

Sterling Sermon Guide
Colossians 3: Living Out the Christian Faith
Moses Falco, June 18, 2017



How to use this guide

- The main purpose of this guide is to encourage groups and individuals to dig deeper into the topic of a sermon. This guide summarizes the sermon and provides discussion questions and suggestions of how to continue the conversation in order to apply the topic to real life.
- Listen to the sermon online (sterlingmennonite.ca) if you were not in church that Sunday or if you want to hear it again. If this sermon is not on the website, please contact our office.
- Re-read the scripture text and recommended reading.
- Select a leader in your group to guide your conversation and to lead you through this study.
- Use what is helpful for your group, but do not be bound by this guide. Let the Spirit lead you. You may be surprised where you end up.

Colossians 3: Living Out the Christian Faith
Part 3 of a 4-part series

Scripture Text: Colossians 3:1-11

Recommended Reading: Colossians 3:1-17

Prepare Your Heart: Colossians 3:12-14

Sermon Nugget: Chapters one and two deal with the reality of the Christian faith. They speak to who we are and what Jesus has done for us. They speak about the mystery of God, which is Christ in us. In chapter three, things get really practical. We learn about what it means to live out this Christian faith we have in Christ. We hear of things that we should put to death and things that we should clothe ourselves with. But we cannot take chapter three out of the context of chapters one and two. We can't live the Christian life without Christ in us.

Actions start in the mind

In chapter 3 of Colossians, Paul gets practical. It seems almost like chapters 1 and 2 are the precursor for what the Christian life actually looks like. It is vitally important for us to know who Jesus is and what He has done for us, but we also need to know how the life of Jesus changes us and transforms us as we follow Him.

In Colossians 3:1-2, Paul calls us to set our hearts and minds on things above rather than on earthly things. “Things above” refers to things of God, heavenly things, things of the kingdom of God. These are strikingly different than the things of this world that do not last. This echoes Jesus’ words when He said that we should not store up treasures on earth where they will be destroyed.

If we want to be people who live out the Godly kingdom, we need to also keep our minds on heavenly things. When we think and focus on ourselves and how we can make something of ourselves, our actions will reflect that. If our focus is bitterness and revenge, it is likely that our language will show that. So when Paul tells us to think on things of God’s kingdom, it is so that our actions would also reflect the life of Christ to the people around us.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Reflect on a time when you did something you knew you shouldn’t and later regretted. What was your thought process that led to that decision? What about an incident where you showed the kingdom of God to someone around you?
- 2) What can you do to help keep your mind on things of God and His kingdom?

Our identity in Christ

There is a very real and practical reason why Paul believes the Christian life is possible. The only reason he suggests that we keep our minds on things above and can clothe ourselves with the things of Christ, is because of what Christ has done for us.

Colossians 1 already revealed to us that the hope we have is that Christ is in us. In Colossians 3:3-4, Paul reiterates that we have died in Christ and that our life is found in Him. We are a new creation. We are being transformed. We are made clean. Although we may not see it materialized in our life time, our resurrection is hidden in Christ and we will share in the glory of His return.

Put very succinctly, we are made new in Christ which means we have a new identity. We are born again and are now fully adopted into the family of God. God is our Father. The sin that once was so much apart of us is no longer there. We have been given a clean slate. This identity is at the core of us living out the Christian life.

Discussion Questions

- 3) What is your identity? Of all the things you are and are about, where does being a child of God fall on your list?
- 4) Even though it is true that we are given new life in Jesus, it is difficult for us to let go of the guilt and shame and accept God’s love for us. How can communities of faith help each other accept the love of God and their new identity in Christ?

Taking off and putting on

Paul uses the image of taking off and putting on clothes to describe our new selves in Christ. We used to do certain things that are now being renewed in Christ. Because of our new identity, we should put on the new clothes Christ that have been given to us.

Clothes are a part of us. They are what people see. But they are not the core of who we are. When our core identity changes, our clothes can change as well.

This new identity that we have breaks the boundaries what once divided us. Being a child of God is the most important aspect of who we are. It is more important than our social status, wealth, gender, age, etc. We are one in Christ.

Activity

Make a list of all the things (clothes) that Paul tells us to take off because we have been raised in Christ. Now make a list of the things (clothes) that Paul tells us to put on. Put these lists side by side and compare. Which looks more attractive to you? Which do you think the world would like to see? Which one looks more like you?

Picture This

Imagine you started your own clothing company (think of a creative name). To model your clothes, you look for someone and find the perfect fit. You tell her you want her to model your clothes and sign her to a lifelong contract. Then you send her a whole wardrobe of clothes and tell her to show up at the first photo shoot. When she arrives, you are confused and offended because she is wearing clothes from your rival clothing company. You ask her why and she tells you she just didn't feel like changing and wasn't sure whose model she was. You tell her that she already is your model. You already signed the contract and sent her the clothes. All she needs to do is put them on.



Jesus has already paid the price. He saved us free of charge. He has made us His children and wants to dwell in us. He wants to transform us and make us new. In a sense, He has already signed the contract and sent us the clothes. Our identity is secure in Christ. Paul is telling us how to live out our identity in Christ that we already have. In a general sense, as we see in Colossians 3:17, we should do everything as if we were doing it for God.

Discussion Questions

- 5) We can learn and be encouraged so much by stories. What are some of the ways that you have lived out your identity in Christ? What stories of others living out their identity in Christ have been encouraging for you in your own walk?
- 6) What other thoughts, reflections, questions, or concerns does Colossians 3:1-17 raise for you?

Resources for Further Study (available for loan from Sterling)

Colossians & Philemon by Ernest D. Martin (Believers Church Bible Commentary, 1993).

Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon by Ralph P. Martin (Interpretation Commentary, 1991).

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*"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid;
that foundation is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11*