

## "SO HEAVENLY MINDED. . ." COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

### This Week's Core Competency

**Identity in Christ** – I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God. John 1:12 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Choosing the best Core Competency for a given passage can, at times, be a little challenging. It is both an 'art' and a 'science.' It is a science in that there are clearly certain Core Competencies that fit within the framework of a given passage - as well as numerous competencies that would not fit a given text. It is an 'art' in that the more time you take to prayerfully reflect on a particular passage, the clearer it becomes which Core Competency to use. This week is a prime example.

Colossians 3:1-4 is a pivotal passage in Paul's letter to believers in Colosse. Paul just invested much of the last two chapters affirming essential truths of their relatively newfound faith and conversely warning them against heretical teachings that were greatly encroaching upon them. Says one author, "the short section of four verses serves as an important transition piece in the letter. On the one hand, it rounds off what has been said previously serving as the conclusion to the author's polemic against the 'philosophy' of the false teachers (2:8-23) and presenting the true alternative to that teaching. On the other hand, it marks a new beginning spelling out programmatically the inferences of the preceding for the walk of

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***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,  
he is a new creation; the old has  
gone, the new has come!***

– 2 Corinthians 5:17

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believers" (Peter O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC, 157-58). In light of this, it is clear that more than one Core Competency is viable.

For instance, Hope is a legitimate option. Our hope rests squarely on Jesus Christ and his bodily return (v. 4; 1Th 2:19; 1Ti 1:1). Prior to chapter 3, Paul references our "hope" on three occasions (1:5, 23, 27). In v. 4, Paul concludes this passage with "when Christ, who is your life, *appears*" (italics mine). Clearly 'hope' was a key piece of Paul's epistle. Another solid consideration is *Single-mindedness*. After all, our passage begin with "since, then" followed by general imperatives ("set your hearts" v. 1; "set your minds" v. 2) which precede specific admonitions in the verses to follow (vv. 5-17). Other Core Competencies warrant consideration as well (*Faithfulness, Giving Away My Life*, etc.), but I believe one, Identity in Christ, represents the best of all possible options.

Central to Paul's "since, then" transition in 3:1 is not 'hope' nor "single-mindedness" nor any other Core Competency. Rather, it is the reality that "you have been raised *with Christ*" (v.1; italics mine). In God's economy, all that Jesus accomplished is credited to our account by faith. And Paul wants us to know that every aspect of Christ's life, his death, burial, resurrection, ascension and glorious return, are "our life" as well—a present reality (Rom 6:5; 8:29-30; Eph 2:6, etc) for us before our Father in heaven. After Paul makes this clear, he then implores us to specifics regarding the single-minded life we are to live as we hope in Christ's return (vv. 5-17). "Christ is a central theme of the paragraph (there are five explicit references to him in the four verses), and prominent throughout is the concept of believers' identification with Christ in death (v. 3a), resurrection (v. 1a), life (vv 3b, 4a), and glory (v. 4b)" (Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 136).

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# day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

## Colossians 3:1-4

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

### Cf., corollary passage

#### Colossians 3:5-17

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Greek or Jew,

circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. 12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Box "Since, then" in v. 1 indicating the *conditional* clause."
- \* Circle each occurrence of "Christ" in this passage.
- \* Highlight "set your hearts" in v. 1.
- \* Double underline "seated at the right hand of God" in v 1.
- \* Draw a line from "not" to the margin and write "3:5-9."
- \* Highlight "set your minds" in v. 2.
- \* Box each occurrence of "things above" in this passage.
- \* Then, in the margin write "3:12-17."
- \* Underline "for" in v. 3 indicating *contrast*.
- \* Underline "when" in v. 4 indicating *sequence*.
- \* Highlight "with him in glory" indicating *result*.

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## day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. "Since, then." Since *what*? Where else in Paul's epistle does he refer to the 'what'?
2. In what sense(s) is our Identity *in* Christ (i.e. "with Christ")?
3. What do you think Paul has in mind regarding "things above?"
4. Compare/contrast "set your *hearts*" with "set your *minds*."
5. Survey the "right hand of God" study note on p. 6, then put its meaning in your own words.
6. What do you think Paul has in mind regarding "earthly things"?
7. In what respect is "your life *hidden* with Christ"?
8. To what does Christ's "appearing" refer?
9. The term "you died" carries with it both a *positional* reality and has *practical* implications. What are they? See also Ro 6:1-4ff.
10. **Discussion:** How does this passage contribute to a believer's understanding of eternal security?

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## day 3

## EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

Around A.D. 60 Paul sent his letter to the church at Colosse. In it he purposes to encourage his young but "faithful brethren" (1:2) regarding their "faith in Christ" and "love for all the saints" (v. 4).

Unfortunately, it is a 'faith' and 'love' under attack by false teachers. These 'teachers' were advancing an early form of *Gnosticism*, stemming from Greek (Plato) and Persian (Zoroaster) philosophy. A foundational tenant of *Gnosticism* (Gk. *gnosis* meaning 'knowledge') is the belief that the spiritual world (the abode of God) is holy but the physical world (the abode of matter) is evil. From this faulty foundation, two equally distorted but opposite schools of thought/behavior developed.

The first was one of rigid asceticism—that is, all contact with matter (i.e. fleshly cravings) should be avoided or at least reduced to a minimum. A Jewish sect, the Essenes, incorporated much of this ideology in their religious practices. The more they distanced themselves from worldly behavior, the greater ease by which they could attain the 'secret knowledge' of the spiritual world leading them to salvation. Note Paul's strong words against such notions in chapter 2. "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day" (v. 16). Further, he says, 'why...do you submit to [their] rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!'" [for they] are based on human commands and teachings" (20b-22).

The second was one of unbridled licentiousness. This latter group, comprised largely of Gentiles influenced by Hellenistic thought (i.e. Greek culture), would argue that the 'ascetic followers' placed too much emphasis on the inescapable presence and inferior value of 'matter.' Therefore, engaging in fleshly impulses are of no consequence to the attainment of the superior 'secret knowledge' unto salvation. Paul knew this line of thinking would wreak havoc on God's will for his Colossian brethren. Thus, he exhorts them to "put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed" (3:5ff)

The urgency of Paul's letter is not simply due to the fact these teachings were wrong, but that their Gnostic underpinnings led to heretical conclusions about the person and work of Jesus Christ - namely, his incarnation - full deity taking on the fullness of human flesh. Gnostics asserted that Christ only

appeared (by hologram?) as though he was in the flesh. But Paul knows that *the* Christ had to be fully man to be a legitimate substitute for man. He also had to be fully divine in order to match the standard of the Father's righteousness and to endure his divine wrath in victory against sin. Thus his doxological testimony: "He is the image of the invisible God . . . for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [and to] make peace through his blood, shed on the cross. [God] has reconciled you by Christ's *physical body* through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (1:15-22; italics mine).

One commentator summarizes this well. "Knowing that all wisdom is in Christ (2:1-5), Paul urged the Colossian Christians to continue in Him (2:6-7), not being deceived by vain philosophies (2:8-10). Since believers are identified with Christ, they are not to live under Jewish laws (2:11-17), for that would only rob them of their rewards (2:18-19). They have died with Christ and hence need not submit to legalistic rules (2:20-23). Furthermore, they have also been raised with Christ. So they should set their hearts on heavenly things (3:1-4), put to death sinful worldly practices (3:5-11), and clothe themselves with Christ's virtues (3:12-17). Stated in another way, believers are to seek spiritual values (3:1-4) and put off the sins of the new life (3:12-17). This in turn should affect their relationships with other members of their families and society (3:18-4:1)" (Norman L. Geisler, 'Colossians,' *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 679).

Through the finished work of the divine Messiah, we are freed from accusation (hence there being no need for an ascetic lifestyle) and freed from falling back into bondage via temporal, physical indulgences (hence there is no need to respond with indifference to sinful cravings). And it gets better: in 3:1-4 Paul asserts that our identity before God is already fully, completely, irrevocably found in the person and work of Jesus. "For you died" with Christ (v. 3; See also 2:11-12a), you were "raised with Christ" (v. 1; See also 2:12b; 13b), Christ is, in fact, presently (and forevermore) our very *life*—and at his second coming, we who believe "will appear with him in glory" (v. 4)! Then beginning with v. 5, he gives specific practical details relative to our response to these celebratory aforementioned truths.

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## *The Message of the Passage*

*Since you have died with Christ, been raised with Christ, and your present life is hidden in Christ, set your heart and mind on things above until his glorious return.*

### day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the first two "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

**“So Heavenly Minded . . .”**  
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

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# notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **raised**  
2:12b; 13b.

"If [our] death with him severed the links that bound [us] to the old order, then [our] resurrection with him established links with a new and heavenly order" (O'Brien, 160). See also

v. 1 **with Christ**

"Christ is the source, center and goal of the individual and corporate lives of believers (cf. 1 Cor 8:6, Gal 2:20, Phil 1:21; Col 1:16)" (Harris, 140). He concludes, "we are 'with Christ' in our death to sin, self and the world (v. 3a; cf. 2:20; Rom 6:6, 11); in spiritual resurrection and newness of life (v. 1a; cf. 2:12-13; Rom 6:1-4; Eph 2:5-6); in new spiritual life, aliveness to God (vv. 3b, 4a; cf. Rom 6:11, 13); and in resurrection glory (v. 4b; cf. Rom 8:17-18; 2 Thess 1:10)" (143).

v. 1 **set hearts**

"The verb *seek* [KJV, RSV; 'keep seeking' - NASB] implies persevering effort hence, the rendering 'Be constantly seeking,' is not incorrect. The emphasis, though, is not on the seeking but on the object sought" (William Hendricksen, *Colossians*, NTC, 140). "[Heart] focuses on the practical pursuit of heavenly or spiritual goals" (Harris, 138).

v. 1 **things above**

Refers to "spiritual matters" or "things of the Spirit (3:12-17; Rom 8:5b)". "It has to do with what is ultimately essential, transcendent and belonging to God (O'Brien, 161).

v. 1 **right hand**

"Christ's ascension to the right hand of God was an essential and constant element in the earliest apostolic preaching (See: Acts 2:33-35; 5:31; 7:55-56; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 3:21). It goes back to the messianic interpretation of Ps. 110:1, one of the most primitive of Christian *testimonia*. There we find reproduced an oracle of Yahweh addressed to someone whom the psalmist calls 'my Lord': 'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool' (Bruce, 132). "The apostles were aware that they were using figurative language when they spoke of Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God. They no more thought of a literal throne at the literal right hand of God than we do. Ancient Jews and Gentiles alike commonly regarded the right side and a position at the right hand side as symbolic of honor or good fortune" (D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, 90). "God's right hand" is the place of unrivalled prestige and unparalleled authority; consequently, although believers now "sit with Christ in the heavenly places" (Eph 2:6), they do not "sit at God's right hand in the heavenly places," as Christ does (Eph 1:20)" (Harris, 138).

v. 2 **earthly things**

Refers to "unspiritual matters" or "things of the flesh" (3:5-9; Rom 8:5a). Specifically to this text, it refers to "hollow and deceptive philosophy, human tradition and the basic principles of the world" (2:8).

v. 2 **set minds**

"[This admonition] means that the Colossians are urged to ponder and yearn for the thing that are above," (Hendricksen, 141). "[Minds] emphasizes the inner attitude necessary in that pursuit" (Harris, 138). "You must not only *seek* heaven, you must also think heaven" (J.B. Lightfoot, cited by Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest Word Studies: Ephesians and Colossians*, 217). "The way one thinks is intimately related to the way one lives" (O'Brien, 163).

v. 3 **died**

"Dying with Christ symbolizes the drastic split with the old life (3:2) and forms an essential part of Paul's warning against the rules of a holy and deceptive philosophy" (David E. Garland, *Colossians/Philemon*, NIVAC, 201). See also 2:11-12a, 20 and especially Ro 6:1-4.

v. 3 **hidden**

The verb "hidden" is in the perfect tenses "stressing [its] ongoing and permanent effects" (O'Brien, 165) "Their heavenly life remains hidden, secure with Christ in God. Their new life as Christians in Christ is not visible to others and, in some measure, is hidden from themselves. It will only be fully manifest when Christ, who embodies that life, appears at his Parousia [i.e. - Second Coming]. Indeed, the day of the revelation of the *Son* of God will be the day of the revelation of the *sons* of God. That manifestation will take place 'in glory' for it will involve the sharing of Christ's likeness and the receiving of the glorious resurrection body" (O'Brien, 171). "Security as well as concealment is implied" (Harris, 139).

v. 3 **in God**

"The believer's life is safely 'hidden away' with Christ. [Their] well-being depends on his. Not only is their life hidden 'with Christ', but 'with Christ in God' - a double rampart, all divine. [Our] true life is an extension of that indissoluble life which is his in the Father's presence" (Bruce, 135).

v. 4 **appears**

"[Jesus] is not their life only; because he is their life, he is also their hope. The indwelling Christ who is at present their hope of glory is the Christ whose manifestation at his [return] will bring them the realization of that glory" (Bruce, 136).



Connect the **FAMILY**. Kids Kindergarten thru 6th grade receive Kid Pix tokens for discipleship activities completed during the week.

### Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

NO Connect the FAMILY this week.

#### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse:

#### What Do You Think

#### What R U Going To Do

Core Comp

Memory Verse

### KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).