

The Point: How we live reflects on the message we share.

The Passages: Colossians 3: 1-3, 12-17 (The Message)

Sometimes, it is easy to fool people – at first. But when they get to know us, who we truly are becomes real to them. They don't hear just our words; they see our actions. Christians must proclaim Christ's saving grace, but people will see what our daily living actually says. When we fail to live in obedience to Christ, we become hypocrites of the worst kind. When we live and act in God's will, the outside world will see that our trust in Christ does change a life.

Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians focusing on the deity of Christ in order to counter the false teachers who were trying to infiltrate the church there. Paul issued a challenge to them to demonstrate the gospel through not just their theology, but also through their behavior.

COLOSSIANS 3: ¹⁻² *So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective.* ³ *Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God. He is your life.*

In his first two chapters of Colossians, Paul provided a great explanation of Jesus' divinity. Jesus holds the keys to salvation and we are to reject rituals and regulations imposed by false teachers. But freedom comes with responsibility. Hold tightly to true teachings, but also we need to live our lives in light of those beliefs.

1. Since we have been raised with Christ, we must seek the things above, pursue something with a strong desire to possess it. Seek spiritual, eternal things instead the things of the world which do not last. 2. The second imperative ties in to the first – set your minds on the things of God. Paul challenged the Colossians and us to avoid being distracted by the temptations of the world. The focus must be on things above. We all acknowledge that we live in a physical world and have a need to acquire and use materials things. But we must always remember the true Source of our earthly blessings. God supplies ALL our needs, and every blessing is a gift from Him. In verse 3, we are reminded that it's one thing to know what we should do, but it's also important to understand why. We are dead to the old way of doing things. And this new life is not really our own. We live because Christ lives in us.

COLOSSIANS 3: ¹²⁻¹⁴ *So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.* ¹⁵⁻¹⁷ *Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.*

Paul turned to advise the Colossians and us of the “new look” we should put on. We are to adorn ourselves with specific characteristics reflecting our beliefs and new life. Think of how we sometimes dress up to support our favorite sports team or cause. Do you have a special hat or jersey you like to wear on game day? We are sending a message regarding our support for our favorite team. Wearing the character of Christ does the same thing for believers. Instead of representing ourselves to others, we portray Christ to others when we display His characteristics. Those traits should include:

1. Compassion – a tender heart that sympathizes with others, especially those suffering or in need.
2. Kindness – treating others with benevolence
3. Humility – reject pride and arrogance
4. Gentleness – considerate of others and putting their needs ahead of our own
5. Patience – accept insult or injury without retaliation
6. Bearing one another –don’t be easily offended
7. Forgiveness – God forgives us and expects us to offer grace and forgiveness to others
8. Love (agape) – If we love, we will have little trouble living out the other qualities.

Paul challenged us to live like Jesus and demonstrate His character to the watching world. He charged them to teach and encourage each other. Paul emphasized that they could do this not only through the scriptures, but also music could play a vital role in the Christian life. He noted that music can teach us rich truths of God’s Word. He identified psalms – sacred poems and songs from the Old Testament. He also noted hymns, which are festive songs of praise and that tell of our faith and that of God. Also, he stated that spiritual songs of various musical compositions could be important factors. How has music helped shape your knowledge and understanding of God?? I find that often, God reveals a hymn or psalm to my mind as I meditate on His word. I like to keep hymn books close at hand to look those up as they are revealed to me, and find that often they stay with me throughout my day, keeping me close in thought to what God wants to reveal to me.

Paul’s summary statement in verse 17 touches every part of our lives. The ultimate goal of the Christian faith is to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. The character qualities mentioned in verse 12 should be present in our lives but not done out of ritual or obligation. We must connect our service to the love and grace God has poured out on us in Christ. Paul ended this passage by returning to the idea of gratitude. God has done so much for us, and we can never repay his generosity. But we can live in a way that honors Him and points others towards Him.

Pray:

God our Father, we are eternally grateful for what you have done for us. Help us always to set our minds on the things that are pleasing to You.

Betty Jane Duncan

(with credits to Bible Studies for Life Leader Guide)