



Community Group Discussion Guide

The Christian Life

October 29, 2023 | Colossians 3:12-17

MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

- ⇒ *What is your favorite item of clothing? Why?*
- ⇒ *Can you name some specific articles of clothing you associate with certain people or situations?*

DISCUSS

In Colossians 3:12-17, Paul gave the Christians in Colossae practical advice on their daily lives, continuing his clothing metaphor of taking off the old life and putting on the new. First, however, Paul reminded them of who they really were in God's eyes as a way of encouraging them to continually strive for the standard Christ established. The Judaizers made the Colossians feel inferior, incomplete, and lacking in what was necessary to be equal to the Jewish Christians and worthy before God.

- ⇒ *Why must we be continually reminded of who we are in God's eyes?*

Colossians 3:12-14 *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

To counteract the false superiority claimed by the Judaizers, Paul referred to the Colossians with three terms. These were originally used as designations for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament but Paul applied them to the Christians at Colossae. Paul reminded these new believers that those who follow after Jesus are truly God's chosen ones, holy, and beloved.

A. Chosen ones: The Jews were the people of God, chosen because they were descendants of Abraham through whom God established His special nation. Just as the Jews were chosen, Christians are chosen by God because we are united to Christ by faith.

B. Holy: The term "holy" means to be separate. God separated the Jews from the rest of the nations for a unique purpose. They were to be the people through whom the Messiah would come. Their religious practices, their history, and their lifestyle were all given to them by God to set them apart from the other nations. Just as the Jews were a holy nation, Christians are also to be set apart by the way we live our lives in order to glorify God and to prepare the world for the return of Christ.

C. Beloved: The Jews were beloved by God in that He sent them prophets, gave them His Word, protected them, and promised them salvation. Just as the Jews were beloved, Christians are also beloved of God because we receive fulfillment of all the promises God made to the Jews about a coming Savior.

- ⇒ *Of these three terms, which is currently the most meaningful to you? Explain your answer.*
- ⇒ *What comes to mind when you think of being chosen by God?*
- ⇒ *Discuss what Paul meant in 2 Timothy 1:9: [God] who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.*

These titles Paul used were not only applied to Israel in the Old Testament, but also to Jesus in the New Testament: He is the chosen One, the holy One, the One supremely beloved by the Father. It is in Him that Christians find our identity as God's chosen people, holy, and dearly loved. God has assured us in Christ that our membership in His people, our being "set apart" as holy for His service, depends not on our goodness but on His grace, not on our loveliness but on His love. God doesn't choose people based on their own merit. He chooses them based on His purposes and His grace. As a result, Christians now enjoy the favored position as heirs of Israel's privileges.

⇒ ***Why is it vital we remember that God didn't choose us based on our own merit?***

Earlier in his letter Paul reminded the Colossians who they were before God called them and set them apart (Colossians 1:21-22). Paul wanted believers to remember that while we were at one time separated from God, Jesus died for us so we could experience the fullness of God's love. This is the truth of the gospel; this is God's design for us. Being set apart by God means our lives take on a whole new look, one that is drastically different from the world around us.

Once Paul reminded the Colossians of their true standing with God on account of Christ and reassured them that they were not second-class citizens in comparison to the Judaizers, Paul set forth the different characteristics of the standard of Christian living. He depicted this with his clothing object lesson.

⇒ ***How should wearing "Christ's clothing" affect the way you live your daily life?***

⇒ ***How should life in Christ affect the way you treat others?***

In Colossians 3:5-11, Paul spoke about what must be "put off" in order to follow Christ. In verses 12-14, Paul specifically turned to the "putting on" of the believer's new self. This involved specific characteristics that should be present in our daily lives--as much a part of us as our own clothing:

- Compassionate: Heartfelt sympathy for those suffering or in need.
- Kindness: The helpful, genuine spirit which meets needs through good deeds. This is the concrete action of compassion.
- Humility: Proper estimation of self which allows us to serve others without caring whether or not it is noticed.
- Meekness: Power under control that refuses to demand one's rights and that creates a gentle willingness to make allowances for others.
- Patience: The capacity to bear injustice or injury without revenge or retaliation.
- Forgiveness: The underlying principle is clear: forgive as the Lord forgave you. It is utterly inappropriate for one who knows the joy and release of being forgiven to refuse to share this blessing with another. It is also highly presumptuous to refuse to forgive one whom Christ Himself has already forgiven.
- Love: The final garment to be put on is love itself, which will hold the rest in place: and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. The other virtues, pursued without love, become distorted and unbalanced. We cannot truly exhibit these Christ-like qualities without love.

⇒ ***Can you add any additional insight into any of these virtues Paul listed?***

⇒ ***Which of these attributes is challenging for you? Explain your answer.***

⇒ ***How is God currently working in your life to help you put on these characteristics of your new nature?***

God hasn't set us apart to live according to our own strength. When Jesus reconciled us and made us blameless before the Father, He began a process we call "sanctification." This means that, although we are not yet perfect, God is working in and through us so we can live the life for which He set us apart. It is only by the strength of God working in us that we can demonstrate these characteristics and accomplish His good purposes. This is what it looks like to be set apart; this is what it looks like for God's people to be bound in love.

- ⇒ ***What does our life look like if we are bound by love?***
- ⇒ ***How does being bound by love lead to perfect unity?***

Colossians 3:15-17 *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

When love has its full effect in the Christian community, not only do God's people experience unity as one body but also peace. This not just the mere outward absence of hostility. It is "the peace of Christ" and it is to rule our hearts. The Greek word for "rule" carries the overtone of someone acting as an umpire or arbitrator.

- ⇒ ***How does Christ's peace rule our hearts differently than the peace offered by the world?***

Paul also challenged the Colossians to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly. God's Word should have a permanent place in believers' hearts. His Church is to be stocked with good teaching as a palace is filled with treasures.

- ⇒ ***What is the difference between knowing the Word of God and knowing it richly?***
- ⇒ ***What are you doing to attain such knowledge?***
- ⇒ ***Why do you think Paul used the word "dwell" when talking about the Word of God?***
- ⇒ ***The "you" in verse 16 is not singular but plural. What does this mean to you?***

In verse 16, the wise teaching and admonishing Paul wrote about are to be part of a life of thankfulness that overflows into singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Warren Wiersbe writes, "There is (according to Paul) a definite relationship between our knowledge of the Bible and our expression of worship in song. One way we teach and encourage ourselves and others is through the singing of the Word of God. But if we do not know the Bible and understand it, we cannot honestly sing it from our hearts."

- ⇒ ***Describe a worship song that is meaningful to you because of its direct connection to Scripture.***
- ⇒ ***How does music enhance your worship of God?***

Paul closed the circle which he began in Colossians 2:6: Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. In verse 17, Paul described our entire lives as acting "in the name of the Lord Jesus." This means both representing Christ and being empowered to do so. To do everything in the name of Jesus is to act consistently with who He is and what He wants. Paul expressed the same thought in 1 Corinthians 10:31: So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

- ⇒ ***What does "whatever you do" cover?***

All we do, we must put to simple tests: What would Jesus do or say? Is this something that I can do in His name? Is this something I would say in His name? Would I be doing this or saying that if Jesus were here standing right beside me?

Everything we do or say should be done or said according to Jesus' character and will. Believers should so clothe themselves with Jesus Christ that when people look at us, they see Him reflected.

- ⇒ *Briefly describe an action or reaction that honors God in your life.*
- ⇒ *How could we use words that are consistent with the nature of Christ in our daily lives?*

Paul closed verse 17 with a defining mark of a believer: *giving thanks to God the Father through him*. This is the third time in this passage Paul mentioned being thankful. A Spirit-filled, Word-filled believer gives thanks to God for everything.

Being thankful is the single greatest act of personal worship a Christian can render to God. Thankfulness is the epitome of true spiritual worship. The ability to offer thanks in the midst of any situation, good or bad, is the ability to praise God. A thankful heart sees beyond the difficult circumstances to the sovereignty of God.

- ⇒ *Why must God's chosen people be thankful?*

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: Christians are to be transformed in Christ. This transformation produces a completely changed lifestyle—stripping off old vices and putting on new virtues.

- ⇒ *Clothing choices are typically an expression of how we want people to view us. What are some things God wants to produce in you that could cause people to view you as Christ-like?*
- ⇒ *What changes does God need to make in your life to develop virtues that are consistent with the intent of this passage from Colossians?*

2. Pray: Ask God to give us discernment to understand what is really important in our lives. Pray He will help us “to be dressed” in ways that honor Him. Spend time in worship expressing your thankfulness to God through Christ.

STUDY: Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

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