BIBLE STUDY

Fashion Tips

RESONATE

Fashion Tips

Fashion Designer

We live in a culture that is obsessed with looks. The latest fads sweep our nation and no one wants to be left behind. Yet in our obsession with the outward appearances, have we lost the value of inner beauty? God does not look upon our outward appearance yet He is greatly interested in our hearts. We need to learn how to be attractive in the eyes of God.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 2:13-15; Ephesians 6:11-12

We have all heard the question, "If you knew that you were going to die tomorrow, what would you want to do today?" But I would like to put that question differently. "If you knew that you were already dead, how would you respond to new life?"

Colossians 2:13-14

> 13When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Verse 13-15: You were dead. Ponder that thought. The spirit within you was dead. Sin kept you dead. Your future was eternal death. But because of the grace of our Lord, you are now alive. You have been forgiven. The record against you has been wiped clean. Your death was given to Jesus and in return He gave you His eternal life. He not only gave you life but He won victory over those who wanted to keep you dead.

Colossians 2:15

> 15And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Verse 15: What are these powers and authorities whom Jesus defeated? The evil demons of this world.

Ephesians 6:11-12

> 11Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Verse 11-12: The enemy loves death. He wants people to die spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Death is his calling card. Jesus took his call. And He went to the cross. He wore the cloak of sin, of shame, of humiliation, and of pain. And He took death itself and threw it back in the face of satan! The evil forces believed that death was a sign of their victory. They did not understand that death opened the door to eternal life. Because of the death of Jesus we can be clothed in righteousness, glory, honor, and joy! That's the wardrobe I want! That is a fad that will never go out of style, not even in heaven.

DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Meditate on the cross. Think about all that it took for Jesus to disarm the powers of evil in order to bring victory to you.

You were dead and now you are alive. How will you live differently?

What are ways that the enemy tries to keep people dead emotionally and spiritually?

In what area of your life do you need the life of Jesus to make a difference in you?

DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:1-2

I have heard of many people who have had a near-death experience. They may have been in a serious accident, or were facing a intense surgery, or have had a doctor give them a diagnosis of a serious disease. After people realize that their lives may be cut short and death may be imminent, they seem to live differently. The petty things of this world no longer have a hold of them. They transcend the immediate problems and begin to value all they have in life. They love more deeply, give more of themselves to others, laugh more, and enjoy little things in life. They are changed.

Because of the victory of Jesus at the cross, we are no longer dead but alive in Him. We used to be spiritually dead and now we are alive.

Colossians 3:1-2

> 1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Verse 1-2: We have been raised with Christ. We have been given a new lease on life. We have gone from death to life. What is your response? Let us think this through using a physical analogy. You were born with a birth defect. Because of your problem, you had to live in the hospital everyday of your life. Day in and day out, you never leave the hospital. Then one day a new doctor comes in and runs some tests. He tells you that He knows of a way that will release you from your prison. You will have to go into surgery. He cannot give you all of the details, but you must trust Him. You decide to trust Him. You are willing to die then to spend another day in the hospital. You are scared but you go into surgery. Hours later you awake. Family and friends are all around celebrating. They tell you that they surgery was a success and after all of these years, you are free to leave the hospital! You are so thankful that you ask to speak to the surgeon. A nurse responds, "Didn't you know? His heart was the only perfect match for yours. He gave His life for you!"

Tears well up at this sacrifice on your behalf. "How can I ever thank Him?"

The nurse responds, "He left instructions. Eat healthy and exercise."

After all this person has been through, don't you think they would want to follow these simple instructions? They have been set free at the cost of Another's life. Could they not follow His simple directions? Jesus sacrificed Himself for us. He has left us instructions. He

summarizes two directions right here:

Colossians 3:1-2

> 1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Verse 1-2: Two simple steps: set your heart on things above and set your mind on things above. These are directions that help us to live in freedom for the rest of our lives. Set your emotions and your thoughts on heavenly things, not earthly ones. This is the response that your Surgeon has asked of you. But you must choose. Will you live a spiritually healthy life or will you stuff your heart and mind with the “junk food” of the world? You decide what to set your heart and mind on. In response to all He has done for you, what will you do?

DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Thank Jesus for His sacrifice. Request the Spirit’s help to set our hearts and minds on the things of heaven.

How do we set your hearts and minds on things above?

Why do you believe that Jesus wants this to be our response to His work on the cross?

What are ways that we can do this throughout the day?

DAY 3

The Word

Today’s Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Matthew 11:28-30; Colossians 3:3; Psalm 23:1-4; Ephesians 2:4-7

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

> 19Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Verse19-20: You are not your own. You are not in charge. You do not have the final say. You are not in control. You cannot shout about “your rights”. You are not independent. And considering all of this: you should be thankful. You were redeemed. You were bought from the enemy with the price of Jesus’ blood. He is your new Master. Your former master was evil, cruel, heartless. Your new Master is good, kind, loving.

Matthew 11:28-30

> 28"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Verse 29-30: Our former master enjoyed burdening us with stress, pain, heartache, regret, shame, sin, depression. Our new Master wants to take our burdens and carry them upon Himself. He desires to walk beside us and teach us along the way. He wants us to grow up in Him. His yoke is not to burden us but to help us. When a young ox was in need of training, they would yoke him together with an older and more experienced ox. The older ox truly carried the burden. The younger ox just learned what to do. This is what Jesus is pleading for us to do: come to Him, walk with Him, learn from Him. In Him is where we find rest.

You are yoked beside Christ. Another way to view this is as follows:

Colossians 3:3

> 3For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Verse 3: You are hidden in Christ. I love this imagery. As a child, if you were afraid, where did you want to be? You would run to the arms of a parent. There you were “hidden” from the danger, from the pain, from the fear. The same is true for you today. Your life is permanently hidden in Christ. You are linked beside your Master. He will never leave you nor

forsake you. He will lead you.

Psalm 23:1-4

> 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
>
> 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
>
> 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
>
> 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Verse 1-4: You are being led to good places. Sometimes the journey may be difficult but in the end you are being taking to places of rest and restoration. You are never without anything you need. You are taken care of, for your Guide is with you.

To know that we are “hidden in Christ” enables us to understand that we have everything we need to be able to live up to His instructions for us. Remember that we learned yesterday that He wants us to set our hearts and mind on eternal matters. This would be impossible to do on our own. We are not capable. However, He has assured us that we are hidden in Him and He is able to lead our hearts and minds to rest in Him. For in Him, we are already located in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:4-7

> 4But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Verse 4-7: In Christ Jesus, you are seated in the heavenly realms. This is a deep mystery but since we are in Him and He is in us, we are together with Him in the heavenly places. Spiritually speaking, we are already there. Now, physically speaking, we will be there after our deaths or the rapture. For now, the Spirit who is eternal resides within you. He is not confined by time for He is outside of time. You are in Jesus who also is eternal. In the eternal plan, you are already seated in the heavenly realms. I hope this is mind-boggling to you. Let it lead you to praise. But let it also make you wonder how could someone seated in the heavens dwell on this temporal earth? That is like a Prince or Princess focusing on the moat outside the castle instead of the riches of their kingdom! Stop setting your mind on the “dirty water” of this world. Instead, set your heart and mind on the One in whose life you are already hidden, your Guide, who is walking you towards your Home!

DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

Confess any sin which keeps you tugging on the “yoke of Christ” instead of walking with Him.

How are our lives hidden in Christ?

What are your thoughts on the Scripture that tells us that we are seated in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus?

How is setting your hearts and minds on heavenly things connected with honoring God with your body?

The price Jesus paid for us is connected with how we should respond (obedience). How does meditating on the cross help us to obey the Word of God?

DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:4; Revelation 19:6-8; Colossians 3:1-2

Have you ever looked in the mirror and thought, "Who is this old person staring back at me?" Or maybe it's just that all your "flaws" seem more highlighted like the dark circles under your eyes that now look like you had been in a boxing match! On those really rough days remember this:

Colossians 3:4

> 4When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Verse 4: A time is coming when you will be glorious. You will appear with Christ and radiate His glory. The Spirit who is within you and is covered by this earthly flesh will somehow be set free to showcase you in God's brilliance. You will never be dressed finer. The glory of God will be manifest. However, you also have a part in creating your heavenly outfit.

Revelation 19:6-8

> 6Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. 7Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. 8Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Verse 6-8: You will be clothed in your righteous acts. All of your good works done here on earth, will be part of your splendor as you appear with Christ in His glory. How will you be dressed in heaven? Your every action determines your future attire. Dr. David Jeremiah jokingly remarked that he thinks that with some people who are only want to "just get to glory" but do not care about living for the Lord on earth may find themselves indecently dressed in heaven! I hope that does not describe us. We must work to make ourselves beautiful for the King! How do we act righteously? Let's review the verses we have studied this week.

Colossians 3:1-2

> 1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.



Verse 1-2: By setting our hearts and minds on the things above, our actions will stem from the heavens. Our hearts and minds determine our responds. If we think like the world, we will act like the world. If we think like heaven, we will act like heaven. Jesus is our righteousness. He will lead us towards righteousness. These righteous acts will be rewarded in heaven. We will be dressed in them. Our future glory will be in proportion to our present actions. Thus, the more we decide to set our hearts on minds on Christ, the more we will be a reflection of His glory in heaven!

DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you to get ready to appear with Him in His glory.

Express in your own words how setting your heart and mind on heavenly things will make a difference in your future.

What can you begin to do today that will help you be dressed in the righteous actions of the saints?

The following is a quote from C.S. Lewis. Write your thoughts about it. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.

DAY 5

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Colossians 3:1-4

Colossians 3:1-4

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

Verse 1-4: Past. Present. Future. All three parts of your life are summed up in these verses. All of time is wrapped up in four verses. The beginning and the end is right here.

Let’s begin with the past. You were raised with Christ. It does not matter what you have done. Your history is summed up with Christ. He chose to give you a new life. Each time you sin, each time you succeed, you can look back and see one thing, “you have been raised with Christ.” That is your past. Each day it brings hope for our present and our future. For those of you who are bogged down with regrets or who are obsessed with past achievements, then let me tell you that your eyes are on the wrong event in your life. Turn your eyes to that moment in time when you became new in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17

> 17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Verse 17: You are new. You are constantly being made new. You are being renewed each day. Your past fades away. Every achievement, every failure passes by, never to be regained. But the life of Christ which you have been raised, grows more and more in you. That is the only event in your history that matters. The rest can be discarded.

Philippians 3:7-8, 12-14

> 7But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Verse 7-8, 12-14: The past is the past. Today, this moment, is all that we have control of. We must choose to use this time to stretch forward to what is ahead. What is that future? Review verse four of Colossians chapter three.

Colossians 3:4

> 4When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Verse 4: Your life which was made new when you were “raised with Christ” will now appear with Christ. Jesus, who is your life, who dwells within you, will finally be seen face to face. You will see your Hope, your Savior, your Redeemer, your Life right before your eyes. He will appear. You will see Him for in Him you, too, will be eternally alive.

John 11:25-26

> 25Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Verse 25-26: We will be with Him. Forever. And ever. And ever! He is our Life and that Life is within us so we have no fear of death. Our future is eternally secured. Our future is life. That life began when in the past we were “raised with Christ” and that life will continue. It will never end. That is your future.

Our future is glorious. Our past ensures our future. What is our present?

Colossians 3:1b-2

> 1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Verse 1-2: Your present is active. It has a purpose. It is a struggle. It is a fight. It is exciting! The Christian life is not about sitting in seclusion. The Christian life is not irrelevant to real world issues. Instead, the true Life gives us life to face every situation.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

> 3For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Verse 3-5: Each moment we are in the middle of a fight. We are living out a real life action movie. The enemy comes against us in our minds. He throws out his arsenal of weapons to fight the Spirit of God within you. You can join in on the victory by setting your heart on min on things above, on the place of heaven, on the Person of Christ.

Does this sound dull to you? Then you have no understanding of spiritual warfare. The Lord Almighty has recruited you to be a warrior in His battle against evil! Your present can secure great gains or great losses to the kingdom of God! You are valued by God. Will you value God by living for Him? Where you set your heart and mind shows who you value.

Mark 12:30-31

> 30Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Verse 30-31: Your present allows you the opportunity to show your thankfulness for what Christ did in your past (raising you with Him) and what He will do in your future (appearing with you). Time is passing. More and more slips into the past. Choose now to make the present one that pleases the One who has given and will continue to give you life eternal!

DAY 5

Up Close and Personal

Praise our Lord Jesus Christ for the eternal life that He has given you. He gave you this life in the past so that you may have this life forever!

Think through your past. There are moments of failures and success. How will you begin to focus on Jesus' work of salvation instead of what you have done?

How does focusing on salvation help you to forget your past failures and achievements?

How does the future give you hope?

How does understanding your past and future help you to live for Jesus today?

How does the act of setting your heart and mind on things above showcase your love for God?

BIBLE STUDY

Fashion Tips

RESONATE

Fashion Tips

Get the Look

The Designer of the universe is willing to give you fashion tips for the heart. Are you willing to listen? He wants you to be as glorious as He. Imagine having a heart that is as beautiful as heaven’s King. This week we will discover what this kind of heart looks like and will also learn how we can get “the look”.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:12; James 1:2-4; Ephesians 5:18

Have you ever looked back at baby pictures and wondered, "What was my parent thinking to dress me in that outfit?" Styles come and go. We look back and question, "How did we ever think that it looked good?" In a short amount of time, a favorite outfit can become a faux pas! But there is one thing that will never go out of style: a properly dressed heart.

Colossians 3:12

> 12Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Verse 12: If you desire to know God's will for your life, here it is: He wants your heart to be like His. Every circumstance is being weaved together by the Master Designer's hand to mold you into the image of Christ. His heart is one of "compassion, kindness, humility, and gentleness". The Lord desires that the ones He loves to be like Him. Look again at the beginning of this verse.

Colossians 3:12a

> 12Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved…

Verse 12: You are chosen by God. You have been made holy by the atoning blood of Jesus. You are dearly loved. Because of the thoughts and the feelings that God has towards you, He wants you to be the same way towards Him and towards others. Is this not true for any parent? You want your child to love you as you have loved him. You want your child to live a life that is good to himself, to you, and to others. You want what is best for your child. God knows that the best thing in the universe is a heart like His. He makes it clear what that heart looks like so that we will know what we are striving for.

The Lord does not want us to have to guess at His will. Often many people are confused about the direction that God wants them to go. They wonder about what they should or should not do. The overlying objective of God in your life is to make you like Christ. When you let this be the leading factor in your life, then you will view circumstances not as "Which way to go" but instead as "What will make me more like Christ." This will lead to expectation instead of dread. You will welcome each situation as one designed by God to bring growth into your life.

James 1:2-4

> 2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Verse 2-5: It is through perseverance that the will of God is completed in your life. Each day you choose to put on the heart of God which, over time, will help you grow into maturity. The sign of maturity is to not be lacking in anything. In other words, you are filled. What are you to be filled with? The Spirit, of course!

Ephesians 5:18

> 18Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Verse 18: The Spirit has the heart of God for He is God. Therefore, the Spirit is the One who fills your heart with the heart of God. Maturity is won by perseverance. Perseverance is achieved by daily progress. What are we to progress in? The ways of God. His ways, shown by His heart, are outlined in Colossians 3:12. Each day we choose whether to clothe ourselves with His ways or our own. His ways leads us to understanding more of His will.

Do you see the connection? God’s will for your life is to make your heart like His. So, every circumstance you go through can bring you joy for it is being used to achieve God’s will in your life. If each day you focus on putting on the heart of God, then you will always line up with His will. Over time, this perseverance will lead to your maturity so that you will easily detect the Lord’s will. Now, we can help the maturity process by determining each day to put on “compassion, kindness, humility, and gentleness”. These godly characteristics enable us to better determine the will of God for our hearts will be beating in tune with His.

DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Pray that your heart will become more like the heart of God.

How can the will of God be found by following the heart of God?

Why would daily perseverance in the ways of God help us to readily discover the will of God?

How does knowing that the will of God in your life is to make your heart like His help you in your decision making processes?

DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:13; Matthew 18:21-35

Resentment. Bitterness. Anger. Revenge. Do you hold onto any of these? Is there someone in your life with whom you still harbor ill feelings? Did that person do something terrible to you and you are not willing to let him or her "off the hook". Let the Word of God plead with you:

Colossians 3:13

> 13Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Verse 13: I believe forgiveness is a difficult subject to address. I do not know your hurts and pains. I do not know what memory still evokes an ache in your heart. I have heard, seen, and experienced bad things from people. We all have. Each one of us can name someone whom has deeply offended us. However, this verse is not for that person who is on your mind. This verse is for you. You are asked by God to forgive.

I want to clear up any misconceptions about what forgiveness is and what it is not. Forgiveness is simply not having a debt owed to us. We no longer think or feel like a person is indebted to us for their actions. They may have been wrong. We do not minimize the sin committed against us. Instead, we no longer expect them to make up for whatever they did. In truth, can the hurt caused to us ever be erased? It cannot be undone. What happened, happened. That cannot be changed.

Forgiveness is not trust. I can forgive someone by no longer expecting that person to "owe" me. I can forgive him by not holding his action against him. However, I do not have to place myself back into the same situation. For example, if someone betrayed my confidence, I can forgive that person for the gossip she shared about me. However, I do not have to trust her by telling her my personal thoughts again. Or, if someone borrowed something from me and then broke it due to willful neglect, I can forgive him for what he did. I do not have to trust him with another one of my possessions. Forgiveness and trust are two different things.

God calls us to forgive others. He wants us to release our bitter feelings towards others. He wants us to commit the people to Him for He alone is the Judge of their actions. We can only do this by remembering the fact that He has the right to judge us, yet He chose to give us mercy instead. As we have been forgiven, we can forgive others. We are only mimicking the heart of God when we forgive for He has given us the example of forgiveness. This truth is best explained through this story:

Matthew 18:21-35

21Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26"The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

29"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

30"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Verse 21-35: Forgiveness is part of the heart of God. The Lord wants us to have His heart. He does not ask us to do anything that He Himself has not modeled for us. He has forgiven us so we in turn can forgive others. To not forgive damages only ourselves. Forgiveness releases us from the negative consequences of bitterness. Our hearts are free to become more and more like the heart of God!

DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Praise God for the forgiveness that He has given you.

If there is someone in your life with whom you are struggling to forgive, write a prayer to God beseeching His help to give this person mercy.

Why is forgiveness only possible in light of the fact that we have been forgiven?

DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:12-14; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

I am prone to getting cold. I often layer my clothes. Jackets are a big part of my wardrobe. Even during summer months I bring a jacket along with me due to air- conditioning. The extra layer shields me from the uncomfortable pain of being cold.

The wardrobe of our hearts also has layers. We are to be dressed in "Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" and forgiveness. But overall all of these virtues, we must wear love.

Colossians 3:14

> 14And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Verse 14: Love is the foremost virtue. Being the outer layer, it is the quality that should be the most evident in our lives. All of the other virtues are filtered through our love. In other words, we show compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" and forgiveness to others because we love them. None of these qualities can be shown without love. It is love that makes all of our virtues worthwhile.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

> 1If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Verse 1-3: Love is what makes all of our thoughts and actions have purpose and meaning. Without love, our lives are meaningless. That is why it is the outer layer in our hearts. Love should dictate our every move. Just as a jacket meets the cold wind and provides a barrier to the elements, so our love meets our circumstances and provides a barrier to our negative response. In other words, if I face every situation with love, then I will not commit sin against God or others. Instead, I will filter my circumstances through love and respond with "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" and forgiveness.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

> 4Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Verse 4-7: When we are wrapped in love than we will deal with each person and each situation as Jesus Christ would. His life is a legacy of love. As sinners we deserve eternal punishment. Yet, He filters our offense against Him through His love and we receive His “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” and forgiveness. Because He loves us, we can love others. The calling of God for us to put on the virtue of love is in response that we are loved.

Colossians 3:12-14

> 12Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Verse 12: You are dearly loved. Because of the love given to you, clothe yourself in love. This one virtue is the greatest protection from living like the world. Love is from God alone for He is love. When your heart is surrounded by love you will live like God.

DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

Praise God for the love He has given you. Ask Him to clothe your heart with His love.

How does love bind together all of the other virtues?

Why should love be our first response to every situation?

How does the quality of love keep us from living like the world?

In what situation in your life do you need to have filtered through love so that you can respond in a way that pleases God?

DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

Ambassadors are chosen to go to other nations and represent their home country in a foreign land. These ambassadors work to serve as a bridge between the two nations. Their goal is to provide amicable and peaceable relations between the two countries. These are not soldiers on a search and destroy mission. Instead, these are men and women who showcase their home nation in a way that would cause foreigners to love it as well.

You are an ambassador. You have been chosen by God to showcase your "home", which is heaven itself. You are living as a foreigner in a foreign land. You are to work to help others bridge the gap between the world and heaven. You want others to fall in love with Your King, as you yourself have.

2 Corinthians 5:20

> 20We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Verse 20: An ambassador lives out his culture in the middle of a foreign culture. The ambassador does not become like the people around him, instead his identity is unique in the foreign land. He lives with the people in peace but does not become a part of the people. We, too, live in this word but we are not of this world. To become like the world would disqualify us as the ambassadors of heaven. We are to be ambassadors no matter the reaction of the world.

Ephesians 6:19-20

> 19Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Verse 19-20: Paul was an ambassador for Christ. Even though this connection to his home country led him to jail, he continued to be an ambassador while chained in prison. To what extreme are you willing to go to be an ambassador for Christ? Some of you may already be backing down. You think, "Hey, I don't want to offend anyone. I don't want to make waves." But by backing down, you are forsaking your calling.

Colossians 3:12

> 12Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Verse 12: You are God’s chosen people. You are a part of His kingdom. As one of His citizens, you have a responsibility to act like His child in this world. Only by acting like one of His own can you be a witness to others. The main goal of our lives in growing in Christ likeness is to win the hearts of others to this endeavor. We want others to come “home” with us. If our lives reflect the heart of God, others will notice. They, too, may become a part of His people.

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

> 31So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. 1Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Verse 31-1: In whatever we do, we are to live for the glory of God. We are His people and we need to live in a way that reflects Him. Thus, believers and non-believers alike will understand where our allegiance is. They will notice that we live for the good of others. And our overwhelming purpose is to see people come to salvation. As we live out the heart of God, we lead others to God.

You are chosen. You are an ambassador to this world. The Lord desires for you to live out His heart. We have studied this week what His heart looks like. The people of this world are studying you to see if your heart looks like the world or like this God that you proclaim to know. Are you being an ambassador in the foreign land or are you just on vacation? An ambassador knows his job and works at it daily. A tourist just takes in the sights. Which are you?

DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Spirit to show you how you can become a better ambassador to the world in behalf of your King.

How do we live out our “Heavenly culture” in the midst of the world?

As ambassadors, we do not hide our identity. Our purpose is to showcase Whom we represent. How do you need to show others the heart of God?

How does being an ambassador of God link to seeing people come to salvation?

Who have been ambassadors on behalf of God who showcased the heart of God to you?

How did these people impact you?

DAY 5

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Colossians 3:12-14; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Philippians 2:3-4; Proverbs 15:1; James 5:7- 9; Matthew 6:12-15; Mark 12:30-31

Colossians 3:12-14

> 12Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Verse 12-14: These were the virtues that we studied this week. However, reading something and living it out are two different things. Today, we are going to pray through each virtue. We will model our prayer after Scripture. To pray the Word of God means that you are always praying the will of God. I will give you examples of how to do this throughout the study. My hope is that you will make praying Scripture a continual part of your Bible study habits. If possible, please pray aloud.

Compassion

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

> 3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Verse 3-4: I do praise You God for You have shown me compassion and comfort numerous times in my life. You have been near me through difficult times. You have heard my cries. Thank you for being compassionate to me. With the compassion You have shown me, help me to show compassion to others. You have taught me compassions so that I may now minister to others who are in need. I know that there are people around me in need of Your heart being shown to them. Let me be an instrument of Your compassion here on earth.

Kindness

2 Timothy 2:24-26

> 24And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Verse 24: My Lord, I am Your servant. Because You are my King, I desire to do what pleases you. I ask forgiveness of my quarrelsome ways. I repent now and choose to be kind to others because you have been kind to me. May I treat others with kindness despite intense opposition that I may receive. Help me to focus on the fact that kindness is an example of Your heart. It is Your kindness that led me to repentance. May I be a witness of kindness to others who are in need of Your salvation.

Humility

Philippians 2:3-4

> 3Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Verse 3-4: Merciful One, please forgive my selfish and vain actions. I confess that I have lived for myself in the past. I want to choose another way. Help me to live for others. Instead of fighting my way to the top, I want to consider others better than myself. Teach me humility so that I may live a life that helps others. I want to be a benefit to the kingdom work and in order to do this I must stop looking out for myself. I will trust you to look out for me as I pour myself into the lives of others.

Gentleness

Proverbs 15:1

> 1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Verse 1: Precious Savior, You know the depravity of my heart. I confess how wicked I can be. I have stirred up anger by using harsh words. Forgive me. I thank you for Your mercy. Please help me to change my ways. I desire to be gentle with my words. Let me speak in a way that pleases you. How often you have answered me in gentle ways. Let me reflect that gentleness to others. May I not try to “win” arguments but instead speak in a way that brings reconciliation to my relationships.

Patience

James 5:7-9

> 7Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Verse 7-9: God of Grace, help me to be patient with others. A farmer is patient while the seed grows. Help me to accept others for where they are in life. Some people are sprouting seeds while others are a full harvest. Let me be patient with others as You are patient with me. You know that we are all developing into the image of Christ. You accept where I am and work with me to make me more like Your Son. Help me to accept where others are and walk with them towards heaven, which is a day coming soon. Forgive me for my words spoken against others. You alone are Judge. Instead, may my words and actions reflect the patience that You have shown me.

Forgiveness

Matthew 6:12-15

> 12Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' 14For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Verse 12-15: Merciful Redeemer, please forgive my sin. I have committed wrongs against You. I am sorry. Cleanse me from the stain of sin. I believe that you do forgive me and I receive Your mercy. Because of the mercy given to me, I will give mercy to others. You know the people who have sinned against me. By Your Name, I will forgive them for I do not want my bitterness to cause me to fall into more sin. I want to be protected from the enemy who is waiting for access into my life. He knows that if I do not forgive others that my relationship with you is damaged. This can enable him to wage attacks against me. I want to prevent his plot against. I release those who have hurt me so that I will not bear consequences of not forgiving them. Now, I am free to receive Your mercy and grace. Please pour them into my heart and soul.

Love

Mark 12:30-31

> 30Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."



Verse 30-31: Dear Heavenly Father, help me to love you with all of my heart and all of my soul, all of my mind, and all of my strength. Enable me to love You with every part of myself. Because of my love for You, I want to love others for they were created in your image. Help me to love people as I love myself. I want to treat them in the way that I would want to be treated. Only You can help me live this out. I desire to follow all of your commands and I know that to love You and others is to fulfill Your purposes here on earth.

BIBLE STUDY

Fashion Tips

RESONATE

Fashion Tips

Off the Runway

The purpose of developing godly hearts is to live a godly life. These past few weeks we have studied what the Lord desires and what He disdains in our hearts. From this, we can live out fully the life that God wants us to experience on earth. This life is not onto ourselves but is lived for God and for others. Our “fashionable” hearts are to model good deeds to the world around them.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:27; James 4:1; Ephesians 4:3

During the Christmas holidays, you will often hear many people say that what they want most for Christmas is "Peace on earth". Of course, the focus of this wish is for there to be an end of wars between nations. As nice of a thing that it is to say, which is why many beauty contestants say it during pageants, the sentiment is impossible. Before you call me a pessimist and realize one of many reasons why I am not in a beauty pageant, please hear me out. Peace on earth is impossible without Jesus, for He alone has the title of Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). In other words, Peace is a place where He rules. For example, the Prince of England is from England and has authority in England. He does not, however, have authority in France. Following this logic, the Prince of Peace has authority over Whom He rules. The world, for now, is under the domain of satan. Thus, true peace is impossible.

Is it hopeless? Are beauty contestants forced to find a new answer in pageants? Is holiday marketing a total waste? Not completely. For if you are in Christ then the Prince of Peace reigns over you. Where the Prince is, there is peace. Thus, you are a part of the "nation of peace" which is represented all over the world by all who call the Prince of Peace their King.

Colossians 3:15

> 15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Verse 15: Throughout the world, throughout your nation, throughout your state, throughout your city, throughout your community are people who know Christ. Because of His ownership on our lives, we make up the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:27

> 27Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Verse 27: If a body is at war against itself, then it cannot survive. It is like the physical ailment called lupus. The disease of lupus is a disease where your immune system does not protect your body but instead forms anitobodies that attack your tissues and organs. The body attacks itself. Spiritually speaking, we have lupus in the church whenever there are fights among us.

James 4:1

> 1What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

Verse 1: If evil desires are in control, then there will fight and quarrel amongst the body of Christ! This spiritual lupus is devouring many churches today. The remedy is Peace. We must allow the peace of Christ rule in our hearts instead of our selfish desires. This peace bonds the body together so that we may live in unity.

Ephesians 4:3

> 3Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Verse 3: We are to strive toward unity through the bond of Peace, who is Jesus. We are to make an effort to unite our hearts because we know that the same King in our lives indwells the other members of His body. The Spirit within me cannot be fighting with the Spirit within another believer. The Spirit is always in unity. So, if there is a fighting, then on one side or the other or on both sides there are selfish desires from within that are welling up. If desires are in control and not Peace, then there will be disharmony in the body of Christ. It is only when He rules in our hearts that peace and unity are attained.

Colossians 3:15

> 15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Verse 15: You have a calling, together with all the members of the body of Christ, to live in peace. This peace is only achieved when Christ rules the heart. You cannot force others to have the Prince of Peace rule, but you can choose in your own life to set Him on the throne of your life. May you bring “Peace on earth” to the body of Christ.

DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Prince of Peace to show you if you are helping or hindering His peace in the body of believers.

How is peace achieved?

If you are in disharmony with a member of the body, ask God to show you whether peace or selfish desires rule over your heart. Write His response here.

How can focusing on the fact that we are the body of Christ help us to live in peace?

If we do have a disagreement with a fellow believer, how can we make every effort to achieve peace?

Peace is not easy. We must let Christ rule in our hearts and we must make every effort towards peace. This involves submission to God and sacrifice to others. What are the benefits attained from working at peace?

True peace is an absence of dissension, not an avoidance of arguments. In other words, it is not faking “peace” or pretending there is not a problem between two people. How can fake “peace” be harmful in the long run?

DAY 2

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; James 5:9; 1 Corinthians 12:21-26

We learned yesterday that we are called to peace in the body of Christ. We did not study the phrase that came after this high calling. This sentence is one key in promoting peace in the church.

Colossians 3:15

> 15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Verse 15: “And be thankful.” That one sentence is revolutionary. It can change our perspective on people and circumstances, on our past and future. This one sentence alone can radically impact your life if you will allow its truth to penetrate your soul. Do I sound like I am going over the top? Maybe it is because we view thanksgiving as a holiday that comes once a year. We do not understand that the way of a thankful life is a benefit not only to a believer but to everyone the believer has contact.

Thanksgiving is a matter of focus.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

> 18give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Verse 18: If we would be thankful instead of negative, we would be kept from the sin of murmuring. To murmur is to complain. Often, as the body of Christ, we criticize other members of the body. The “foot” puts down the “hand”. We forget that God has placed that person in the body and that when we put down the created person, we are putting down his Creator as well!

James 5:9

> 9Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Verse 9: As the body, we all are connected to one another through Christ. This connection transcends time for we are united for eternity. We will stand together side by side in heaven praising God. This praise should begin now. As the body, we are to worship our Creator. Our words are to lift up God, not to put down others. To gossip against someone is to abuse the

body of Christ!

1 Corinthians 12:21

> 21The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

Verse 21: We need one another. To keep us from gossip, from criticism, and from disdain; we need to be thankful. When we are thankful for one another, we will focus on the good in others. This will help us from highlighting the negatives. None of us are perfect. We are all on the journey to become more like Jesus Christ. We must be patient with one another as we become more and more like our Savior. We need to look for ways to be thankful for others. This will help promote peace and unity in the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:22-26

> 22On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Verse 22-26: There should be no division in the body. We are to work in harmony with one another. We are to show care, concern, and honor towards every believer. We may have different personalities, social skills, backgrounds, and talents. Yet, each of us has been placed by the Lord Himself into His own body. Whom He chooses should be treated with respect. If we all were respectful, we would have peace in the body. The journey towards peace begins with thanksgiving.

DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Is there someone whom you are having difficulty with? Begin to pray for that person and thank God for certain qualities of that person. If you are struggling to begin, thank God that He is the Creator and that He chose that person to be a part of His body.

How does thanksgiving promote peace in the body of Christ?

How prevalent is criticism and gossip in your life? How can you begin to replace these sins with thanksgiving?

DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13

Hello, teacher. That is what you are. Did you not know? By the Word of God, you are called to teach others. This is not for certain Christians. Every Christian is called to know and teach the Word of God.

Colossians 3:16a

> 16Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom,

Verse 16: Every believer is responsible to know the Word of God. If you are not studying the Word of God on a daily basis then you are not living out your calling. The Word of God is to dwell in you. It can only dwell in you if you take time to draw it into yourself. You must make the effort for the Word of God so that the Word of God can affect change in you.

The Word of God is living and active. It is not words on a page but life to the soul. The Word is not meant to be a nice time of reading but a way of affecting change in life. To affect change in life it must be applied to life. The model God has set up for us to apply the Word of God is to teach and encourage one another with the Word of God. In other words, you share together what the Lord is teaching you in His Word. The Word is not for you alone but to be shared collectively with the believers around you.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

> 12We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

Verse 12-13: Whatever God teaches us so that we now know it in our minds, must be spoken aloud to others so that they can then know it as well. They in turn tell others and so on and so forth. God's will for us is that anytime we learn something new we are obligated to share that thought with others. Each person who hears a sermon on Sunday should be sharing what they learn throughout the week. Each day you learn something in Bible study, you must tell others about it. We must put words to those thoughts.

The enemy has silenced the church. We either think that only the pastor should share his biblical knowledge with others or we believe that the Word is only for ourselves. We have

even named personal Bible studies as “quiet” times which have led us to just being quiet! We feast away on the Word and leave others starving. The sad truth is that we are being kept from progress because spiritual growth is derived from spiritual thought being combined with words. Not only that, we limit the growth of others by keeping biblical truths to ourselves.

If the enemy cannot keep us from reading the Word, he just keeps us quiet about it. We feel “spiritual” for reading it yet are unaware that the enemy is gaining victory in and around our lives. It is time for the muzzle to come off the mouth of the church. The enemy may try to make you feel uncomfortable in speaking aloud spiritual thoughts. He uses this tactic for he knows the power of the Word. We must stop cowering and take a stand by speaking the truth aloud to others.

It is time that the church reclaimed conversations for God. We have wasted enough words on worldly talking: weather, sports, movies, jokes, etc. We must speak the knowledge of God so that we can experience spiritual growth in our lives.

You are called by God to be a teacher. Whom are you teaching?

DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

Praise God for giving us the Word of God. Thank Him that you have access to His thoughts and ways by reading the Bible.

How does it feel to know that you are called by God to teach others?

Think through your conversations from today. How often did you speak about the Word of God?

What are you conversations mainly about?

How can you begin to speak more about the Word of God throughout the day?

How does speaking about the Word of God help us to live out the Word of God?

DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:16

I am not musically inclined. To clap on beat, I have to watch others to know when to clap. Musical people enjoy sitting near me and purposely clapping off beat to mess me up. Yet, as tone deaf as I am, I have a calling from God to worship Him. This same calling has been given to you.

Colossians 3:16b

> ...and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Verse 16: Music is a gift from God. Every culture throughout the world enjoys music. Even in remote tribes, the villagers have created their own type of instruments in order to create music. The Lord takes pleasure from our songs. He loves His people singing His praises!

Praise is not a matter of music. If it was, then I would be in great trouble! Praise is a matter of the heart. To help explain "praise" read the definition from Nelson's Illustrated Dictionary:

An act of worship or acknowledgment by which the virtues or deed of another are recognized and extolled...The praise of man toward God is the means by which we express our joy to the Lord. We are to praise God both for who He is and for what He does...Praising God for who He is is called adoration; praising Him for what He does is known as thanksgiving.

Look back at Colossians 3:16. We are to sing with thanksgiving in our hearts. One source of praise is gratitude. Our songs, our hymns, and our prayers need to be constantly thanking God for all He has done on our behalf. This is the focus of our hearts. Our hearts are the seat of our emotions. Our emotions are usually dictated by our circumstances. We are in a grumpy mood because we have had a bad day. We are happy because we have had something good happen. Our feelings constantly change. If we praised God only when we "felt like it" He would receive very little praise. Instead, our praise should be derived from all we have to be thankful for. On good days, we praise Him for the good situations He has allowed in our lives. On difficult days, we praise Him for being near us, for helping us, for being our guide through trials. We thank Him for what He does, not based upon what we feel. We must train our hearts to praise God in all situations, for no matter what we are going through, God is God and He is worthy of praise.

DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Praise God for who He is and what He has done in your life!

What is the purpose of praising God?

What keeps us from praising God on a daily basis?

DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:17

Your life has value. Every minute of your life is a gift. It is a gift to you from God and now you have the chance to give a gift back to Him. Each moment that you live for the glory of God is a way of saying "thank you" to the Lord for life.

Colossians 3:17

> 17And 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.

Verse 17: I am overwhelmed by this verse every time I read it. I am overwhelmed because my life does not measure up. I can think through this day and realize that many seconds, minutes, and even hours were wasted. Words were spoken and actions were committed that were not done in the name of the Lord Jesus. The words and actions were not "sin" per se but they were a waste. They were a waste of what could have been moments when I could have showed my gratitude to the Lord.

To do everything in the Name of the Lord does not mean that I sit all day in prayer and Bible study. Do not feel guilty that you have chores to do, errands to run, work to finish, children to take places, and whatever else is on your "to do" list. These are your duties and part of what God has called you to do. However, the way we do these daily tasks are either ordinary or extraordinary.

1 Peter 4:11

> 11If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Verse 11: To do everything in the Name of Jesus is to recognize that our lives are not our own. Our words are not careless tokens to be thrown about. But our voice is a gift from God to be used to honor Him and others. Our actions throughout the day are not completed because we are amazing people. Instead, from the moment you get out of bed, you are dependent on God. It is only by His strength and power that you are able to do anything at all. To live in this humble dependence makes us grateful to the One who gives us so much. It changes our focus from "look at what I did" to "look at what God did through me."



The key to living to the glory of the Lord is to be thankful. Throughout the day, show your gratitude to God. You can thank Him for health, arriving to your destination safely, a promotion at work, a paycheck, a rainbow in the sky, friends to eat lunch with, clothes to wear, or anything and everything that comes your way.

We studied thanksgiving on day two of this week. I will not repeat it now. But please realize that this spiritual discipline can transform mundane minutes of the day into heavenly glory. Thanksgiving gives eternal meaning to the daily routines. A time of grocery shopping can be spent thanking the One who provides for all your needs. Driving can become a divine communion with your Guide. Waiting in lines is a marvelous time to recount to God all of your blessings. Redeem your minutes with matters of eternity. Do not waste another second. Begin to live each moment toward God. Every word and every action can become a place of communion with your Lord and King.

DAY 5

Up Close and Personal

Ask God to help you to learn how to live each moment for Him.

When do you feel like your words and actions are committed to the Name of the Lord Jesus?

How will you redeem those moments in your life which you feel like are a waste of time?

Name some creative way to remind yourself to live each moment for the Lord.

How can thanksgiving become a part of your daily routine?

BIBLE STUDY

Fashion Tips

RESONATE

Fashion Tips

What Not to Wear

We all want to have a doctor who will give us an accurate and honest assessment as to what is wrong with our bodies. In our spiritual lives, we also need to have a Doctor tell us what is wrong with our hearts and minds. This week we will look at the sin that is prevalent in our lives. The choice of what to do with the diagnosis is up to us. We could ignore it or we can allow it to be a catalyst for change.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Colossians 3:5-6; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:18-20; 1 John 3:4

I do not like scary movies. I was in a theater watching a cartoon movie with a group of friends when I was frightened by the events taking place on screen. I jumped in my seat and screamed. A little girl, who was seated behind me, laughed and said to her mom, “That lady over there screamed.” I was mocked by a child! An eight year old was not bothered by the movie while I was visibly and audibly upset! My friends still consider it humorous to know that cartoons can and will scare me.

If a movie has the power to frighten at least some of us, real life can scare even more people. There are horrible evils in this world. The nightly news is enough to make anyone jump and scream as the terrible events of this world happen before our eyes. Murder. Rape. Genocide. Abuse. Drugs. Cults. Terrorism. We behold these terrible crimes and wonder, “How could anyone do such a thing?” But the truth is all of us are capable of evil.

Colossians 3:5-6

> 5Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Verse 5-6: The crimes of the world are in you and in me. It is out of our hearts that the wickedness of all people comes forth.

Jeremiah 17:9

> 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Verse 9: Your heart is deceitful and so l is mine. It pours forth with evil. Often, we overlook the heart to focus on outward actions. But it is the heart that needs to change.

Matthew 15:18-20

> 18But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' 19For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.' "

Verse 18-20: In Jesus' day, the religious leaders were strict with their ritual cleansings before eating. They believed that if you did not wash your hands in a certain way then you were spiritually "unclean". To be unclean precluded you from being a part of worship. Jesus rebuts this falsehood by focusing on the fact that washed hands do not make a person clean or unclean in God's sight. Instead, the Lord looks at the heart.

In modern times we easily see through the religious leaders' "washed hands" claim to spirituality. We consider it foolish. However, we need to look at our own "washed hands" ways of looking good on the outside while hiding evil in the heart. There are many people in prison today for heinous crimes that friends and neighbors would say, "He seemed so nice. I never thought he would do anything like that." They had "washed hands" but "dirty hearts".

For every person who believes his or her heart is clean because it has never committed an act that would lead to time in prison, meditate on these words:

1 John 3:4

> 4Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

Verse 4: Every sin that we commit is breaking the law of God. We are lawbreakers. No matter how good we look on the outside, we are criminals. It is easy to look at the people in prison and think, "I'm not as bad as she or he is." But we forget this truth: by God's law, we all deserve eternal prison time. Thankfully, Jesus did the time for us.

Our records have been cleared. We have been eternally pardoned. But we cannot forget our pasts. We cannot forget what it cost Jesus to free us from our prisons. We cannot begin to think we are "good people". For in truth, all of us are capable of evil. It is only by the Holy Spirit that we have been kept from being the lead story on the nightly news. It's time for us to face the truth about ourselves. For only by seeing who we truly are, wicked and depraved, will we see the need to remove the hint of sin in our lives. Sin is the most frightening thing in the universe.

DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Confess any sin that you harbor in your heart. Ask God to make your heart clean.

In what ways do we focus on “clean hands” (outward religious acts) instead of “clean hearts” (true spirituality).

Write your thoughts and feelings about the truth from 1 John 3:4.

What is the danger in considering yourself a “good person”?

DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:5-8; John 20:24-29; Romans 12:1-2

The wrath of God is coming. He will avenge the sin that humanity has committed against Him. He is the Judge who has the right and the power to condemn. For those of us who have been redeemed by the death of Jesus, we will be spared the judgment. This should not lead us to complacency. Instead, we must work to eradicate sin for it deserves punishment.

Colossians 3:5-8

> 5Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Verse 5-8: Look at the imagery: we are to put to death anything that belongs to our earthly nature. We must rid ourselves of "anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language". We are to be active in removing sin from our lives. Our activity should be such a frontal attack that the sin within us is "put to death". This is not a "Well, I guess I'll try" kind of an attitude. This is a battle to the death!

People who go to war are willing to die for their country. Their loyalty sometimes leads to the ultimate sacrifice. We, too, must have loyalty in order for us to engage in warfare. If we are loyal to our King, then we will fight against the sin nature that is within our flesh. If our loyalty is to ourselves, then we will take the easy way out and not bother to fight. We must decide to whom we will be loyal.

How do we become loyal to the King? We must recognize why He deserves our devotion. A disciple named Thomas gives us a good illustration of how this is done.

John 20:24-29

> 24Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."
>
> 26A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

27Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

28Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

29Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Verse 24-29: Thomas realized that Jesus had died and had arisen from the dead. Thus, he proclaimed, “my Lord and my God!” We, too, know this truth. He spoke this truth before he received the Spirit yet he was able to declare his loyalty. How much more should we for we know the truth of the resurrection, we understand the purpose of His death (to atone for our sins), and we have been given the Holy Spirit? Because of all of this, we look forward to eternal life. We have many reasons to be loyal to our King!

This loyalty demands our allegiance. We need to join the fight. We must battle the sin in our lives. It is the only fitting response to all we have been given.

Romans 12:1-2

1Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 2Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Verse 1-2: Look at God’s mercy. Look at all that Jesus has done for you. Meditate on all His works in your life. Now, what will be your response? Will you decide to exude energy on removing sin from your life? Will you decide to do whatever it takes to win the battle? Or will your heart look similar to the ones that the Lord will condemn to eternal judgment?

DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Ponder all that Jesus has done for you. Spend time praising Him for His wonderful works.

What sin do you need to battle in your life? How will you put this sin to death?

How does loyalty to Jesus help us to overcome sin?

DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Genesis 3:6-10; Colossians 3:9-11

Sin leads to hiding from God and others. It has been going on since sin entered the world.

Genesis 3:6-10

> 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.
>
> 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"
>
> 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Verse 6-10: Adam and Eve were living in Paradise. They walked free from clothes without any shame. But then they sinned. Sin leads to shame, to pain, to covering and to hiding. They hid from themselves; they hid from one another; they hid from God.

The most tragic question in the Bible is when God asked His beloved creation, "Where are you?"

This same question is asked to each one of us. When we hide behind our sin, we lose our relationship with God. Our friendship is halted because of what we have done. Our relationships with others are also maligned. As long as we hide, we are alone, without God and without others. Sin is so destructive. The enemy works to keep us hidden. He feeds us lies to hide behind. In turn, we lie to ourselves, to others, and to God. We will do anything to "protect" our image. Little do we realize that all we are doing is sheltering ourselves away from the only lifeline we have to healing and restoration. We must come out of hiding.

Colossians 3:9-10

> 9Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Verse 9-10: Transparency is vital for successfully living out the new life of Christ. We need to stop lying by telling others that we “have it all together”. Instead, we must be honest about our struggles with sin. This will help us to build the support we need for change. Our authenticity allows others to be brought into our lives who can fill us with knowledge for spiritual success. This knowledge is not “10 steps to a better you”. Instead, it is wisdom gained by the Spirit through the Word. We can share with one another how God has helped us in the past through our sin struggle and also encourage others towards that same success. Together, we can build one another up as we put on the new self. This new self is glorious, looking more and more like God Himself!

In a culture obsessed with image, how do we come out of hiding and openly share our struggles? We must realize the truth about one another.

Colossians 3:11

> 11Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Verse 11: We are all on equal ground. No one is better or worse than you for each one of us is a sinner. The type of sin we have committed or are struggling with is not the issue. Do not compare sins. How can you compare mud to mud? It’s all a mess. We are in equal need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Through Him, we can come out of hiding and share with one another the struggles we have. Through Him, we can listen and not judge others. Through Him, we can love one another to wholeness. Through Him, we can answer God’s question of “Where are you?” by standing with our brothers and sisters and saying, “Here we are!”

DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

If you have a Christian friend with whom you can share your struggles, spend time thanking God for this person and praying for that person today. If not, ask the Lord to send you someone with whom you can grow in Christ. Until then, continue to seek the Best Friend of your life, Jesus Christ our Lord. He will meet your needs.

In what ways do you hide when you have committed a sin?

How does hiding affect your relationships with God and others?

How will you begin to be transparent with others about your struggles?

How can you receive help from others in dealing with the sin in your life?

DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Luke 7:36-39, 44-48, 50; Colossians 3:9-11

Have you ever been labeled? In Puritan times a person who committed the act of adultery would have to wear the letter "A" on their garments. The label enabled everyone to know the sin committed. We do not physically label ourselves today, but emotionally many of us carry labels with us: bad, useless, stupid, overweight, shy, manic, trouble...the list could go on and on.

The enemy wants to keep the label on us. He wants to beat us down. Often he uses other people to label us. Sometimes it is the "religious" people who scoff at our "badge of dishonor".

Luke 7:36-39

> 36Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.
>
> 39When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

Verse 36-39: The Pharisee, a religious leader, only saw a sinner. He knew her past and considered her worthless. Have you ever been treated that way? Jesus knows how you feel. He was labeled as well. He was ridiculed for being a friend of sinners. (Matthew 11:19) This label was true. They belittled Him for caring for sinners like you and me. He sees past your label. He sees you as someone He loves.

Luke 7:44-48

> 44Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven— for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

48Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Verse 44-48: Your sins are forgiven. Your label is gone. You are no longer held to your past. You are a new creation.

Colossians 3:9-11

9Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Verse 9-11: Read this verse in a modern translation.

Colossians 3:9-11

9-11Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete. Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ.

Verse 9-11: You wear only one label now. Your label is Christ. Everything from your past is obsolete. They are stripped off you and replaced with Christ alone. He is your all and all. It is time to for you to believe by faith that you are a new creation. Live by your new label “Christian”. You are Christ’s own. But you must choose to believe that is true.

Luke 7:50

50Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Verse 50: This woman, whom the religious leader had labeled a “sinner”, had received forgiveness. She chose to take Jesus at His Word and to walk into a new life. At that moment she decided to leave her past, to leave her labels, and to walk towards a new life. She believed. Will you believe the same is true for you? No matter your past, no matter your poor decisions, no matter your circumstances; will you believe that He has made you a new creation? Then, today, you can walk in your new life. You can go in the way of peace.

DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Ask God to help you identify any “labels” that you are wearing. Request His help in removing these labels so that you can leave your past behind and walk confidently in Christ.

Write any “labels” that you have carried or are carrying now.

How have you labeled others?

How are “labels” damaging to a person emotionally as well as spiritually?

How would a life without labels be connected to a life of peace?

DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Colossians 3:5-11; Psalm 26

We have looked at ourselves this week. I hope you are ready for change in your life. I do not want this to be just another bit of knowledge to add to your Bible trivia. Instead, the Word of God is meant to enact Power into your life.

In closing this week, compare our passage in Colossians to Psalm 26.

Colossians 3:5-11

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

There must be change in our lives. We need to go from "Colossians to Psalms". Our lives need to have the world removed and God exalted. Psalm 26 shows what a God- honoring life looks like. It gives us a picture of what we are striving towards.

Psalm 26:1-3

> 1 Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have led a blameless life; I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.
>
> 2 Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind;
>
> 3 for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.

Verse 1-3: Anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language should be replaced with patience, trust, growth, and love. Instead of desiring revenge or lashing out at others or gossiping about the offenders, Psalm 26 people will allow the Lord to vindicate them. They do not retaliate but give the guilty party over to God to judge. Instead of focusing on what the other people have done wrong, they ask the Lord to test, try and examine their hearts and minds so that they might grow. Because of the love and truth of God, they willingly abandon their old selves in order to walk in the new.

Psalm 26:4-5

> 4 I do not sit with deceitful men, nor do I consort with hypocrites;

5 I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked.

Verse 4-5: People of Psalm 26 no longer act like the world. Their associations are no longer worldly. They have given up habits and relationships which drag them back to the ways of the flesh. They understand that they have new relationships in Christ which will build them toward Christ instead of away from Him.

Psalm 26:6-7

6 I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, O LORD,

7 proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds.

Verse 6-7: People of Psalm 26 use their time and energy to live for the Lord not themselves. Their words and actions reflect the Father not the ways of the world which are sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed. Their righteous lives are evident for others to see.

Psalm 26:8

8 I love the house where you live, O LORD, the place where your glory dwells.

Verse 8: People of Psalm 26 love the Lord and His people. For the Lord indwells His people. Believers are the “house of the Lord”. They rejoice in the fact that “there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free”. They promote this unity through love and service to the body of believers.

Psalm 26:9-11

9 Do not take away my soul along with sinners, my life with bloodthirsty men, 10 in whose hands are wicked schemes, whose right hands are full of bribes.

11 But I lead a blameless life; redeem me and be merciful to me.

Verse 9-11: People of Psalm 26 do not want to associate with evil. They want to be separate unto Christ. Thus, they want to live in the new self which is “being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator”. The new self lives in such a way that it is protected from the consequences of sin in this life and also in the life to come.

Psalm 26:12

12 My feet stand on level ground; in the great assembly I will praise the LORD.

Verse 12: People of Psalm 26 realize that they are weak and so are in need of a firm foundation. This foundation is Christ alone who “is all, and is in all”. They do not rest assured of their own good works but instead trust the redeeming work of Christ on the cross. The knowledge and awareness of all He has done for them causes them to want to continue to live each moment as people of Psalm 26.

DAY 5

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Spirit to equip you to be a person of Psalm 26.

What part of your life still looks like the world?

How will you work to transform into a person of Psalm 26?