

Message Series: **'Moving Forward: what does that look like for you?'**
Message Title: **'Moving Forward: What Do I Believe? How Should I Live?'**
Scripture Source: **Colossians 3:1-11**
Teacher: John Garner
Date: Sunday, February 7, 2016

An Incredible Offer!

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Jesus: John 10:10 *"...more and better life than they ever dreamed of."* (The Message)

Jesus yearns for us, that we would not be tripped up and deceived about how to experience a life with purpose, hope, resilience, and a deepening connection with God and others. Jesus 'nets it out' and states that we face a spiritual enemy who is out for our destruction. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." John 10:10. Compare 1 Peter 5:8-10. How can we...you and me move forward with purpose, wisdom and confidence? In a world that is marked by such confusion, brokenness, exploitation, isolation and the list goes on...how can we experience healthy growth, emotionally, spiritually and relationally? And I know that many of you yearn to mature and move forward in meaningful ways!

Jesus offers guidance and power to live wisely, courageously, and purposefully. Paul, the author of the letter we are exploring together speaks of choosing and cultivating a life that is Jesus-directed rather than self-directed.

Freedom and Growth through Discernment and Discipline

1. What do we need to discern and believe? Who we are and whose we are: Colossians 3:1-4 I love the richness of the Message rendering of these verses, let these words of truth soak into your mind and heart.

"So if you're 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. Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life – even though invisible to spectators – is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up on this earth, you'll show up, too – the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity like Christ."

When we choose to trust in the sacrifice of Jesus for the payment of our sins, we are reconciled to God. We are forgiven of our sins. We are reconnected with God and given the power of the risen Christ to behave in ways that comply with the teachings of God's word, the Bible.

Do you believe in Jesus as Saviour and coming-back-to-this-earth Lord? When we are rooted in relationship with Jesus, we are freed up from dead end ways of thinking and living...if we will pursue and cultivate maturity of beliefs and behaviour.

Maybe you have questions about what it means to be a Christian or how to begin the journey of following Jesus. We would love to have a conversation with you, please connect with us!

2. How should we behave? If we say, 'I'm a Christian', what will that look like behaviorally?

Colossians 3:5-11

- a. **Sexual Purity:** Well, the writer doesn't mince words! In strong, engaging language he calls for sexual purity. Yep, God's word calls for disciplined behaviour in the realm of sexuality. The writer calls for a decisive rejection of engagement in shared sexual activity that is outside the realm of a heterosexual marriage commitment. Colossians 3:5. I am fully aware that holding to this belief is regarded by many as being 'out of step' with contemporary culture. In our 'almost anything goes' culture as pertaining to sexual behaviour and preferences, this clear call to disciplined sexual purity seems unrealistic and undesirable. As a pastor, this is not an easy or 'fun' message to give. Pastors have to make decisions about these kind of messages.

Will I compromise and 'water down' the message? Will I assume a posture of condemnation? Or, will I engage in conversation with people, talking through challenging and real issues, including human sexuality?

God's plan is intended to enable us to live with sexuality as a manifestation of a deepening intimacy and trust between a man and a woman. Far too often, our culture touts sex as a path to fulfillment and pleasure regardless of relationship 'status.' And the fall out is profound. Emptiness, guilt, shame, isolation, STD...some of us know this from painful experience, past and present.

Illustrate:

Over 30 times in the Scripture, 'sexual immorality' is taught as outside the parameters of healthy, enriching, and God honouring behaviour.

The writer calls for decisive action, day to day. 'Put to death...' Any engagement that stimulates and misdirects healthy sexuality is to be rejected. We are a culture awash in sexuality and relentless encouragement to live an indulgent life. Pornography continues to enslave and destroy lives. We must be vigilant about these very real and pervasive temptations to undisciplined sexual behaviour.

In this 'thread' of Scripture, the writer instructs Christians to deal the death blow to "impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." Anything that becomes a driving force in our lives, other than God needs to be deposed. Anything...anyone.

"That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God." (The Message)

So, what might 'moving forward' look like for you? Please consider how Jesus treated people operating outside God's plan. John 4, John 8. No condemnation. Yet, instruction leading to relationship with God. This is amazing. The woman at the well story: "Jesus steers back to the real issue –which by the way is not the sexual/relational mismanagement of her life, but putting God first, heart and soul, in spirit and truth." (John Burke- No Perfect People Allowed – highly recommended reading Ch.12)

There is forgiveness for sin, including sexual sin. Yours included. 1 John 1:9, Proverbs 28:13

And there is power to behave. Today. To walk away from what is unhealthy and to walk toward what is appropriate. Please understand, God takes this seriously. Vs. 6. People who choose to reject God's guidance will experience the discipline of God.

b. Emotional and Relational Maturity: Colossians 3: 7-11

God yearns and intends for followers of Jesus to mature in every realm, manifesting discipline of our at times unruly emotions and untamed tongues. Read. Why? Because that is not our core identity any longer. We are Christians. 2 Corinthians 5:17. He uses the image of getting rid of ragged and ill fitting clothing and dressing appropriately. We are instructed to care for each other, to build each other up. More on that next week with Pastor Paul.

Friends, we can behave with increasing maturity, through our active cooperation with God, day to day, circumstance to circumstance. Illustrate:

Moving Forward: What are your next steps?

1. Choosing sexual purity – constructive conversations with wise and trustworthy people. Engaging in healthy environments and staying clear of 'temptation.'
2. Expressing and developing emotional and relational maturity – again, any conversations needed? Any amends need to be made or relational repair work required?
3. Nourishing your mind and soul with God's grace and truth...choose environments carefully.

'Come as you are, but don't stay as you are.' Moving forward: what could that look like for you?