

Adult Teaching Resources

December 29, 2024



Advent: Someone's Coming

December 1, 2024—1 Thessalonians 3:6-13 (RCL 3:9-13)—Anticipating

December 8, 2024—Philippians 1:1-11 (RCL 1:3-11)—Longing

December 15, 2024—Philippians 4:1-9 (RCL 4:4-7)—Rejoicing

December 22, 2024—Hebrews 10:1-10 (RCL 10:5-10)—Out of the Shadows

Season of Christmas

December 29, 2024—Colossians 3:12-17—Resolution Clothes

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Resolution Clothes

Colossians 3:12-17

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Key Verse

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col. 3:17)

Opening

After everyone arrives, form smaller groups of 3-4. Give each group a piece of paper and a pen.

Ask each group to write a letter to some friends, or a church, who have started following wrong teachings and aren't on the true path of Christianity and discipleship. What words of encouragement would you offer? What words or advice would you give? What words of discipline would you share? What would you want them to hear and know so they can get back on the right path?

Give each group time to think and write, then ask for each group to share their thoughts with the larger group.

Reading the Bible

What does Paul call the Colossians? (God's chosen ones, holy and beloved)

What does Paul say to clothe themselves with? (compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.)

How should they relate and respond to each other? (Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.)

What is the ultimate clothing? (clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.)

What should they do with the peace of Christ? (Let it rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body)

What should they do with the word of Christ? (Let it dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God)

What should they do? (whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him)

Making Connections

What positive attributes do you actively engage when relating to others and when relating to God? What positive attributes do you have, but need some work in bringing out when you relate to others and to God? How can God help you bring those out?

Of all the attributes listed in the passage, which one do you “clothe” yourself with the most? What attribute do you think others would say comes to mind first when they talk about you?

In what specific way have you lived out compassion this week?

In what specific way have you lived out kindness this week?

In what specific way have you lived out humility this week?

In what specific way have you lived out meekness this week?

In what specific way have you lived out patience this week?

What is the most difficult thing for you to do when relating to others? Why do you think Paul specifically mentions forgiving when he talks about bearing with one another?

Our Lesson Writer says, “Harboring ill feelings toward others is not only hurtful to them; it is harmful to our own health. Learning to forgive and let things go is not just a Christian ideal, but crucial for our own emotional wellbeing.” Do you agree with that? What can you share from your own experience that speaks to that idea?

Our Lesson Writer says, “love that is not dependent on feelings alone, but which grows from a conscious choice to treat other people as Jesus would. Living in this way enables us to experience the deep peace of Christ, aware that we are all parts of one body of believers, called to live with love toward others and with gratitude to God (v. 15).” When have you experienced the kind of love that draws the body of believers together? How would you describe the love? How would you describe the community it formed? Why do you think we struggle to maintain that kind of unity?

How often do you find yourself choosing to live in the way of Christ, with all the attributes from this passage, and especially with love? How often do you think you succeed, if even for a moment in living them out?

How often do you experience others living in the way of Christ, with all the attribute from this passage, and especially with love? How does that make you feel when you recognize it?

So What?

Ask everyone to gather back together with their small groups from the beginning of the lesson. Give each group a piece of paper and a pen. Ask each group to write down their thoughts and ideas pertaining to these questions

What specific things can we do to focus our minds on Christ?

What specific things can we do to encourage others to focus their minds on Christ?

As we enter into a New Year, what do we choose to do to build more community with what God has given us?

Give each group time to write down their thoughts and ideas. Then, open the floor for small groups to share with the large group. Spend time in conversation and discussion, making plans to do what the small groups suggest.

The Challenge

This week, say good-bye to the old year and prepare yourself with prayer to live a New Year in Christ—focusing on the best of Christ's attributes and encouraging others to do the same.

Prayer

Loving God, as we say good-bye to this year, we give you thanks for all that you have done for us and provided for us this year. While not every moment has been full of joy, we know that you have been with us, and we give you thanks. For the celebrations, thank you for celebrating with us. For the loss and grief we have endured, thank you for holding us close. God, we look forward to the New Year and especially look forward to living more like Jesus every day. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Colossae—Colossae was a small city in the southwest part of Asia Minor (now Turkey), in an area known as Phrygia, about 100 miles inland from the port city of Ephesus. Colossae was near the head of the Lycus River, a tributary of the Meander River (the source of our English word “meander,” referring to a wandering track), and not far from Laodicea and Hierapolis, perched on opposite sides of the valley. Colossae was famous at one time for its textile industry, which featured wool products from local sheep dyed a deep red color.

By the time Paul wrote his letter to the church in Colossae, the town was in decline, but still had a cosmopolitan population of local Phrygians, Jews, Greeks, and Syrians. The diverse population held to a variety of religious traditions, out of which a syncretism emerged that Paul saw as a threat to the Christians’ dependence on Jesus alone.

Authorship—The introduction to the letter of Colossians states that it was written by Paul, along with “Timothy our brother” (1:1). The letter was accepted as scripture from the earliest known lists of New Testament writings, and it was commonly accepted that Paul was the author.

Some critical scholars have questioned whether Paul actually wrote the letter, suggesting that some elements of the language are uncharacteristic of Paul, and that some of the Christological and eschatological positions appear similar to those that developed after Paul’s lifetime. Others argue that the language differences can be explained by Paul’s frequent use of an scribe to write letters as he dictated them. Likewise, the theological positions Paul expounds may reflect the particular issues with which he was dealing.

In any case, while questions remain, we will speak of Paul as the author of the letter.

Cultural conditioning—While today’s text is not problematic, we must acknowledge that some of Paul’s advice in the letter reflects an ancient cultural situation that most modern believers could no longer justify. We would no longer accept Paul’s advice for slaves to obey their masters (vv. 22-24), for example, though we can appreciate his emphasis on doing our best to honor Jesus in everything.

Likewise, only the most conservative Christians still hold to the cultural idea that wives must live in submission to their husbands, though we can appreciate his insistence that husbands must love their wives and never treat them harshly (vv. 18-19).

Learning curves—Today we can often purchase a new camera, digital tablet, or smartphone and begin using it with little trouble. It takes considerable effort, however, to learn how to make maximum use of a camera or other device’s features.

Digging Deeper *continued*

People of my age can remember when computers came in multiple boxes with several hardbound user manuals, some of them bigger than a Bible. Today's computers are more intuitive and user-friendly, with any manuals more likely to be included in help files or online. Still, there is quite a learning curve if one hopes to become a power user.

Becoming an effective Christian is not automatic, either. We need to focus on Christ, and we need the encouragement of our brothers and sisters.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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What is meant by psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs?

Modern readers – familiar with many types of music – feel drawn to distinguish between these three terms. Do they indicate specialized types of music, and if so, what are they?

We cannot be certain exactly what Paul meant: he may have intended only to emphasize the role of singing or chanting as means of instruction or encouragement. But we can make some guesses.

It's likely that “psalms” (*psalmoi*) refers to psalms known from the Hebrew Bible, or to recently developed songs of praise in the style of Hebrew psalms. The psalms were designed not only as prayers of praise or petition, but also to impart wisdom (see Psalms 1, 36, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, and 133) – and Paul speaks of them in the context of teaching and admonishing one another “in all wisdom.”

The term “hymns” (*hymnoi*), in the New Testament, generally occurs in the context of songs of praise to God (Acts 16:25, Heb. 2:12, Eph. 5:19). may suggest specifically Christian songs of praise that originated within the early church.

The word for “songs” (*hōdais*) was a generic term that could be used for any type of singing. The word translated as “spiritual” (*pneumatikos*) occurs after the triad of musical terms. Some readers automatically assume that “spiritual” refers only to “songs,” and imagine that it may refer to more spontaneous songs or even ecstatic utterances of people speaking in tongues.

The word “spiritual” agrees grammatically with all three terms, however, and likely modifies all three: thus Paul probably spoke of all psalms, hymns, or songs that were inspired by the Spirit, or Spirit-honoring, and thus considered to be “spiritual.”