

# Love Letters

## Lesson 17: Colossians 3–4

Is it possible to be saved and yet not find satisfaction and significance in the Christian life? Yes, sadly, it is possible to receive Christ as Savior but not progress very far into spiritual growth or fulfillment. God does not intend for it to be this way and Paul realized that fact; hence, he calls all believers to gain ground daily in their Christian walk by looking up to a higher perspective. Rather than simply enduring the disciplines of the sanctified life, God's desire is that we passionately pursue our relationship with Him, so that we may prosper every step of the way. Here in chapter 3 the challenge is to make the ordinary—extraordinary by placing Christ at the center of everything.

Read Colossians 3 and 4.

### Day One: The Higher Perspective

The false teachers in Colossae were attacking the deity and sufficiency of Christ. Paul attempts to correct that thinking by stating that believers do not need to follow more rules or strive for more knowledge, but rather to come to an understanding of our identification with Christ.

1. Paul begins by elevating the believers' perspective in verse 1. Why does he encourage God's children to look and think higher?

The reality that we have been raised with Christ should produce a new kind of motive in us. Paul now goes on to explain our new life in the verses that follow.

2. Because of our identification with Christ, where should the believer's mind be focused? Why (verses 1–4)?
3. In verses 5–9a, the focus shifts to the kind of behavior the Christian should not be engaged in. Where does Paul say our minds should *not* be? Why?
  - a. How is it possible to turn our minds from sinful thoughts that motivate bad behavior to God-like thoughts that glorify Him (verse 9)?

Notice within your reading of the first four verses that *Christ* is mentioned four times. Using this as his foundation, Paul will now elaborate on how spiritually focused living is based not on *our* character but on the character of Christ. Because of everything previously mentioned in verses 1–4, “Therefore,” Paul says, “put to death your members which are on the earth . . .”

4. List the specific things that are to be put to death in verse 5.
  - a. Why are these behaviors and heart attitudes to be utterly eliminated (verses 6–7)?

Some things are worthy of being put to death; others must be replaced with something else. Next in verse 8, Paul switches the imagery of what could be considered old worn out clothing that must be discarded, to that of something new put in its place.

5. What are the old habits that must be replaced with new ones befitting a godly lifestyle (verses 8–9)?

*Selah* ~

As we *put off the old*, we must also make room to *put on the new*—that which is created in the image of Christ (verse 10). Think about it: what distinctions (verse 11) have been abolished within the Christian community, revealing that your relationship with Him is really all that matters?

*Memory verse:* Colossians 3:16 NIV

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Day Two:

## The Christian Lifestyle

Reread Colossians 3:12–25.

Reading through this chapter enables us to contrast mentally the virtues of the new life with that of the vices of the old life. We see these being played out today in terms of our personal relationships. In verses 12–17, the old things now put away are to be replaced with the character of Christ.

1. Name the various aspects of Christ's character that you as a believer are to *put on* (verses 12–13).
2. The character qualities you just listed above are descriptive of God's people in the Old Testament pertaining to the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6). Consider how they might be applicable to you today as a Christian (see 1 Peter 2:9–10). Record your thoughts.
3. By what standard of measurement are you to forgive others (verse 13)?
4. Paul saves the most important aspect of the Christian's character for last; what is it and why is it so important (verse 14)?
5. What is the essential ingredient for maintaining unity in the body of Christ (verse 15)?
6. What is the aspect that ensures the believer will grow on to maturity (verses 16–17)? Whose name will be honored as we do?

### *Selah~*

When the Word of God finds a comfortable home in the believer's life there will be evidence of instruction and correction as well as corporate thanksgiving and worship. In this one chapter, Paul has gone from the higher perspective of the Christian life to the lifestyle, and now in verses 18–25, and 4:1, to the home and workplace—areas where our faith is most often tested. In a sense, he presents us with a prayer list, beginning with the relationships most important to us. Note Paul's instruction for each and in what manner *you* would pray.

- Wives –
- Husbands –
- Children –
- Fathers –
- Employees –

## Day Three: Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

Reread Colossians 4:1–6.

Paul's encouragement in chapter 4 has to do with three things: being watchful in prayer; walking in wisdom; and using words of grace, so that you have an answer for every man, woman, and child He brings across your path. Imagine what a difference *you* could make for the kingdom of God by paying attention to these three priorities.

1. Take the three aspects mentioned in verse 1 and note your thoughts on the value of each as it pertains to prayer.
  - a. Earnestly –
  - b. Vigilant –
  - c. Thanksgiving –
  
2. The fact that Paul is in prison does not prevent him from proclaiming Christ to all who would listen. Note Paul's specific prayer requests while he is in chains (verses 3–4).
  
3. For believers to remain effective in getting out the gospel message, what must they do? (Put the answers in your own words; be specific.)
  - a. Verse 5
  
  - b. Verse 6

### *Selah* ~

In Paul's day, salt was used for two main purposes: as a preservative to keep food from spoiling, and as a flavor additive. Think about it: in order for *your* words to be flavorful and long lasting, what would your speech consist of? Give a couple of examples.

- Personal: Reflect back on a few of your conversations this past week. How effective have you been in getting the gospel facts across? Please explain.
  
- There's an old saying that "you can draw a lot more people with honey than you can with vinegar." That being true, what are *you* as Christ's representative, doing to make sure you are drawing people *to Christ* rather than driving them further away?

## Day Four:

## Witness with Your Life!

Reread Colossians 4:7–18.

The remainder of chapter 4 should be examined from the perspective of more than a list of Paul's co-workers and friends. These are real individuals—ordinary in themselves—but whose lives and ministries became extraordinary because of their God! Paul mentions them as a ministry who's-who, worthy of honorable mention. Note what made them each important to Paul and the church.

- Verses 7–8: Tychicus
  
- Verse 9: Onesimus
  
- Verse 10: Aristarchus
  
- Verse 10: Mark
  
- Verse 11: Jesus Justus
  
- Verse 12–13: Epaphras
  
- Verse 14: Luke
  
- Verse 14: Demas
  
- Verse 15: Nympha
  
- Verses 16–17: Archippus
  
- Personal: Paul's consuming passion was to communicate the saving message of Jesus Christ wherever God had placed him; and to fulfill the ministry he received from the Lord. Where has God placed *you* to share this good news? How are *you* doing?

“The most important question is not how much work is being done but how much Jesus is doing through you. Look up—God's ceiling is unlimited.” —Corrie Ten Boom

Day Five:

*In Touch with Jesus ~*

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

---

---

---

---

---

2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

---

---

---

---

---

3. *LIVE*: What step of obedience will you purpose to take in your walk of faith this week?

---

---

---

---

---

*Prayer Requests ~*

---

---

---

---

