

Colossians 3:1-17 • Seeking the Things Above

Introduction

The fancy word is “protocol”, meaning a way of behaving or a prescribed code of conduct attached to a certain environment or situation. Government officials learn the proper “protocol” for each foreign government they deal with in order to communicate within the boundaries of that culture’s acceptable behavior and communication. Christians have a protocol too, but it’s not one that encourages becoming like others, but like Christ. We’re supposed to be living and behaving with our eyes focused on the heavenly; in this way others will begin to see heaven through us.

¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

⁵Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— ¹¹a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

[Read v.1-11]

Q: What is the context for Paul’s introduction in 3:1? That is, what is the “therefore” referring to?

A: He is referring to what God has done for us in Christ as stated in 2:8-15, specifically v. 13. (“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” —Ephesians 2:13) These verses state our position in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:5-6). From God’s perspective and from a spiritual perspective, we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

Q: If our position is “above,” what does Paul tell us to do as a result, and why?

A: If you are spiritual positioned “above,” then seek the things that are “above.” Why? Because our daily behavior and all our relationships ought to reflect our position “above.”

Q: Why do you think more Christians do not seek the “things above”?

A: Because either they do not know about their position “above,” or they know about it but don’t really believe it.

Application: How can we teach our children and our selves about our position in Christ?

Q: What are 4 admonitions (actually, imperatives) in verses 1-11 only for how we can fulfill in our earthly environment our spiritual position above?

A: They are listed in verses 2, 5, 8, and 9.

- “Set your mind on the things above” (v. 2)
- “consider the members of your earthly body as dead” (v. 5)
- “put them all aside” (v. 8)
- “Do not lie to one another” (v. 9)

Q: What does it mean, and how do we “Set our minds on the things above” and “not on the things that are on the earth”?

A: [Give your own answer by personal, practical application.]

Q: What does it mean, and how do we “consider the members of (our) earthly body as dead”?

A: [Give your own answer by personal, practical application.]

Q: What does it mean, and how do we “put...aside anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech” from our mouths?

A: [Give your own answer by personal, practical application.]

Q: In what ways do we lie to one another?

A: [Give your own answer by personal, practical application.]

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Q: In verses 9-10, what is assumed that we have done once we become a disciple of Jesus?

A: It is assumed that we have laid aside the old self and put on the new self.

Application: What does it mean on a personal, day-by-day practical way to lay aside the old self and put on the new self? (Hint: You might want to encourage the group members to use Scripture to support their conclusions.)

[Read v.12-17]

¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Q: In verses 12-17, what are 8 more imperatives for living out the Christian life? Examine each one of these and apply practical application to them, as has been done with the verses above. Answer the question, “How do we actually do these things?”

- (v. 12) “put on a heart of...”
- (v. 13a) “bear with one another...”
- (v. 13b) “forgive one another...”
- (v. 14) “put on love...”
- (v. 15) “Let the peace of Christ rule...”
- (v. 16) “Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you...”
- (v. 17a) “do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus...”
- (v. 17b) “give thanks through Him...”

Q: In verses 1-17, how many times do you find the phrase “one another”? What part (if any) of these 12 imperatives found in verses 1-17 are outside the context of relationships?

A: You find the phrase “one another” 3 times. However, only a few could possibly be performed outside the context of relationships, but all, in one way or another, affect relationships, whether a relationship with others or our relationship with God.