

# SEEK THE THINGS ABOVE

Colossians 3:1-17

## INTRODUCTION

I stopped using Facebook recently. A dark cloud of resentment, frustration, and discouragement lifted. I'm happier and more at peace than I have been in months.

Am I anti-Facebook? No. Am I telling you not to use Facebook? No.

What I am saying is that for me, I came to realize that Facebook was a *crumb and bubble* not helpful to my soul. Disengaging from Facebook has removed its influence upon my soul.

## REVIEW

### Crumbs and Bubbles

Crumbs and Bubbles are those numerous daily, seemingly insignificant experiences and choices that taken all together form our soul. News, talk shows, music, conversations, emails, Facebook, Scripture and many other daily experiences shape our souls. Aware of this, we can decide what inputs we allow into our thoughts and hearts. We can choose influences that shape our souls positively. God's goal is to re-shape our soul in the likeness of Jesus.

### God's goal for me is to become like Jesus

From birth, we are separated from God. Away from God, our souls form around our self-centered desires. Reborn in Christ, God begins a lifelong process of re-forming our souls in Christlikeness.

Misunderstanding the process and attempting behavior modification by willpower alone often leads to the conclusion that becoming like Jesus is impossible. It is critical to understand that transformation proceeds from the inside out.

**The secret of becoming like Jesus is to realize that if I change the inside, the outside will follow.**

Colossians 3:1-17 is our core passage in this series. Read it many times in the next five weeks. Join me in memorizing it.

### Colossians 3:1-17

Written by the Apostle Paul in 60AD, his letter combats heresy that had arisen in Colossae and was threatening the life of the church. In this passage, Paul urges believers to become like Jesus.

## READ COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

Spiritual transformation depends on the very first phrase of verse one: *If, then, you have been raised with Christ....* Everything else in the passage is downstream.

Becoming like Jesus is the natural course for us now that we are identified with Jesus. When you trusted in Jesus, your position in the universe changed. You were raised with Jesus to a living relationship with God. Before Christ you were dead to God; now in Christ, you are alive to God. Before Christ you lived in the kingdom of darkness; now in Christ, you live in the kingdom of light. Before Christ you were an enemy of God; now, in Christ, you are His beloved child. Before Christ your destiny was the Lake of Fire; now in Christ, your destiny is the New Jerusalem.

Your whole self is bound up in Jesus.

As the Apostle Paul loves to say, "You are in Christ." Now, God's goal is to get more of Christ in you! The one flows from the other. Spiritual transformation is the process of bringing our inner selves into alignment with who we are in Christ.

When visiting our son and daughter-in-law at Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay, I did not see one out of shape Marine. Beginning with Boot Camp, it is drilled into each recruit that he/she is a U.S. Marine and, among other things, a Marine is always fit to fight. Their new identity changes their self-image, which changes their diet and fitness habits.

Similarly, internalizing our new identity in Christ is critical to becoming like Jesus.

I have included *Who I Am In Christ* on page two of your notes to help you become firmly grounded in who you are in Christ.

## Who I Am In Christ

### READ WHO I AM IN CHRIST

Reading *Who I Am In Christ* one time will have virtually no impact on your self-image. Repetition is one of your most powerful tools in becoming like Jesus. I recommend you read through this list several times a day for the next 30 days. Reading it aloud will strengthen its impact. I also recommend you add to this list additional truths about who you are in Christ.

It is critical we internalize these truths; this is who you are in Christ, in God's reality. This is not make believe or theory. It is reality. As evidence let me ask a question: after you trusted Jesus were you able to understand Scripture better than before trusting Jesus? If so, it is because the Holy Spirit now lives in you and illuminates your mind to understand Scripture. Illumination by the Holy Spirit is proof that you *have been raised with Christ*.

Forgiveness of sin, the indwelling Spirit, our new standing in Christ, and our future home in the New Jerusalem, are all gifts from our Heavenly Father. We don't deserve them nor do we merit them by our works. We are saved by grace through faith.

But if we are to become like Jesus, we must exert effort. In other words, we must work at it. If we do not want to become like Jesus we will not become like Jesus.

Read again Colossians 3:1.

## Colossians 3:1

Having been raised with Christ we are to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right of God.

*To seek* in this context, means *to strive*.

For what are we to *strive*?

*The things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.* Jesus expressed this as “seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”. What are the things above?

What is Jesus’ demeanor? Is He full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? What ethics characterize Jesus’ leadership? Truth, honesty, equality, justice, mercy, compassion, faithfulness, wisdom.

For these attributes and ethics we are to strive. We must strive to become like Jesus.

### **I must strive to become like Jesus**

But that doesn’t mean we will. We must want the things above. You must want to become like Jesus. Without the vision and desire to be like Jesus we lack the motivation to take the steps that lead to Christlikeness.

This explains the less than satisfactory experience of teaching our children to play piano. It was Cathy and my vision for our kids, not theirs! My inspiring instruction was not reciprocated with enthusiastic learning. It was a fight to get them to practice. Many lessons ended in angry tears and frustration. Finally, mercifully, we ended the pain.

We first must have a vision of the skill we want to master. Then we commit to pursue that skill. Then we engage in the steps towards mastering that skill. This is true whether it be music, art, writing, athletics, cooking, counseling, acquiring a new language, whatever the case may be.

This also is true of becoming like Jesus. We first must have a vision for ourselves of becoming like Jesus. Hopefully this vision drives a desire to become like Jesus. Thus motivated we participate in the steps that lead to Christlikeness.

Two main ideas from this study:

### **Who I Am In Christ**

My hope is that a clear vision of your position in Christ will drive a deeper desire to become like Christ. Reading *Who I Am In Christ* repetitively will internalize these truths and change your outlook. By God’s grace we are *in Christ*. The question is; do you want *Christ in you*? We must desire Christlikeness and strive for it.

### **I must strive to become like Jesus**

Our striving will not be in our strength alone for God will be working in us to carry to completion the work He began with our new birth. Great things are possible for those who *seek the things that are above....*