

Colossians 3:5, 10, 14 NLT - 5 So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. ... 10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. ... 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

What does Paul tell us to do to be renewed (growing, strengthened, refreshed) in v. 10? What are you doing to better know God, the one who created you?

If you read verses 11 – 17 you will find more ways to live as our true selves, and in our new nature. But we find the bottom line in verse 14, and that is to love as Jesus loved. Being bound together in harmony is one way we see heaven coming near to the earth.

WRAP-UP

Heaven is not just the good place you go when you die. It is God's kingdom and that is any place He rules. We can help bring the reality of heaven to earth by focusing more on heavenly and less on earthly things. That means living in the new life Christ offers us and not in our old nature, which we put to death when we followed Jesus. The real version of you is empowered by Christ, separate from the old sinful nature, and a reflection of our Creator and His love.

MEMORY VERSE.

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

- *Colossians 3:17 NLT*

PRAYER (20 MIN) Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge - Do a "reality check" this week. Are you clinging to the world's reality too tightly? What do you need to distance yourself from to break ties with the old life and embrace the new you?

"Back to Reality"

Prison Letters- #13

INTRODUCTION

In writing to the Colossian church, Paul began his letter by stating who Jesus is, and then he pointed to the new life Jesus offers us through His death and resurrection. Now in chapter 3, Paul begins to apply those truths to how we should live considering these facts. Paul encourages us to seek heavenly rather than earthly things. As Christ followers, we are no longer tied to the corruption of the world, we are citizens of heaven. And heaven is not a post-mortem destination, it is our reality right now as we live in God's kingdom and under His rulership in our lives.

Ice Breaker

Do you watch any "reality programs"? How much do you think is real and how much scripted?

Key Passage

Colossians 3:1-2 NLT - 1 Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. 2 Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The Reality of Heaven

Matthew 3:2 NLT - 2 "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

If Paul tells us that God wants our focus on heaven, then we need to understand what heaven really means.

What images do you normally associate with heaven? Do you think of heaven as a place, and if so, where do you find heaven?

Jesus taught many parables that explained what the kingdom of heaven was like. When John the Baptist told people to repent, he said it was “near”. The word used by both John and Paul was *engizō* and it means to draw close or join one thing with another. Heaven, it turns out, is not a physical place in the clouds, but it is any place where God reigns.

Matthew 6:10 NLT - 10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

How does the “Lord’s Prayer” express the idea of Heaven being close to or joined to earth?

“God’s kingdom’ in the preaching of Jesus refers not to postmortem destiny, not to our escape from this world into another one, but to God’s sovereign rule coming ‘on earth as it is in heaven.’ It is a picture of a PRESENT reality, the heavenly dimension of our present life. Heaven, in the Bible, is not a future destiny but the other, hidden, dimension of our ordinary life - God’s dimension, if you like.

-NT WRIGHT - “Surprised by Hope”

The quote above is about the reality of heaven. If the kingdom of heaven is in fact wherever, and whenever God is sovereign, then how do you experience heaven daily? Have you considered what it means to live as a citizen of God’s kingdom?

2. Heaven Seeker

Colossians 3:1 NLT - 1 Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand.

When Paul says “set your sights” it is the word “zeteite” which translates to our word for seek. We are to look for, and seek out the place where God rules. This isn’t the only time we are told to do so.

Matthew 6:33 NLT - 33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Jesus tells us above all else, the Kingdom of God (heaven) is what we should seek. When you consider seeking the kingdom of God (heaven) how would you do that in your daily life? What brings you to a place where God reigns over all else, and what gets in the way? The idea of seeking is active. What do you think it takes to continue to seek the Kingdom of God over a lifetime? Have you known someone who is actively seeking God in their everyday life?

3. The Real You

Colossians 3:3-4 NLT - 3 For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

Paul wants to remind his readers that when they became Christ followers, they died to their old nature, to their old lives, and they received a new life which comes from the power of Jesus, who is the source of life. This is huge part of focusing on heavenly versus earthly things.

John 20:31 NLT - 31 But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

Romans 6:5 NLT - 5 Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.

In what ways is our old life apart from God different from the new life you have in Christ? What was the focus, the limitations, the things that used to be most important?

Living in our new nature is a process, sometimes we stumble and cling to the old life when we should be letting go. In case you aren’t sure what things were a part of your old nature, Paul gives some specific examples of things we need to separate ourselves from and what it means to live in our new nature, our hidden life in Christ.