

Colossians Pt. 4

Colossians 3:1-17

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Colossians is like Paul's Spark or Cliff notes (of today's Chat GPT) which are dense summaries of the text. In Colossians, Paul is writing to people he has never met: read it alongside other letters because it's a compilation of all his teachings. It's quite packed in the first two chapters that Jesus is Supreme.

Over the next two weeks, I will cover Ch 3 which is Paul's practical application of how we should respond to Jesus as the Supreme Ruler.

We'll start with three movie references:



1. Star Wars: In this scene, Luke is wearing a blast helmet and blinded and using a sword to block lazer bolts from a robot. "I can't see anything!" he says.
2. Karate Kid: Daniel asks Miyagi to teach him karate given instructions about how to wax a car. "How will this help me?" he asks.
3. Ahsoka Series: Sabene has a blast helmet with a practice sword and her instructor Ahsoka is helping her defend herself without being able to see him.

All three of these students get frustrated with the process of learning because they don't connect what they are learning with how it will actually help them. Colossians 3 is also like this!

Col 3:1-17

3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ set your hearts on things above, where Christ is,

In this passage, notice the theme and images of baptism. In the early church, once people said they believed in Jesus, they were baptized. Later on, the church added instruction and confirmation classes before being baptized.

Following Jesus can be summarized with these four words:

**1 SINCE YOU
HAVE BEEN
RAISED WITH
CHRIST:**

Seek

Seek (intimacy)

Set

Set (direction)

Put

Put (off control) Put (on vulnerability)

Let

Let (the Spirit sing)

1. Seek Intimacy

SEEK INTIMACY

1b (seek what is above), set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.



The word SEEK is very important: We are to seek intimacy.

This word (seek) also means worship. When you worship something, you organize your life around that thing.

Why is the first thing we are called to is to seek intimacy? When we were not IN CHRIST, we had no relationship

with him and were situated back to back. Belief and baptism now puts you face-to-face with Jesus. You know that when you look at someone it's easier to have a relationship than if your back is to them. But it goes beyond this: when we seek Jesus, we are saying that **he is the only one who gets to define me and say who I am.**

However, you and I spend a lot of time asking everyone else “who am I?” and we struggle much because we don’t ask Jesus this question. This is like a mirror: Jesus is the only one who accurately reflects me as His image-bearer. Other people give us a distorted view of ourselves, even if some of what they say is true.

For example, when you walk into your parent’s house, you get a “look ” from your parents and suddenly you are a 12-year-old child instead of a 51-year-old. We have been hearing about who we are (in a distorted way) for a very long time from our parents. ***It doesn't matter if you are a master teacher or an apprentice, we are all asking, "Who gets to tell me who I am?"***

Who are you asking to tell you who you are? Life will go off in the wrong direction if Jesus doesn’t answer this question for us.

2. We are called to set direction

Col 3:2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Notice the baptism theme again here. If you want to keep hearing Jesus tell you who you are, you must set your mind on it. It’s like bumpers in a bowling alley: you need these habits to keep you facing Jesus. These questions can help us:

1. Who gets to tell me who I am? Do I really know what Jesus says about me?
2. What habits do I have that prompt me so I can hear Jesus to tell me who I am?

Col 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Paul loves to say “Christ who is your life!” But what does this mean? Does it refer to when Jesus comes back? People don’t know what glory means.

Glory is actually very exciting! If you are hidden in Christ, powerful things are happening.

Leslie Newman talks about glory as a love affair between the father and the son mediated by the Spirit and CS Lewis talks about glory as an intense dance of

relationship. When you are hidden in Christ, you are part of the dance and when Jesus appears and you also will experience this love. Get excited about this! The hope of setting my heart on Jesus is that I will get a deeper experience of this dance.

As you venture into the world, this is very helpful.

Col 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. **6** Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

How does this relate to “Put off control?” When we ask others “Who am I?” they give us a distorted view of who we are and this results in shame, disappointment, and emptiness. We need control and so we try to grab whatever we feel is missing from our lives using immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed. We worship others things that we think will satisfy what is missing. We try to grab control. These aim for our identity, which has been attacked. We try to medicate this and we worship other things. Greed and covetousness are the consumption of everything. These things are medicating us. This is why the wrath of God is coming. We are called to put these off: (it’s a ref to clothing).

Col 3:7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. **8** But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. **9** Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

When things are not working out for me (my family, my body, my bank account), I get angry (a control mechanism) and even rage. If these don’t work, I turn to malice and slander and filthy language. There is a progressive here from bad to worse. There is something called barnyard language: when we call another person a pile of poop, we degrade another person. Lying is the ultimate denigration of someone. All of these distort the truth and we want to **desperately** be in control. **This can be subtle:** a snarky comment at the dinner table can do this. The invitation is to put all of these off. The way we do this links to the habits we have in our life: These won’t exist if we are linked to Jesus. Your habits in putting them off are very important.

Col 3:10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. **11** Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

We are in the age of renewal and engaged in process of transformation: we understand that our position has nothing to do with our wealth or ethnic backgrounds. This meant a lot to the early church because it was a mix of slaves and the wealthy: your slave could be your elder. It turns everything upside down. When we step into God's community, we lay down our wealth, our poverty, and our slavery out and we walk in the same spaces in love. This needs vulnerability! It looks like this:

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

How do we do this? Maybe you think you need to be aware or go to an accountability group but these may become behavior-oriented. I must fix my behavior! But Paul wants **Jesus to define us** and then put on new things. It's hard to be angry when you are kind or compassionate with someone. These put you in a vulnerable space: when I'm angry with someone, I don't have hope for them. Hope sets me up to be disappointed. The ultimate picture of love and vulnerability is Jesus: he was kind, compassionate and gentle and he died. When you do these things, you will also die: you are being kind, compassionate and gentle to broken people. Jesus's sacrifice binds them all together. I know when you treat me badly, it's not a statement about who I am because I know I am God's chosen and dearly loved by the God of the universe. This empowers me to return kindness to you. The way of Jesus is to be vulnerable: **this is where the power is** in our lives and in the lives of others.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. **16** Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

I am skipping a lot here: but don't miss the word LET. You could be defensive but you must LET the peace of Christ rule. The only way is to LET it come over you: accept it. That's what we must do individually when we come together, in our families or in our communities. This is how we will walk and engage others. We let this message dwell among us. We teach and admonish one another: there are many musical terms in how to do this: something significant happens to us when we sing. **The teaching and admonishing are given power through singing.** You come here and you realize this is a

divine moment where the Spirit can transform you. The way he will do it is by your engagement through singing and speaking to one another and eating together. Something happens: I can't really put words on this.

17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

He is saying there is a call to SEEK, SET, PUT, LET...do all this in the name of the Lord. How? I think it's connects to these statements:

"We believe what we pay attention to. What we consciously focus on, we remember. And what we remember shapes our expected future."

-Dr. Curt Thompson

The way we let the peace of Christ rule is by paying attention to what is happening: the conversations we're having, the words we're singing. If you do this and then you go home and rehearse what you learned and said and what happened here today, that will shape the hope you have. When we have conversations about what happens on Sunday, it changes what God does in our lives. Most of the time, we walk away from church and do other things but we don't rehearse what God has done. We rehearse conversations that made us feel bad or the disappointments we feel that someone didn't talk to us. This is what we pay attention to and consequently we don't believe.

My invitation is to go home and rehearse what happens here today.