

JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY SEVEN

Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach

Colossians 3:1–14

The apostle says, “Set your sights on the realities of heaven.” So next time you’re in a slump or a funk and you can’t seem to pull out of it, look at your sights. Look at your focus. Turn it in a vertical direction and get out of the horizontal frame of mind. I don’t know that there’s anything more valuable regarding attitude than the right perspective. How we look at things makes all the difference.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE often picture coaches as those fanatics on television holding clipboards, yelling at referees, jumping up and down when their team scores, scolding the recalcitrant, spurring on the disheartened, and giving orders to everyone. Teams with the best coaches often enjoy the sweetest successes. Conversely, failure often finds the team without a good coach.

To the surprise of some, the role of coach is not limited to sports arenas. Bosses act as coaches as do parents, consultants, teachers, and the list goes on. These coaches succeed when they do more than correct and instruct. They must also inspire and encourage.

Such a posture we find in Paul as his tone transitioned in Colossians 3. He became the coach—an experienced coach qualified to instruct. He relayed words brimming with inspiration and encouragement. It’s to these words we turn in this study on Colossians 3:1–14.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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Colossians 3:1–14



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before sitting under the apostle Paul’s coaching, quiet yourself. Pray to God that His Spirit would help you see as never before, so you would receive from Scripture exactly what you need in this season of life.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!” (Colossians 2:21). Even today, Christians fall into the trap of negation—focusing only on those things we should avoid.

“NO!” said Paul. After spotlighting the errors in Colossae, Paul gave them the Christian game plan: where to look, what to stop, what to restart, and even what to wear, spiritually speaking.



Observation: Receiving the Game Plan

Look for those categories as you read *Colossians 3:1–14*. Remember not to rush. Observe it slowly.¹ Record below any observations you find especially important and interesting.



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What to Think About—Colossians 3:1–4

Why did Paul want the members of the Colossian church to set their minds on Christ (*Colossians 3:3*)?

How would the truth in *3:4* have motivated the Colossian church?

What to Stop—Colossians 3:5–9

In this section, Paul defined what he meant by “the things of earth” in *Colossians 3:2*. How many things or vices did Paul list? Write a single statement summarizing them.



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For which two reasons did Paul want the Colossians to put aside these practices? (*Colossians 3:6, 9*)

Paul refers to this all-consuming drag of materialism that is everywhere, all around us, and his concern is that it comes to live within us, and we begin to worship the things of this world. “You used to do that,” and now he says, “Don’t go there. Don’t go there.”
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What to Do to Start Over—Colossians 3:10–11

Before telling the Colossian church what to practice, Paul addressed their identity. How had their identity changed?

How did Paul compare their new identity in Christ with their old life before Christ?



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What to Wear—Colossians 3:12–14

According to Paul, new practices accompany the new identity Christians have in Christ. How many practices did Paul list? Summarize these practices in a single sentence.

In just fourteen verses, Paul gave spot-on advice for thriving in the Christian life. The Christian has been redefined in terms of Christ's death, victory, and love. Our old sinful identity and its deadly habits no longer control us. We are new. So, we live new in Christ, our all in all.



Interpretation: Understanding the Game Plan

Here we will gain a clearer understanding of what Paul meant, why he wrote what he wrote, what it teaches us about God, and how to live as a Christian today.

Notice in *Colossians 3:1–4* how Paul connects our past (Colossians 3:1), present (3:3), and future (3:4) with Jesus. Why did Paul do this, and why is this significant for Christians today?



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Using your resources, explain what Paul meant by, “Put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you” (*Colossians 3:5*). Describe how you can follow this command in a practical way.

How does *3:10–11* relate to *3:1–4*?

You now act on the fact that there’s a new nature within you with a new power and the ability to become like our Master, like our Savior. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

If you read multiple translations, you will notice an interpretive difficulty in *3:14* regarding the word translated “love.” Some define *love* as that which binds together the virtues of *3:10–11* while others translate *love* as that which binds together the church, the body of Christ.

While both are true, which do you believe Paul meant here? Why is Paul’s statement important for Christians today?



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Christ has restored our true identity as God’s image bearers. Only through this God-given power can we reflect God’s patience, kindness, mercy, and love. These new spiritual clothes radiate the light and joy of our King, foreshadowing the light and joy that will saturate every speck of dust and breath of air on this earth when His kingdom comes in full.

Correlation: Enriching the Game Plan

From the very beginning, God made us to be like walking mirrors reflecting His nature and representing His presence. By refusing to obey God, humanity shed its divine mandate and privilege, leaving itself impoverished of God’s presence.

All salvation history testifies to God’s restoration of our identity in Him as well as our fellowship with Him. Psalm 15 captures this picture perfectly, complementing Colossians 3:1–14 by connecting our fellowship with God with our reflection of Him.

Read *Psalm 15*. Explain how Psalm 15 ties our relationship with God to behaving like God.

Meditate on this psalm, and then write a brief reflection on how it affects you.

God swore a blessing to Abraham, involving the whole world, in Genesis 12. We realize the fulfillment of that blessing through Christ—God’s own Son—who lived, died, and rose again in order that God’s people might enjoy a personal relationship with Him. That’s remarkable!



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Application: Doing the Game Plan

Applying this passage begins with your perspective. Scripture tells us how things will end. Your connection to Jesus positions you on the winning team. Living victoriously can happen today if we live in light of that truth.

What about this section of Scripture especially relates to your own perspective? Choose one aspect about your own thinking that must change based on your identity in Jesus.

What new habit from the virtue list would you like to work on? Which one do you think you are weak in and would like to develop? Write a brief game plan mapping how you will do so.

Coach Paul made it clear. He presented the Christian life in a nutshell—one we can easily put in our mental pockets and take with us from morning to evening. As the Word of God whispers to us, the power of God flows through us, and Jesus is magnified in us. Thank you, coach Paul.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, how incredible that my life rests in the hands of Jesus who sits at Your right hand awaiting Your command to return! Thank You that He intercedes for me, that He pleads on my behalf, and that You see both Jesus and me with the same eyes of love. Help me to walk in His ways, to shed my old habits and earthly desires, and to live in newness of life in the power of my new nature which You have given me. In Christ's holy name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Visit sts.insight.org to learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study.

