First thoughts:

Changing Clothes

Leader: Read aloud Colossians 3:1-4.

¹Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, and then you also will appear with him in glory.

A winsome story illustrates an interesting point:

We had just moved from graduate school to our first full time job. The job was located in one of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in one of our largest cities. A very wealthy and influential couple in the community had invited my wife and me out for dinner. We were so concerned about the impact we would make on this first social outing. We discussed the clothes we would wear. Our selection was very limited. Would the couple be dressed casually or more formally? To compound our problem the two-story townhouse we had rented was so large that we had no furniture on the ground floor. All the furniture from our small apartment at school had been taken upstairs. We wanted to greet our host at the door and depart immediately. One of the windows overlooked the street. Our solution was to lay out the various options of clothing and then await the arrival of our guests. When they got out of the car, we would see what type of clothes they were wearing. We would rush to put on the appropriate clothes and race downstairs to meet them at the door. If only our guests could have seen the hilarious race, I wonder what they would have thought. We were invited to dinner many times over the next five years that we lived in that city but our attitude changed. We knew of their acceptance and kindness through a developing relationship. Our clothing selections were then made out of relationship and not to impress.

The same is true in our Christian walk. We are asked to put on clothing that is consistent with our relationship with God not to impress Him to somehow like us more. We have been raised with Christ and we are hidden in Him. We are now to look at life from that perspective. May we learn more about that relationship today.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Say: Today we are collecting items of clothing to give to _____. During the break, you may put your clothes donations _____. And as you give these clothes, you can know that these coverings and your outward appearance are not the basis of your relationship with God.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

The Discipline of Right Living

Focal Text

Colossians 3:1-14

Background Text

Colossians 2:20-3:17

Main Idea

Because of the relationship that we, as Christians, have with Christ, we must stop living in ways that bring dishonour to Jesus and begin living in ways that bring honour to him.

Questions to Explore

What difference does Christ make in how you live each day?

Teaching Aim

To help participants decide individually on at least one change they will make in the way they live so as to honour Christ.

Introduction to your personal study:

Within one day, one 24-hour period of time, I might wear as many as four different sets of clothes, depending on what I am doing. I wake up in the morning wearing my pyjamas. After a shower I change into my work clothes, usually a shirt and tie. When I come home in the afternoon I will change into my grubby play clothes and take the dog for a walk. If I have karate class that evening, I then change into that outfit. At bedtime I put on my pyjamas again. Any one set of clothes might not be appropriate for another activity. At least four times during the day I deliberately choose what are the right clothes to wear.

Paul described living the Christian life in terms of taking off and putting on clothes. Each Christian has a choice of what kinds of clothes to wear, the old clothes of the

sinful life or the new clothes of the new life given to them through Jesus Christ. It is our choice, and we must make this choice daily. Before we were Christians we had no choice, but now that we are Christians we do have a choice. We must therefore choose wisely.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you as well.

Paul's letter to the Christians in Colosse was written to people who had already entered into a relationship with Jesus and had found a new life in him. They were not seeking to gain a relationship with Christ, rather the relationship with Jesus was already intact, and they were seeking to live out that relationship. There was a group in Colosse that wanted to hand Christians a bunch of rules to live by (Colossians 2:20-23). Paul condemned such legalistic rule-keeping in order to be accepted by Christ. Instead he urged these Christians to live out their faith because Christ had already accepted them.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Colossians 3:1-4 “Set Your Minds On Things Above”

3:1-4 ***"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ . . ."*** When a person gives his or her life to Christ and is converted, he/she is freed from sin. Just as Christ was resurrected from the dead into a new kind of existence the Christian has also been raised by the power of God to a new kind of life. We don't have to wait for this new life to begin when we die, because it begins at the time of conversion. Once dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) we have been raised with Christ to live a new life (Romans 6:4).

"Set your hearts on things above. . . . Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." We must then focus our attention and thoughts on the right kinds of things, and this will enable us to live the kind of life that Christ would want for us to live. The things we think will determine our actions; therefore, a Christian should concentrate upon only those things that would be pleasing to Christ. The true Christian does not need to be uptight about his or her salvation because, ***"you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."*** We can take comfort that Jesus will keep our spiritual life securely in his care. Our spiritual well-being is never in jeopardy, because it is in the hands of the Lord of the universe. One day our struggle with sin will finally be over. And on that day when Jesus comes back, we will ***"appear with him in glory"*** and gain our eternal reward. Our victory over sin and evil will finally be complete. Because ***"Christ is your life,"*** he will guarantee your salvation. If Christ is your life, then you need to make sure that he is the focus of all your thoughts and actions.

Colossians 3:5-11 “Taking Off and Putting On”

3:5-6 *“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.”* Even a Christian will continue to struggle with sin until the day when Jesus returns to take him/her home. The good news of the Gospel is that because of Jesus we now have a choice in how we want to live. Christ gives the Christian the power to kill off any attitudes and actions that are not godly (cf. 2:20-23).

Paul listed five specific sins that every Christian should slay. **“Sexual immorality”** refers to any sexual relationship outside of marriage. **“Impurity”** means anything unclean, but here it specifically refers to one’s sexual life. A person’s sexual urges and desires can be controlled under the lordship of Christ. Sexual relationships outside of marriage are sin (cf. Hebrews 13:4), and Christians should never compromise at this point. The terms **“lust”** and **“evil desires”** refer to any cravings for the wrong kinds of things. Sexuality is a God-given gift (Genesis 2:18-24), and God’s provision for meeting a person’s sexual needs and desires is a committed, loving marriage relationship. Focusing one’s attentions, actions, or thoughts on someone outside of God’s provision is committing sin in the heart.

“Greed” refers to a person’s desire to have more. Here greed is linked with sexual immorality and refers to wanting something that is against God’s law (cf. Ephesians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:6). Paul called this kind of attitude **“idolatry,”** that is, focusing one’s attentions and energies on something other than God (cf. Ephesians 5:5). Sexual indulgence leads to an unhealthy obsession. The person who rejects godliness and encourages lust in their heart will soon be worshiping sex instead of God. These kinds of actions and attitudes belong to the old life of sin, so the Christian must systematically **“put to death”** all of these.

Another reason we should kill these things is **“because of these the wrath of God is coming.”** God’s wrath is his holy reaction against sin. God’s wrath is shown in the moral consequences that people presently experience from their own sin (Romans 1:18-32), but God’s wrath will fully be revealed in the future when he will judge all sin (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). Christ delivers the Christian from both the power of sin in this present life as well as God’s terrible future wrath (Romans 5:8-10).

3:7-8 Paul reminded the Colossians of how they had progressed in their Christian faith, **“You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.”** But now things should be different than before. Before they knew Jesus personally they were no different from the rest of the sinful world, **“but now”** that they know Jesus and his Holy Spirit is at work in their lives, their lives should display a distinct change from before.

“You must rid yourselves of all such things as these.” Paul used the picture of a person changing clothes, “taking off” the old clothes and “putting on” new clothes. New clothes represented a new kind of life. The old garments of a sinful past must be discarded like dirty old rags. Every day a Christian has a choice of what kind of clothes

to wear. We should discard certain garments and never pick them up again. **“Anger”** is the constant feeling of hatred or ill will towards another person. **“Rage”** is anger that blazes up suddenly like a volcano, such as losing one’s temper. Temper tantrums have no place in the Christian life. **“Malice”** is an attitude that wants to harm someone else. Many times we express our anger, rage, and malice in our speech, such as **“slander.”** Slander is abusive speech that tries to harm or insult someone. The information may be true or false, that makes no difference, for the speaker’s attitude is the point. A Christian should only speak words that will help others, never hurt them (Ephesians 4:29). Some things are true but are better left unspoken, because any word spoken at another person’s expense is slander. It is ungodly and unloving. Such speech tears down community and does not build it up. **“Filthy language”** refers to any foul talk that is disgraceful and obscene. This includes unclean innuendos and dirty suggestions also. Some words, expressions, jokes, and references should never enter a Christian’s conversation. Some subjects are too shameful even to be discussed.

3:9-11 The last piece of old clothing has to do with character, **“Do not lie to each other.”** A Christian should be known by truth, honesty, and integrity in both word and deed. Lying involves more than speech, for it simply means misleading someone in any way, including actions. These old garments should be put off because as a Christian **“you have taken off your old self with its evil practices and have put on the new self.”** Jesus has brought a life-changing experience for the Christian. We now have the power to overcome sin, but we must choose to exercise that power that God has given us through his Holy Spirit. We must constantly seek to live as Jesus would want us to live. But the initial conversion experience is not all that God provides. This new self **“is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator”** (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16). God is working in our life to make us look more and more like Jesus (Colossians 1:15).

The more Christians look and act like Jesus the more the barriers this world places between people will disappear. Sin divides, but Christ brings people together, drawing them into Christian fellowship. He wipes away all racial divisions (**“Here there is no Greek or Jew”**), all religious prejudice (**“circumcised or uncircumcised”**), all cultural and educational barriers (“barbarian, Scythian”), and all social and class distinctions (“slave or free”). A “barbarian” was a derogatory term for people who did not speak the Greek language. Scythians were considered the crudest and roughest of all barbarians. “Christ is all” because he is the supreme Lord of all. He is “in all” because his image is brought out in each person who truly follows him. A world (and churches) still bitterly divided by prejudices of race, color, and social status, needs to understand this liberating, dignifying, and unifying truth. Jesus wipes away all barriers. In the church all people are on the same level.

Colossians 3:12-14 “Over All Put On Love”

3:12-14 Jesus creates a new community from people of diverse backgrounds. These people all carry the same titles, **“God’s chosen people, holy, and dearly loved.”** These terms in the Old Testament referred to Israel, God’s chosen people (cf. Isaiah

44:1; Psalms 89:3-4; Exodus 19:6; Psalms 108:6). But now these terms refer to all Christians, no matter their background. God had chosen them all, set each of them apart from the world for his service, and he expressed his love for each of them.

As “Christians” we must act in a Christ-like way. Christians should discard the old clothes of the sinful life (vv. 7-9), but there are also new clothes that we should put on. **“Clothe yourselves with compassion.”** Compassion is a tenderheartedness that responds to others in need (cf. Luke 10:29-37). Compassion cannot look the other way when someone needs our help. **“Kindness”** is a gentle and loving spirit that only seeks to do good to other people, even when we have been wronged. A kind person will not retaliate or act in anger, but instead they will act in gentleness and love, seeking only the best for the other person. **“Humility”** means being willing to give up your rights and privileges to help others (cf. Philippians 2:3, 5-11). It is lowering oneself in order to build others up. **“Gentleness,”** sometimes translated “meekness,” conveys the idea of controlled strength. It is like a horse that has been tamed and is willingly obedient to its master. Unless harnessed, this strength can cause much damage, but strength under control can be focused on the right kinds of tasks. **“Patience”** is the willingness to put up with difficult people and circumstances for a long period of time. A patient person deliberately chooses not to retaliate or become bitter. Such a person has chosen to let Christ determine the correct response and will not be controlled by circumstances or feelings.

“Bear with each other” means that Christians should be willing to put up with each other for the sake of their relationship. Some people are difficult to be around, but a spirit of forbearance means that Christians are committed to a relationship even with difficult people. Therefore, forgiveness is absolutely necessary. **“Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.”** Relationships will inevitably cause some pain, and we should give up the right to bear grudges against one another (1 Corinthians 13:5). God himself first set the example of forgiveness, **“Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”** Remembering his forgiveness towards us should be all the motivation we should need to forgive others (Ephesians 4:32). Forgiving someone may not wash all the painful memories away, and neither is it a naïve attitude that nothing bad happened. Rather, forgiveness is a deliberate choice to give up the right to retaliate against someone. We should never seek to get even with someone, and we should continue in a relationship with that person in spite of what they did. By forgiving we do not act as if nothing happened, but we choose to redeem a relationship despite what has happened. Changes in the relationship may need to be made, but forgiveness is a determination that the relationship will continue. God has been willing to forgive us, so we must be willing to forgive others (Matthew 18:21-35).

“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” Paul described love as the garment that held everything else together. In fact, all of the virtues listed in these verses are simply love in action. For Paul, love was the source and the power for living the Christ-like life (1 Corinthians 13), and Christ is the chief example. Love binds people together and makes them truly one.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible study:

The Scripture passage today teaches about the kind of life a Christian should live. The "new self" described here is radically different from the "old self" of our sinful past. Christian growth is a process of discarding the old garments of sin and putting on the new garments of Christ-likeness. This process of growth is not automatic, for it takes daily decisions and deliberate effort. The good news of the Gospel, however, is that we now have a choice, and God gives us the power to live in a way that is pleasing to him.

For Personal Reflection:

1. **What have I learned from this study?**
2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**
3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

The Discipline of Right Living

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Colossians 3:1-14

Background Text

Colossians 2:20-3:17

Main Idea

Because of the relationship that we, as Christians, have with Christ, we must stop living in ways that bring dishonour to Jesus and begin living in ways that bring honour to him.

Question to Explore

What difference does Christ make in how you live each day?

Teaching Aim

To help participants decide individually on at least one change they will make in the way they live so as to honour Christ.

Connect with Life:

As the group gathers, ask them this question: "How many times do you change clothes in the average day?" (Make sure they count pyjamas, work clothes, play clothes, etc.). Most will admit to wearing two or more different sets of clothes.

Ask: "Why do people need different clothes?" (Different clothes are appropriate for different activities.) Ask, "What would happen if you wore the wrong clothes?"

State: "Today's passage describes living the Christian life in terms of deciding what clothes to wear. The old clothes of the sinful life are no longer appropriate for the new life Jesus has given us."

Ask, "Does Jesus make a difference in how I live each day?" Then ask, "Can others tell by looking at me that Jesus makes a difference?"

Guide the Study:

Briefly explain the background of the Colossians passage as given in the "Background" section. Highlight the fact that Paul was specifically speaking to people who were already Christians.

Have someone read Colossians 3:1-4.

Ask what kinds of "things" Paul might be referring to when he said, ***"Set your hearts and minds on things above, not on earthly things."***

Then ask, "Why is it important to set our heart and mind on these things?" (What we think will determine our actions.)

Have someone read Colossians 3:5-9. Make sure they understand the picture of "taking off" the old clothes. Point out that "put to death" (v. 5), "rid yourselves" (v. 8), and "taken off" (v. 9) all basically mean the same thing.

On a sheet of paper, list the "old clothes" one by one (sexual immorality, impurity, . . . slander, filthy language, lying), making sure that each term is explained.

Ask, "According to this passage, what two reasons are given that these old clothes should be discarded?" (They belong to the old life of sin [vv. 5, 7, 9]; because the wrath of God is coming [v. 6].) You may need to explain about the wrath of God from the **"Teacher Preparation"** notes.

Now say, "According to verses 10-11, what kind of barriers does Jesus wipe away?" (racial, religious prejudice, culture and education, social)

Ask: "What does the phrase, 'Christ is all and is in all' mean?" Be prepared to explain from the study notes.

Say, "Now let's look at the new clothes of the Christian life that God wants us to put on."

Have someone read Colossians 3:12-14.

On another sheet of paper, list the "new clothes" one by one (compassion, kindness, forgiveness, love, etc.), making sure that each term is explained. Note that each of these character qualities displays the character of Jesus. Point out that these are a natural result of letting Jesus take control of your life. By doing these things we do not gain salvation, rather they flow out of one's relationship with Christ.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Point out that the overall message of the scripture passage is that Christian growth is a process that is not automatic. We have daily decisions to make and we must make a deliberate effort to grow and mature in Christ. Before we were saved, we had no choice. The good news of the Gospel is that now we do have a choice, and God gives us the power to live a life that is pleasing to him. Therefore, in our daily choices of the kind of life we want to live, we must choose wisely.

Have the group look at the list of "old clothes" on the paper.

Ask, "Is there a piece of clothing on the list that you need to discard?" Lead the group in prayer asking God for the strength to get rid of it.

Have the group look at the list of "new clothes" on the paper.

Ask, "Is there a specific piece of clothing you need to put on?"

Lead the group in prayer asking God for the strength to live in this way.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

The Discipline of Right Living **Colossians 3:1-14**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Clothes, Clothes, Clothes

From the collection of pictures of current youth styles, each of you select three or four outfits that you would like to have. Glue these on a large poster board.

Discuss the importance of clothes to the teen groups with which you participate at school and elsewhere. Reread Colossians 3:1-14. What is more important?

Now, each of you choose character traits that you want to add to your dream picture wardrobe. Write your choices on the poster board.

Take the poster board(s) to the worship area at the end of the Bible study time.

One teen (or the group) will be asked to share about the meaning of the poster.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***The Discipline of Right Living***
Colossians 3:1-14**Beginning the Service:**

Sing (or play a recording) of “Light the Fire Again” as people sing-a-long and as latecomers gather for worship from Bible studies. You may wish choose other music at your discretion.

Worship leader: Our worship theme today is right living with God and with other people. Right living begins with the risk of honesty – when we dare to look at ourselves in honest reflection, when we can admit to our Lord our failings. This is when the walls in our relationship with God fall down. And this is when our worship to Him becomes powerful. Right living is possible because Jesus is alive today. This is also why our worship is powerful. Let’s enter into this experience of worship with the goal of becoming honest with our risen Lord, the living Jesus Christ.

Sing either “Because He Lives” or “Jesus Is Alive.”

Sing “He Knows My Name.”

Have a child read John 14:19-20.

Worship Leader: Say “Those who know Christ will live in Him eternally, through the joys and through life-rending trouble. Christ transcends it all.”

Sing “God Will Make A Way” or “Lord I Want To Be A Christian”

Offering:

Ask a youth to gather the offering for the day.

Praying for the World:

Have the group reflect on ways in which the offering and the clothes donation will be used to reflect God's compassion for others.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

A New Relationship Brings a New Lifestyle ***Colossians 3:1-17***

As we look around the world, we will find a great variety in the clothing of people. In some cases the clothing reflects the climate of the community. In other cases the clothing reflects the culture or beliefs of the community. As believers in Christ, the "clothing" we wear is not that which is made by human hand but it is a transformed character and heart that is revealed in the lifestyle we choose. Our passage this morning reflects that relationship and the changes in lifestyle that must occur.

Note to worship leader: If the youth of the church have completed their "Take Ten" activities, ask them to show the poster(s) they made and share the meaning.

In the opening verses of the passage the identity of those receiving this instruction is revealed. They are individuals who have died and have been raised with Christ. This is the new position of our lives in Christ. We no longer examine life from an earthly perspective but rather we are given a heavenly vantage point from which to evaluate the lifestyle we will choose. We are hidden with Christ in God. We have died to the old way of life and become a new creation in Christ. We continue to live out life on an earthly level but now we live with an eternal perspective.

The writer tells of moving from city to city as a child, and playing a game at each new site. He would ask, "What kind of person do I want to be?" In some cities he would be the serious student and in others he would be the fun-loving, active participant in as many extracurricular activities as possible. In some places he would combine all the different types. The only thing that allowed those choices was the position of being the "new kid" in school. As a believer, I am a new creation with an eternal destination of heaven and a wonderful position of being completely identified with Christ. Therefore, I can make some new choices about the way I will live.

Along with that new identity comes a new relationship. Before I became a Christian I was separated from God by my own choices to sin. I knew what was right in God's sight and I struggled against it on a regular basis. I may not have known it was God that I was fighting with inside, but I knew there was a truth that I was not in agreement with. When I accepted Christ, that changed. According the verse 12 of the passage I was "chosen by God". He took the initiative to seek me out. As a result of my yielding to the authority of Christ by accepting His evaluation and plan for my life, two things happened. I was made "holy". To be holy means to be set apart for the plan of God and cleansed of any past failure. Secondly, I became His beloved. We experience His incredible intimate love as His chosen ones.

This new relationship and position demand changes in lifestyle. Paul, the writer of Colossians, gives three lists of items we are to either remove or put on like a new piece of clothing.

That which we must put to death in our lives

The first list speaks to that which we must put to death in our lives. This list speaks of the things that we hold up as idols in our life. These idols must be thrown out of our lifestyle. Fives things are on the list – Immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed. The common thrust of all of these things is the uncontrolled desire for more. It could be sex, power or things. When your actions or thoughts are outside of God's provision, you have sinned. When the object of your focus becomes one of these things, you have taken your eyes off of Jesus Christ. We must take action to remove those idols from our life. It may require a change in schedule or places of temptation we attend. Whatever is necessary: put these things out of your life.

A change of attitude toward people

The second list focuses on attitudes toward people. We often destroy, hurt, or insult a person through the words that come from our mouth. This action is called slander. It usually comes from hatred or ill will that is boiling in your heart toward that person (anger) that boils over in a moment of rage. The desire to harm that person (malice) results in an act of slander. General disrespect for other people who are created in the image of God is often demonstrated in filthy language. All of these things we must remove from our life.

Put on a new heart

The final list calls for us to put on a new heart. This is the transformed character demonstrated in the actions of a holy and beloved chosen one of God. They are the attitudes that come from within because of the new relationship. They are kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Again these are things that reflect our attitude toward others. It is the seeking of the best for others even if it means giving up our personal rights and privileges. It is taking the time to put up with difficult people even when we have the power or the ability to hurt or destroy them. We must choose to

forgive and put up with each other for the sake of the unity of the body. We must put on love for it alone can bind us together (1 John 4:8). Love is seen as the final garment that holds all the other pieces together. It is best described in 1 Corinthians 13. And it is best demonstrated in the love that Jesus Christ had for each of us.

Call to Commitment:

Four important actions

How do we get the strength to take the actions we have discussed? The final verses of this passage speak to four actions. This week may we encourage each other to carry them out.

First, allow the peace of Christ to rule your heart. Last week we talked about prayer as the path to peace. When we reflect on our life with thankfulness for all God has done and we pour out our hearts to God, peace will rule. Pause to take each issue to God in prayer with an expression of thanksgiving for salvation and the opportunity to grow in your relationship with God.

Second, let the Word of God richly dwell within you. Spend time this week focused upon the Word of God by reading daily. May I suggest that you begin with the book of John to daily examine your life in light of the example of Christ.

Third, teach and admonish one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We need the encouragement of brothers and sisters in the faith. The greatest encouragement should come in the midst of worship as we gather to celebrate our Lord. We cannot neglect the times of gathering for worship (Hebrews 10:24-25). We will one day all worship together at the throne of God.

Finally, whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. A person's name captures the character of that person. When we act or speak we are reflecting on the character of Jesus Christ. We must examine our daily choices in the light of what it will reveal about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

May God richly bless you in the midst of your faithfulness.

Concluding the Service:

All sing: "Lord I Want to Be A Christian"

Ask someone to pray a blessing asking for Christ's grace and peace until the next meeting. Pray also for the power to live well before other people, and to live honestly before God.