



Community Group Discussion Guide

Living in Light of Our Current and Future Hope
October 8, 2023 | Colossians 3:1-4

MOTIVATE

Starter Questions:

- ⇒ ***What is a personal goal or endeavor that you have set your mind to? What practical steps did you take to set your mind on this goal?***

DISCUSS

Colossians 3 is a continuation of Paul's teaching to the church in Colossae, but marks a shift in his tone and emphasis. In Colossians 2, Paul primarily warned against false teachers and provided negative cautions to the believers as they were confronted with this false teaching. In Colossians 3:1-4, Paul shifts toward more positive encouragement and direction for these believers. Throughout the rest of the letter, Paul appealed to the Colossians to live lives pleasing and honoring to the Lord.

- ⇒ ***Why is it important that Paul did not just focus on confronting the false teaching in Colossae, but also included encouragement and direction for the Colossian believers?***

Colossians 3:1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Paul opened up his positive exhortation by reminding the believers of their positional standing in Christ. In using the phrase "you have been," he reminded them it is God's already accomplished work, rather than their own efforts, that was the starting point for their spiritual growth. Before we have done anything, Christ has already been raised, and because of this reality, we have new life in Him.

- ⇒ ***How might the reality of knowing it was Christ's already accomplished work, and not their own merits, have been encouraging to the Colossian believers?***
- ***How should it be encouraging to us today as well?***

Paul then moved on to discussing how these believers should respond to this already realized positional standing. Because of the new life believers have in Christ, we are now called to "seek the things that are above." This marks a shift of the believer's focus upward and is a contrast to the things that are on earth. The idea of seeking is that our hearts' passions and desires would be directed toward our eternal hope, and not towards temporal, fleeting, worldly pursuits. When we "seek the things that are above" we are deepening our knowledge of Christ. We are seeking to "know him and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10). We also seek Him by living for Him and in alignment with His will, as Matthew 6:33 reminds us we are to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

As we seek to live for Christ, our devotion "should be measured by their value in Christ's kingdom, their purpose in accomplishing His mission, and their contribution to building His church" (Christ-Centered Exposition p. 79). We are to be His ambassadors on earth, living sent, and intentionally making disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).

- ⇒ ***How should being raised with Christ redirect your life's pursuits and perspective?***

Finally, Paul reminded the believers of Christ's supremacy. In reiterating that He is "seated at the right hand of God," they were pointed to the authority of Christ and His ability to make intercession with the Father.

- ⇒ *Read Psalm 110:1. Why is it encouraging to know that Christ is seated at the right hand of God and will ultimately destroy His enemies?*

Colossians 3:2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Paul continued to encourage the believers to reorient their lives toward Christ. In verse 2, he narrowed the focus to the believer's mind. Again, Paul made the contradiction between the temporal nature of worldly pursuits and the eternal nature of heavenly pursuits. In instructing them to "set [their] minds on things that are above," Paul reminded them that they were to interpret the world according to the heavenly realities that are already theirs in Christ (see verse 1). In a similar fashion of contrasting the world and heavenly realities, Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

As we set our minds on the heavenly realities that we have in Christ, we are sanctified more and more. We are conformed to the will of God (Romans 12:2), encouraged to fulfill the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-38), given protection of our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7), renewed in our hope (2 Corinthians 4:16-18), and given the mind of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:16).

- ⇒ *What are some things you are tempted to set your mind on that are worldly in nature?*
- ⇒ *What are some things you set your mind on that are part of the heavenly reality we have in Christ?*
 - *As we "set [our] minds on things that are above," what are some of the ways we are made more like Christ?*
- ⇒ *Read Romans 12:2. How does this passage call us to renew our minds?*
 - *For what purpose are our minds renewed?*

Colossians 3:3-4 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

In verses 3-4, Paul completed his conditional statements made in Colossians 2:20 and 3:1. The believers were to stop "promoting self-made religion" and instead seek and set their minds on things above because of their life in Christ.

Paul then encouraged the believers with the truth that their "life is hidden with Christ in God." Because of their trust in Christ, they were secure in Him. This is similar to the security of God's people referred to in Psalm 27:5-6 and Psalm 31:19-20.

Finally, Paul further emphasized the eternal security of God's people by reminding them that when Christ returns, believers will "appear with him in glory." Followers of Christ have a personal relationship with Him, are secure in His salvation, and have a promised inheritance to take hold of. Because of this, the believer should live with a sense of urgency, living as "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20) in a broken and desperate world.

- ⇒ *What does it mean for our lives to be hidden "with Christ in God?"*
- ⇒ *What does this teach us about our future hope?*
- ⇒ *How should knowing that we have a promised eternal inheritance lead us to live with urgency to tell others about Jesus?*

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application:

When believers trust in Christ and are raised with Him, we are given new life. This life is one that is defined by following Christ in true obedience and with sincere passion. Our lives are changed as Jesus reshapes our desires, purpose, and will to be more like Him. We also find true life-giving hope in the promise that Jesus will return and make all things perfect one day.

- ⇒ *How do we find life-giving hope in the promise that Jesus will return and that we “will appear with him in glory?”*
- ⇒ *How can you share this life-giving hope with those around you this week?*

2. Pray: Thank God that He sent His Son to rescue us from our sin and to give us new life in Him. Ask God to help you set your heart and mind on things that have eternal value. Pray for protection from desiring worldly things. Thank God for giving us an eternal hope that we can take hold of by trusting in Christ.

STUDY: Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *ESV Study Bible*, page 2298.
- *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Colossians and Philemon*, pages 70 – 83.
- *NIV Life Application Study Bible*, page 2012.