Paul's Letter to the Colossians

**"IF IT WALKS LIKE A DUCK”**

**Colossians 3:1-25**

**“Got Life?”**

P

eggy Lee sang her way to the top of Billboard’s Hot 100 with “Is That All There Is?” Many have taken a shot at the answer:

*“Life is a whim of several billion cells (who want) to be you for awhile.”* ~Unknown

*“I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer.”* ~actor Jim Carrey

*“The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.”* ~poet Henry David Thoreau

*“Any idiot can face a crisis - it's day to day living that wears you out.”* ~Russian short story writer/playwright Anton Chekhov

*“Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you’re good is like expecting the bull not to charge because you’re a vegetarian.”* ~American TV host/producer Dennis Wholey

*“Life’s an endless struggle full of frustrations and challenges, but eventually you find a hair stylist you like.* ~Unknown

*“God never creates a life for whom He’s unnecessary.”* ~Unknown

#### “That’s Life”

Paul, a distinguished Jewish jurist, was God’s first spokesman to the Gentiles. He’s writing to Jesus’ believers in the ancient Turkish city of Colosse, thirty years after Jesus Christ had returned to heaven.

As is his style, the first half of Paul’s letters outlines some ABC’s of the Christian faith; the latter half demos how to walk the talk.

He’s urging Christ-followers to get serious about their new identity. What are you *really* serious about? Are you led by *feelings*…or by what you *know*? **Beware of P.C. land mines, and note the *verbs* as we read Colossians 3:1-25 (p. 446, The Message).**

#### Keepin’ It Real, Dog

#### Colossians 3:1-4

In chs. 1 and 2 (see “Archives” at [www.NordysGroup.com](http://www.NordysGroup.com)) Paul warns his readers about heresies that were infiltrating their ranks, denying that simply trusting in Christ is adequate to gain God’s forgiveness. Sin’s temptations can only be rebuffed by letting God call the shots from our inner control room (Romans 7:14-25).

Our thoughts shape our actions, habits and destiny. As we invest more time maturing in *God’s* thoughts, we begin to focus on forever, and our day-to-day “means” will reflect the values of our ultimate “end,” as opposed to an “end justifies the means” lifestyle.

**DISCUSS: What are “things over which Christ presides” and “things in front of you” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)?**

#### Buried Alive

It’s all about who *GOD* says you are. If God is in your life, the real you is safer than Safeco, in better hands than AllState, closer to God than your State Farm neighbor. When we were hopelessly headed for an end that defies the most hellish description, Jesus served our death sentence for us. By asking His Holy Spirit to live in us, guiding us to make right choices, He actually *becomes* our life!

The “old you” has died (Romans 6:3-11; Galatians 2:19-21). Sin’s verdict against you was nailed to the cross. The “new you” is safe in God. Christ *is* your life; you two are inseparable (Romans 8:38-39).

Dairy farmers ask, “Got milk?” H&R Block says, “You got people.” But when we say “yes” to God’s invitation, we “*got God!”* and “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

In 1966 the leader of show business’ Rat Pack recorded a chart-topper that did *not* go a little something like *this*:

That's life (that's life), that's what all the people say.

You're ridin' high in April, shot down in May.

But I know I'm gonna change that tune

When I'm back on top, back on top in June.

My Life…in those moments when I'm honest

I see myself an empty shelf.

Where's all this world promised?

There's an emptiness no matter how I try

Still back I go…lappin' up the lie.

So I keep workin' and scratchin' and waiting and wanting

My piece of some dream.

So vexed inside I even tried…the 'religious' thing.

When came the day I found myself…flat on my face

Someone told a story 'bout Amazing Grace!

Now I've found Life! The Son of God connection

The real kind we only find through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Now I praise the living Lord who paved the way

When Jesus rolled back the stone…on that first…Easter day.

**DISCUSS: What does “Christ *is* my life” mean and look like?**

#### Been There, Bought The Hair Shirt

#### Colossians 3:5-11

This new resurrection life is like a wardrobe change. Before joining Christ we dressed according to our old, self-serving habits. Now, putting on our “new self” with Christ’s power and our transformed mind, we’re equipped to say “no” to sin (Romans 12:1-2).

Farmers know “sowing and reaping.” Those who flip off God’s free gift of resurrection life will reap His hatred of sin (Romans 2:5-8). But those who decide for Christ will never experience God’s finger-pointing or permanent banishment to an eternal lake of fire the Bible calls hell (Romans 1:18, 8:1; I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

**DISCUSS: Describe “a life shaped by things and feelings” vs. one “shaped by God” (Hebrews 2:14-18, 4:14-16).**

#### In Hot Water

#### Colossians 3:12-17

Cuffed to a jailer in Rome before being beheaded, this faithful messenger of God reminds his readers how much God loves them (Romans 5:6-8; 1 John 3:16). Keeping this alive in our minds will lead to more soothing relationships, replacing our former vices with the virtues embodied in God’s unearned love. This corrective surgery can only begin by soaking in the Jacuzzi of God’s Word which alone has the “words of life.” Resurrection life.

**DISCUSSION: How will “putting on” our new *spiritual* threads make Christ known to those around us?**

#### Not Your Bella Abzug’s Libmobile

#### Colossians 3:18-25

The world, as God first delivered it, was in perfect order. That pristine state is still seen in the predictable courses of the sun, moon, stars, planets, seasons and tides. All are in *submission* to God’s precise management. Imagine the catastrophics if they operated randomly on their own.

God didn’t leave civilization’s basic building block to evolve on its own, so He instituted marriage between one man and one woman.

If Gloria Steinem has a Bible, this page is missing. The word “submission” does NOT mean “subservient,” “inferior” or “mindless obedience.” So let’s check it out. sub = subordinate. mission = an aim, task, purpose, or a group sent out to represent its sponsor. If a married couple’s mission is to honor God, submitting to that is a noble pursuit. It’s “resurrection life.” Living by a higher standard.

**Let’s cruise a parallel passage Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:17-24, 5:1-2, 5:21-6:9 (p. 427, The Message).**

The onus is on the husband to (1) be the quarterback but let God call the plays, and to (2) love his wife as Jesus loves us. What wife committed to Christ wouldn’t *volunteer* tosubmit to *unselfish* love!

Children in a Christ-centered home are to listen and carry out their parents’ instructions. And mom and dad must not be unreasonable, ragging on the kids, making them lose heart and turn bitter.

Across the Roman Empire more than half the populace were slaves, even craftsmen, teachers and doctors. Far from condoning forced labor, Jesus’ early followers stressed that God loves all equally. This ultimately dismantled slavery in the British Empire (through the leadership of MP William Wilberforce in 1807) and in the U.S.

Paul is encouraging employees who love Christ to serve their bosses wholeheartedly as if they’re working for God, to live above pettiness, seeing our work as a place to serve our Lord and others with dignity (Romans 6:23; Philippians 4:19).

DISCUSSION: What would it take for you to be aware that you’re working for God, not the corner office inhabitant?

#### Life Begins Here

God had you and me in mind when He shipped His Son to hang in our place because He doesn’t want to spend eternity without us.

If the feeling’s mutual, just tell Him now, “I can no longer reject Your indescribable gift of forgiveness, God. Jesus, You took my sins to the cross and left them in that tomb. I’m ready to follow You. Thank You! By faith, I’m all Yours. Amen.”

His Deal

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