



The last four weeks, we have been learning about the lies we tend to believe about ourselves, marriages, faith and even about God Himself. This week we are going to learn to make sure that we don't fall prey to these lies by turning to the ultimate truth that is only found in Scripture.

In James Montgomery Boice's book, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace*, I found these words from a hymn describing God's Word:

*When God from heaven gave His Word
His Word was all-sufficient;
It needs no words I may have heard
To add or be in it.
So I will take God's Book and read,
To learn what God desires;
The Bible gives the strength I need
To do what God requires.**

When we read and study the Bible daily, we are affirmed and convicted by the very words of God. We will find that God's character is good, holy and perfect, and we are assured that His inspired Word is the truth we can and should believe!

Grace and Peace!

Deering Dyer
Small Groups Pastor

Group Study Questions

1. How often do you read and study the Bible?
 - a. Every day
 - b. A couple times a week
 - c. Not near as much as I need or want to
 - d. I think I'll make it a New Year's resolution

Discuss your answers as a group.

2. Discuss what you expect to receive when you read God's Word regularly?

3. Read Proverbs 14:12 and Hebrews 4:12. How do these passages put God's Word into perspective? Would you rather have human wisdom that leads to death or God's Word that leads to life? Discuss.

4. The Bible is the best selling book of all time. Why doesn't society reflect this? Discuss.

5. Many believe that the Bible is true but know very little about what is in it. How is **KNOWLEDGE** of the Bible helpful in the way we live out our faith?

6. It's not enough for us to know what's inside the pages of Scripture, but we also need to know how to use scripture properly. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and discuss.

7. Pastor Tim taught us that when we devote time to learning the Scriptures, we will have a proper **PERSPECTIVE**. What happens when you start to see life from God's point of view? Discuss.

8. Read James 1:2-4. Does this passage give you a new perspective on the problems of life? Discuss why or why not.

9. God's Word also gives you **CONFIDENCE** that you are living a life that pleases Him by *convicting* us when we sin. Discuss how conviction of sin leads to confidence.

10. Discuss a time you felt convicted by the Holy Spirit while reading the Bible. In what ways does that help you build confidence as you grow in your faith?

11. Read Hebrews 5:14. How does this passage say we become mature Christ Followers? As a small group, how can we help one another develop the habit of Bible study?

12. How does God's Word help us to build **CHARACTER**?

13. Take a few minutes and think of the character defects you see in yourself. How does God's Word help us to "put on the new self"? Read Colossians 3:1-16 and discuss.

14. What does it mean to have "the Word of Christ dwell richly in you"? Make it personal. Discuss.

For Further Study and Review

Colossians 3:1-16

The Bible Knowledge Commentary¹

3:1. Since believers have not only died with Christ but **have also been raised with Christ** (cf. Rom. 6:8-10; Col. 2:12-13), they should **set their hearts on things above**. That is, believers' lives should be dominated by the pattern of heaven, bringing heavenly direction to their earthly duties. "Set" (*zēteite*) means "to seek or strive for earnestly" (cf. Rev. 9:6; 1 Cor. 7:27). Fixing their attention decisively toward "things above" involves centering their lives on the ascended (Eph. 4:10), glorified (John 17:5; Phil. 2:9) **Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God** (Ps. 110:1; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). This is His seat of divine authority because He has defeated the forces of evil and death (Heb. 2:14-15).

3:2. Also Paul wrote, **Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things**. That is, concentrate your concern on the eternal, not the temporal. "Fix [your] eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). The similarity of the two commands in Colossians 3:1-2 reinforces their impact. "Set your hearts on things above" is *ta anō zēteite*, and "Set your minds on things above" is *ta anō phroneite*. The first suggests striving; the second suggests concentrating.

Paul was not enjoining an other-world asceticism; he had just condemned that (2:20-23). He was saying that life *in this world* will be better if it is lived by a power *beyond this world*, the power of the resurrected, ascended, glorified Christ. The "earthly things" (*ta epi tēs gēs*, lit., "things upon the earth," 3:2; the same Gr. words are used in v. 5) to be avoided are moral, not physical (cf. immorality, impurity, lust, etc., in v. 5). Paul was not encouraging a kind of Gnostic disdain for material things. Every physical thing God created, including the body and sex, is good (cf. Gen. 1:27-30; 1 Tim. 4:1-4). However, since having a physical body does give occasion for the works of the (moral) flesh (cf. Rom. 7:4-6), Paul warned against setting one's affections in this area and perverting God's purpose for them.

3:3-4. At the moment of his salvation, a Christian **died** to the evil of the "flesh," the sin nature (Rom. 6:3-8; Col. 2:11), and his **life is now hidden with Christ in God**. "Hidden" implies both concealment and safety; both invisibility and security. He is not yet glorified, but he is secure and safe in **Christ**. In fact, Christ is his very **life**. Christ said He was going where "the world will not see Me anymore" (John 14:19).

But when He will appear at the Rapture (1 Thes. 4:16-18), believers **will appear with Him** and will be glorified. As John put it, "We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (i.e., believers will be glorified as He is glorified; 1 John 3:2; cf. 1 Cor. 13:12; Col. 1:27). So Paul added a new direction to the believers' focus of attention: they should look *upward* to Christ's reign over them in heaven and also *forward* to His return for them in the clouds.

Putting off the sins of the old life (3:5-11).

3:5-6. Paul's imagery moved from death and life to putting clothes on and off. **Put to death . . . whatever belongs to your earthly nature**. The Greek tense in this command suggests a decisive action, as if Paul said, "Mortify it! Do it now! Do it resolutely!" Of course, God has already done it, but Christians are to *know* this, *count* it to be true, and *act* accordingly (Rom. 6:5-14). In other words, they are not to go on living as though they are still alive to sin when in actuality they are not. They are to put away that old life, which springs from their earthly natures. "Whatever belongs to your earthly nature" is literally "the members that are upon the earth" (*ta melē ta epi tēs gēs*). These contrast with the "things above" (Col. 3:1; *ta epi tēs gēs* is also used in v. 2). This "earthly nature" is the "old self" (or "sinful nature" [2:13], or "old man" [κν]; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9). Some take this to mean the persons Christians were before conversion, whereas others take it (more likely) to refer to the evil tendencies in believers today (i.e., their "old natures"). Even if it means the former, the net effect is the same: they should not live as they did before, because they are new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

The list of evil activities flowing from man's earthly nature includes **immorality** (*porneia*, "fornication"), **impurity** (a wider perversion), **lust** (*pathos*, "uncontrollable passion"), **evil desires** ("illicit craving"), and **greed** (or coveting), **which is idolatry** (because it seeks satisfaction in things below and not above). Similar lists of sins appear often in Paul's writings (Rom. 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5). Paul

¹Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:679

cf. *confer*, compare

lit. literal, literally

Gr. Greek

v. verse

i.e. id est, that is

added that **because of these evils the wrath of God is coming**. The words “is coming” render the present tense *erchetai* (lit., “comes”). This suggests that God’s wrath has already begun (cf. John 3:36). It will, of course, culminate in His future climactic visitation on evil (Rom. 2:5; 2 Thes. 1:7-9).

3:7-9. Though the Colossian Christians **used to walk [live] in these evil ways**, before they came to know Christ, Paul commanded that they do so no more. **Now you must rid yourselves of all such things**. The word “rid” (*apothesthe*) means “to put off” like a suit of clothes. In its ethical use here it means “throw it off like a dirty shirt” (cf. Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22, 25; Heb. 12:1; James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1). In the Bible, behavior is often likened to a garment (e.g., Job 29:14; Ps. 35:26; Isa. 11:5; Rom. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:8).

Repulsive habits—**anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language**—do not fit or suit Christians. They are unbecoming to believers (cf. Eph. 4:17, 31). “Anger” (*orgēn*) is a chronic attitude of smoldering hatred, whereas “rage” (*thymon*) is an acute outburst. *Thymos* elsewhere is rendered “outbursts of anger” (2 Cor. 12:20), “fits of rage” (Gal. 5:20), and “rage” (Eph. 4:31). “Malice” (*kakian*, the vice that lies below anger and rage as their root) is forbidden, as is “slander” (blasphēmian, “railing or evil speaking”). “Filthy language” (*aischrologian*) is shameful or abrasive speech. Neither should Christians **lie** (cf. Eph. 4:25) for truthfulness is essential in followers of the One who is “the Truth” (John 14:6).

Lying and all other vices are inappropriate for a Christian for at salvation he discarded his **old self** (lit., “the old man,” i.e., the former sinful way of living, characteristic of the unregenerate; Col. 2:11, 13a) **with its practices** (cf. “died” in 2:20; 3:3).

3:10. A Christian is to **put on** (cf. v. 12) **the new self** (new way of life or disposition). Hence his conduct should be in accord with his new position. This “new self” needs constant renewal or refreshing—it **is being renewed** (pres. tense), in order to keep it victorious over sin. Paul also expressed this idea of continual renewal in 2 Corinthians 4:16 (“Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day”); in Romans 12:2 (being “transformed by the renewing of your mind”); and in Ephesians 4:23 (“to be made new in the attitude of your minds”).

This renewal of the new self is **in knowledge** (eis epignōsin; cf. Col. 1:9; 2:2). It takes place as a believer comes to a personal, deep knowledge of and fellowship with Christ. And the renewal is **in** (*kat'*, “according to”) **the image of its Creator**; its goal is to make believers like Him, for the “new self [was] created to be like God” (Eph. 4:24). Adam was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), which included a moral and intellectual likeness to God. Though this image was not erased (but only effaced) by the Fall (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9), yet it was corrupted and needs to be repaired and renewed. Christians become increasingly like the Lord as they refresh their new natures, yielding to the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work. And in the resurrection believers “shall bear the likeness of the Man [Christ] from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:49). Then the task of restoring God’s image will be complete, for “we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2).

3:11. In Christ distinctions are removed. These include national distinctions (**Greek or Jew**; Jews called all those outside their nation Greeks; cf. Gal. 3:28); religious distinctions (**circumcised or uncircumcised**); cultural distinctions (anyone foreign to Greek culture was a **barbarian**, and a **Scythian** was a wild, savage nomad); and economic or social distinctions (**slave or free**). If a Greek, an uncircumcised person, a barbarian, a Scythian, or a slave became a believer, he was a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), a “new self” (Col. 3:10), just like a Jew or free person who became a Christian. For **Christ is all, and is in all**. That is, normal human distinctions are overruled and transfigured by one’s union in Christ.

All barriers are destroyed in Christ, and all believers are truly “created equal.” So it is to be expected that each believer—regardless of his nationality, former religion, culture, or economic standing—should do away with his former sinful practices and should live in accord with his “new self.”

Putting on the virtues of the new life (3:12-17).

Because of their new lives in Christ all believers are called on to clothe themselves in virtue, letting Christ’s peace rule their hearts. His Word should dwell in them richly, and they should do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

3:12. Again Paul called on believers to take a decisive action: **Clothe yourselves** (*endysasthe*). Because they have “put on (*endysamenoi*) the new self” (v. 10), they should live accordingly, with appropriate attributes and attitudes. In verses 8-9 Paul listed six vices (anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, and lying). Now in contrast to them, Christians—as **God’s chosen people** (cf. Rom. 8:33; Titus 1:1), **holy** (“separated to God”; cf. Col. 1:2) **and dearly loved** (cf. Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:9-11, 19)—are to have several virtues. These include **compassion** (*splanchna oiktirmou*, lit., “tender sympathy of heartfelt compassion”—an unusually touching expression; in Phil. 2:1 Paul joined these two nouns with “and”), **kindness** (benevolence in action; cf. 2 Cor. 6:6), **humility** (a lowly attitude toward God; cf. Phil. 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5), **gentleness** (*prautēta*), meekness, a lowly attitude toward others, **and patience** (*makrothymian*, self-restraint, a steady

e.g. *exempli gratia*, for example
pres. present

response in the face of provocation; cf. Col. 1:11). The last three of these are mentioned in the Greek in the same order in Ephesians 4:2; and Galatians 5:22-23 in the Greek includes three of them: patience and gentleness, as well as kindness.

3:13. Furthermore, believers are to **bear with each other** (i.e., "put up with each other") with the attitudes just mentioned in v. 12. Also they are to **forgive whatever grievances** (complaints) they **may have against** others. How? By forgiving **as the Lord forgave** them, graciously and freely (Eph. 4:32). Grudges have no place in a Christian's life for they may lead to the sins mentioned in Colossians 3:8-9.

3:14. But **over all these virtues** Christians are to **put on love**. As Paul wrote elsewhere, "The greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). In one's catalog of virtues love should be the cover, because it is of supreme importance and is the perfect bond, holding **them all together in perfect unity**.

3:15. Believers are also to **let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts** because they are **called to peace** as **members of one body**. The closer believers are to Christ (and His likeness), the closer they are to each other. In interpersonal relationships "peace" (transcendent, God-given tranquility) should rule (brabeuetō, "arbitrate, decide every debate"; a word used only here in the NT; cf. katabrabeuetō, "decide against," 2:18). Christ's followers who have put on the virtues Paul listed (3:12-14), are concerned about being arbitrated in every trying circumstance by His peace, not by their wrangling. Also Christians are to **be thankful** (cf. Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:12; 3:16-17; 4:2; 1 Thes. 5:18). An attitude of gratitude contributes to an enjoyment of spiritual tranquility, whereas grumbling makes for inner agitation.

3:16. The new life Christians must "put on" is one in which **the Word of Christ dwells richly**. Christ's words were recorded by Spirit-guided apostles (cf. John 14:26; 16:13; 20:31). The words of the Bible, God's written Word, are to **dwell in** believers. That is, by study, meditation, and application of the Word, it becomes a permanent abiding part of one's life. When the words of Christ become part of a believer's nature, they spring forth naturally and daily in **psalms** (songs from the Book of Psalms), **hymns** (other songs of praise), **and spiritual songs** (as opposed to secular odes) **with gratitude** (en tē chariti; lit., "in grace"). This can mean either (a) God's grace, (b) graciousness in Christian singing, or (c) Christian thanks. As suggested by the NIV it probably has the third meaning. Such joyful singing is not only to please oneself or others but is to be praise **to God**. Through this Spirit-filled kind of life (cf. Eph. 5:18-19), Christians can **teach** (instruct) **and admonish** ("counsel") **one another** (Col. 3:16; cf. "admonishing and teaching" in 1:28) if it is done **with all wisdom** (*sophia*; cf. 1:9; 2:3; 4:5) and not tactlessly (cf. Gal. 6:1).