

Colossians

UNDERSTANDING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH



Colossians 3:11-17 Inductive Bible Study Guide with Discussion Questions

Outline

- I. Put on the new self (11-15)
- II. God's Word in us (16-17)

I. Put on the new self (11-15)

Discussion Questions

- What do we learn from verse 11? How does this apply to the church today?
- What kind of relationship do we have with God according to verse 12?
- How can we "put on" a heart?
- Why does it refer to the heart instead of behavior?
- How are we to treat the people around us?
- Which of these areas do you most need to grow in?
- How can you start to change?
- Can anyone share an example where they failed in any of these areas?
- How about a case where someone else showed one of these qualities toward you?
- What does it mean to "bear with one another"?
- Do you ever find it difficult to forgive others? Why?
- What is the reason given here for why we are commanded to forgive each other?
- Why is love referred to as the perfect bond of unity?



Cross-References

2 Corinthians 3:18 – And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Colossians

UNDERSTANDING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH



Galatians 2:20 – I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Psalms 51:10-12 – Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Romans 12:5 – So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Galatians 5:22-23 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Introduction:

In the following passage we are going to study a summary of what it means to be new in Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 we learn that believers are like new people. The old has gone and the new has come. Are you still the old you? Can the people closest to you tell a difference in your life from before? Is there even a new you?

As we will see in the following passage, a believer is not just the same person with a new set of clothes. They are to be completely transformed from the inside out. Our relationship with Christ ought to change who we are, what we do, and even how we think. God wants us to be well-rounded and obedient to Him in each of these areas. Imagine what the church would be like if believers lived up to the standards Paul sets in this passage. Imagine what you would be like. Imagine what your family could be like. God doesn't want us to trudge through this world satisfied with our own mediocrity. He wants us to soar like an eagle as His strength energizes us to treat the people around us in the right way.

1. *Verse 11* – No matter what you were like prior to receiving Christ, you can be forgiven. In the Bible we see murderers (Moses), drunkards (Noah), adulterers (David), fornicators (Samson), liars (Peter), cowards (Elijah), and swindlers (Jacob) be forgiven and accepted by God. Each of us can be complete in Christ regardless of our past. At the same time, we must remember that

Colossians

UNDERSTANDING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH



these sins must not characterize our lives anymore. We must be renewed. Is Christ the priority in your home? Is He in the center of your heart? Is He all in all to you? Are you setting your mind on heaven or on earth? Now is the time to make Christ the priority before another day is wasted.

There is no distinction among believers because each of us has received God's grace and mercy. You are not better or more important than any other believer. Treat others like fellow heirs of God and not like the older brother treated his younger brother who returned to their father in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).

2. *All believers have been chosen of God* (John 15:16; Ephesians 1:4; Romans 8:29) - It is this relationship with God that enables us to put on any of the following characteristics. These are not things you can do on your own through sheer will power. Not only has He enabled us to do them, but His choice of us should motivate us to live out these traits. Without Him we are lost sinners without any hope of rescue. Because of His choice, we are transformed sons and daughters, sitting at His own table. Through Him we are holy. We are loved by Him. We owe everything we are and have to Him. That should motivate you to live for Him!

3. *Put on a heart of...* – All of the following character qualities are not external behaviors. They are not like a switch which you can just flip on whenever you feel like it. Our heart must be renewed. These qualities must flow out of a heart that is right with God. They come from the inside, not the outside. How can you put on a heart like this? This is not just a minor procedure. It is major surgery. We need a heart transplant. David knew this and prayed for this.

For us, a one-time heart transplant is not enough. For some transplants, the patient needs to take medication every day for the rest of their lives so that their body doesn't reject the new organ. In a similar way our old flesh is still fighting against this new heart. We need to take in the right "medication" to continue stimulating and renewing our heart.

4. *A spiritual checkup* – From time to time we need a spiritual health check. That is what this passage is.

Colossians

UNDERSTANDING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH



Activity

First, I would like each of you to go through these verses (12-17) on your own and write down every character quality that Paul talks about in a list. Then spend a few minutes thinking about your own “performance” in each of these areas. For each area, write down any recent failures you have had. Then for each area write down one sentence of how you need to grow.

For example:

Patience – I failed to be patient when I raised my voice to my son when he made a mess. I need to grow in patience toward my children by keeping calm and quiet even when they do annoying things.

Next, before you go through these verses spend some silent time in prayer. Each person should spend this time confessing their sins in these areas and asking God to strengthen them to grow.

For each quality discuss the following questions:

What does it mean? Can you give any examples (negative or positive) of Biblical characters who did (or didn't) do this? What other verses touch on this? Let each person pick one area and share how they have failed in the past and how they intend to grow in the future.

- Compassion
- Kindness
- Humility
- Gentleness
- Patience
- Tolerance
- Forgiveness
- Love
- Peaceable
- Teaching/Admonishing/Sharing
- Thankful

Colossians

UNDERSTANDING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH



II. God's Word in us (16-17)

Discussion Questions

- How can we let the word of Christ richly dwell in us? What will this look like when a person does this?
- Who is supposed to teach and admonish others?
- How can you grow in wisdom as you do this?
- What does it mean to admonish others with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs?
- What topics should fill our minds and our conversation?
- Do you intentionally share with other believers like this?
- What should our hearts be focused on when we are singing?
- What guiding principle do we find in verse 17?



Cross-References

Ephesians 5:19-21 – speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 16:24 – Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Proverbs 4:20-23 – My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Psalms 119:105 – Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

Jeremiah 23:29 – "Is not my word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Colossians

UNDERSTANDING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH



Verse by Verse Commentary

1. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you – God’s Word is meant to be bubbling up inside of us like a brook. Too many believers go to church on Sunday and listen to the sermon and cannot even remember what it is about. Too many times we read the Bible and then forget what we read about. It goes in one ear and out the other. If God’s Word is to richly dwell within us, we can’t be like this.

We should often be thinking about and meditating on God’s Word. Do you keep thinking about the verses you have read during the day? Do you often think of verses which apply to the situation you face? When you are lying on your bed at night, are you thinking about God’s Word or worrying about something? During church and Bible study are you thinking about the passage or are you absent minded?

For the Word of Christ to richly dwell within us we must also allow it to transform our lives from the inside out. It must impact every area of our lives. We should put the things we are learning in the Bible to practice. It should affect how you work in your company, how you treat your co-workers, how you treat your family members and friends. If God’s Word is richly dwelling in you, then you will be zealous to obey it every day of the week.

2. *Verse 16b* – In addition to meditating on and acting out God’s Word, the second half of the verse shows that we must be sharing it with those around us. This will come quite naturally if you are often thinking about it and also making a point to do it. We will typically talk about what interests us and if we are interested in the things of God this is what we will be talking about.

The command to teach and admonish is given to all believers without exception here. It is not limited to pastors, elders, missionaries, or people blessed with the gift of teaching. Believers young and old are to be teaching the Word and sharing with others around them. Here, we see that this sharing does not have to be in a formal context like a church service. It is to occur in everyday life. The world is our classroom! These verses are very similar to what we learn in Deuteronomy 6:4-10.

Colossians

UNDERSTANDING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH



It is this kind of sharing which is to take place throughout the week as we live our lives that can be very powerful. A pastor often does not know what issues or struggles the various individuals in the congregation are facing. As a body, we are to be helping each other by sharing God's Word with each other, not just relying on the pastor. Here are just a few examples of things we should be sharing about with other believers.

- If you hear a brother or sister take God's name in vain, remind them of the relevant verses. They may very likely be young in the faith and not realize this is wrong.
- Parents, share together about what God's Word says about raising children.
- Fathers, challenge each other from the Word to lead their families in worship.
- Brothers, keep each other accountable in purity.
- Sisters, remind other sisters about the Biblical standards of modesty.
- Pass on verses and principles which you have learned from the Word which have motivated or encouraged you.

As a body, we are to care for one another. Remember back in Exodus, Moses could not deal with all of the people's problems. He instead developed a system (after advice from his father-in-law) by which people would help each other as the first, second, and third option before bringing large problems to him (Exodus 18).

We should naturally be sharing with other believers what God is teaching us (this concept is, by implication, teaching others). How exciting and uplifting it would be if believers made a habit of communicating with each other in this way. Unfortunately, we often get together and complain about our lives or share about trivialities.

Colossians is a book about Christ as the priority. In these verses we learn that He is to take the priority in our communication. Is Christ at the center of your communication? If someone were to print out your everyday conversations would Christ be a regular point of discussion, or would they have to go through page after page before He is even mentioned?

Colossians

UNDERSTANDING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH



Application: One good idea is to intentionally talk about meaningful and spiritual things when you get together with friends. If you don't plan ahead to ask specific questions or bring up specific topics, then your time with brothers and sisters may be dominated by chit-chat. Practice the art of asking deep questions.

3. *Verse 17* – Christ is to take the priority in every aspect of our lives including both our communication and our behavior. Whenever we make a decision, we should ask if it will glorify Christ. Moreover, we should live our lives with a thankful spirit because of the transformation He has wrought in us.
