

Small Group Guide: Colossians 3 -- Living Out What We Believe

Overview

This week's message walked us through Colossians 3, a chapter that moves from doctrine to action. Because of what Jesus Christ has done for us – his death, burial, and resurrection — true believers are called to a transformed life. That transformation is not a one-time event but a continual, intentional process of putting off the old nature and putting on the new. This chapter will help your group reflect on what that looks like in everyday life.

Key Takeaways

- Our position in Christ (Colossians 3:1-4) is the foundation for how we live. We have died to our old selves and been raised with Christ, and one day we will appear with him in glory.
- The Christian life requires ongoing, active effort. Putting off sin and putting on godly character are not passive experiences – they demand daily commitment.
- The list of things to put off (anger, malice, filthy language, lying, sexual sin, covetousness) and the list of things to put on (tender mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, love) serve as a practical mirror for self-examination.
- Love is described as the bond that holds everything together. Without it, even our greatest gifts and abilities amount to nothing (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-3).
- Our relationships – in marriage, in the family, and in the workplace – are all areas where our faith must be visibly lived out.
- Whatever we do, we are ultimately doing it as unto the Lord, not unto people.

Discussion Questions

Opening (Choose One to Get the Conversation Started)

1. When you think about the phrase "putting on the new man," what image comes to mind? What does that look and feel like in a practical, everyday sense?
2. The pastor mentioned that many people get stuck after accepting Christ, thinking that because he accepted them as they were, they can stay as they are. Have you ever wrestled with that kind of thinking? What helped you move past it?

Digging Into the Text

3. Colossians 3:1-2 calls believers to continually seek and set their minds on things above. What are some of the biggest obstacles in your daily life that pull your mind away from Christ and toward earthly concerns?
4. The pastor used the example of taking up a hobby – how a person naturally starts researching and pursuing everything related to that hobby. How does that compare to the way you currently pursue knowing Jesus? What would it look like to approach your faith with that same kind of eagerness?
5. The sermon described the list in verses 5-9 – fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness, anger, malice, blasphemy, filthy language, and lying – as things that are "common to man" and can rise up again even after salvation. Which of these do you find most difficult to put to death consistently, and why do you think that is?
6. Verses 12-13 list tender mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another, and forgiveness as things we are commanded to put on. The pastor said forgiveness is the big one. Do you agree? What makes forgiveness so difficult, and what does it look like to forgive someone who may not even know they hurt you?
7. Verse 14 says to put on love above all things, describing it as the bond of perfection or unity. The pastor connected this to 1 Corinthians 13, noting that without love, even great spiritual gifts are just noise. Where in your relationships – at home, at church, or at work – do you most need to grow in this kind of

sacrificial, unconditional love?

8. The sermon addressed marriage, parenting, and the workplace as specific arenas where faith must be applied. Which of these areas do you find it hardest to act as unto the Lord rather than as unto people? What would change if you consistently approached that area as service to Christ?

Reflecting on Application

9. The pastor said that repentance is not just turning away from something but agreeing with what God's Word says. Is there an area of your life right now where you know what the Word says but you have not been living in agreement with it? What is one step you could take this week toward alignment?
10. Verse 16 calls believers to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly. What is your current relationship with Scripture – reading it, hearing it, meditating on it? What is one realistic change you could make to give the Word more room in your daily life?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

For Personal Reflection: Use the two lists in Colossians 3 – what to put off and what to put on – as a personal inventory. Prayerfully go through each item and ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you are struggling and where you are growing.

For Your Relationships: Identify one person in your life – a spouse, a child, a coworker, or a fellow church member – toward whom you have been carrying bitterness, impatience, or unforgiveness. Take a concrete step this week toward forgiveness, even if that step is simply praying for them daily.

For Your Work Life: Before your next workday, pray and consciously dedicate your work to the Lord. At the end of the week, reflect on whether that shift in perspective changed how you treated your coworkers, how you handled frustration, or how much effort you gave.

For the Word: Commit to reading Colossians 3 once each day this week. As you read, ask yourself: What am I being called to put off today? What am I being called to put on?

For the Group: Share one specific prayer request related to an area of your life where you need the Holy Spirit's help to put on the new man. Commit to praying for each other by name throughout the week.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together by praying over these themes:

- Gratitude for what Christ has done – his death, burial, and resurrection that made new life possible
- Humility to see the areas where the old nature still needs to be put to death
- Strength and consistency to pursue Christ daily through his Word and prayer
- Love for one another and for those outside the church who do not yet know Jesus

Scripture references: Colossians 3:1-25; Philippians 4:8; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3