

Labor in Love

Colossians 2:6, 20-23; 3:1-17

When we entrust our lives to God, we are, in effect, offering our lives to God. In doing so, we invite God to transform us from our selfish ways to the way of self-giving love. That is, we give ourselves to God so that God can remake us into the image of our Creator.

This is the life that Jesus lived. It is a life of surrender to the God who is love. Jesus calls us to let go of our greed and our self-serving behavior. Jesus empowers us to live instead a life of love as we rely on God's strength, wisdom and help. In this new way of life, all we are and all we do are gifts received and gifts given to God.

In this way, our busy lives are made new. Whatever was driven by selfish ambition, pride or greed (including good deeds and religious activities) is let go. All that is centered in God's heart-compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and forgiveness- is pursued and undertaken as if we were doing it all for the One who loves us beyond telling.

All our words and deeds take on this singular focus. So that "whatever [we] do, whether in word or deed, [we] do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col 3:17).

GROUP DISCUSSION. How would you define or describe *compassion, kindness, humility and gentleness*?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. What do you see as your typical motivation or focus for doing what you do?

In the text for this study we will explore what it might mean to let our activity become a labor of love and gratitude for God. *Read Colossians 2:6, 20-23; 3:1-17.*

1. As you look over the entire text, ask yourself how it describes what it might mean that our "life is now hidden with Christ" (Col 3:3)?

2. Describe and summarize the contrast Colossians 3:1-17 draws between the "old self " and the "new self "

3. What other phrases might be used to describe what is being said in verses 5-9 when it instructs the reader to "put to death" and to "rid yourself " of the characteristics of the "old self "?

4. What might it mean to "clothe yourself " in the qualities of the "new self "?

5. What is verse 11 saying?

Why is this significant to the new way of life in Christ?

6. Imagine meeting someone who displays the qualities described in verses 10-17. What might it be like to be in close relationship with a person with these qualities?

7. What might it be like to live day to day with qualities of character described in verses 10-17?

8. This text is telling us that to be "clothed" in the characteristics described in verses 10-17 is to be made into the image of our Creator. What impact does it have on you to see God in this way?

9. Read verse 17 again. What does this mean?

How might it change your experience of your busy life to "do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"?

10. In previous studies we have been exploring our need to ask God to be our Provider, Strength, Wisdom and Peace as we rest in and rely on God, and as we remain in conversation with God. How might this way of living help us to let go of the "old self" and put on the "new self"?

Thank God that all you do and say can be done as a labor of love for God.

Now or Later

In a time of quiet, invite God to show you where you are living from the "old self" Ask God, as well, to give you glimpses of how your life might change if you let go of these old hurtful and destructive ways. Make a note of what you sense God is showing you.

As you continue in quiet, ask God where you need to clothe yourself in the "new self" Then let yourself see Jesus clothing you in garments of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and forgiveness. Invite God to show you how your life might change day-to-day as you put on these new clothes. Make a note of what you sense God is showing you.

Make a list of some of the tasks, responsibilities and challenges you are facing. Offer these activities as a gift of love and gratitude to God, asking for God's help, strength, wisdom and peace as you labor in love for God.

Daily prayer: Lord, all I do and all I say today, I offer in love and gratitude to you. May all be done as a labor of love for you.