

Become More Like Christ Every Day

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[0 : 00] What kind of goals do you have for yourself? Now I'm going to guess a lot of people in this room, we have financial goals.

Some people, your goals to get out of debt maybe this year or as soon as possible. Some people have goals related to retirement. And that is, that's good.

It is good to have financial goals. What would be bad is if that's the only kind of goal you have. We need to have career goals, educational goals.

We need to have goals as the kind of husband or wife or parent God wants me to be.

The kind of child living with your parents that God wants you to be. It's good to have goals about a lot of different areas of our lives.

[1 : 07] But I want to ask you, what are your goals specifically as a Christian? What is it that you want God to do in you?

What is it you are praying and asking God to help you to be, what are your goals for you to do? We've been looking now since the first Sunday in January at God's goals for us.

Really the Bible is filled with God's goals for His people. Now, we're looking at it, Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 through 17.

We're looking at it under a big topic. You see on the screen, God's goals for you are never just for the year, like a New Year's resolution or a New Year's goal.

God's goals for you this hour, this day, this year, and on and on as long as we live. This study is really about developing Christ-like character, which is God's number one goal for us.

[2 : 13] I put it on the screen just about every week. I'm going to do it again today because we need to understand what God is doing in our lives if we're Christians. For those whom He foreknew, set His heart on in a favorable way.

Very similar to the word chosen. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

This is what God's doing in every Christian's life. He is working in our lives through every kind of situation possible, through the people in our lives. He's working through the good times and the bad to shape and mold us into the likeness of His Son.

And I like to think of it in terms of us developing Christ-like character. Well, Colossians 3 helps us to see some of the ways God works in us to accomplish this.

We've looked at this passage, verses 1 through 17, in terms of three goals God has for us. Number one, be mindful of who you are in Christ. I'll remind you one more time.

[3 : 19] This whole series is designed for Christians. We have to, for this to make sense, to work.

We have to be united to Christ by faith. We have to be one with Him. And we need to know who we are in Christ. That's what verses 1 through 4 is all about.

The second goal, don't be who you are apart from Christ. We still have a sinful nature. We have sinful desires. We are tempted.

And what we need to understand is who we are in Christ. We can resist any temptation. In fact, we're told in this passage, verses 5 through 10, to put off sinful habits and desires.

And then in goal number three, put on some things. Look at goal number three. Become more like Christ every day. This is how we put on Christ-like character qualities with the grace God gives us to do that.

[4 : 28] We're going to conclude goal number three this morning by looking at how we can become like Christ every day. We've already looked at the fact that if we're united to Christ by faith, we are God's special people.

In verse 12, let me remind you, God declares that we are, or Paul declares that we are God's chosen one. God's chosen people from the foundation of the world we looked at a few weeks ago.

We are chosen people. We are holy people. God has chosen us as His and set us aside, set us apart, different from everybody else in the world who's not a Christian. And we are beloved.

We are dearly loved by God as His people united to Christ. Now most of the passage that we're looking at now, verses 11 through 17, most of this passage encourages us to actually live like God's special people.

We can do that. You and I, if we're Christians, we can live like God's special people because when God saved us, He put His Spirit in us. And we've looked at this over the years, we've looked at this a lot of times.

[5 : 41] If you're a Christian, the Spirit of God indwells you and He gives you the desire and the ability to live a life that pleases God. And some of the things we're looking at in Colossians chapter 3 helps us to understand what it takes to please God as His children.

We've already seen that it begins with love. Look at this real quickly. Let the love of Christ fill you. That was the heading we gave to what we see in verses 11 through 14 that we've already covered.

So let me just hit the highlights here. Number one, love will motivate us to live in unity with one another. in spite of our differences and just look around, we're very different. But if we are children of God, we're brothers and sisters in Christ and we can live like Him.

Love will motivate us to be gracious with one another. Look at Colossians 3, 12 there. What that means. We'll show compassion.

We'll show kindness. We'll show patience. We'll do things like that. Love will compel us to treat one another this way. Love will motivate us to bear with one another. Put up with one another.

[6 : 51] Some people in here are hard to deal with, hard to live with. Some of us, more of us than we think are hard to deal with.

Now, number four, love will motivate us to forgive one another in the same way that God forgives us. That's what we looked at in detail last week. What I want us to see at the outset is loving one another is the number one way we live like God's special people.

Jesus said we are to be known by the love that we have for one another. But, this is not all Paul says in this passage when he talks about living like God's special people.

Let's move on now. Let the peace of Christ rule you. Look at verse 15. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body, one church, one family, and be thankful.

What is the peace of Christ? Oh, obviously it has something to do with him. It's the kind of peace that he experienced and gives to us his people as noted in John chapter 14.

[8 : 11] Look at this. Jesus said, Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.

Let not your hearts be troubled. Neither let them be afraid. Now I want you to understand this is John 14. This is the night that Jesus was arrested.

This is the night before Jesus was going to be crucified and he knew it but he told his disciples let not your hearts be troubled. Let them be afraid.

This shows us that the peace of Christ is not dependent on having peaceful circumstances. It's not dependent on everybody loving us and treating us well.

The peace of Christ that he talks about that he gave to his disciples he was about to go through the worst that the devil could throw at him.

[9 : 16] He knew he was about to bear the full wrath of God against sin as he hung on the cross. So this peace is not dependent on our circumstances.

The peace of Christ look at this it is an inward sense of quiet confidence that comes from knowing you are right with God through faith in Jesus.

Look at what Paul says in Romans 5 1 therefore as we have been justified by faith as we have been declared right with God by faith.

we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It's the peace that we have in our soul. Peace is hard to describe.

Paul says it is beyond description in Philippians 4. It's the peace that God gives us deep within that we really are God's chosen person.

[10 : 29] His set apart person. His dearly loved person. No matter what else is going on it's the peace that God puts in our heart because we are one with him.

Now we can experience that kind of peace by living as Paul calls us to live throughout Colossians chapter 3. We can experience this kind of peace within our soul and within the family Christian family if we put off sin say no to it resist temptation and put on as we've been seeing these Christ-like character qualities.

Now that's not all he says he doesn't just say the peace of Christ he says he talks about the peace of Christ ruling in your heart how does that happen? Well the word rule here refers to the activity of a referee or umpire in a game.

The role of a referee or umpire is to maintain control keep order allow the game to be played as it is intended to be played.

The idea that he's talking about here is let the peace of Christ rule your life were to live in such a way that we maintain the peace of Christ within in everything that we do.

[11 : 55] He's talking about how we go about making decisions and interact with people in such a way that we stay close to the Lord that we experience his peace and as far as we're concerned we experience peace with other people.

Let's think about how this might work in some situations. Let's begin with something sort of light even fluffy.

Most churches in our area have both Carolina and Clemson fans. Both fans like to tease and insult the team that is not yours.

I love to insult you Gamecock guys. And there's some of you love to insult me. You don't like winners you know.

Calm down now. If we let the peace of Christ rule in these kind of situations we won't take our teasing too far.

[13 : 08] You have no idea how much restraint I show. Especially throughout football season. And we won't take offense when others take their teasing us too far.

Let me be serious for a moment. What we're talking about is we will so value staying close to the Lord.

Experiencing his peace. Demonstrating Christ-like character. That we will overlook silly insults more than winning an argument about something when all is said and done doesn't really matter.

here. You see what I'm talking about? Now, change the idea of the conflict, the potential for conflict over being a Carolina or Clemson fan.

Think about something serious. when questions arise over something that the Bible says clearly is right or wrong, we must, as God's people, take a stand for the truth of God's Word.

[14 : 40] And allowing the peace of Christ to rule in those situations will sometimes mean we have conflict with somebody who is opposed to the truth of God's Word. But our point, our purpose, we're more concerned to please God, to stay close to Him, to remain in fellowship with Him than we are to please someone who is opposed to God's way, to His will, to His Word.

What do you value most? Being close to God or close to whoever you're around at the time? Bottom line, who do you really and truly want to please the most?

God, by being faithful to Him and His revealed Word? Or other people? No one should enjoy conflict.

Seriously. We should not seek out conflict. We shouldn't thrive on conflict. But as God's people, when the truth of God is at stake, we must not fear conflict, and we must not avoid conflict.

As long as we're seeking to please God, be right with Him, experience the peace of God, the peace with God for being faithful to Him, we ought to be able to sleep well at night, even if other people have something against us over a matter of truth.

[16 : 17] But let me say this before we move on. We need to be committed to speaking the truth in love. We need to defend the faith in the right way.

We can't experience peace with God in our heart and be arrogant, be rude, be mean-spirited.

I know some Christians who believe right, but they're just doggone mean about it. That's not what God calls us to be, and that's certainly not going to help us to continue on experiencing the peace of Christ within or in the body of Christ when we're mean-spirited about defending the truth.

When we live like God's people, we will make decisions that will enable us to preserve the peace of Christ within and among the family.

Let's move on. Living like God's people also means let the word of Christ dwell in you. Verse 16, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

[17 : 37] Let's look at that. The word of Christ refers to the gospel of Christ or the teachings of Christ. Either way, it's referring to the authoritative message about Christ which is found in scripture.

Now, if we're going to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, we've got to read it, don't we?

We've got to know what the Bible says. But as important as that is, reading the Bible is not enough. I read things all the time and just in a short time, I don't really remember what it was.

There's a lot of mornings I get up and I look at the weather, see what it's going to be that day. And before Lisa leaves home, it hadn't been that long, she'll ask me, what's the temperature going to be today? Well, I forgot.

I read it, I looked at it, but I forgot. We can do that when we read the Bible. You know, it is a commendable goal if you were reading through the Bible this year.

[18 : 45] It's a commendable goal to have to read the Bible every day. But don't just read it and check off on your list that you've read it. Just putting content in your mind is not enough.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Read it. Think about it. Think seriously. Think deeply about it. Meditate on it.

Memorize it. That's what he's talking about. And the key to know if this is happening is simple. Do we obey it? If we're really taking in the word, dwelling on the word, letting it dwell in us richly, we'll not only believe it, we will live it.

And notice what else it says about what we should be doing with the word. teaching and admonishing one another. Now, for you Carolina fans, the word admonish means to warn.

That just sort of got over your head, I do believe. Clemson people, they understand admonish means to warn. So I was trying to help out these game cops. Now see, that was a test to see if you're going to let the peace of Christ dwell in your heart.

[20 : 01] See, I set you up. Admonish does mean to warn. We are to teach and warn each other based on the truth of God's word.

You know, most of the things that we're to do in the church, it's not from church leaders to church members. Most of what we're called to do in Scripture is for, with, to one another like this.

If you have any doubts, when you go home today, do a Google search. Don't do it here. And write in there. Type in there. The one another's of the Bible. And there will be a long list of things we are called by God as Christians to do for, to one another like this.

How do you advise your friends, people that come to you about important, serious life issues? We've talked about this before.

You are probably some people maybe in your family or where you work or your classmates, you are probably somebody's main Christian counselor.

[21 : 18] You are probably someone in one of your circles, you're the go-to person if they have a real problem and they want some spiritual, biblical, Christian guidance.

Well, how do you advise them? Do you go just by, you know, your gut feeling? Do you tell them what you think they want to hear?

That's not being a friend. Or do you speak the truth of God's word? Years ago, Lisa worked with a lady. And she was, she had separated from her husband contemplating divorce.

But she knew Lisa was a Christian and so she talked to Lisa about it. Lisa was her counselor. And they, as friends, talked.

Lisa said some things about what the Bible teaches. This lady really was interested. She listened to Lisa. She actually read the Bible. She initiated with her husband Christian counseling.

[22 : 32] And in time, they were reconciled. God used, Lisa is what I'm saying. God will use you in life-changing ways in other people's lives as their counselor, as their teacher, as their warner, admonisher, if you will be that.

God calls us to teach and warn one another according to the wisdom of his word. Now we also, look in this passage, we also see that when we allow the word of God to dwell in us, it'll not only produce information but also emotion specifically.

It will promote praise, praise and worship to God in the forms of music. Look at this phrase. Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thanksgiving, thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Stuart Briscoe comments on these phrases here like this. The fellowship of believers is a praising community where people who can sing beautifully, sing beautifully.

And those who just sing, just sing. And those who have voices like crows with laryngitis croak to the glory of God. But nobody just sits there like an old sourpuss looking as if they had lost their last friend having had their breakfast of onions.

[23 : 57] Listen to what he says. Singing, it really is an important part of Christian worship.

And I'm saying that as someone who really can't sing. It is important that we do, that we worship and praise the Lord.

But it is important that we worship and praise the Lord in a biblically sound way. According, as the word of God richly dwells in us.

I want you to know Paul uses three different words here. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. There's a lot of debate among New Testament scholars as to what the differences are.

Are they major or minor? Let me just say this. There are some differences. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

[24 : 58] That means we should use different kinds of music in our worship. And we do. Good example this morning. We sang, this is amazing grace.

A more contemporary type song. We sang an old hymn, amazing grace. And I want you to know, God enjoyed both if they were sung as an act of worship and praise to him.

He didn't like one better than the other. You may have liked one better than another. And that's fine. I liked one better than another. But you know something?

I'm not going to talk about which one I liked the best, which one I didn't like as well. It's really not about me. And I got news for you. When we come here to worship on Sunday morning, it ain't about you.

Never is it about you. When we come here for worship, it is about worshiping and praising and honoring and glorifying God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26 : 06] And we're going to do it in as many different ways as we possibly can because it's biblically, as long as it's biblically sound and it is because that's what God wants us to do.

We're different and we have different ways of expressing our worship and praise. But you know, I can really praise God in different kinds of ways, even ways that's not my favorite.

And if it's about praising God, you can do the same. You will do the same. You know, I've been pastor here a long time. And I don't think there's anyone in this room other than maybe Brian.

I've never said much to him in all these years. There's very few people in this room who knows what my favorite form of music and worship is. And I don't care what yours is.

Because we try to do a little bit of all that is biblically sound and God focused, God honoring, praising and worshiping him, talking about him.

[27 : 14] That's what worship really is. And that's what Paul tells us to do. It's got to be biblically sound, but it needs to be done in a variety of ways.

Emotion is important. Let's look at one more way we're to live like God's people. Verse 17, let the name of Christ guide you. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Paul is describing, obviously, every aspect of our lives when he says, and whatever you do, in word or deed.

Whatever you do, what you say, what you do, everything we should do should be done in the name of Jesus. Now, what is he talking about? We're to think of ourselves as always being the Lord's representative.

I think that's the best way to think of it here in this context. Or as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, we are his ambassadors. Now, this is a real sobering thought.

[28 : 20] Let it sink in. As Christians, what he's telling us here, we are to represent Christ in everything we say and do in our lives.

Let the name of Christ guide us. That means at home, at work, at school, wherever we are, with our friends, with our enemies.

Think about it. What kind of representative are you on a typical day? On some days, we're all poor, poor. We're all poor, poor.

But on a typical day, do you represent Christ in a way that is honoring of him?

Or do you represent him, misrepresent him? Think about it another way. The way you represent Christ, are you attracting people to him?

[29 : 29] Or are you turning people away from him on our typical day? You know, the Bible does not provide a verse or even a passage that applies to every kind of problem we encounter in life.

But this verse provides one of the best guidelines for helping us to make wise decisions about the things the Bible is not specific about. For example, whenever you face a situation and you don't really know how to respond, the Bible doesn't really address your question.

Well, think to yourself, as a representative of Jesus Christ, what would be my best response? How should I respond to most honorably represent the Lord in this conversation, in this action?

This is one of the ways that God guides us to make wise decisions when there's no passage that actually addresses the issue. Well, let's think about this now.

How well are you living like a child of God? How well are you living like one of God's special people? Think. Look at yourself. Ask God to help you to see. Is the love of Christ filling you?

[30 : 52] Is the peace of Christ ruling you? Is the word of Christ dwelling in you? Is the name of Christ guiding you? None of this can be true if you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior.

I want you to understand. If you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior, the only thing you can do right now is to admit that to the Lord, humble yourself before Him, turn from your sin, repent, change your mind, and put your faith in Jesus.

Call upon Him to save you. But you know, none of this can be true until you do what we've been looking at throughout this chapter.

Put off sin. Say no to temptation. Put on Christ-like character. And remember, it's only by the power of the indwelling Spirit that we can do that, but we can do that with His help.

But if that's not how you're living right now, if this is not a good description, what you see on the screen, go to God right now and just confess your sin specifically.

[32 : 15] Turn from it. Come back to the Lord and renew your faith, your commitment to Him as the real king of your life. And keep in mind that repentance and faith is not just a one-time commitment.

As Christians, our lives are just a process of being convicted of our sin, turning from it, turning to Christ in renewed faith and commitment and love and service.

The Christian life is a life of saying no to sin and temptation. And saying yes to the Holy Spirit's prompting us and helping us to truly develop Christ-like character.

There's one final thought. In each of these verses we've looked at this morning, Paul tells us to be thankful. Every one of those verses, 15, 16, and 17, he says in some way, be thankful.

We need to leave here this morning thankful for the grace that God has shown us, for the work that He is doing in us every day.

[33 : 26] Thankfulness is a sure sign of people who know they belong to God. If you know you are chosen by Him, that He has truly set you apart as His child, if you truly know that you are a dearly loved child of God, you will be thankful and you will express it to Him in word and in deed.

Let's pray together. Father, help us to see right now how we should respond. Convict us.

Encourage us. Affirm us. Whatever we need. Call people in this room who are not Christians to real faith in Jesus.

Call Christians who are being unfaithful right now. Back to you. Encourage Christians, Father, who are seeking to be sensitive to your spirit and obedient and faithful to your word.

Encourage those who are struggling. Use those who are truly seeking to walk faithfully with you to help others and be an example and a counselor to others.

[35 : 05] Father, show us all how we should respond and help us to do it right now. Let's just all do that in attitude of prayer. If I could pray with you during this time, I'd be happy to do that.

But as always, the important thing is that you listen to God and obey Him in these next few minutes.