

Colossians 3: 12-17 (ESV) – Guidance for Holy Living

Main point: Here's how to conduct ourselves as believers.



Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: This book was written by the apostle Paul, probably with Timothy (one of Paul's partners in spreading the Gospel of Christ), around A.D. 61, to an early group of Christians, probably mostly Gentiles (non-Jews). Before this passage, Paul has written that as people of Christ, new believers have a "new self," with no division between different types of people.

Focus of the study:

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Christ.

Questions:

1. *The apostle Paul gives the brand-new Colossian church some specific instructions. In fact, four times Paul repeats "and" at the beginning of a sentence, as if he keeps thinking of things to add! "Oh, and one more thing ..." What is Paul's first instruction, his very first words?*
 - a. v. 12: "put on"
2. *Why? What's the reason Paul gives for "putting on" the characteristics he's about to list?*
 - a. Because we are "God's chosen ones" – *what does that mean? When you raise children, how do you teach them?*
 - i. "Do what I do" – children watch and imitate.
 - b. Paul's description of being God's chosen: "holy and beloved"
 - i. holy – *what does that mean?*
 1. Literally: set apart, with a special purpose and identity
 - ii. beloved – *who loves us? Who is our heavenly Father? How does a child feel when he or she knows they are loved deeply?*
 1. Safe, confident, glad; pleasing to the parent no matter what
3. *Now let's look at the characteristics Paul says we are to "put on" (read aloud again, then talk about each of these in turn – what does each one look like? describe in as much detail as possible):*
 - a. v. 12: compassionate hearts
 - b. kindness
 - c. humility
 - d. meekness
 - e. patience
 - f. v. 13: bearing with one another

- g. forgiving one another
- 4. *And what is the overarching characteristic Paul says to put on “above all”?*
 - a. v. 14: LOVE
- 5. *Why does Paul say that love needs to be the over-all characteristic?*
 - a. Love “binds everything together in perfect harmony” – *what does love do in a relationship? When you love someone, how do you treat them, even if they do something wrong or frustrating?*
 - i. You are bound together – you don’t give up easily, you’re committed to that person.
- 6. Paul then continues with more instructions for these new believers:
 - a. v. 15: let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts – *where is your heart? When you say you feel something deep in your heart, what do you mean?*
 - i. You feel it strongly! The heart is the seat of emotion, conviction
 - b. Be thankful (we’ll talk about this more in a bit...)
- 7. v. 16: Paul’s next instruction: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly – *how do we study God’s word, the scriptures? What do we use to learn and understand things?*
 - i. With our minds – the seat of wisdom and understanding
 - ii. With our hearts – not just head knowledge. Learning God’s ways should affect our lives, how we feel about things and how we act on those feelings.
 - 1. We involve both the heart and the head in living on this earth in faith.
- 8. “Let the word of God dwell in you richly” – *what do you think that means? When you eat something rich, what is it like?*
 - a. FULL of flavor, satisfying, stays with you
- 9. *So, what should we do with peace and the word dwelling in us? How does Paul say we should help our brothers and sisters in Christ?*
 - a. v. 16: teach and admonish one another in wisdom – we talk to one another, share what we know and understand
 - b. sing psalms and spiritual songs – isn’t it great that music is a command? 😊
 - c. focus on thankfulness in our hearts to God – we focus on gratitude
 - i. *What are grateful people like?* happy, perspective, joyful
 - ii. *What’s the opposite of gratitude?* grumbling, complaining
- 10. v. 17: Paul then wraps up his instructions with one final encouragement: “whatever you do, in word or deed...”
 - a. *What does “whatever you do” include?*
 - i. Everything! day-to-day living, every moment, every choice
 - b. “... do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Christ.”
 - i. *What does it mean to do things “in the name of the Lord Jesus”?*
 - 1. remember Jesus as you go through your day
 - 2. think of how *Jesus* would *do* things (W.W.J.D.) – and this goes back to the instructions at the beginning of this passage!
 - a. compassionate
 - b. kind
 - c. humble
 - d. meek
 - e. patient
 - f. loving

3. *Who had all of these characteristics perfectly while on earth?* Jesus! Look through the stories of Jesus in the gospels, read them often, to see and learn from how he treated people
 - ii. Final instruction: “giving thanks to God the Father”
 1. *How do we practice thankfulness?* List as many things as possible for which we’re thankful, and how to *be* thankful people.
- Ask for prayer requests for today.
 - Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
 - End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

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