

Main Idea: In Colossians 3:1-4, we discover two insights concerning the kind of priorities that God wants us to have in our lives.

- I. We learn what our priorities should be (1-2).
 - A. We should be seeking the right things (1).
 - B. We should be thinking about the right things (2).
 1. Priority #1: Be God's kind of person (2 Cor. 5:9-10).
 2. Priority #2: Be God's kind of partner (Gen. 2:18; Eph. 5:22-33).
 3. Priority #3: Be God's kind of parent (Gen. 1:28; Eph. 6:4).
 4. Priority #4: Be God's kind of parishioner (Heb. 10:25; Eph. 4:11-13).
 5. Priority #5: Be God's kind of provider (1 Tim. 5:8; Col. 3:22-4:1).
 6. Priority #6: Be God's kind of player (Matt. 6:33; Amos 6:1-7).
- II. We learn why we need these priorities (3-4).
 - A. We should because of what happened to us (3).
 1. I died.
 2. I have a new identity.
 - B. We should because of what will happen to us (4).
 1. Christ is going to appear.
 2. I will appear with Him.

Make It Personal: Three vital questions to consider...

1. What do I value in life?
2. What should I value in life?
3. Can the world see Christ through the way I'm living my life?

The Lord created the family and did so for His glory. We've been learning about the Christian family by looking carefully at the first family in Genesis, having considered the first marriage, the first sin, the first excuse, the first sacrifice, the first parents and children, the first family divide, and the first genealogy.

Now, with the foundation in place, it's time to move to the New Testament, and see how the first followers of Christ took the truths of Genesis and applied them this side of the cross. We want to spend the next four weeks exploring Colossians 3.

May 19 – “**Priorities** in the Christian Family” Colossians 3:1-4

May 26 – “**Communication** in the Christian Family” Colossians 3:5-11

June 2 – “**Forgiveness** in the Christian Family” Colossians 3:12-14

June 9 – “**Roles** in the Christian Family” Colossians 3:15-21

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Think of a young boy around 8 years old. He's sitting in the dirt playing with a plastic airplane, having a great time. You are his grandfather, and you approach him and say, “Looks like you're having fun, Johnny. That's great. Guess what? I've got something for you, something even better. How'd you like to go with me next Saturday on a little trip? I've got a friend with a real airplane, and I've arranged for him to take us up for a ride. We're going to fly over your house and school and all over this area. It'll be great, just me and you, up in the plane. How about it?”

And his response? “Ummm, no thanks, Grandpa. I'd rather stay here so I can play with my pretend plane all by myself. It's more fun.”

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the message preached at WBC in 2012.

Now picture a grandmother. She's all by herself in her home, looking at a photo album of her family. The phone rings and it's her four year old granddaughter. "Hi Gramma! It's Sally. I want to come and be with you and make cookies. Okay?"

And grandma replies, "Ummm, sorry Sally. I'm really busy looking at my picture book of you and the other grandkids. Maybe some other time."

A 35 year old man is sitting alone in his apartment, getting ready to pop a tv dinner in the oven for the fifth time this week. The phone rings and it's his best friend from college days on the other end. "Hey, Steve, it's me, Bob, your old roomie. I'm in town for business. How about going out to supper with me. I'm buying. I'd love to catch up with you on life's going. Sound good?"

But Steve responds. "Well, I don't think so. I'd rather just stay home. I'm in the middle of a really good book about friendship and I'd like to finish it tonight."

So what's your assessment of that little boy, and that grandmother, and that 35 year old man? What's going on their lives? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? In each case, someone is settling for a lesser and deficient joy. A toy airplane over the exhilaration of a ride in a Cessna. A picture of a grandchild over the delight of the grandchild herself. A novel about friendship over the experience of being with a friend.

It's not that the toy plane and the photo album and the novel are bad. You can get some pleasure out of them, but not near the joy that comes from experiencing the real thing they represent.

Sometimes I think that when we talk about choosing to live God's way, we have the notion that we're going to deny ourselves of what's most fulfilling to us. Sort of, if that's what it takes to please God, then okay, I'll do it. But if God only knew.

But the truth is, God does know. Since He made us, He alone knows what will most maximize our joy in this life and forever. And because He loves us, He tells us in black and white in His Word what the joy-filled life looks like.

I want your family to have the fullest experience of God's joy. That's what this series is all about. I'm after your maximum joy, and I'm after it because I know that's what will result in God's maximum glory.

Let me be honest with you. You're about to hear some things that could make you think I'm trying to take away your toy airplane, or your photo album, or your tv dinner and novel. I'm not trying to take away anything. I want to maximize your joy, and I know that will never happen as long as you're clinging to lesser, deficient joys.

You say, "How can I experience this maximum joy you're talking about?" I'll give you two answers, first the short and then the longer. The short is this. If you want God's fullest joy, you must come to *know Christ* and then *put Christ on display in your life and family*. That's it. The most joyful people on the planet are those who know Christ and are seeking to adorn Him in the way they live.

You say, "Okay, but what's that look like in practical terms?" That's the longer answer, and that's the answer that God gives us in Colossians 3.

Let me make a pastoral observation. As I've interacted with families over the years, and as I've noticed the dynamics of my own family, for that matter, I've discovered there are some common joy-robbers that invade our homes. And the good news is that in Colossians 3, God shows us how to get rid of those joy-robbers.

One common joy-robber is *mixed up priorities*—and that's the subject Colossians 3 addresses in the first four verses (as we'll see today). Another joy-robber is *improper communication*—and verses 5-11 address that subject as we'll see next time, the Lord willing. Then there are *forgiveness* issues—and that's dealt with in verses 12-14, which

we'll see in week three. And then there's the *confusion of roles*—a subject that Paul straightens out in simple terms in verses 15-21.

We're going to begin this morning where the Spirit of God begins in Colossians 3, by talking about priorities. If I asked you to write down five words that describe your family right now, what words would you pick? For some it would *fun*, maybe *crazy*. For a lot it would be *busy*, or *frustrated*, or even *crisis*. How about *joyful*? Can you use that word to describe your life and family. Can you say, "My life and my family is *full of joy*."?

If you can't (and again, that's what I want for every family in this room, your maximum joy), then I can almost guarantee you need to give careful attention to the first topic Paul addresses in Colossians 3, the topic of *priorities*.

It's not complicated. When our priorities get out of whack, we lose our joy. It's usually not a blow-out either, but a slow leak. There are two points to this message. As we work through Colossians 3:1-4, the Lord is going to tell us *what our priorities should be*—that's verses 1-2. And *why*—that's verses 3-4.

I. We learn what our priorities should be (1-2).

Take a look at verses 1-2 (NIV), "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

We've jumped into the middle of a God-inspired letter that the apostle Paul wrote to a church in the city of Colosse, in present day Turkey. Paul himself did not start this church. Apparently, a man Paul led to Christ named Epaphras did (1:7). Then in about 60 AD, Paul penned this epistle to the Colossian church to address a dangerous problem. There was a hybrid heresy being taught by some in the church, a combination of gnostic asceticism, ceremonialism, and angel worship.

In this letter we call Colossians, Paul refuted this dangerous teaching, and here's how he did it. In chapter one he highlights the **supremacy** of Christ (1:18), then from the end of chapter one to the first part of chapter two the **sufficiency** of Christ (2:3). Then, in light of Christ's supremacy and sufficiency, Paul challenges the Colossian Christians in 2:6-23 not to settle for **substitutes**, particularly the legalistic rules the heretics were promoting (2:23).

Then in chapters three and four, Paul lays out the implications of Christ's supremacy and sufficiency. If Christ is supreme (and He is), and if Christ is our Savior (and He is), and if Christ lives in us (and He does), then we ought to be putting Him on display in our lives and relationships.

Sad to say, as Christians, we're prone to say we believe truth that isn't affecting the way we're living, at least not as it ought. That's why we need reminders, like this one that Paul gives us in chapter three.

"Since then, you have been raised with Christ." In light of the doctrinal truth of chapters one and two, in light of our position in Jesus Christ, here's what must follow. It ought to show up, first of all, in our priorities.

There are two imperatives in verses 1-2, both pertaining to our priorities.

A. We should be seeking the right things (1). Listen to the ESV, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." *If* you have been raised. Have you? If you have put your faith in Christ, yes. And if so, then seek the things that are above. When I'm not doing that, I get in trouble. When my family isn't doing that, my family gets in trouble, too. Out goes the joy.

The verb in the Greek text is the word *zateo* which has a wide range of meanings, but it has to do with the orientation of a person's will. It's talking about what you're *wanting* and *living for*. It's actually a present tense imperative indicating that continuous ongoing effort is required. *Seeking the things above* is not something we do naturally. We don't naturally seek things we cannot see. But since we've been given new life in Christ, it's what we should do.

Of course, left to ourselves, this is something we would never do. As R. C. Lucas explains, "The story [of the Bible] is, from the beginning, that of a divine search for those who hide from their Maker (Gen. 3:9; Luke 19:10). When men and women begin their search for God and his forgiveness, it is evidence of a prior work of God. Having found that forgiveness, or been 'found' by the heavenly Father, the search for reconciliation is over."²

And it's at that point the real seeking begins. When God finds us and brings us to Himself, the proper response is then to seek Him and the things that please Him. This is to be the believer's daily aspiration, to set our hearts on things above.

Let that sink in. People ought to see a difference in our families when they look at what we're *seeking*. What specifically should they see us seeking? Paul says, the "things above." What does that mean? What are the "above" things? Paul's next phrase gives us a clue, "where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Those words come from Psalm 110 (interestingly, there are 33 quotations or allusions to Psalm 110 scattered throughout the New Testament³).

Where is Christ seated right now? He's seated above, specifically at the right hand of God. In other words, Christ is in heaven, the place He went after He finished His earthly work.

Now answer this. What's important in heaven? The stock market? A bigger house? T-ball games? No. It's not that heaven doesn't have a perspective on such things, but they're not what drives heaven. What's important in heaven is the One seated at God's right hand, namely, *Christ Himself*.

So the question becomes, what things matter to Christ, the One who is in heaven? Those are the "above" things, and they're the opposite of the "earthly things" we'll see in verse 2. It's the *above* things that should matter most to us.

By the way, there in verse 1 is a good definition of a Christian. A Christian is a person who's been granted a relationship with the exalted Christ at God's right hand. That's what is true of you if you are God's child. You, though undeserving, were given a relationship with God through the Christ, the One who died to rescue you from sin and its consequences and conquered the grave to reconcile you to God. In light of what He has done for you, it's only natural then that you would seek the things that matter to Him, the things *above*.

Are you? If we're not, then somethings out of place, something serious. This text is calling us to look at all of life from the perspective of what matters in heaven, and to refuse to live as if this life is what life is all about. When it comes to our priorities, we should, first of all, be *seeking* the right things.

B. We should be thinking about the right things (2). That brings us to the second imperative, in verse 2 (in the ESV), "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." The object is the same as verse 1. It's the above things. But

² Lucas, p. 135.

³ O'Brien, p. 162.

the verb is different. *Seek* the things above, said verse 1 (*zeteo*). *Set your minds* on things above, says verse 2 (the Greek is *phroneo*).

The KJV translates it, “Set your affection on,” but that’s sort of misleading for it gives the impression that this task has primarily to do with a person’s emotions. It doesn’t. The Greek *phroneite* means “to judge, give one’s mind to, to think.” It’s an activity of the intellect which also affects the will.

Do you see the connection between the two commands? You’re going to *seek* what you *think about*. And you’re going to *think about* what you’re *seeking*. They go hand in hand.

So let me ask you. What are you thinking about these days? What’s on your mind? Your latest project at work, your kids’ activities, your summer vacation plans, how to make some extra spending money? Nothing wrong with those things, and nothing inherently wrong with thinking about them.

But quite honestly, we don’t need to work at thinking about those things, do we? Those things, those *earthly* things, are right in front of us, and so we think about them.

But how often in a day’s time do you think about the Lord and the things that matter to Him? We seek what we think about. That’s why we need to be in the Word every day, and with our church family whenever it assembles.

Yet herein lies a tension. Our feet must be on earth, for that’s where we live. But our minds must be in heaven,⁴ for we’re commanded to seek and think about “above things,” not “earthly things.”

So what does this look like practically? Let me give you a real life scenario and you tell me what the people are seeking and thinking about.

You’re at your fifteen year high school reunion, and bump into a classmate you haven’t seen graduation. You ask how life has been, and she opens up, “To be honest, not so good. I’m married to a man who thinks more of his job than he does of me.”

You’re stunned. In high school this was the couple most likely to succeed. “I hate to admit it,” she says, “but facts are facts. There’s nothing between us anymore. We’re just roommates, but we’re going to keep our marriage together for the sake of the kids.”

You say you’re so sorry to hear that, listen a little longer, and then move to the other side of the room. At this point, her husband approaches. “I guess she told you,” he says, shaking his head. “I don’t even know my wife any more. It seems like all that matters to her are our children. At least at work I’m appreciated for what I do.”

You tell him you’ll be praying for them, and encourage them to find a good church and get some help. To which he replies, “Oh, we go to church, always have, even sing on the praise team together. I don’t think anybody there even knows we’re struggling.”

In this scenario, there’s a lot going on, but with a common denominator. Did you spot it? Your two friends have *misplaced priorities*. They’re not seeking and thinking about the above things.

You say, “I don’t follow. What exactly are the priorities that matter in heaven, and how can I learn to seek them first in my life and family here on earth?”

To answer that, I want to give you a biblical priority grid. Some of you have seen it before, for others it’s new, but I believe it will serve us all well as we take assessment.

Quite often, our choices are not between a good and a bad option, but between a good and a better option. That’s what this grid is all about.

⁴ As Wiersbe aptly puts it, p. 134.

Should I go to a school event on a Wednesday evening or bring my family to the Bible study at church? Should I play golf on Saturday morning or go to my son's little league game? Should we use the income tax money to get a new car, or give a gift to the mission's project?⁵

The following grid presents six biblical priorities.⁶

1. *Priority #1: Be God's kind of person (2 Cor. 5:9-10).* Or to put it another way, we ought to put God first in life. Why? Because He made us (Gen. 2:7), and if we've believed in His Son, He redeemed us (Eph. 2:10). So that means we are here *for Him*.

That ought to impact our lives as it did Paul. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, "So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him, for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

Nothing ought to be more important to me than being God's kind of person. Nothing.

So what about the distressed spouse who says, "Pastor, I'd do anything to get my spouse back and have a happy marriage, anything!?" Sounds noble, but actually it's an indication of a misplaced first priority. Would you do *anything* to have a good marriage, even disobey God? Beloved, though God is pro-marriage, He will not play second fiddle, even to your spouse.

Indeed, the best thing you can do for your family is to put Christ first. Always. Then what? Next to the Lord, what does God's Word say should be more important to us than anything else on the planet? If we are married...

2. *Priority #2: Be God's kind of partner (Gen. 2:18; Eph. 5:22-33).* If I am not married, it's to be God's kind of person in my singleness and as I wait for the partner He may bring to me.

Listen. If you are married, there is no one or nothing, outside of Christ, that should have higher priority than your spouse. Not your job, not your children, not even your Christian service. Your second, God-given priority in life is to be God's kind of partner.

Why? God tells us in Genesis 2. In Genesis 2 God established priorities for the first man, Adam. Adam's relationship with God came first. Then, above all else, came his relationship with his wife, Eve. God said in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Next to being God's kind of person nothing in my life should have higher priority than being God's kind of partner. And passages like Ephesians 5 tell me how to do it, by the help of the Holy Spirit (5:18).

So ask yourself some questions. Does your home revolve around your kids? If so, then you're priorities are out of whack, which means you're diminishing your joy.

You say, "But shouldn't my children be a priority?" Yes, but not #1 or #2.

3. *Priority #3: Be God's kind of parent (Gen. 1:28; Eph. 6:4).* Genesis 1:28 states, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.'" What's that saying? We ought to strive to be God's kind of parent. And being God's kind of parent means we value the fruit of the marriage covenant. That includes children, and by extension I think it would include other relatives. We are to give God first priority, next our spouse, and then our children.

⁵ Every day we make choices, and our choices always reflect our values. It's our values that determine our priorities, and it's our priorities that determine our choices.

⁶Material adapted with permission from Clearcreek Chapel Biblical Counseling Training materials.

Let's be honest. Some of us are going a hundred miles an hour, and there's no joy, just a gnawing sense that something's...*out of order*. And it is. It's not complicated. Are you taking steps every day to put the Lord first in your life? And if you're married, are you then seeking to put Christ on display in the way you treat that precious partner? And if God has blessed you with children, are you seeking by His grace to be a parent that pleases Him?

Then what? Next to your relationship with the Lord, your spouse, and your children, what does the Bible say we should prioritize higher than anything else?

Answer this. Who are you going to spend eternity with? The Lord, yes, and who else? My forever family. According to 1 Timothy 3:4-5, I am qualified to serve as a leader in the church only if God is first in my life and my home is in order. I have no right to ignore my wife and children in the name of church ministry, nor does any member of this church.

But if my family is in order, what am I supposed to do? I'm supposed to use my gifts for the glory of Christ in the service of His beloved Bride, the church. So priority four...

4. *Priority #4: Be God's kind of parishioner (Heb. 10:25; Eph. 4:11-13).* Friends, God intends church to be a higher priority in our lives than our jobs, and our recreation. Not because our jobs and hobbies don't matter to God. They do. But by taking church seriously, we grow and help our brothers and sisters to grow, so we can together glorify God in our jobs and hobbies in the most God-exalting way.

Hebrews 10:25 tells us, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Participating in church is important, not just Sunday morning either. Church is a family, a body, a household, not merely a weekly event on Sunday mornings. We need the church (Eph. 4:11-13), and by God's design, the church needs us.

5. *Priority #5: Be God's kind of provider (1 Tim. 5:8; Col. 3:22-4:1).* What does God think of your job? Your job is very important to Him, and it should be to you. He gave you aptitude to work so you could support His work and your family. 1 Timothy 5:8 says, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." In Colossians 3 & 4 Paul gives practical counsel to slaves and masters about their work.

So work is good. Your job is important. But you and I are making a grave mistake if we place our job over the Lord, and our spouses, and our kids, and our church. There's going to be a joy-leak until we learn to embrace the priorities God has established.

You say, "But aren't there exceptions? Aren't there times when these five priorities need to be shuffled?"

Suppose you work for the electric company and are called to work a double shift because of an electrical storm. But they need you on a Wednesday evening which is when you've committed to teaching a children's Bible lesson. Aren't there exceptions to this grid?

Sure, but that's the point. They are *exceptions*, not the norm. If I find myself regularly saying yes to the overtime just so I can make extra money, but end up sacrificing my relationship with the Lord, my family, and my church in the process, I can be sure that I'm forfeiting the fullest experience of joy God intends for me.

6. *Priority #6: Be God's kind of player (Matt. 6:33; Amos 6:1-7).* You say, "Where does time for *me* come in?" The world says, "You need to take time for self first, and then you can give to others." But the Bible says just the opposite. I need to seek to be God's kind of person, and seek to be His kind of partner, and parent, and parishioner,

and provider, and all this by His grace. And if I'm doing that and I have some free time on Saturday morning, then sure, go ahead and play a round of golf with friends, and do that for His glory, too.

Here's where we often get in trouble. We try to motivate by *guilt*. Like, "You better get your life in order!" "Why?" "Because God will get you if you don't!"

But friends, God doesn't show us what our priorities should be because He's *against* us. That's unthinkable. "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things (Rom 8:32)."

God is for us! He's giving us something good with this teaching on priorities. He knows this will maximize our joy. You'll never be more fulfilled and joyful than by choosing to set your heart and mind on things above rather than earthly things.

This brings us to point two, the why question. We've learned *what*, now *why*.

II. We learn why we need these priorities (3-4).

Paul gives us two reasons why we should seek and think about God-honoring priorities in Colossians 3:3-4.

A. We should because of what happened to us (3). "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Don't miss this. If I'm a Christian, two things are true of me.

1. *I died.* That's quite a statement! Paul says, "*You died.*" A dead person has a different approach to life than a living person, right? Do you think of yourself as a person who has died?

Warren Wiersbe writes about the story he heard years ago. There were two sisters who enjoyed attending wild parties. Then they were converted and found new life in Christ. Soon after they received an invitation to a party and sent their RSVP in these words: "We regret that we cannot attend because we recently died."⁷

Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20)." I died. And that means this.

2. *I have a new identity.* My life is now hidden with Christ in God. Paul uses the phrase "with Christ" to speak of our position, a phrase which he uses far less frequently in his letters than "in Christ." In fact, "with Christ" (*sun Xristo*) appears only twelve times, four of which are in Colossians.

There may be a word play here. Remember, the Colossian church was being attacked by false teachers who promoted a heretical mix of gnostic ideas and Christian truth. The heretics called their books of so-called wisdom *apokruphoi*, for these books were hidden from all except those who were initiated. Paul used a similar word *apokruptein* to show that our lives are *hidden* with Christ in God. It's as if Paul was saying, "For you false teachers, the treasures of wisdom are hidden in your secret books. Not us. For us Christ is the treasury of wisdom and we are hidden in him!"⁸

Fellow Christians, realize this. Christ not only died *for* us, but we died *with* Him. And He died not only *for* sin, thereby bearing its penalty, but He also died *unto* sin, thus breaking its power.⁹

So I have a new identity. In verse 3, Paul calls our life in Christ a 'hidden' life. Why? In part, it's because the world can't see it. We have an intimate connection with a person the world cannot see. They can't see the real us, for our life is hidden with Christ in God.

⁷ Wiersbe, 133.

⁸ Barclay, 148.

⁹ Wiersbe, 133.

But the world should see the evidence of this hidden life. And it will *if* we are seeking and thinking about the things above.

There's a second reason. First, our priorities should be different because of what happened to us. Past tense.

B. We should because of what will happen to us (4). Future tense. "When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." What's going to happen?

1. *Christ is going to appear.* And what's going to happen when He appears? Many things, but here Paul highlights one very amazing reality.

2. *I will appear with Him.* And not just with Him, but "in glory" with Him. Again, a staggering thought, but one we need to think.

Most of us don't think about Christ's coming enough. If we did, it would change the way we live now, and particularly, change our priorities.

Do you remember what happened at Kadesh Barnea? The Israelites sent twelve spies into the Promised Land. Ten saw giants, and spread a pessimistic report amongst God's people. The result was that an entire generation perished in the wilderness. Except for two men, Caleb and Joshua. What was different about these two men? They saw what others failed to see. Their minds and hearts were fixed on higher things. They knew they had an inheritance coming, and they lived in light of it.

Is that true of you? Several years ago a Senate committee met to discuss a certain issue. One of the members of the committee was the late Senator Hubert Humphrey. During the deliberation Senator Humphrey made the following comment: "You must remember that in politics, how you stand depends on where you sit."

He was referring to the political party seating arrangement in the Senate, but think about it. As a Christian, how I stand (and walk) depends on where I sit. And where *do* I sit? God's Word says that if Christ is my Savior, then I am seated with Christ in the heavenlies and one day will appear with Christ in glory.¹⁰

Last week I received an email from Wycliffe missionary Andy Minch. I met Andy years ago in the jungles of PNG. He's now involved in recruiting future missionaries.

He shared the following, "Mission agencies across the board (including Wycliffe) have asked new recruits, 'What was the tipping point that actually caused you to join our agency?'" For all their recruitment efforts, the top answer was, "I took a Perspectives course."

Andy is talking about a course called "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement." He says that alumni who finish this 15 week course often encounter a life changing paradigm shift saying, "I am ruined for the ordinary." "I now realize I am made for more." "I am no longer content with the status quo."

What I found particularly helpful was a perspective-question that Andy is urging people to ask themselves, which I now encourage all of us to ask. Rather than asking, what is God's will (purpose) for my life, we should be asking ourselves, what is God's will for the world and what is my part in joining God in his purpose?

Churches are filled with people who are not asking the right question, and they're not asking the right question because they're not living with the right perspective. This is the right question. What is God's will for this world, for this church, for my family, and what is my part in joining Him in fulfilling His purposes? And this is the right perspective. Seek and think about *the things that are above*.

¹⁰Illustration and observation given by Warren Wiersbe, 134.

Listen to how Eugene Peterson's paraphrases our text in *The Message*: "So if you are 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."

I wonder, is that what you've been doing, shuffling along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you? Let's ask ourselves three very pointed questions.

Make It Personal: Three vital questions to consider...

1. *What do I value in life?* What's important to me, so important that I am devoting my time, energy, money, thoughts, and attention to it? What am I living for? What *do* I value in life? Be honest. For most of us, it's not immoral things that's robbing our joy. It's attaching too much value to lesser things. Nothing wrong with killing a dragon on a video game, but how much better to do some Scripture memory so you can fight against the dragon of your soul!

2. *What should I value in life?* Paul said in *Philippians 1:21*, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He said that from prison. Is getting your head severed from your body by a Roman sword a good thing? Paul said it would be a *gain*.

Paul was no glum-faced, duty-absorbed, grind-it-out stoic. He was a joy-seeker, and that's what took him to prison facing the potential sword. He was after his maximum joy and the glory of the God who saved him. That's why he invested his life in thinking about and seeking things above, rather than the trivial pursuits of things below.

William Barclay made this observation, "Sometimes we say of a man, 'Music is his life--Sport is his life--He lives for his work.' Such a man finds life and all that it means in music, in sport, in work, as the case may be. For the Christian, Christ is his life."¹¹

Is that true of you? Is Christ your life?

3. *Can the world see Christ through the way I'm living my life?* That's why our priorities are so critical. Yes, it's His glory and our joy, but not just our joy. There are lost people all around us for whom Christ died who don't yet know Him. Their joy depends on coming to know Him, and it's our privilege and calling to make Him known to them.

So what changes need to occur so your neighbors will get a better picture of Christ when they look at your family? That would be a good lunchtime conversation, and a good first step towards maximizing your joy this week.

Closing Song: #388 "*I Would Be Like Jesus*" (all four verses)

Baptism (Hunter Phipps, Mack Howe, baptized by Rex)

Closing charge: Let the redeemed of the Lord...SAY SO.

¹¹ Barclay, p. 149.