



Set Your Minds on Things Above

By Shari Miller

(Please do NOT use the “if time permits” sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)

Share with a partner or the small group the last time you cleaned out your closet or chest of drawers. Did it take longer than you thought it would? Was it hard to let some items of clothing go? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

During this Bible study, we will look primarily at Colossians 3:1-17. We are reminded in Colossians 1 and 2 that we are God’s own dearly loved children given new life in Christ through Holy Baptism. In Colossians 3, we are urged in practical ways to live lives worthy of Christ and to give Him all glory and honor.

Opening Prayer: Dear Loving Lord, Thank You for creating us and giving us life. However, we confess that we sin often and deserve only Your punishment and death. But because of Your great love, You sent Your Son Jesus to be our Savior through His perfect life, suffering, death, and resurrection. He fulfilled Your plan of salvation completely. Because He lives, we, too, can look forward to eternal life in heaven. Thank You for giving us the Holy Spirit Who gives us *new* life through the cleansing waters of Holy Baptism. Through Your Word and Sacraments, our faith is strengthened and we are enabled to live lives that glorify You – above all. Be with us as we study Your Word. In Jesus’ all powerful name we pray, Amen.

Focus

Sometimes when I decide to clean out my clothes or even to change my clothes between seasons (warm and cold!), I find that I seem to have to get my mind focused on the task at hand. I dedicate a time period to do the work of keeping or discarding clothes, and look forward to my ultimate goal: a clean closet, filled with functional and fashionable clothing to wear for the months to come. However, sometimes I lose focus or get lost in memories that the sight of well-worn clothing invokes. I find it hard to get rid of the clothing that makes me feel comfortable, but is really ready for the rag pile. Time flies by and my clean-closet goal has not been reached. It’s time to focus once again. Perhaps you’ve run into the same difficulty.

Read **Colossians 3:1-4**.

¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Paul begins this section of God’s Word with the phrase, *If then you have been raised with Christ ...* How are we *raised with Christ* according to **Colossians 2:12–15**? **Our sins are forgiven in Baptism and God has given us the hope of eternal life**

¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

When the word “above” is used in Colossians 3:1–2, is it referring to spatial or spiritual things? **Spiritual**

Faith Talk: Make a group list of *things that are above* (Colossians 3:1–2). See also **Romans 5:2** and **Hebrews 12:2**. **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Romans 5:2

²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Hebrews 12:2

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

If time permits: What does the phrase *right hand of God* (Colossians 3:1) symbolize? See also **Psalm 110:1–2** and **Ephesians 1:19–23**. **Power and authority**

Psalm 110:1-2

¹The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” ² The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!

Ephesians 1:19-23

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Clean Out the Closet

Read **Colossians 3:5–9**.

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ...

List how our earthly life apart from God is characterized in these verses (especially vs. 5, 8, 9). **Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness (idolatry), anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, and lies**

How does God treat this kind of life (v. 6)? See **Romans 1:18; 6:23a**. **He hates sin; His wrath is kindled; spiritual death is the result**

Romans 1:18

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Romans 6:23a

For the wages of sin is death ...

Can we of our own volition *put off the old self* (v. 9) – or our old clothes, so to speak? **No** Why or why not? See **Ephesians 2:1–3** and **John 14:6**. **Because we are by nature sinful and enemies of God**

Ephesians 2:1-3

¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

John 14:6

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Faith Talk: Why do we find ourselves wanting to keep on our old comfortable, dirty, and worn clothes – our pet sins or sinful lifestyles? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

New Clothes

Through Jesus’ perfect life, suffering, death, and resurrection, we are given God’s forgiveness for sins and the hope of eternal life. He gives us His Holy Spirit Who creates and sustains our faith in the Good

News of salvation in Jesus. What tools (means) does the Spirit use to transform our lives? See **1 Peter 3:21a**, **Mark 14:22–25**, and **Hebrews 4:12**. **Means of Grace**

1 Peter 3:21a Holy Baptism

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you.

Mark 14:22-25 Lord's Supper

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Hebrews 4:12 Word of God

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Read **Colossians 3:10–17**.

¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. ¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 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 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.

Put on then are the words used in Colossians 3:12. Read **Galatians 3:27**. What happens as God works in us through Baptism? **Christ's righteousness becomes ours**

²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Describe the beautiful images of Baptism shown in **Isaiah 61:10** and **Zechariah 3:1–5**.

Isaiah 61:10 Robe of Christ's righteousness – new clothes

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Zechariah 3:1-5 From filthy garments to garments that are pure and clean – not sinful

¹ Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" ³ Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴ And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." ⁵ And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

Faith Talk: At Baptisms, special clothing is often worn. Share with a partner or the entire group, special clothes that have been used for Baptisms in your family. Why is that baptismal garment special? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

"Before the dawning day Let sin's dark deeds be gone, The sinful self be put away, The new self now put on" (*LSB* 331:5). In **Colossians 3:12–17**, practical guidance is given as we put on our new clothes of righteousness in Christ and are given the gifts of the Spirit that we cannot make or purchase. List all the Christ-like qualities that we, **by the Spirit**, strive for as Christians in these verses. **Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other, put on love, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, be thankful, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, and do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus** What difference do these new clothes from Christ make in your day-to-day life? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Faith Talk: Read **1 Peter 2:9**. As *God's chosen one* (Colossians 3:12), how can you proclaim what He has done in your life? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

If time permits: Colossians 3:16 says we are to sing *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*. The Psalms were most often used during worship in the Old Testament. See the following passages for examples of New Testament hymns: **Colossians 1:15–20; Ephesians 5:14; Philippians 2:6–11; and 1 Timothy 3:16.**

Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Ephesians 5:14

¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Philippians 2:6-11

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Faith Talk: Share with your partner or the small group a favorite hymn and why. Discuss why music is an important part of the Christian life. **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

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 (Colossians 3:17). What does the word “everything” mean to you in this context?

Both our secular and spiritual activities; our occupation and vocation; – all of life

How many times does Paul mention “thankfulness” in Colossians 3:15–17? **Three times in three verses**
Why does he mention being thankful more than once? **It is something often forgotten – what a privilege that we can acknowledge God as the giver of all!**

Faith Talk: What are ways that you can specifically show your thanks to God for all He has done for you, especially your salvation and new life in Christ? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

In summary, how would you explain to a friend these words: *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth* (Colossians 3:2)? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Faith Walk:

1. Pray that the Lord will help you to set your mind on things above.
2. Thank God that He has given you a new life and Christ’s new clothes through your Baptism.
3. Pray that the Holy Spirit will enable you to share the Good News of Jesus with those who need to hear.
4. Thank God for His many gifts and ask the Holy Spirit to help you to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Closing Prayer (sing or speak together): “Now Thank We All Our God” (LSB #895; LW #443; TLH #36).