

Week 5

SET YOUR MIND ON CHRIST

Colossians 3:1-4

.....
*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things
that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand
of God.*

(Colossians 3:1, ESV)
.....

Introduction

What do you spend most of your time thinking about? When you have free moments to daydream, where do your thoughts go? When you are preparing for a busy day, what are you thinking about?

The reality is that what we think about often determines how we feel, how we respond to different situations, and what we give our best energy to. Will we focus on temporary things with little consequence or will we focus on eternal realities? That's the question that Paul wants us to answer in this passage. Rather than focusing on earthly things of less significance, he wants us to think about Jesus Christ and all that he's done for us.

Renewed thinking is a key ingredient for transformed living. Paul said in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but *be transformed by the renewal of your mind.*" Therefore, it makes sense that Paul would begin his section on practical Christian living by focusing on the mind. His exhortation: "Set your minds on things above." This phrase is often misunderstood or poorly applied. Therefore, this study seeks to help us discern what it means to seek the things that are above.

May it lead us to become renewed people who have such an intense focus on Christ and the implications of the gospel that it leads us to live radically different lives.

Investigation

Read Colossians 3:1-4.

1. How many times does Paul use the word “Christ” in this passage? Why is that significant for understanding the meaning of the passage?
2. What does it mean to “set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (3:2)?
3. What does Paul mean by saying that “you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (3:3)?
4. In your own words, how would you summarize Paul’s main idea in this passage?

Implication

1. Paul roots our practical living in deep theology (i.e. being raised with Christ, having our lives hidden with Christ, etc.). Nonetheless, many Christians view theology as unimportant. Why is theology important for practical Christian living?
2. What are some practical ways that a person could set his or her mind on Christ?
3. What are some earthly things that you tend to end up focusing on in an unhealthy or idolatrous way? (*Note: Don't generalize about things "we" struggle with—be specific about yourself*)
4. Is Christ your personal treasure? If so, why? What is it about him that you adore? If not, why not?

Other Issues

What are the dangers of earthly things?

Perhaps John Piper says it best:

The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for Heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night. For all the ill that Satan can do, when God describes what keeps us from the banquet table of his love, it is a piece of land, a yoke of oxen, and a wife (Luke 14:18-20). The greatest adversary of love to God is not his enemies but his gifts. And the most deadly appetites are not for the poison of evil, but for the simple pleasures of earth. For when these replace an appetite for God himself, the idolatry is scarcely recognizable, and almost incurable...“The pleasures of this life” ... are not evil in themselves. These are not vices. These are gifts of God. They are your basic meat and potatoes and coffee and gardening and reading and decorating and traveling and investing and TV-watching and Internet-surfing and shopping and exercising and collecting and talking. And all of them can become deadly substitutes for God.⁹

⁹ John Piper, *A Hunger for God* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1997). 14-15.

Sermon Notes