

Colossians 3:1-17 as a Curriculum For Christlikeness

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Colossians is a practical text on being spiritually formed in the image of Christ. Paul begins chapter 3 by repeating his earlier theme of the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, the sovereign Son of God, and then he spells out the details of how a person can change to be permeated and overflowing with divine love. (“Paul’s Curriculum for Christlikeness” on SoulShepherding.org covers all of Colossians.)

To become more loving like Jesus devote your will, thinking, and body to God (vv 1-5)

”Since... you have been raised with Christ... For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with him in glory” [or “...you will also appear glorious like him”].

In theological terms, we need to participate with Christ in our justification and sanctification, his cross and resurrection for us and the life he is now living in Spirit on earth all around us right now.

Here is the general pattern of being formed into the image of Christ: (1) set your heart on Christ, (2) set your mind above, not on earth, (3) put to death vices and put on virtues.

“Set your **heart** [will] on... Christ [above]” (v 1)

“Zēteite” (verb): to seek, search, desire

Bond and interact with Christ in the space above and around you



“Set your **mind**... above, not on earthly things” (v 2)

“Phroneite” (verb): to think, observe, understand

Focus on heavenly things — not earthly things

God make you holy and loves you dearly (v 12)

“**Put to death**... [things of] **earthly nature**” (v 5)

“Nekrōsate” (verb): mortify, deprive of life and energy

“Melē” (noun): bodily members (organs, limbs, functions)

Take off old self, put on new self (vv 9-10; Eph 4:22-24)

We develop heart-habits (character of our embodied soul) for good or bad (vv 5-14):

Vices (sinful/destructive heart-habits) to put off	Virtues (holy/effective heart-habits) to put on
Sexual immorality and greed, etc (v 5)	Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience (v 12)
Anger, slander, bad language, etc (v 8)	Forgive grievances against one another (v 13)
Deceiving one another (v 9)	Love one another (v 14)
	Let the peace of Christ rule you (v 15)

We can use disciplines/experiments to help us become more like Jesus (vv 13-17, 4:2)

Self-Denial (helps us to put off vices)	Engagement (helps us to put on virtue)
Stability: staying in relationship when it’s hard (v 13)	Community, caring relationships (v 12)
Sabbath rest (implied in v 16)	Gratitude (vv 15, 16, 17, 4:2)
Submission to one another (v 16)	Word of Christ: study, meditation, singing together (v 16)
Watching in prayer; solitude and silence (4:2)	Practice God’s presence in all you do (v 17)
	Interceding in prayer for others (4:2)