

LESSON SIX

COLOSSIANS: MORE THAN ENOUGH

“JESUS IS ENOUGH TO FORM US”

SCRIPTURE | Colossians 3:1-4:6

MEMORY VERSE

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him”
(Colossians 2:6).

MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT

Because Jesus is enough to form us, our everyday lives begin to reflect our life in Christ.

GROUP TIME

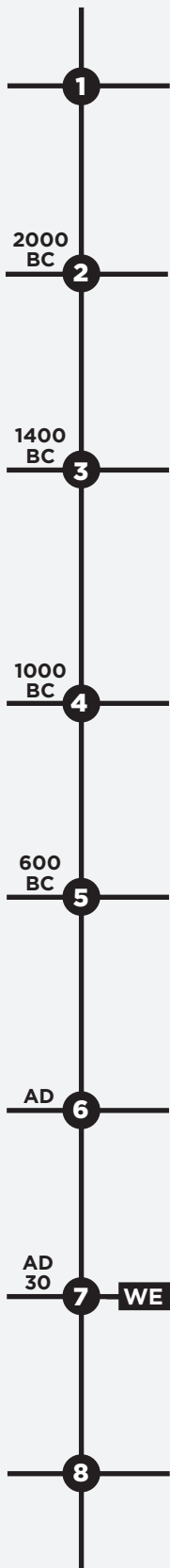
5 minutes	Welcome
5-10 minutes	Attention Grabber
10 minutes	Story / Context
25 minutes	Discussion
5-10 minutes	Closing & Prayer

PRAYER FOCUS

- **One Another** - Pray for one another as you wrap up the study of Colossians. Pray that in every area of life, you will turn to Jesus and not look to other things. He is enough!
- **Rooted** - Pray for Rooted groups. This week, participants are learning about confession and repentance and will be sharing about strongholds in their lives. Pray for yielding to the Spirit's work and experiencing freedom in Christ.

BEGIN this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

GOD'S STORY TIMELINE



1. God Creates the World and Promises a Rescuer (*Genesis 1-11*)

God created everything good and placed humans in a garden to live in close relationship with Him. But Adam and Eve chose to trust themselves instead of God, and sin entered the world. Relationships, creation, even our connection to God was broken. Yet even in judgment, God promised that one day, a descendant of Eve would crush the serpent and bring healing.

+This points to Jesus as the promised Rescuer who defeats sin, Satan, and death.

2. God Calls a Family and Makes a Promise (*Genesis 12-50*)

God chose a man named Abram (later Abraham) and gave a covenant to him: that he would have a large family, receive a land, and be a blessing to all nations. Though Abraham and his descendants were deeply flawed, God continued His promise through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

+This points to Jesus as the true offspring of Abraham, through whom all nations are fully blessed.

3. God Rescues His People and Forms a Redeemed Nation (*Exodus-Deuteronomy*)

Generations later, Abraham's descendants were enslaved in Egypt. God raised up Moses to rescue them from oppression and slavery. God called His people into a relationship with Himself. He made a covenant with them, gave them the law, and instructed them in worship. He was forming a people who would live differently and show the world what it looked like to belong to Him.

+This points to Jesus as the greater Moses, who rescues us from slavery to sin and writes God's law on our hearts.

4. God Gives a Home and Promises a King (*Joshua-2 Chronicles*)

God brought His people into the promised land under Joshua's leadership. Over time, they asked for a king like the other nations. It was a disaster. But God graciously gave them David, with whom he made another covenant: one of David's descendants would rule forever. Solomon built the temple, but after his death, the kingdom split into two and began spiraling into idolatry and injustice again.

+This points to Jesus as the forever King from David's line, who reigns with justice and peace.

5. God Removes His People and Reminds Them of His Promise (*Ezra-Nehemiah*)

Because of their rebellion, God allowed His people to be conquered and taken into exile. First, it was the Northern Kingdom, Israel (to Assyria), then the Southern Kingdom, Judah (to Babylon). The temple was destroyed, and the glory of the kingdom faded. Yet God continued to speak through the prophets, reminding the people of His promise to restore them, give them new hearts, and send a Rescuer.

+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the new covenant, restores hearts, and fulfills every prophecy.

6. God Sends His Son and Fulfills His Promise (*Matthew-John*)

At just the right time, God sent Jesus into the world—born of a virgin, fully God and fully man. He perfectly obeyed the law, pointed us to the Father, and laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. On the third day, He rose again, proving that He is the Savior, the King, and the fulfillment of every covenant promise God has ever made.

+Jesus is the center of the story—all of Scripture leads to Him.

7. God Sends His Spirit and Builds His Church (*Acts-Jude*)

After rising from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to empower His followers. The early Church spread the good news of Jesus across the Roman world—planting churches, welcoming both Jews and Gentiles, and learning to live as God's new covenant people. Though imperfect, the Church carries Jesus' mission forward today.

+This points to Jesus as the risen King who gives the Spirit to dwell in us and send us on mission.

8. God Restores All Things and Dwells with His People (*Revelation*)

The story isn't over. One day Jesus will return to judge evil and make all things new. There will be a new heaven and new earth, where God's people from every tribe and nation will live with Him forever. There will be no more pain, no more death, and no more sin—just joy, justice, and unbroken peace.

+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the story to its perfect and eternal culmination.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

LEADER TIP

To grab your participants' attention, start your lesson by telling a story related to the lesson's main idea. We have provided you with three options in this section, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: ROMAN CITIZENSHIP

In the Roman world, citizenship was not merely a line on a document. It altered a person's standing in law, in commerce, and in daily interaction. A Roman citizen carried protections others did not. He could appeal a sentence, avoid certain punishments, and claim rights that determined how authorities treated him. The status was conferred, not earned each morning. Once granted, it defined him.

That identity did not remain abstract. It shaped how a person carried himself in public, how he spoke, and where his loyalties lay. A citizen living in a distant province still bore the weight of Rome's authority and reflected its order in ordinary life. The conduct flowed from the status. The life reflected the citizenship.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Why would it be absurd for someone to claim Roman citizenship but live with no regard for Rome's authority or identity? What does that reveal about the relationship between status and conduct?*
- *If identity shapes behavior in ordinary life, where are we most tempted to separate who we belong to from how we actually live?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:

Roman citizenship carried daily implications that shaped how a person lived in public and in private. In Colossians 3, Paul said the same thing happens if we have been raised with Christ. Our everyday lives will increasingly reflect the life we now share in Him.

OPTION 2 : TWO TREES (PSALM 1)

Psalm 1 opens with the image of a rooted life. The person who delights in the law of the Lord and returns to it day and night is described as a tree planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither. Its stability and fruitfulness come from where it is planted and what continually feeds it. What anchors a life ultimately forms a life.

The contrast is striking. The wicked are not pictured as powerful or impressive but as chaff carried by the wind. They are unrooted, untethered, defined by whatever current happens to move them. Psalm 1 shows that where you place your confidence, what you delight in, what you allow to shape your thinking and desires will establish your roots. And your roots determine your fruit. The life that appears on the surface always grows out of what lies beneath it.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *In Psalm 1, the tree bears fruit because it is planted by a steady source of nourishment. What does that image teach us about how real spiritual growth happens?*
- *Psalm 1 connects hidden roots to visible fruit. When you think about your everyday life, where do you see steady growth over time? Where does life feel more hurried or reactive than rooted?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:

Psalm 1 reminds us that fruit grows from the root. What feeds us and where we are planted shapes who we become. The patterns of our lives always grow out of something deeper. In Colossians 3:1-4:6, Paul wrote to people whose identity was already secured in Christ. If our life is now hidden with Him, then our roots have changed. And if our roots have changed, our everyday lives will begin to reflect it.

OPTION 3 : ALL-STAR JERSEYS

In most professional sports, All-Star games are exciting but rarely intense. The best players in the league put on a different jersey for a weekend and represent something temporary. Everyone knows the stakes are lower. There are no playoff implications and no long-term consequences. It is an exhibition. Because it is not the team they truly belong to, the effort often reflects that reality. No one wants to get injured for a jersey they will only wear once.

The difference shows up in how they play. When athletes step back into the uniform of the team they actually belong to, the intensity changes. That jersey carries record, reputation, and future. Identity shapes effort. Where you believe you truly belong determines how seriously you live in that space. If something feels secondary, it receives secondary commitment. If something defines who you are, it shapes how you carry yourself in every ordinary moment. Is following Christ the jersey we wear occasionally, or is it the identity that defines how we live our everyday lives?

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Why do you think players instinctively compete differently when the jersey represents their real team?*
- *In everyday life, what tends to function as our “real team,” the identity that actually shapes our decisions and priorities? Is the gospel like an “all-star” jersey or is it the team we truly play for?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:

In Colossians 3:1-4:6, Paul wrote to people who had already been given a new identity. He told them they had died and their life was now hidden with Christ. If that is true, then following Jesus is not an occasional uniform we put on. It is where our real belonging is found. And if Christ truly defines us, then that identity will shape how we speak, forgive, work, love, and live in the ordinary moments of everyday life. Let's turn to the text and see how Paul connected who we are in Christ to how we actually live.

2 SET THE STAGE

LEADER TIP

This section provides the historical, cultural, and literary context needed to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

- I. Opening Greetings (1:1-2)
- II. Continuous Work of the Father (1:3-14)
 - A. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
 - B. Intercession for the Colossians (1:9-14)
- III. Climactic Work of the Son (1:15-23)
 - A. Supremacy of Christ (1:15-20)
 - B. Response to the Work of Christ (1:21-23)
- IV. Apostolic Mission of Paul (1:24-2:5)
 - A. Paul's Suffering in the Plan of God (1:24-29)
 - B. Paul's Toil for the Local Churches (2:1-5)
- V. Faithfulness of the Believers (2:6-4:1)
 - A. Call to Faithfulness (2:6-7)
 - B. Sufficiency in Christ (2:8-23)
 1. Against Deceptive Philosophy (2:8-15)
 2. Against Human Rituals and Regulations (2:16-23)
 - C. Reorientation of Christian Living (3:1-4:1)**
 - 1. Focus on the Risen Christ (3:1-4)**
 - 2. Take off the Old Humanity (3:5-11)**
 - 3. Put on the New Humanity (3:12-17)**
 - 4. Lord of the Household (3:18-4:1)**
- VI. Eschatological Mission to the World (4:2-6)
 - A. Prayer in Eschatological Alertness (4:2)**
 - B. Prayer for Paul and His Mission (4:3-4)**
 - C. Witness to Outsiders (4:5-6)**
- VII. Final Greetings (4:7-18)
 - A. Messengers of the Letters (4:7-9)
 - B. Greetings from Paul's Coworkers (4:10-14)
 - C. Greetings to and Instructions for Others (4:15-17)
 - D. Paul's Signature (4:18)¹

CONTEXT

The issue in Colossae was not blatant immorality but competing formation. The teachers pressing in on this young church were not telling them to abandon Christ. They were offering a “more complete path.” They spoke the language of depth and protection. Their practices promised stability in a spiritually dangerous world. Food restrictions, sacred days, strict self-denial, visionary experiences, and attention to spiritual powers all carried the feel of seriousness. It was easy to believe that these structures would produce a fuller, safer, more mature life. Christ was not denied, but He was treated as a starting point rather than the sufficient source of growth.

Paul saw the subtle danger. If fullness is found in the program, then formation comes from the system. If maturity is achieved through added layers of regulation and mystical experience, then identity slowly shifts from union with Christ to performance within a framework. That is why Paul rooted everything in what had already happened. They had died with Christ. They had been raised with Him. They had been filled in Him.

¹David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 34.

The question was not how to supplement Christ, but whether Christ Himself was enough to shape their desires, relationships, work, and speech. Chapter 3 is not a new set of rules to replace the old ones. It is a picture of what life looks like when Christ is truly the formative center.

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

We believe life and transformation come from what we build, manage, or add. We look for fullness in systems we can control rather than receiving life from a source outside ourselves.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

We do not have to manufacture the life we are longing for. In Christ, the life we could never produce has already been secured. We have died with Him, and we have been raised with Him. Our identity is no longer self-constructed but hidden with Christ in God. Because He is our life, transformation does not begin with adding more pressure but with receiving what has already been accomplished. From that secure union, new desires, new patterns, and new fruit begin to grow.

3 LOOK AT THE BOOK

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your group through Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the leader, work through all the exercises below to ensure you understand the text well.

Colossians 3:1-4 — In **verse 1**, Paul grounded everything that follows in a shared reality: “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ.” He was not urging them to pursue resurrection but reminding them it had already happened in union with Christ. The verb assumes participation. Earlier in the letter he spoke of being buried with Christ in baptism and raised through faith. Now he drew the implication. Because they had been raised, they were to “set” their hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. The command is not about physical location but about allegiance and orientation. Christ’s present reign defines what is ultimate. **Verse 2** reinforces this by repeating the call: “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” The repetition shows this is not mystical escape but a sustained reordering of thought and desire. What captures the mind eventually directs the life.

Verse 3 explains why such reorientation is necessary: “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” Paul spoke of death as something already accomplished. The old life shaped by sin, self-rule, and the pressures he described in chapter 2 no longer has the final word. At the same time, he described their true life as “hidden.” That language suggests security and invisibility. Their identity was not something the world could easily evaluate, nor was it grounded in outward religious markers. It was bound up with Christ Himself and safeguarded “in God.” The Colossians were being tempted by visible systems that promised depth, but Paul pointed them to a life that was real even when it was not immediately impressive.

In verse 4 Paul lifted their eyes to what will one day be revealed. “When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” Christ is not merely the source of life; He is identified as their life. That statement carries enormous weight. Their future is tied to His future. The hidden life of verse 3 will not remain hidden forever. When Christ is revealed, their true identity would be revealed with Him. Paul placed present obedience within that future horizon. The certainty of appearing with Christ in glory anchors the call to live now in a way that reflects where their life is truly found.

Colossians 3:5-11 — In **verse 5**, Paul moved from orientation to action: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature,” a command that flows directly from verses 1-4. Because their life was hidden with Christ, certain patterns no longer fit who they were. The language is decisive. “Put to death” suggests deliberate and ongoing resistance, not passive avoidance. The list that follows—sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, “which is idolatry”—is not one of random sins. They are desires that attempt to take ultimate place. Greed is called idolatry because it treats created things as sources of life and security. Paul exposed the root beneath the behavior. Disordered desire reveals misplaced worship.

Verse 6 grounds the seriousness of this call: “Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.” Paul did not soften the warning. Sin is not merely unhealthy; it is aligned with a world under judgment. In

verse 7 he reminded them, “You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.” The emphasis is on past identity. These patterns belonged to a former manner of life. Paul was not describing a higher level of spirituality but a break from what once defined them. The verbs “walk” and “lived” show that sin is not isolated action but a way of life shaped by certain loves and assumptions.

In **verse 8** Paul turned from inward desire to relational expression: “But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” The shift from sexual sins to speech and hostility shows the breadth of transformation. The old life manifests both in private desire and public interaction. Anger and malice fracture community. Slander and abusive speech distort truth and tear down others. In **verse 9** he added, “Do not lie to each other.” Falsehood undermines the trust, a trust that was necessary for the new community Paul was describing. The change Christ brings is not confined to inner purity but extends to everyday conversations.

The reason for this radical removal appears at the end of verse 9 and into **verse 10**: “since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self.” Paul drew on clothing imagery to describe identity. The old self is not merely bad habits; it is a former way of being. The new self is described as “being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” Renewal is ongoing, but it is rooted in something already true. The language echoes Genesis. To be renewed in the image of the Creator means restoration toward the purpose for which humanity was originally made. Knowledge here is not abstract information but relational understanding that reshapes life.

Verse 11 reveals the communal implications of this renewal: “Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” The categories Paul listed represent ethnic, religious, cultural, and social divisions. The new self cannot coexist with hierarchies that define worth by background or status. In the renewed humanity, Christ is the defining reality. He is “all,” the central reference point, and He is “in all,” present among those who belong to Him. The old markers that once structured identity and belonging no longer govern. A new humanity has begun, and it is formed around Christ alone.

Colossians 3:12-17 — In **verse 12**, Paul turned from what must be put to death to what must be put on: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” The description of their identity came first. They were chosen, set apart, and loved. These are covenant words. The virtues that follow are not strategies for self-improvement but traits that correspond to who they now were. The imagery of clothing continues from verses 9-10. Just as the old self was taken off, these qualities were to be deliberately put on. Each term shapes community life. Compassion moves toward need. Kindness acts for the good of others. Humility resists self-exaltation. Gentleness tempers strength. Patience endures weakness without retaliation. Together they form the character of a people shaped by Christ.

Verse 13 makes the application more specific: “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.” The command assumes friction. Community will expose weakness and offense. The measure of forgiveness is not personal tolerance but

Christ's own action: "Forgive as the Lord forgave you." The pattern of reconciliation is grounded in the gospel itself. In **verse 14** Paul added, "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Love is not listed as one virtue among many but as the bond that holds them together. Without love, compassion and humility fragment into isolated acts. Love integrates the virtues into a coherent way of life.

In **verse 15** the focus widens from personal virtues to governing realities: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." The verb "rule" suggests an umpire or deciding authority. When conflict arises, the peace secured by Christ is to have the final word. Gratitude is added as a stabilizing posture, reorienting the heart away from entitlement. **Verse 16** deepens the formative center: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." The word is not to visit occasionally but to take up residence. As it dwells, it shapes teaching, correction, singing, and thanksgiving. Finally, **verse 17** gathers everything into one comprehensive principle: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." No part of life is excluded. Speech and action alike are brought under the authority and representation of Christ. The new humanity is not defined by isolated virtues but by a life thoroughly aligned with the Lord who has claimed them.

Colossians 3:18-4:1 — In **verse 18** Paul turned to the household, the most basic social unit in the ancient world: "Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." The instruction is brief but qualified. Submission is not grounded in cultural expectation alone but "in the Lord." That phrase places the marriage relationship under Christ's authority. The call is not to passive silence or blind compliance but to ordered partnership shaped by allegiance to Christ. **Verse 19** balances the command: "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." In a world where the male head of household carried legal authority, Paul directed power toward self-giving love. Harshness, whether verbal or physical, contradicts life in Christ. The pattern mirrors what Paul had just described: identity in Christ reshapes how authority is exercised.

Verses 20-21 address children and fathers. "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." Obedience is again tied to Christ, not merely parental preference. The aim is not control but alignment with the Lord's will. Yet Paul immediately spoke to fathers: "Do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." The warning assumes that authority can wound. Discipline detached from compassion produces resentment and loss of heart. Paul's concern was not only order but formation. A father's treatment of his children either reflects the character of Christ or distorts it.

In **verses 22-25** Paul addressed slaves, who formed a significant portion of the Roman household. "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything." The obedience he described goes beyond eye-service or people-pleasing. They were to work "with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord." Paul reframed their labor. However constrained their social position, their true master was Christ. "It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (v. 24). That statement does not erase injustice, but it reorients identity. Work becomes an arena of allegiance to Christ rather than merely compliance with human authority. Verse 25 adds a sobering

reminder: “Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.” Accountability reaches beyond earthly systems.

Chapter 4:1 completes the section by addressing masters directly: “Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.” The symmetry is intentional. Earthly masters are themselves under authority. Justice and fairness are not optional virtues but obligations grounded in shared submission to Christ. Across these relationships, Paul neither dismantled the household structure nor simply baptized it. Instead, he placed every role under the lordship of Christ. Authority is restrained, obedience is dignified, and everyday interactions become expressions of a deeper belonging. The household becomes a proving ground for whether Christ truly forms the life of His people.

Colossians 4:2-6 — In **verse 2** Paul turned from the internal life of the household to the posture of the church in prayer: “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” Devotion suggests persistence and priority. Prayer is not an occasional response to crisis but an ongoing orientation toward God. It is a first response. To be watchful implies alertness, an awareness that life unfolds within spiritual realities and that opportunities for faithfulness can be missed through distraction. Thanksgiving accompanies both watchfulness and devotion. Gratitude guards prayer from becoming an anxious demand. It roots dependence in recognition of what God has already done.

In **verses 3-4** Paul made his request specific: “And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message.” The language of an open door emphasizes divine initiative. The spread of the gospel is not engineered by human strategy alone but granted by God. Paul, though an apostle, depended on prayer for clarity and boldness. He asked not merely for release from imprisonment but for the opportunity to proclaim “the mystery of Christ.” The content of the message remained central. His concern was that he may “proclaim it clearly, as I should.” Even in chains, Paul measured success by faithfulness to speak Christ plainly.

Verses 5-6 shift from the apostolic mission to the congregation’s daily conduct: “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.” Wisdom here involved discernment in public life. The church’s behavior toward those outside the community matters. Time is not neutral; opportunities can be gained or lost. Paul then focused on speech: “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Grace-filled speech reflects the character of Christ and resists harshness or arrogance. Salt suggests preservation and distinctiveness. The goal is not clever argument but readiness to respond appropriately to each person. In this closing section, Paul showed that a life formed by Christ extends beyond private virtue and household order into prayerful dependence and thoughtful engagement with the world.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4:6

3 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. **12** Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. **15** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. **16** Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **17** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. **18** Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. **20** Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. **21** Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. **22** Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. **23** Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, **24** since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. **25** Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

4 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. **2** Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. **3** And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. **4** Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. **5** Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. **6** Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.²

² The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Col 3:1-4:6.

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people to discuss the Observation and Interpretation questions.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: A NEW IDENTITY

Read Colossians 3:1-4. What statements did Paul make about what had already happened to believers, and what two commands did he give in response?

Suggested Response: Paul said believers have been raised with Christ, have died, and that their life is hidden with Christ in God. He said Christ is their life and that they will appear with Him in glory. In response, he commanded them to set their hearts and minds on things above.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: TAKING OFF AND PUTTING ON

Read Colossians 3:5-17. What behaviors did Paul say to put to death or rid yourselves of, and what qualities did he say to put on?

Suggested Response: Paul listed sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, and lying and said to put those things to death. He then called believers to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. He also said to let the peace of Christ rule, let the word of Christ dwell richly, and to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: CHRIST IN ORDINARY LIFE

Read Colossians 3:18-4:6. Who did Paul address directly, and what key instructions did he give for both the household and life among outsiders?

Suggested Response: Paul addressed wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, and masters, giving instructions about submission, love, obedience, fairness, and avoiding harshness. He also told believers to devote themselves to prayer, act wisely toward outsiders, and let their speech be full of grace.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: IDENTITY AND ORIENTATION

In 3:1-4, Paul said believers have been raised with Christ, have died, and that their life is hidden with Him. What does it mean that Christ is not only the giver of life but is “your life”? How does that shape the command to set your hearts and minds on things above?

Suggested Response: Paul was grounding obedience in union with Christ. Christ is not an addition to life but the defining source of it. Because believers share in His death and resurrection, their primary allegiance has shifted. Setting their hearts and minds above means allowing Christ’s reign and future to shape present priorities and desires.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: MORE THAN NOT DOING THINGS

In 3:5-17, Paul moved from “put to death” to “clothe yourselves.” What does this contrast reveal about how transformation happens in the Christian life?

Suggested Response: Transformation is not merely the removal of bad behavior but the replacement of an old identity with a new one. The old self is tied to disordered desire and fractured relationships. The new self reflects the character of Christ. Paul presented change as active and intentional but rooted in a renewed identity rather than self-improvement.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: EVERYDAY FORMATION

In 3:18-4:6 Paul applied identity in Christ to marriage, parenting, work, prayer, and speech. What does this tell us about where Christ intends His rule to be visible?

Suggested Response: Christ’s lordship is meant to shape ordinary, daily life. Faith is not confined to private devotion or corporate worship. It reshapes authority, obedience, labor, communication, and engagement with outsiders. The Christian life is formed not in isolated spiritual moments but in everyday relationships and responsibilities.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God calls them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

QUESTION 1: As you read Colossians 3:1-4:6, what phrase or idea stands out to you most right now?

Suggested Response: Some may notice the call to “set your minds on things above,” others the strong language to “put to death,” the image of putting on compassion and love, the instructions within the household, or the call to gracious speech toward outsiders. The goal is to reveal what the text is already pressing before moving toward a specific application.

QUESTION 2: In 3:5-11 Paul called believers to put to death certain desires and patterns of speech. Which of these feels most connected to your everyday environment? What might it look like to take that command seriously this week?

Suggested Response: Participants may identify sins that feel normalized in their context such as sexual temptation in media, subtle greed in career ambition, irritability at home, sarcasm, harsh speech, or comparison. Help the group think practically about what “put to death” might involve.

QUESTION 3: In 3:12-17 Paul described qualities like compassion, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love. Think about one relationship that feels strained or ordinary. What would it look like for Christ’s character to shape your posture there?

Suggested Response: Guide participants to move beyond abstract virtues and into real situations. This may involve choosing to listen instead of defend, initiating reconciliation instead of waiting, speaking gently instead of sharply, or practicing gratitude instead of resentment. Emphasize that these virtues are not personality traits but clothing we intentionally put on.

QUESTION 4: In 3:18-4:1 Paul applied faith directly to marriage, parenting, and work. Where is it easiest for you to treat faith as separate from your responsibilities? What might change if you truly believed Christ defines how you lead, submit, obey, or serve?

Suggested Response: Some may realize they separate Sunday faith from workplace ethics, family conflict, leadership decisions, or authority structures. Encourage reflection on how Christ’s lordship reframes power, service, and fairness. In marriage, that may mean sacrificial love instead of control. In parenting, discipline without discouragement. In work, integrity when unseen. The emphasis is that formation is tested most clearly in ordinary authority dynamics.

QUESTION 5: In 4:2-6 Paul connected prayer, speech, and witness. As a group, how can we help one another live in a way that makes Christ visible in both our words and our daily rhythms?

Suggested Response: This could include praying for specific conversations, checking in about difficult workplace interactions, modeling gracious speech within the group, and celebrating small acts of faithfulness. A healthy group culture normalizes dependence on prayer, wise engagement with outsiders, and speech that reflects Christ rather than sarcasm or hostility.

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CHALLENGE

LEADER TIP

End your study time with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

Formation happens in ordinary decisions, repeated conversations, and daily responsibilities. Over time, those patterns reveal what truly defines you. If Christ is your life, that identity will not remain theoretical. It will show up in what you set your mind on, what you refuse, what you put on, how you treat people in your home, how you work when no one notices, and how you speak when tension rises.

This week, pay attention to what is shaping you.

- What is quietly forming your desires and reactions?
- Where does your everyday life suggest that something other than Christ is functioning as your defining identity?
- What would it look like to take one concrete step to live in the reality that your life is hidden with Him?

You do not create new life by trying harder. You live differently because your life is already anchored in Christ.

Let's pray.