



Key Passages: Colossians 3:1-3 (MSG) and Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV)

BACKGROUND

This year's Vision and Commitment material seeks to encourage people to grasp more clearly Christ's limitless love and commitment to us and how we can encounter him afresh, seeking him in the places, people or circumstances that we perhaps never imagined.

RESOURCES

- Names of famous people on different pieces of paper
- The song '[Who you say I am](#)' by Hillsong Worship
- Bibles
- Pens and paper

WELCOME

Welcome the group (introduce them if they don't know each other's names; names and what we call ourselves are going to be important in this session!).

- **Who am I?**

Ask each individual to take a piece of paper with a pre-written name on it of a famous person, without looking at it. In turn, one person holds the piece of paper with the name facing towards the rest of the group. The person holding the paper will say 'Who am I?' and the group will then describe the person or character using just one word each. For example, if the paper said 'Harry Potter', people might suggest the words 'wizard', 'glasses', 'scar'. If the guesser does not get it after each person has said one word, you can go around the group again.



- **Who do you think you are?**

Ask each person to share something that they think makes them who they are - it could be their hair colour, accent, favourite song or what they like to have for breakfast. Close this section by explaining that no matter how small these parts of their character might seem, they all contribute to the wonderfully unique person they are today. Some of these things may change over time. At the beginning of a new year, people often want to change something about themselves in an effort to improve their health, character or appearance. Remind the group that no matter how much they change themselves, their identity as someone loved by God will never disappear.

WORD

Ask two people to read Colossians 3:1-3 (*MSG*) and Ephesians 3:16-19 (*NIV*).

Colossians 3:1-3 (*MSG*):

‘So if you’re serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, *act* like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don’t shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ - that’s where the action is. See things from *his* perspective. Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your *real* life - even though invisible to spectators - is with Christ in God. *He* is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you’ll show up, too - the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ.’

Explain that this passage is taken from a letter that Paul wrote to the Christians who lived in Colossae. At this point in time, Colossae was a relatively small town of little significance, but they were facing a big problem: they were preoccupied with

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listening to false teaching rather than the true gospel. People were turning away from the truth found in living with Christ, and Paul felt called to remind them that their old life - of sin, lies, and doing what they want - is gone, and they now should live in freedom, truth and service to God.

The people of Colossae needed to be led well and put in the right direction towards living 'real' lives for God. This is why Paul's letter sounds like a list of instructions: 'Pursue the things over which Christ presides', 'don't shuffle along... absorbed with the things right in front of you', 'be alert', 'see things from his perspective'.

Break into small groups to discuss the passage and its application for today.

Discussion

- What do you think about the tone of Paul's writing? Do you think he was gently offering advice to the people of Colossae, or was he giving them a good telling off?
- How would you feel if somebody wrote a letter or sent a text to the people at your church and community commenting on how they live?
- What would it mean for you to 'be alert' to Christ and 'looking up'? Would you have to give up any distractions or take up any good habits?

It's worth talking about why Paul is so set on telling these people how to live. Paul is concerned for the people of Colossae because he believes that if they concentrate on worldly things, 'absorbed with the things right in front of (them)', they will miss out on eternal, true life with Christ. Paul says that when a person does not live for God, they do not live at all! Even though they may physically exist, physical and worldly living is temporary. Instead, they should receive new life from Jesus and be in relationship with him. The next passage explains what living with Christ is like.



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Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV):

‘I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.’

Although Paul is writing to a different group of people here - he’s praying for the Christians at Ephesus - this is the same experience he wants for the people of Colossae and all churches. He wants them to know the life-changing truth that God loves them beyond their understanding - it surpasses their knowledge. Paul wants them to be strengthened in God’s power, so that they will not grow weak as long as they keep close to Christ. More than anything, Paul wants these people to make their hearts a home for Christ.

This is some of the Bible’s most beautiful poetry. Some people might like the poetic nature of it, others might find the more straight-talking verses more their kind of style. Nevertheless, this passage of Scripture is what being a Christian is all about! We can pray this over anybody that we meet: that they may love God and recognise that they are loved by him beyond comprehension and can experience daily more of his power at work in their lives! Our identity as Christians is to be a person who loves God and is loved by God.

Discussion

- Consider how your identity changes when you view yourself as ‘of the world’ versus ‘of God’.
- Are there ways in which we are limiting God’s love and power?



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- If God can do ‘more than we can imagine’, what would that look like in our lives? How about in our places of study, with our friends and family, in our church?
- Read through Ephesians 3:16-19 again for yourself. Pick out one phrase that you want to focus on personally or silently to pray over another member of the group.

WORSHIP

Invite the group into a time of reflection and play ‘[Who you say I am](#)’ by Hillsong Worship.

Tell the group to listen closely to the lyrics. Pass around pens and paper and ask them to write down some words that stand out to them from the song or from the Bible verse. If they’d like to make it more personal, they could rewrite the lyrics with their name at the centre, for example: ‘Jane is chosen, not forsaken. She is who you say she is.’

When the song ends, ask the same question from the beginning of the session: ‘What makes you “you”?’ and invite each person to either share their writings or reflect on how their thinking might have changed since before the Bible study.

WITNESS

Challenge the group with the first line from Colossians 3:1 (MSG):

‘So if you’re serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, *act* like it.’

Share that one part of the ‘new resurrection life’ is to see yourself as a child of God. Another part of living with Christ is saying goodbye to old habits and bad behaviours and experiencing more of his power in your life. It’s time to start



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putting the belief that your identity is in Christ into action. After all, the Bible verse tells us that ‘your old life is dead’ and we are now living with Christ in God.

Challenge the group to make a real effort in the coming week to replace negative thinking (to themselves and to others) with the phrase(s) that they wrote down during their reflection. When they feel like they’re stepping out of line, they can try to stop by asking themselves: ‘Is this how a child of God would act?’ Suggest that if they haven’t set themselves a new years’ resolution already, that this thought-process could be a good one: to be more like Jesus and ‘see things from his perspective’ (Colossians 3).

