

FOLLOWING JESUS: SUBVERTING THE

EMPIRE

STUDY GUIDE

The Christian's New Clothes

Colossians 3.1-17

WELCOME & SHARING

Share any announcements...

- Mazatlan Mission Trip is Feb 20-25. If you missed the info meeting last week and want to learn about the trip, contact Pastor Josh (joshua.reitano@gmail.com).
- Floral Ave gets nearly 1,000 trick-or-treaters every year. We're looking for some folks who will take the lead on hospitality for the church on Halloween night (Monday October 31). It would involve hanging out on the front steps, handing out candy, hot chocolate (and maybe hot dogs). It could be a fun thing for some friends to do, especially if you live in a place without a lot of trick-or-treat action. We'll have a budget for all the supplies, candy, etc. If you're interested, please message Pastor Josh on The City, or email (joshua.reitano@gmail.com).

OPENER QUESTION

What is the best Halloween costume you've ever worn? (either as a child or an adult)

STUDY/DISCUSSION

We are journeying through the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossian church in September and October. This week we're studying Colossians 3:1-17.

Note: In this section, Paul begins to offer the solution to the questions about what it looks like to pursue Jesus. In contrast to the false teaching of moralism and legalism, Paul paints the picture that life is found IN CHRIST and the Christians' position with him.

Read: Colossians 3:1-17

1. Have you ever bought a new outfit that you really loved or was really important? What was your experience of putting it on for the first time? How did it make you feel?
2. In verses 1-4, Paul gives the basis for the Christian life. What does he say? List out some of the things that are true about Christians.

3. When you think of where you stand with God, what typically comes to mind? How does that compare with what Paul describes in verses 1-4? How would your life and walk with Christ change if you believed more that these things are true about you?
4. In verses 5-10 Paul gives a list of things that followers of Jesus are not to participate in. Many of these things describe the cultural climate that we live in. What does it look like for the church to be a community that doesn't participate in these things? What are some implications of that? How can we support one another in pursuing a life free of these things?
5. In verse 11, Paul writes "*Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all, and in all.*" Paul paints a picture of the church that is not divided by racial, socio-economic, class, or culture. How are we doing as a community? What would it look like for your group to begin to embrace this reality in the place where God has placed you?
6. In verses 12-17 Paul uses the metaphor of "putting on new clothes" to describe how the Colossian Christians are to live. What does he describe?
7. Are these the things that first come to mind when you think about pursuing the Christian life? How would your life change if you were to pursue some of the things listed here (compassion, patience, forgiveness, love) just as much as spiritual practices like prayer and bible study?
8. What is one thing you want to take away from this passage or our discussion?

NEIGHBORING EXPERIMENT OF THE MONTH: Try to meet one neighbor you don't know yet and learn something about them. (If you've met and talked about this, give a report...have you met a neighbor you didn't know before?)

PRAYER

As you get to know each other as a group, it's good to keep the prayer time a little lighter and help set the tone of how you'd like the prayer time to be as everyone is just getting to know each other. You can close in prayer, ask a few folks to pray, or break into smaller groups. Try using "conversational prayer" where folks pray briefly in a sentence or two (not "prayer speeches"), with normal words (no thees and thous), and can pray more than once (no "one and done" rule). Basically, pray to God like you're talking with one another.

What should we pray about? The most natural thing is to ask for personal requests if folks are willing to share, though in these first few weeks, people may be somewhat hesitant. Instead, you can pray in response to the passage, or simply focus your prayers on the growth and development of your community group.

LEADER'S NOTES

Having established the supremacy of Christ and salvation in Christ, in chapter 3 Paul turns his attention to the practical implications of living out what it means to be united to Christ by faith. He begins by describing the status of believers and then the servanthood that follows from that status. In this way the **indicatives** of the gospel (who we are by virtue of God's grace) drive the **imperatives** for our lives (what we should do in accordance with God's Word).

The new status that believers possess includes being raised and seated with Christ at the right hand of God in heaven (v. 1), having certainty of their future state of glory (v. 4), becoming equal heirs of God's kingdom with all other Christian believers (v. 11), and being forgiven by Christ (v. 13). Believers already possess many benefits tied to Christ's resurrection, ascension, intercession, and glorification. Some of these blessings, however, will not be fully realized until Christ's return. Thus, believers live in an already/not yet (or "eschatological") tension. The blessings of the final age have dawned right now, in the middle of history, becoming ours through union with Christ. We are therefore pilgrims who, though our destiny is secure, are called to journey through life with faith and obedience.

In light of these many gracious eschatological blessings, Paul calls on the Colossians to seek, out of gratitude to and love for God, the knowledge and wisdom that comes from Christ alone (vv. 1–2). More than this, Paul summons them to serve others in a manner consistent with the characteristics of Christ's kingdom. He describes Christlike servanthood as both a "putting off" (vv. 5–11), no longer practicing the old vices that characterized their lives before Christ, and a "putting on" (vv. 12–17), practicing the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (cf. Gal. 5:22–23). This ongoing process of becoming a Christlike servant (sanctification; cf. Phil. 2:12–14) occurs only because of the change in status (justification, etc.; cf. Rom. 3:21–31) that God has granted. It is as we learn of God's love for us that our hearts are changed and we are moved to obey him from the inside out.