

## A Pattern for an Empowering and Beautiful Life

### Instructions from Colossians, Chapter Three

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#### *Colossians 3:1-4 (NKJV)*<sup>1</sup>

*“If then you were raised with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.** <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”*

The Apostle Paul was clearly speaking from his own experience. His words encourage us to think about those things that come from heavenly places, not from the things of this world that try to influence our everyday thinking. In the verses following, Paul encourages us to “*put to death*” (Verse 5) or “*put off*” (Verse 9) and to rid ourselves of the world’s way of thinking. The Greek word for “*put off*” is “*nekroo*.” It means “to mortify or render weak and without power.”

Then, in Verse 12, Paul tells us to “*put on*,” to embrace and make room for the kind of thinking that will bring life-changing patterns for empowered, successful living. The Greek word translated “*put on*” means “to endue.” We can think of this as clothing ourselves in a comfortable garment that we just can sink into. Paul describes this as giving us what we should think about to bring comfort, support and empowering success to our lives.

In this study, we will focus on a pattern of thinking and action that will give us a way forward to successful living. It is one of many New Testament patterns that become “the owner’s manual for an empowering and *‘beautiful life.’*”

#### *Romans 12:2 (TPT)*

*“Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think. **This will empower you to***

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the following applies to all Scripture quotes. Scripture taken

***discern God's will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes.***<sup>2</sup>

Let's now go to the six verses that make up this pattern of thinking and action that will become our "owner's manual for an empowering and 'beautiful life.'" Paul gives us this information in Colossians 3:12-17.

## **The Owner's Manual for an Empowering and "Beautiful Life"**

### **Colossians 3:12-17 (NKJV)**

***"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. <sup>14</sup>But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."***

Our study will unpack each of these verses, one at a time, to see what our "Owner's Manual" will tell us about living for Jesus in ways that empower us to live a "beautiful life."

### **Verse 12**

***"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;"***

Paul reminds us that the ways we now are to think, as God's

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<sup>2</sup> The Passion Translation (TPT).

people, are very different from those that used to fill our minds and hearts. Here's what he says:

- A. You no longer are under the devil's influence. No longer allow yourselves to believe what he says to you, because you are now children of God. Satan's words are "weak and without power." You have within you the God supplied ability to do this.
- It's time for change. You may still live in a broken world, but you are a "*holy and beloved*" member of a very different eternal place, the Kingdom of God. This means you can apply "the owner's manual for an empowering and '*beautiful life*'" to your everyday walk with God.
  - Paul tells us it's the right time for change. You have the power to disallow the world's way of thinking to stay in your hearts and minds. Replace this with a new pattern of godly instructions that you will find in God's Word. Remember, you are now God's children. He has snatched you from Satan's grip. You are holy and beloved by the only one with the power to do this, the Lord Jesus Christ!"
- B. Paul's instructions in Verse 12 for godly thinking lead to patterns of blessed and successful godly living. This means, as children of God, we now have the opportunity and the power to look at others with "*tender mercies*" and "*kindness.*"

Let an awareness of the tenderness of your heart and the kindness that accompanies measure what you think and then, say to others. This will influence your actions and show itself openly in the way you treat other people. It will be apparent in what you do, and often, what you decide *not* to do because it would bring negative outcomes. (Remember, you are now a child of God. The devil is *not* your father.)

- C. As Verse 12 continues, Paul adds to our "owner's manual for an empowering and '*beautiful life*'" with additional valuable instructions. He writes that we are to have the same humility and quite meekness of attitude that Jesus brought to earth when He went to the cross for our salvation. (Refer also to Philippians 2:1-13.)

We are to embrace "*meekness*" because we understand it is a part of the pathway to the empowering and "*beautiful life*" Paul

is writing about. In the Beatitudes, Jesus called “*meekness*” an enabling quality that He will bless (Matthew 5:5). “*Meekness*” is never a weakness! It is one of those hidden biblical mysteries that becomes a platform for personal victory.

D. Before moving to the next verse, Paul finishes Verse 12 with one more component for a “*beautiful life*.” He tells us to “*put on*” patience, or what the NKJV calls, “*longsuffering*.” The term “*longsuffering*” provides a graphic understanding of the normal journey of patience. It speaks of delayed gratification, while going through unpleasant circumstances that we would rather not welcome into the process. The word the NKJV translates as *longsuffering*: is “makroqumia.” It means the following:

- (1) Patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance and...
- (2) Forbearance, [along with] a slowness in avenging wrongs

You can see why it can be difficult to embrace a lifestyle of *longsuffering* to be “*put on*.” Nobody wants to patiently endure unpleasant difficulties or unfulfilled hopes while waiting for God to move and our circumstances to change.

Life Point:

Wait patiently on God to move into your circumstances, and you will find yourself becoming empowered to be more like Jesus every day.

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**Verse 13**

***“bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”***

Verse 13 is clearly a continuation of the stream of thought from Verse 12. The two verses should not, and cannot contextually be separated. What Paul tells us in Verses 12 *and* 13 requires a slow, deliberate self-examining walk with God. This may take us

through places we would prefer not to go. Paul has now moved us from some of the easier attitudes in Verse 12 to some that are quite a bit more challenging. Let's unpack this verse and see how it welds together the thoughts of both Verses 12 *and* 13.

- A. Paul speaks to us out of his own history and makes us aware of the destructive power of anger and unforgiveness. He has seen enough of it, both within himself as Saul of Tarsus; and then on the receiving end of it as God's apostle to the gentiles.
- B. Paul knows God has called us to leave the harmful emotions of anger and unforgiveness behind, like a pile of discarded filthy old garments. We are to strip our hearts clean of these worldly, harmful emotions. Our instructions are to clothe our souls in forbearance, forgiveness and grace. Christ cleansed Paul's thinking of hatred and unforgiveness. He now understands the love of God, and so he adds this extraordinary piece of life-changing instructions to our "owner's manual for an empowering and *'beautiful life.'*"

*1 Corinthians 6:11 (NLT)*

*"Some of you were once like that. But **you were cleansed**; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."*

Forgiveness and reconciliation biblically define the Christian's life journey. It's the way we are to walk. It's the sure course to blessings. Think of it as your opportunity to honor and worship God with your life, while rejecting anything ungodly you used to worship. We should see this as life-changing instructions to "*put off*" idols of self-indulgence, while worshipping the things of the world, as we "*put on*" selfless, holy living in Christ. As you study the Scriptures, you will see that "*forgiving one another*" is *not* an option. It is a command... and it's the least you can do in light of what Christ has done to gain you God's forgiveness. This is a theme Paul repeated throughout his epistles. Here's one example.

*Ephesians 4:32-32*

*"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is*

good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup>**And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**”

Again, Verse 13b  
 “...even as Christ forgave you, so you also **must do.**”

Life Point:  
 The beautiful Christian life is empowered by kindness, a tender heart and unqualified forgiveness. Clothe yourself in these things. Then, share them with the world.

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**Verse 14**

**“But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”**

Why did the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to write this verse as he did? Perhaps it was because the Lord desires that we be equipped to be a blessing - to be ambassadors of love for Christ, as we demonstrate a meaningful difference between the world’s way of thinking and our born-again perspective on life. Verse 14 cuts through every objection our flesh may offer. To “*put on love*” is a commanding, focused and specific instruction to us. With it, Paul gets to the foundation of Christian principles and practices. He takes us into realm of the primary New Testament commandment - the commandment to love God and each other. Yes, it most certainly takes us to this greatest of commandments, which never is intended as an option or merely a suggestion! Though it may seem easy enough, there will be times when it’s perhaps the most difficult of everything the Lord requires of us.

Matthew 22:34-40

*“But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. <sup>35</sup>Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” <sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup>**This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”***

Loving your neighbor “*as yourself*” is entwined inseparably with loving God. We are commanded to do so with everything we have in our hearts. This should cause us to stop and reflect on how powerful God’s kind of love is. It is “agape,” uniquely and exclusively God’s kind of love.

- A. It’s the pinnacle of the mountain. It’s the highest and most important evidence of our genuine loving worship of, and obedience to God.
- B. As we love our neighbors, we are validating what Scripture commands us to think about and to do. Otherwise, we cheapen what Jesus said, and He will not permit this. There will come a day of judgment when we will have to confront any of our own reluctance to love.
- C. Love is indeed the glue that holds together our maturity in Christ. Paul called this “*the bond of perfection.*” To “*put on love*” means we are to wear it as a garment of honor toward God and toward each other. It is a spiritually shining garment of praise and a testimony to how God loved us before we ever loved Him!

Life Point:

When you wear God’s love for all to see and experience, you become an ambassador of God’s heart. You represent the King of Kings and become a magnet of hope to the world.

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### Verse 15

***“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”***

Verse 15 begins with Paul signaling his readers not to disconnect Verse 15 with the previous verses. This invites us to go back and look again, at where Paul’s writing has taken us so far. Let’s summarize the previous three verses:

Verse 12: Paul writes about attitudes of the heart that result in tangible actions that imitate Christ.

Verse 13: Paul’s thoughts in these two verses were artificially separated by the men who put verse numbers in the Bible. The thoughts in both verses really could have been one continuous verse. Together, they give us a detailed look into the beginnings of this divinely structured “owner’s manual for an empowering and *‘beautiful life.’*”

Verse 14: In the NKJV, this verse begins with the word, “But.” It is a part of English speech called a conjunction, which is an indication that something really important needed to be added to the previous thoughts; and what was about to be said was in a class by itself. It carried significant weight in the message. It was *“above all these things.”* The original Greek word is “ed.” It can be translated, “and,” “but” or “moreover.” The NKJV translators have used it as, “But.” This gives more emphasis on the words immediately following it (*“above all these things.”*). The original Greek word “ed” has the same function, regardless of how a particular translation uses it. It gives us an indication that the thought is continuing and something important is about to be said. This same Greek word “ed” repeats itself in the next verse. This time, the NKJV translates it “And.” (It serves an identical purpose as before to connect the preceding verses to Verse 15.

Paul invites us to make a decision. He says, *“...let the peace of God rule.”* The Greek word Paul used for *‘rule’* is “brabeuw.” It means, “to be an umpire;” “to decide or determine” [as an authority]; and “to control” or “rule.” Take another look at Verse 15. Paul wrote, *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to*



*which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*” Paul was emphasizing three things that we are invited to “let” happen. We can paraphrase this to say, we are to invite these three things to happen in us. Here they are:

1. The peace of God is to be allowed to rule in a very specific place - our hearts. It’s an invitation to trust what God has provided for His children in the midst of an unsettled, chaotic world. God’s peace has the ability to take all the pressures of life off of us, because trusting God’s peace allows it to step between us and the pressures that we experience daily.
2. God’s call to be us to one as His people is a call to our hearts. It goes far beyond what we may think, what our cultural circumstances may try to dictate, or what our emotional preferences may desire. It is a heart-call to allow Christ to determine our attitudes and actions. God sends it into our hearts, so we can display it as it goes forth from within us to those around us.
3. Be thankful we are no longer wearing the old spoiled rags - clothes that represent the world’s ways, culture and mores, but now we’re born again in Christ. We’re no longer captured by the cultural and immoral injustices in which we used to live.

Life Point:

Surrender to God’s peace. When your heart is filled with the peace of God, it will function as a new heart. There will no longer be room for what used to fill your heart.

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**Verse 16**

***“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”***

Verse 16 provides us with a divinely given key to the value of God’s Word, abiding as a constant in our hearts and minds.

- A. It will give us wisdom when we need it.
- B. It will give us “rich” wisdom before we ever need it and it will be stored in us waiting for the time we will need it. Wisdom that is “rich” lacks nothing. It has abundance of resources beyond what we could ever humanly obtain. It is a work of the Holy Spirit, teaching us what only He can.
- C. When we recognize the value in all the instructions in these six verses, our lives will become beautiful songs of grace that we will love to sing to the Lord. As our lives become this song to the Lord, others will be watching and listening. This is one of the most significant opportunities we will have to show our lives as the light of the Lord.

*Matthew 5:14-16*

*“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup>Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Life Point:

Let your life be a song to the Lord. Others will join you as they are drawn to clothe themselves in worship.

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**Verse 17**

***“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”***

This is a fitting way to end our study. There are two thoughts this verse holds that are incredibly significant for the life of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ: They hold the power to change anything.

1. *“Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”*
2. When you pray, give God the Father thanksgiving for everything, and always be sure to do it in the name of Jesus.

He is our Savior, Lord and Master. Even more that this, He is our Lord and He calls us His friends! You are a friend of God! He is your Friend! He died for our sins before you and I ever considered Him our friends. What a magnificent Friend!

*John 15:13-16*

*“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. <sup>14</sup>You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. <sup>15</sup>No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but **I have called you friends**, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”*

Life Point:

There is power in the mighty and beautiful name of Jesus. It’s unlimited and always sufficient. Let’s always say and do everything with that beautiful name on our lips, as it spills from the gratefulness of our hearts.

Thank God for Jesus!

The only thing left to say, in light of such undeserved favor and grace, is to humble ourselves and open our hearts to God. Once they are open, let’s give Him every part of our hearts and enjoy His wonderful presence as He abides in us!

Amen

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*May the Lord continue to shower you with a fountain of living waters, filled with faith, hope, and love... but always remember, the greatest of these is love - His unique, divine and blessed kind of eternal love.*

*Dr. Bob Abramson*