



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2017-18 Leader Commentary

Unit 3: Dare to Be Different
Session 2: Make Up Your Mind (see pp. 146-149)

The Question: What does living holy have to do with my mind?

The Point: We can't live holy without a holy mind.

Background Passage: Colossians 3

Focal Passage: Colossians 3:1-10

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "What does living holy have to do with my mind?" and drive home this one truth: We can't live holy without a holy mind.

Focus on These Points

Elevate Your Focus
(Col. 3:1-4)

Paul was known for his mission and evangelism efforts. It was common for him to write to the early churches to help them build a firm spiritual foundation. His letters typically began with spiritual doctrine and ended with moral implications of those truths. In Colossians 3, Paul's chief aim was to share God's expectations of holiness for His people. He explained how believers in Christ were holy because of their salvation and relationship with Christ. He also affirmed that a holy lifestyle was the by-product of salvation, not a prerequisite for salvation. The false teachings that surfaced during this time were causing confusion, and Paul sought to bring clarity. His intended audience in chapter 3 included Christians in the Colossian church—people he knew to be believers despite his use of the word "if" (v. 1). The verbiage here should be understood as "since."

Paul introduced language in Colossians 2:12-13,20 regarding baptism and reiterated the verbiage in verse 1: "You have been raised with Christ." In doing so, he conveyed the death of the Colossian believers' old ways (prior to their conversion) and the new life in Him after their salvation. Here, Paul is not suggesting that baptism by immersion brings about salvation, however it is a symbolic representation of the spiritual change that has taken place. We nurture godly values when we "seek the things above" (v. 1). That means we turn to God first and seek the counsel of godly teachers. We reject worldly instruction and traditions. In turn, our actions will reflect what is above.

Those who have died in Christ are also "hidden with Christ in God" (v. 3). With this statement,

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Paul may have been implying any combination of the following truths. 1) Believers' salvation is eternally secure, 2) Christ is the source of eternal life, and 3) Unbelievers don't understand the new life believers have, so it's said to be "hidden." When Christ returns, everyone will recognize Christ and His followers. Believers will share in Christ's glory (v. 4).

Your Behavior Follows Your Focus (Col. 3:5-6)

Paul continues his instruction to the Colossian believers by building on his previous encouragement in Colossians 3:3-4: Believers have "died" (3:3), are "hidden," (3:3) and will appear with Christ when He returns in glory (3:4). Paul uses his baptism verbiage again, "put to death" (v. 5), to reveal what Christians should do with sin. God doesn't want sin to hamper our usefulness or pollute our minds.

Paul lists several sins in verse 5 that have divided or damaged Christian marriages, families, ministries, and entire congregations. However, believers should ensure their moral compasses point them toward purity, forgiveness, and love. We should attempt to "encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thess. 5:11).

We must continually put to death sin in our life. We do this by yielding to the indwelling Holy Spirit and killing the desires of our "earthly nature" (v. 5) or "members which are upon the earth" (v. 5, KJV). The members referenced in the latter translation include the parts of the body (hands, feet, arms, ears, and the like). Through these members our sinful thoughts are conveyed.

In Paul's list of sins (v. 5) that believers should exterminate, we find sexual sins in the forefront. This is no coincidence; sex sells, finds an easy audience, and provides gratification of the flesh. Following sexual immorality and impurity are two practices involving internal longings: lust and evil desire. Both can lead to sinful actions. Lust involves ungodly passions that lead to sexual indulgences. Evil desire involves yearning for something that is prohibited or unlawful. Both of these practices involve gratifying all types of physical desires.

For those who still choose to be disobedient by embracing an earthly nature, God's wrath awaits (v. 6). Because He is righteous, He responds to sin with punishment. Holy living is what He requires—no exceptions.

Don't Go Back (Col. 3:7-10)

When Paul writes "once walked" (v. 7), he is combining all the behaviors and activities of the Colossian believers' prior sinful lifestyle into one phrase. Previously Paul instructed the Colossian believers to kill their earthly nature (3:5). Now he commands them to discard their sinful ways as they would ragged clothes (v. 8). The phrase translated "put away" literally means to "take off" something.

Paul constructs another list of unethical and immoral behaviors believers should throw

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away. We don't get to choose what items we'll obey. Paul says "all" of the behaviors on this list (vv. 8-9) must be disposed of. Compromises and negotiations aren't valid options.

Starting the list are anger and wrath (v. 8). Subtle differences separate the two. Next on the list are three more actions that could include sins of the tongue: malice, slander, and filthy language (v. 8). Malice is one's intention to bring ill will upon someone through some act of cruelty. And, one who slanders others aims to ruin others' reputations. Filthy language is concerned with obscene or abusive language. Slander and filthy language can be used to convey malice.

Lying (v. 9) wraps up Paul's list. It damages relationships by breaching trust and respect. Since Satan "is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44), lying is considered a characteristic of the unredeemed. Lying is part of the old self—or old way of life—that was "put off" (v. 9). The act of putting off (v. 9) is yet another metaphorical reference to clothing being removed. Not only have believers put off old behaviors, but also we've "put on the new self" (v. 10). This new self functions best when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. And, as we grow in our knowledge of Christ and our intimacy with Him increases, we become more Christ-like, reflecting the image of our Creator (v. 10). We are renewed!