

In Colossians 1, Paul thanks God for the church in Colossae—this church found in a massive **IDEOLOGICAL CROSSROADS**. Because of its surroundings, and because of the stakes, he prays that their **lives would be controlled by the knowledge of God and His will**.

Colossians 2 reminds the believer that he's **received Christ BY FAITH**, he's been **raised BY FAITH**, and he is to **WALK IN THAT SAME FAITH**, NOT the world's value system.

With that, we pick up in Colossians 3...

Colossians 3:1

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

When Paul told the Colossians to "seek the things that are above," he wasn't encouraging them to "*kinda wander in God's general direction*;" he was telling them to **CONTINUALLY** seek and to seek **IN ORDER TO FIND**.

It isn't AIMLESS! There's a **specific GOAL**, and Paul encourages the believer to make every step go in that direction.

Raise your hand if you've **ever misplaced your keys**, your phone, or your wallet.

Did you look everywhere for them? How about in the bathtub? How about in the microwave? Did you look in your freezer? On top of your house?

Well, then you didn't look EVERYwhere.

And of course not! You weren't just look anywhere. You looked in places you thought they'd be! **Every SPECIFIC LOCATION you looked was a SEPARATE ATTEMPT to find them.**

Is that your focus when you sit down to read your Bible? ***"I'm going to know God more because of this."***

Is that why you're here this morning? ***"I'm going to know God more because of this."***

Or are you here because that's just what you do on Sundays?

Are you seeking the Lord in order to find Him?

If your idea of chasing hard after Jesus is **casually attending church** each week **without digging into the Word** for yourself and obeying what you find there, **you're on top of your house looking for your car keys.**

You're not seeking in such a way as to find; you're just doing stuff!

And there's more people in our church's living like that than you'd like to think...

I read in a **BARNA STUDY** released in **September**, and among other things, it was about the "Centrality of Jesus in Life."

Four groups emerged in the study...

22% were identified as "Ex-Christians,"

30% were "Lapsed Christians" (they hadn't darkened the door of a church in the last six months),

38% were "Habitual Churchgoers;" I appreciate that designation because it doesn't assume they were born again believers. They just attended church at least monthly, yet they didn't exhibit the core beliefs of what we'd call a "follower" of Jesus. Finally,

10% were identified as "Resilient Disciples."

That last group...

(1) attend church at least monthly and engage with their church more than just attending worship services;

(2) trust firmly in the authority of the Bible;

(3) are committed to Jesus personally and affirm he was crucified and raised from the dead to conquer sin and death; and

(4) express desire to transform the broader society as an outcome of their faith.

So that's how they determined who was what...

100% of everyone but the "Ex-Christians" **identified themselves as Christians.**

However, when it came to the **IMPORTANCE OF JESUS** in their lives, they differed **VASTLY.**

Only HALF of Habitual Churchgoers believed that:

- Living in relationship with Jesus is the only way to find fulfillment in life.
- Following Jesus shaped their whole life.
- Their relationship with Jesus impacted the way they lived life every day.

Can we agree that what drives HALF of Habitual Churchgoers is NOT the things that matter in heaven? Their minds (or affections) are set on what's down here (like the believers James was addressing in James 4).

And it shows up in their core beliefs! Let me remind you that **the study distinguished them from their more committed counterparts** because of their lack of engagement with their church, but also because **THEY LACKED CORE CHRISTIAN BELIEFS!** And isn't that the point?!

It's why our churches are increasingly filled with people who are okay with the massacre of unborn babies, the redefining of marriage and sexuality, and other attacks on religious liberty.

And while it's great that these folks show up, they're leaving **UNAFFECTED!** And it's because they're **driven by the world's value system** is what drives them, NOT THE "THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE."

But **WHAT** are the "things that are above?"

IF YOU ASK AN ADULT to describe heaven, you know what you'll hear?

...streets of gold...pearly gates...reunion with loved ones...no tears...

ASK A CHILD to describe heaven, and you'll almost always get the same answer:

IT'S WHERE **GOD** IS.

Colossians 3:1

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

The kids have it right. Whether they've made the decision to trust Jesus or not, they know what the main thing is. The rest, once again has to do with us...

Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

There's an important spiritual discipline at the heart of this passage, and it's **the discipline of MEDITATION.**

KEEP THINKING (MEDITATING) on **WHAT MATTERS IN HEAVEN**, not what matters on earth. Let **WHAT DRIVES YOU** be what matters IN HEAVEN.

"Meditate...meditation..."

(Pause)

Does that notion unnerve any of you? Does it feel weird?

If it does, it's likely because your thoughts are influenced by the popular **EASTERN MEDITATION**, which teaches you to **EMPTY your thoughts** and focus on nothingness. It isn't what the Bible talks about, and I would argue that it invites demonic activity into one's life.

No, the biblical **DISCIPLINE** of meditation for which Paul is advocating is a **FILLING OF THE MIND with the truths of God**.

Do this with me. Let's meditate on or **PONDER** today's passage of scripture, and if you would indulge me, close your eyes. No,

it's nothing mystical (again, that's unbiblical eastern meditation); it's just to help you not be distracted.

See, the **Hebrew word for meditate or meditation** means to **THINK**, to **PONDER**, and even to **MUSE TO THE SOUND OF A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT**.

For the believer, it's stepping into the **CLASSROOM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** and giving Him the opportunity to teach you.

Now listen, try to keep from looking around, and focus on the substance of what I'm reading...

Colossians 3:1

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Don't answer, just think. Ask questions of the scripture.

What do you see? What images come to mind?

Colossians 3:1

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Can you see the heavenly scene?

Do you see the THRONE? Do you see THE SON SEATED at the right hand of the Father?

ARE THERE OTHERS AROUND THE THRONE? Let the Spirit remind you of scripture about who is surrounding the throne.

What are they doing?

Okay, open your eyes and look back up here. (Possibly TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU SAW IN THE CONGREGATION).

So, as we meditate upon today's passage, **WHAT ARE THE THINGS OF HEAVEN?**

It's the throne of God where He sits in **AUTHORITY** surrounded by the **WORSHIP, PRAISE,** and **THANKSGIVING** of the saints and angels.

"If then you have been raised with Christ," **THE REALITY OF HEAVEN SHOULD BECOME YOUR REALITY ON EARTH.**

When it is, your actions will be more readily **SUBMITTED TO HIS AUTHORITY,** and a **HEART OF WORSHIP, praise, and thanksgiving will mark your life.**

It's about developing an **ETERNAL MINDSET.**

Tell me, did anyone's **MIND BEGIN TO WANDER?** It's **HARD!**

Everything from **FLESHLY THOUGHTS** to the **MEDIA** we inundate ourselves with make it hard to give any one thing our full attention for any length of time.

You see, that's why **meditation is a DISCIPLINE.**

Can I encourage you? If you're studying your Bible and not getting much out of it, THIS is likely the missing component!

Read **AND THINK!**

PRAY! Ask the Holy Spirit to **TEACH you**, and let Him **CHANGE you**.

Give yourself time to think about the Word you're studying.

Ask related questions of the passage. Find out where it should apply in your life. Again, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you, and when He brings other passages of scripture to mind, go study those too. They'll likely add clarity to your initial study.

The longer you spend pondering a given passage of scripture, you'll find yourself memorizing it, and then you can carry it with you and think about it as you drive (instead of distracting your senses with the radio or talking on your phone).

Give God those alone times. Believe me, you don't have many of them.

But remember, in **verse 2**, Paul also makes a contrast. He says...

Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Let WHAT MATTERS IN HEAVEN be what drives you, NOT what matters on earth.

And what matters on earth? ME.

It's about what **PLEASES ME**—what **interests** me, what **entertains** me, what **distracts**, or **comforts ME**.

See, when we set our minds on heaven, we see the God-Man on the throne. However, ***when our affections are directed to this world, we work to make it heaven, and we make ourselves "God."***

Earlier this month I taught on this very topic from James 4. James made it clear that we can't be friends with this world and friends with God, and **the thing that ties my affections to this world is my desire to please MYSELF.**

What on earth do I allow to drive me? **The pursuit of EARTHLY SECURITY, care for MYSELF, the desire to be HIGHLY ESTEEMED** are a few things that drive me. You know what those are? *"The desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions..."*

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

The NET Bible aptly comments, *"The person who thinks he has enough wealth and property to protect himself and insure his security has no need for God (or anything outside himself)...This is the person who loves the world, whose*

affections are all centered on the world, who has no love for God or spiritual things...)

The more I have, the less I need God. Therefore, to continually pursue the things of this world pulls our affections from the things of heaven to the things of earth, putting us at odds with God.

Colossians 3:3

3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

You died!

No one buried out here is thinking about what's happening on earth today. NO ONE.

That's supposed to be our reaction to this world! We're no longer to be driven by the enticement of SIN (Romans 6:2) or the WORLDLY VALUE SYSTEM (Colossians 2:20).

The world's chains are gone!

I mean, you can always put them back on, and UNDERSTAND, when we GIVE IN TO SIN (we don't "fall into it;" we fall into DITCHES) or put something in this world AHEAD OF GOD, that's exactly what we're doing.

So, yeah, you can always put them back on, but WHY WOULD YOU?!

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

No, as believers, WE'VE DIED, and OUR LIVES ARE HIDDEN...

If we're focused on what He wants, then we'll walk as He walked, which will have a **DISAPPEARING EFFECT on us** while having a **REVELATORY EFFECT on Him**.

Colossians 2 says...

Colossians 2:6-7

6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

We received Christ BY FAITH, but that faith isn't just needed once. It's how we walk EVERY DAY!

Imagine walking through a snowy field (like what you wanted on Christmas; I'm sure it's coming)...



When a couple of people are walking together, there are two sets of tracks and the snow is very disturbed.

Eventually, though, one gets the idea to step in the tracks of the other SINCE THEY ARE GOING THE SAME DIRECTION.

One no longer blazes his own trail; instead, he depends on the steps of the one before them, and HIS OWN TRACKS SEEMS TO DISAPPEAR.

Even though we're the ones "fleshing out" life on this earth, when we submit to Jesus (according to the Word), our lives are hidden in Him, and the world no longer sees the effect of us; it only sees His working.

Look again at the pic.



It looks like one set of tracks at this point, but it's very possible that multiple people walked in them.

That's the way our lives look all the time: ONE SET OF TRACKS.

The question is, whose are they? Your tracks or His? Your actions or His? Are they driven by what matters in this world or by what matters in heaven?

Colossians 3:4

When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

"CHRIST WHO IS YOUR LIFE"

Is He, though? Is Christ your life?

Or is He just a part of your life?

Remember, **only HALF of Habitual Churchgoers surveyed said that Jesus impacted the way they lived their lives every day.**

This passage, however, speaks of someone for whom Jesus isn't **PART** of their life, but the **WHOLE** of it.

Their love for Him informs everything they do.

Are they perfect? No, of course not. However, for them, "not being perfect" or "struggling like everyone else" that isn't a cop out; they strive to give Him control every moment of every day. He is their life.

John tells us the effect this lifestyle has...

1 John 2:28-3:3

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

3 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

As God's children, let our lives be spent HIDING and SEEKING.

One day Jesus will say, "Ready or not, HERE I COME!"

And John says that BELIEVERS who spent their lives focused on this world and living for themselves will shrink back in shame, not wishing to be revealed.

And the ones who have lived their lives hidden in the Lord will be ready to be found. They'll be like my three year old, confidently shouting from his hiding spot, "Here I am!"

Annie Dillard said, ***"How we spend our days is, of course how we spend our lives."***

What if TODAY we became more intentional in pursuing Jesus in our thoughts? It is, of course, where sin originates in our lives.

You know that, right? SIN DOESN'T HAPPEN TO US; we THINK ABOUT IT, and then WE DO IT.

What if we took the impure, bitter, hateful, and covetous thoughts captive (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) to the obedience of Christ?

But don't stop there. FILL YOUR MIND with the truths of His Word?

Take back the territory in your life! In what areas do you struggle? Is it impure thoughts? Is it your temper? Is it submitting to authority? Is it how you treat your family? Is it your discipline in pursuing God? Is it making idols out of things or people?

Find God's heart on the matter in His Word! Study it. Think about it! Ask the Spirit to change you and help you be who He wants you to be!

Jesus is MORE than an INTELLECTUAL PURSUIT! He is GOD to be OBEYED because HE IS WORTHY.

As I said a couple of Wednesday nights ago, for the one who recognizes he needs help wanting God's ways in his life, God says, "I've got grace for you. Keep coming. Keep seeking Me. I've got you."

SEEK TO FIND HIM. Let yourself be HIDDEN as you allow Him to be more revealed in your day-to-day life.

"Hide and seek."