



LC STUDY GUIDE

“Thrive” Series

The Passage: Colossians 3:1-11

October 3 – October 16

Intro: Welcome back to the second study in our new series *Thrive*. As mentioned previously, the people of Colossae are a group of churches that contain different backgrounds. There is a “philosophy” spreading that is undermining the message of the gospel of Jesus. The majority of the Colossians were newly converted Gentile believers and part of their concern was their attempt to discern how “Jewish” they now needed to become. Another part of their concern was to understand how much of their previous lifestyle, that was informed by paganism, needed to change.

Here in Colossians 3, Paul tells them their old lifestyle must be put to death. Today we will unpack how the resurrection of Jesus moves us to a “new life,” moving on from the “old life.”

Central Idea: Living in the faith of the resurrection of Jesus means we change our lives to reflect this new reality and “put to death” our old lifestyle. This transforms our identity, our lifestyle practices, and how we treat each other in community.

Colossians 3:1-11

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. **6** Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. **7** You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. **8** But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. **9** Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices **10** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. **11** Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

O – Colossians 3 opens up with a series of strong imperatives. Identify all the calls to action Paul issues to his readers.

I/A – The first set of verses invite us to “set your hearts on things above” and not on earthly things because we have been “raised with Jesus.” What do you think this means? How can we live meaningful lives here while setting our minds above?
(Paul is telling his readers that because of our faith in the resurrection of Jesus, our lives are changed. Thus, setting our hearts/minds on things above is to see what God has done and is doing, to reflect on His reality and invite that reality to change our lives.)

O – The utilization of written lists was common in the ancient style of writing. In verses 5-11, there are 3 different lists. Identify each list, its theme, and its accompanying brief explanation.

I – Paul writes that the “wrath of God” is coming (v 6). Who is it coming for – Christ-followers who are stuck in the old life or those who have not accepted Christ? (The answer is not both ☺) Second, how would we describe the wrath of God?
(There has been a fair amount of confusion regarding the direction of God’s wrath and unfortunately, it can be used as a scare-tactic to attempt to control people’s behavior. Interestingly, Paul uses the same five Greek words in Ephesians 5:6 and the phrase refers to those who remain in unbelief of the gospel and have not chosen to trust in Jesus. They are not among the redeemed children of God. Paul teaches that the judgment, the wrath of God is upon them. This wrath/judgment could be summarized in at least three ways:

- 1) The consequence of our bad lifestyle choices*
- 2) The withholding of God’s merciful intervention when people choose for God to be absent in their life*
- 3) God’s specific set of punishments, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 (this one is best understood in the context of Scripture and not our own speculation on whether God is going out of His way to punish us or someone else)*

I – What do you think Paul is trying to accomplish with these strong admonitions and lists of sins to remove from the Christ-follower’s life?
(When we consider that these verses are written in the context of Christian community, we start to feel their weight even further. These are small communities of people who are interlocking their lives even deeper since they are now claiming the central belief of their lives is to follow the resurrected Jesus. These micro-communities are a mix between families, neighbors, and people who were strangers until recently – they have new relational dynamics to figure out – again, now that their lives are rotating around Jesus, rather than living for themselves. So putting to death the sins of anger, of sexual immorality, of lying, is paramount for the flourishing of the community.)

A – There is a beautiful call to unity in verse 11 which states that the grace of God puts everyone on the same plane regardless of their current earthly status. Those who were raised with the proud Jewish faith who found Christ have the same spiritual honor as the Scythian slaves who were likely slaves from the Black Sea region and considered barbarians by the people of Colossae. (Side note: Paul is contrasting them with barbarians, which would have been received with great understanding and affirmation by the Scythians, treating them like co-heirs in

the Kingdom of Jesus.)

Who are the Scythians of today, who are the barbarians, who are the Gentiles on the margins who need to feel the love of the church? Let's not only include people groups and demographics but also include the many different types of people (e.g., the recently-divorced empty-nester father, the unwed young woman, etc.). How can they be shown and experience the love and mercy of Jesus and that "Christ is all and is in all?"

- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Complement these questions with "process questions" (what else? what more? what do others think?)
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don't rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into "teaching" rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.