

2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters
Sermon Series - Focus On What Drives Us
Sermon Title - Focus On Becoming Like Christ
Sermon Text - Colossians 3:1-17
Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry

“Oh, I have found a friend in Jesus, He is everything to me!” And you know, Jesus has meant so much to me in my life since I asked Him to save my soul and my life, that I desire to become more like Jesus each and every day of my life! I just don’t think there could be a higher goal, pursuit, purpose, objective, or desire in life! Jesus is the ultimate in every area of life and I want and need to be more like Him! We’re going to talk about what that looks like today, so let’s pray and ask The Holy Spirit to teach us how to be more like Jesus!!

Before I begin my message I have some exciting news for us all. Many of you know that we’ve been praying about and searching for a student minister since last year. After much prayer, many resumes and interviewing potential candidates, we’ve narrowed down this search to one recommendation to the church, Dallas Guidry. Dallas’ bio is available at the connection center today through Feb 26th. Our church will have a special called business meeting on Sunday, Feb. 26th at 6pm here in the worship center. You will have the opportunity to meet Dallas and his wife Abby that day and covenant members will have the opportunity to vote to affirm the Search Team and Leadership Teams recommendation to extend a call to Dallas to be our next student minister. Please feel free to pick up the bio and reach out to the office if you have any questions. We are excited about the future of the student ministry here at NSC. Amen.

Last week we talked about our Core Value of Knowing Christ! Today we’re going to focus on a second core value, Becoming Like Christ! It is also a 310 value. It is based on Colossians 3:10. The New Living Translation translates it this way...

Colossians 3:10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. NLT

I love that verse! Becoming like Christ is a huge part of what drives us to do what we do at Northshore Church! In a minute we’ll read that verse in its context and in the NIV version which I normally use. Last week we talked about coming to know Jesus as our Savior and being given the promise of eternal life and how once we know Jesus as our Savior, we don’t have to worry about our eternal salvation ever again, because we are saved by His Grace and not by our works and we stay saved by His grace and not by our works! But we also talked about how we need to learn to know Jesus as our Lord, our guide, and as the leader of our lives on a daily basis. Each and every day we need to make the decision to allow Jesus to be Lord of our lives, our decisions, our choices, our attitudes, our actions, and our pursuits in life! And let me share something really awesome with you: As you and I become more like Jesus, the negative things about our personalities and the wicked things about our attitudes and actions will begin to change, but another amazing thing is that we will maintain our individuality, our personality, and our originality. You see, Jesus made each of us different and for a reason. We all bring different

things to the table when it comes to the body of Christ and the building of His Church! So we're not talking about a cookie cutter operation here. We're talking about letting Jesus make each of us the very best iteration of who He intended us to be as individual creations of God, but being like minded in our ultimate goals and desires to bring glory to God and to reach others with the Good News of God's love for them! In other words, to love God and love people! Paul actually stated this concept in his letter to the Philippians...

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, Philippians 2:2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

Philippians 2:4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

But here's the big question you and I should be pondering about now: How in the world are we supposed to do that? That's a tall order Pastor Larry. How are we supposed to have the same love, and Spirit, and mindset of Jesus Christ? Paul gives us very specific details in his letter to the Colossian Church! In chapter 3 he tells us why we even have the option to become like Christ and gives us some very practical and powerful action steps to achieve this goal. We are going to take the first 17 verses of chapter 3 verse by verse and look at some specific examples in the life of Christ. So let's get started and I pray you will be as excited hearing these truths as I was discovering these truths in my study! In Colossians 3:1 we find the first of two reasons we have the ability to become like Christ.

We can become like Christ because...

Colossians 3:1a Since, then, you have been raised with Christ...

When we accept Jesus into our lives by believing in Him and calling on His name for salvation, then the work that Jesus did through His sacrifice on the cross and through His resurrection from the grave, is applied to us! Next Sunday we will be painting pictures through Baptism of how this happens in our lives. Baptism doesn't save us, but it paints a beautiful picture of what Jesus did to save us. It paints the picture of Jesus' death, His burial and His resurrection from the tomb! And it paints the picture of how His precious blood washes away our sins because, as we read last week...

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

There was a song we used to sing using the old King James version of this verse. It goes like this...

"I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Who loved me, who loved me, who loved me and He gave Himself for me, I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me!"

And here's a powerful passage about being raised with Christ...

Romans 6:3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Romans 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Did you see that? It says "We too may live a new life!" How cool is that? Very cool indeed! But Paul is not finished with the cool, listen to the next two verses in Romans 6...

Romans 6:5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—

Do you realize how freeing that is? Do you realize how totally powerful and meaningful that is for each of us? I mean, to know that our old self was crucified with Jesus so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin! Peter put it this way...

1 Peter 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Paul will give us another reason why we have the ability to become like Christ in a minute, but he begins immediately giving us the action steps to becoming like Christ. As we look at the second part of Colossians 3:1 we discover...

Action step #1 - Focus your heart on Jesus!

Colossians 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Beginning in March we will have a series called Focus on the Heart, based on part of the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. But today I want you to understand that if you want to become like Jesus then it is imperative that you take this first step! You must set your heart on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. You must set your heart on Jesus becoming like Him! And remember what Jesus said...

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What do you desire most in life? That's where your heart is! The Psalmist gives us a way to make sure the desires of our hearts are right...

Psalm 37:4 Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

Psalm 37:6 He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

Psalm 37:7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him...

In the Hebrew language the subject/verb agreement is different than in the English language. In Hebrew the context determines the translation. So verse 4 can be translated in two ways.

“Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

Or

“Take delight in the LORD, and He will give your heart its desires!”

In other words, if your greatest delight is the Lord, and you are spending time fellowshiping with Him, then He will give your heart the right kind of desires, and then He can give you the desires of your heart because He put them there! So focus your heart on Him! Paul then gives us...

Action step #2 - Focus your mind on Jesus!

Colossians 3:2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

I want to think like Christ. And what did He say in the Model prayer, known as The Lord's Prayer? “Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!” In order for us to make that happen in our lives we must set our minds on things above and ask God to show us how to allow His will to be done in our lives here on earth as His will is done in heaven. And one of the best ways to do that is to become like Christ in our thoughts, attitudes and actions! Our minds never stop working even when we sleep. One of the things we need to let God do is renew our minds. As we've talked about before, the world spends countless hours and resources to influence our minds and opinions. We need to allow God's Holy Spirit through the Word of God to renew and transform our minds. God's Word is plain on this...

Romans 12:2 Do not conform 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.

Being transformed in our thoughts and attitudes to become more like Jesus is what is known as sanctification. Here's the definition of sanctification...

SANCTIFICATION — the process of God's grace by which the believer is separated from sin and becomes dedicated to God's righteousness. Accomplished by the Word of God (John 17:7) and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:3–4), sanctification results in holiness, or purification from the guilt and power of sin.

Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds., Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

Oswald Chambers, who was a Scottish minister who spoke at colleges, Y.M.C.A.s, and was a British Army Chaplain in Egypt during W.W.I. said this in the February 8th devotional "My Utmost For His Highest."

"Are we prepared for what sanctification will cost? It will cost an intense narrowing of all our interests on earth, and an immense broadening of all our interests in God. Sanctification means intense concentration on God's point of view. It means every power of body, soul and spirit chained and kept for God's purpose only. Are we prepared for God to do in us all that He separated us for? (separated from the world) And then after His work is done in us, are we prepared to separate ourselves to God even as Jesus did? "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." The reason some of us have not entered into the experience of sanctification is that we have not realized the meaning of sanctification from God's standpoint. Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the disposition that ruled Him will rule us. Are we prepared for what that will cost? It will cost everything that is not of God in us."

In other words, sanctification is becoming like Christ!

And then in our text Paul gives us the second of the two reasons we have the ability to become like Christ.

We can become like Christ because...

Colossians 3:3 ... you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

What does it mean, "you died?" It means that if you have believed what Jesus did for you on the cross, then you are crucified with Christ, you died to sin, you died to the selfish ways of this world. You were raised to walk a new life in Christ! Towards the end of the message we will remember what Jesus did in order for us to be able to have this new life and to become like Christ as we observe The Lord's Supper! Those of you who have children in Shorekids who have made a decision to follow Jesus and have been baptized, will be able to get them so they can participate! I'll let you know when to get them. We said and sang a minute ago the verse about being crucified with Christ! Because of that Paul says our life is now "hidden with Christ in God." What does that mean? I believe it means several things. First of all, our life is saved and we are now in the hand of God and no one can remove us from His hand! Jesus actually reassured His disciples with these words and they are for any disciple and follower of Jesus...

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.

John 10:29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

John 10:30 I and the Father are one."

Secondly, I believe Paul is saying that we no longer live for ourselves and our own selfish wants and desires. Our old life has been done away with and our new life has begun. In fact Paul put it this way in his letter to the Corinthians...

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

So our life is not hidden from the view of others, but it may indeed be hidden from their understanding. They don't get us! They don't understand us. God's Word says...

1 Corinthians 2:12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

1 Corinthians 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

But here's a beautiful thing about a person who is becoming like Christ: They are not prideful that they understand what others do not. They are grateful for grace and they have an unceasing desire to help others find the grace, mercy, forgiveness and hope they've found in Jesus. But that's the sermon Making Christ Known, which is our third Core Value and you'll have to wait for that one! Paul then gives us a beautiful truth before he continues our action list for becoming like Christ!

A wonderful Truth for believers

Colossians 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

I certainly believe Paul is talking about that glorious day when Christ returns to bring us home for eternity, but I also believe that as Christ becomes more of a focus in our lives that the glory of Christ Jesus will become more and more evident in our lives here on earth! This is accomplished through the power of The Holy Spirit. Once again, Oswald Chambers has a powerful word:

“The one and only characteristic of the Holy Ghost in a man is a strong family likeness to Jesus Christ, and freedom from everything that is unlike Him.”

Paul then continues with our action steps...

Action step #3 - No longer focus on your earthly nature

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Colossians 3:6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Colossians 3:7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

Colossians 3:8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips

Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

When you look at the list of things here that we are to no longer focus on, I ask myself the question, why did I ever think those things were okay to focus on? What was I thinking? Truth is I was not thinking! I was just doing! Doing whatever I thought would bring me pleasure and happiness at the time regardless of who it hurt. I'm so sad that I was ever focused on such things!! But we are all sinners and if it weren't for the gracious love and offer of forgiveness through Jesus, we would all still be focused on things that destroy life rather than give life! In fact, Paul explained it perfectly...

Romans 6:17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

Romans 6:18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Romans 6:19 I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.

Romans 6:20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

Romans 6:21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

Romans 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And folks this leads us to the only way we can ever hope to become like Jesus...

Action step #4 - Focus on becoming like Jesus

Paul says...

Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

Colossians 3:10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Let me read verse 10 again in the New Living Translation...

Colossians 3:10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. NLT

Remember a relationship with Jesus is not just knowing about Jesus, but knowing Jesus personally, and discipleship goes a step further, a true disciple is determined to become like Jesus! That's what a disciple is, a follower of Jesus. And the meaning of disciple is to follow a teacher. Jesus wants to teach us with His life and His words how we are to live! And those of us who are following Jesus should have a desire to lead others to follow Jesus, and one of the best ways to do this is with the way we live our lives. In fact Paul said this...

1 Corinthians 10:32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—

1 Corinthians 10:33 even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

And in our text Paul reminds us of this powerful truth...

Colossians 3:11 Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Paul is saying that every one of us needs to focus on Jesus! It's all about Jesus! It's not about our past, whether we were super religious or super pagan, it's all about the amazing Grace that we all have been given in Jesus! The Amazing grace that saves some from barbaric self-serving paganism! Some from slavery, whether actual slavery or slavery to sin! And amazing grace that offers salvation from the judgment of the letter of the law because none of us could ever be that good, circumcised or not! Christ is all, and is in all those who put their faith and trust in Him!

In other words, becoming like Jesus is for all of us in the church. It's not just a personal core value, it is a corporate core value! Becoming Like Christ!

And this leads us to Paul's final action step, which has a lot of mini steps to take...

Action step #5 - Focus on living like Jesus

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

If you want to look like Jesus you've got to dress like Jesus. That's right! How many of you have a robe you can wear so you can look like Jesus? So some of you are thinking, "Pastor Larry has finally lost his mind! Like I'm gonna walk around in some kind of robe they wore in Biblical times. Ain't happening!" But hear me out. Paul said clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience! That's being robed in the righteousness of Christ! We read this in Isaiah...

Isaiah 61:10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

You might ask, does Jesus have any other robes I can wear besides the compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience robe? Sure...

Colossians 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

And if you don't like either of those, you might need to go back and check the focus of your heart, mind, eyes, and time! But here's the awesome thing: If you get your focus on Jesus, no matter how difficult your circumstances in life your new focus will cause you to...

Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

Peter Hiett wrote these words in his book "Eternity Now..."

"A song can sweep you away. You can lose your *self* in a song. Christians... have tried to surrender to the law of God by playing all the notes. But the score is so demanding it breaks them, and they have to surrender to the love of God, the grace of God, the song of God—Jesus. We surrender to Jesus, the person of God...He sings over us until His life begins to grow in us and we *sing back* to Him...His life in us bears fruit."

In other words, we can't take these action steps on our own. We must have our Lord's help by way of His precious Holy Spirit reminding us of how Jesus lived and empowering us to live as Jesus lived. Paul puts it this way...

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him

Our praise team is going to make their way on up to lead us. As they do, if you have children you would like to participate with us in the observance of The Lord's Supper, feel free to get them now. When you come back in, go ahead and go to the table and get the bread and juice.

As we're getting ready let me ask you this question. Shouldn't we make it our core value as a church and as followers of Christ to...

Have a heart that loves like Jesus, a mind that thinks like Jesus and a life that looks like Jesus?

And let's never forget that we have the ability to do those things because of the supreme example of Jesus in His perfect life and the extreme sacrifice of Jesus in His death on the Cross for us! The blood He shed makes it possible for us to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ! If you've never placed your faith in Jesus, you could do so today. Simply admit that you have sinned and need a Savior to forgive you, believe Jesus died on the cross so He could be your Savior, and call upon His name! As the praise team leads us, please take a moment to go to one of the tables in each corner of our worship center and get the bread and the juice. Then hold on to it and I'll lead us to take the Lord's Supper in just a few moments.

Paul said this to the Church at Corinth...

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,

1 Corinthians 11:24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

1 Corinthians 11:25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Thank You Jesus! The Praise Team will lead us in this final song and if you would like to pray at the altar or with me or one of our counselors, in the youth room, right out the back doors to my left and to your right, we'll gladly pray with you!