

CORE COMPETENCIES

Core Beliefs

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- Personal God
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

Core Practices

- Worship
- Prayer
- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope

"I can cope with the hardships of life and death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

- Humility

As we continue in this brief series on Transformation—"The Morph"—we come to what I believe is one of the most significant New Testament passages on this topic. Colossians 3 is a kind of manifest of transformation, in my opinion. Here we see the three critical elements of change...change in thinking (belief), in action (practice), and in character (virtue). I want to invite you to dig deeply into this text and to discover what God has to say about how we change. Let Him write these truths onto your heart and into your life. I pray that you'll be enriched—and transformed—as you do.

Morphing,

Richard Gotthardt, Pastor of Spiritual Formation

Day 1: (Colossians 3:1-4)

Read through the passage below three times.

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

As you read the passage, were there any questions that you had regarding meaning or intent of the author? List them below.

Ex. What does it mean that Christ is my life?

Read the passage a fourth time. As you read, mark the following items:
Words that are repeated more than twice

What does this passage say is true about you as a believer in Jesus Christ?

What does this passage say about Jesus Christ?

What specific commands are given to believers in this passage?

Paul, the writer of Colossians, instructs believers to "set your heart on things above" and to "set your mind on things above." What does it mean to set your heart on things above? How is this different than the second command—setting your mind on things above?

Now that you have briefly studied this passage, re-write it in your own words.

Ex. I believe and affirm that through the resurrection of Jesus, I have also been set free from the death that my sinful heart had destined me for. Because of this deep truth, I must consciously direct my heart towards eternal things.

Re-read your re-write of the passage and pray these words back to God as a personal expression of the truth He is showing to you.

Day 2: (Colossians 3:5-11)

Spend a few moments praying, asking God to fill you with His wisdom and insight as you set your heart and mind on His words today.

Rewind the previous twenty-four hours before the Lord. Ask Him to show you when your mind and heart were set on “things above” and when they were set on “earthly things.” Take a moment to celebrate what is of God and also to confess and receive God’s forgiveness for that which was not of God.

Read the passage below three times.

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 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 Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

What characteristics does Paul say belong to our earthly nature or our old self? List those below.

What does Paul command us to rid ourselves of? List those below.

When you reflect on your life these days, which of those things do you see? Circle those which are “trouble areas” for you.

What does verse 10 say about the new self? What do you think that renewal looks like?

In verse 11, Paul writes, “Here there is no Greek...” What, or where, is *here* referring to?

It is very important that we understand what Paul is saying about spiritual formation in these verses. He is demonstrating that this takes effort and is a necessary aspect of “taking off” sinful characteristics and “putting on” eternal characteristics. However, the motivation and power for this effort comes through the indwelling Holy Spirit who is renewing our knowledge of our new nature as image bearers of the Creator.

Look back over the list of characteristics Paul commands us to rid ourselves of. What is a correlating godly characteristic that we would need to put on in place of each of the earthly characteristics?

Reflect on your list and ask God to show you an eternal characteristic that needs to be more fully put on next to each “trouble area” that you circled earlier.

Pray about one of those characteristics specifically, asking the Holy Spirit to renew your knowledge of your new self, an image-bearer of the Creator in this specific part of your life in God.

Day 3: (Colossians 3:12-14)

Think on your day yesterday. Ask God to show you when your life reflected His image and when it did not. Confess to Him the areas in which you pursued earthly things and celebrate how you put on the new self.

Read the passage below three times.

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 whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

What specific things does this section say are true about us as believers in Jesus Christ?

What four commands does Paul give to us?

In the first column below, list the characteristics that Paul tells us to clothe ourselves with. In the second column, write a short definition- your own words- of each of these characteristics.

Characteristics

Definition

As you look at this list, with which of these characteristics is God inviting you to clothe yourself? Why is that a missing or more threadbare part of your “wardrobe”? What is a step you can take to begin to “put that on”?

Ask God to show you if there is a relationship in which you are withholding forgiveness or have not fully forgiven someone. Write out your thoughts and feelings about the circumstances you are hurt or angry about.

Ask God to deepen your knowledge of the depth of His forgiveness for you. Ask Him to empower you to move another step forward towards forgiveness in this relationship.

Use Colossians 3:12-14 as a guide and pray the verses back to God.

Ex. Father, I am yours, chosen by you. You have covered over my sins and see me as righteous and holy. I am deeply and profoundly loved by You, the God of the Universe. Help me to put on...

Day 4: (Colossians 3:15-16)

Reflect again on the previous days events. Did you see God inviting you to “clothe yourself” in the area that you identified with Him? How did that show up? Don’t miss celebrating where you see God inviting you to grow in Him!

Read the passage below several times.

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 Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

In verses 15 and 16, Paul gives us some commands. In the space below write the command He gives in the first column and in the second column, write a tangible way you can live out this command.

Command

Living it out...

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”

Confess my sins regularly, so that I am “at peace” with God
Be quick to forgive others so I am at peace with other people

Paul gives the command to be thankful in verse 15. It is a short statement, but a vital command to being formed spiritually. We must cultivate a thankful heart. In the space below, list 10 things for which you are thankful.

Paul focuses in this passage on the importance of being spiritually formed so we can live in a healthy, God-honoring community.

What is one way you have seen your individual spiritual formation impact your community of believers? In other words, as you have grown, how has that affected those around you?

“Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” When you enter into corporate worship through song, are you entering with gratitude in your heart? What practice might you develop to help you come into singing with gratitude?

Write out a prayer to God, telling him why you are thankful for Him. Be specific!

Day 5: Examine Your Life

Read through Colossians 3:1-17. Thank God for His truth found in these verses.

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.

In John Ortberg’s book, The Life You’ve Always Wanted, he talks about the importance of a “well-ordered heart” as being a foundational aspect of spiritual formation.

Read Jeremiah 17:9. What does this verse say about our hearts?

Read Proverbs 4:23. What does this verse say about our hearts?

We see in Jeremiah, that our hearts are fallen and in need of transformation. Ortberg describes a ‘well-ordered heart’ as one that is *transformed to love the right thing to the right degree in the right way with the right kind of love*. This sounds very good, but also very hard. In order to see this kind of transformation, we need a plan of action as well as the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

We need a lifestyle of heart transformation in which the events of our daily lives are focused on knowing Jesus and learning how to be more like him. Ortberg calls this having a “Rule of Life”—a statement that defines and shapes our everyday actions.

Re-read Colossians 3:17. Paul is giving the church at Colossae a “rule of life.”

In the space below, re-write Colossians 3:17 in your own words. Personalize it to make your own “Rule of Life.”

List several daily activities in which you can begin to apply your “rule of life.”

Spend time in prayer asking God to make your “rule of life” more than a memorized phrase, but instead a catalytic statement that will direct your heart and mind back to the image of your Creator.