

# COLOSSIANS

## ALIVE IN CHRIST

H

### (4) "Dressing in our New Nature"

#### HIGHLIGHT: Colossians 3:1-4:1 NLT

*Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.*

#### Colossians 3 (NLT)

##### vv. 1-25

**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. **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.

**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. **6** Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. **7** You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. **8** But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. **9** Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. **10** Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. **11** In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

**12** Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. **13** Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. **14** Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. **15** And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

**16** Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. **17** And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

**18** Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord.

**19** Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

**20** Children, always obey your parents, for this pleases the Lord. **21** Fathers, do not aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged.

**22** Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Serve them sincerely because of your reverent fear of the Lord. **23** Work willingly at whatever

you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. **24** Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. **25** But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God has no favorites.

## Colossians 4 (NLT)

v. 1

1 Masters, be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master—in heaven.

## EXPLAIN

E

*The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.*

A few of us may remember that awesome moment in July, 1969, when Neil Armstrong stepped out of the "Eagle" onto the moon's surface. Most of us have seen some of the "space walks" surrounding the International Space Station. Whether walking on the moon or floating in the quietness of outer space, astronauts are entering an environment in which it is impossible to survive apart from their space suits and support systems. But because of the capabilities of their unnatural environment—their space suits and their identification with them—the astronauts are able to regard themselves as dead to their hostile surroundings and alive to walking on the moon and floating around in space. "...the believer must understand that 'in Christ' he is no longer totally at the mercy of the inhospitable environment of sin but is alive to all the power and life of God Himself" (Stuart Briscoe, Romans, p. 137). Paul urges us in this chapter to make sure we are "dressed out" in Christ for the challenge of walking out our faith in a hostile environment.

### Colossians 3

**vv.1-4** Paul spent two chapters telling us about our new nature as a result of the Person and work of Christ Jesus. He is no phantom; He is real. He is God and "everything was created through Him and for Him (see 1:15-20). We are no longer at the mercy of our flesh / sinful nature because **our life is hidden with Christ in God. We died to the old life** that was devoted to **the things of earth**, but the corruption of that dead body can still contaminate us. It is rotten and it is dangerous. We have an *unnatural environment*; His name is Jesus! **[He] is your new life**. Put Him on and come alive to everything He is. Walk in this hostile environment with confidence in Christ (see 1:27).

**vv.5-11** The **so ("therefore" NIV and ESV)** of v.5 points to what has gone before. It is because Christ is our life that we are called, not to an everlasting struggle in our own strength (we are all too familiar with losing that battle) but to one in dependence on the power of the glorified Lord! So, **put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you** (see v.5, 8, 9, and other passages such as *2 Corinthians 12:20-21* and *Ephesians 5:1-5*)—*we are not who we used to be!* **God's wrath is coming** on the stuff that belongs to the old person (see *Romans 1:18, 28-32*). **Put on your new nature** ("new" in the sense of time; "recent") **and be renewed** ("new" in the sense of quality; different from what was before) **as you learn to know your Creator and become like Him**. As I learn more of who I am supposed to be in Christ, I will put to death anything that is *against God*. Breathing the atmosphere of sin is just as deadly as breathing the deadly atmosphere of outer space. But we are IN CHRIST! He is the air we breathe; He is our victory for living the new life! And it is for **all of us**. Not just the initiated (like the false teachers), not just the religious, the sophisticated, not just those who enjoy the pleasures of this life. **Christ is all that matters,**

**and he lives in all of us.** This is the good news. God is ready to do for any of us what we cannot do for ourselves.

**vv.12-15** When the Prodigal Son came home the father gave him new clothes and shoes (see *Luke 15:20-24*). He was no longer dead: he was alive. He needed clothes that matched his new status. We are the **holy (set apart) people God loves**. We need to dress like “family.” It’s not an option. We can’t pick and choose the “clothes” we want to wear. Jesus’ words are not wrapped in mystery. If we are not taking our stand with Him, then we are opposing Him; if we are not working with Him, then we are working against Him (*Matthew 12:30*). Here are the clothes that bear the monogram of God: **tenderhearted mercy; kindness** (the virtue of making a neighbor’s good as important to me as my own); **humility** (a proper estimate of myself—a sinner deserving hell, but saved by the grace of God and only the grace of God); **humility leads to gentleness** (not insisting on my own rights, but submitting to the will of God, courteous—even when it hurts) and **patience** (the resolute refusal to retaliate in contrast to what our old nature does without thinking). **Making allowance for others’ faults and forgiving offenses against us** demonstrates our understanding of God’s love (*Romans 5:6-8*)—a **love** that we should extend to all around us (*1 Corinthians 13:1-7, 13*). All of this is a pretty tall order. That is why we must clothe ourselves with Christ. He made our peace with God (*Romans 5:1*). And now **the peace that comes from Christ must rule our hearts. We are called to live in peace.** Paul is saying “peace” should be the umpire of our hearts. When there is a dispute on the ball field the umpire has the final say. “Peace” is our umpire. There are times when I don’t want to do the right thing; I don’t want to do the loving thing; there is an argument in my heart between love and bitterness; kindness and retaliation. It is the umpire called peace that settles the conflict in my heart. The attitude of peace must rule in the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace.

**vv.16-17** “Garbage in; garbage out” has become a household word in our digital age. But it is not new. We must be careful about what we allow to **fill our lives**. The **message about Christ** is the only message that will bring redemption to our lives and give hope to a world that lies in darkness. There is no mystery in Him. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinner”—and no sinner is beyond His reach (*1 Timothy 1:15*). There’s no better place to keep that message in the front of our minds and hearts than in a church that **teaches, counsels, and sings with thankful hearts**. That’s the only way to be a dynamic **representative of the Lord Jesus**. Let’s always be encouraging each other to gauge every word and action with this question: *is it godly, it is beneficial?*

**vv.18—4:1** Paul gets specific with his application of what he has just written. He uses everyday-life examples: *relationships*. Family and work. His basic injunction is relationships are reciprocal. That’s a turn-around from the cultural norm that a man owns his wife and children, and a master can do whatever he wants with his slaves. Christianity began a cultural revolution. Relationships are **in the Lord**. The whole life of a Christian is to be *lived in Christ*. **The wife is to submit to her husband, but the husband is to love his wife** with the tenderness and compassion that Christ loved the church (see *Ephesians 5:21-26*). **Children are to obey their parents but fathers** are to refrain from harshness and **aggravation that will discourage their children**. **Slaves are to obey their earthly masters, working willingly at whatever they do and masters are to be just and fair to their slaves—remembering that they have a Master—in heaven**. Every person is made in the image of God. “No man is without his rights, but equally no man is without his obligations. It is an ethic of mutual responsibility” (William Barclay). The only way this would work is when followers of Jesus took off the old clothes and dressed in their new natures. How beautiful it is. Life in Christ—life in the One who came not to be served, but to serve.

## APPLY

A

*Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.*

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. How do we clothe ourselves with our new life in Christ (vv. 1,10) and put to death our old sinful nature (v.5)?
3. What responsibility do we have to "teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives"?
4. Why do we forgive "anyone who offends us"?
5. How do you live out submitting to your husband and loving your wife and "never treat[ing] them harshly" (v. 19)?

R

## RESPOND

*The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.*

1. Verse 4:1 says, "Masters, be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master—in heaven." What implications does this have for us in how we treat our family? Our co-workers? Others?

What needs to change in how you love others?

2. VV. 13-14 say, "13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony."

Is there someone in your life you need to forgive? Or maybe...is there someone who you can let go of their faults?

Consider the love Christ had for you as he went to the Cross. How can understanding his love drive you to forgiveness?

Go and offer forgiveness this week to those you need to forgive.