

Colossians: The Supremacy of Christ (Col. 3:1-4)

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[0 : 00] Amen. Amen. Thank you, Brendan and team. Good morning, church. I didn't know if anyone would! I didn't know if anyone would be here this morning because I was out Ubering last night! and there was no one to drive around. I figured everybody was out camping, but you guys returned.

So thank you. It is good to be here and it's great to begin our week, to seek the Lord, to draw near to Him as we draw near, He responds. And I believe just by us gathering this morning, we're saying to the Lord, we want to draw near to you. Amen? And so we're going to do that. We've done that already through song. We're going to do that through the preaching of God's Word and then we're going to participate in communion together as well. So we have just a wonderful morning set forth for us.

Go ahead and turn open to Colossians chapter 3. We're going to begin a new chapter, a shift in this letter from Paul confronting some of the false doctrines and false teachers, the things that are distracting away and really gets into a very practical section. And this is just going to set us up for Scott the next couple weeks to bring the big bat. I don't know. I don't know. Do we have a big bat? I don't know. All right. So go ahead and turn open if you're not there. Colossians 3. We're going to be looking at the first four verses. And let me just pray for our time and then we'll dive into our study together. Father, it is good to be here this morning. We do want to meet with you.

Want to sense your presence and want to experience your help in whatever way that we need.

Lord, we think of the psalmist as he writes, as the deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God, my soul thirsts for God, the living God. And Lord, we, that's us.

And maybe we've come here feeling very spiritually full or maybe we're just spiritually depleted. But each of us want to experience you this morning. Would you refresh us with your word and with your spirit and with the grace of the body of Christ?

[2 : 25] Lord, would you speak to us and tell us things about yourself and stir our affections to be directed back towards you?

Lord, that we could enter into this week close to you and ready to tackle whatever is in front of us. Lord, we do want to pray for the church there in Texas. And Lord, we know that a lot of suffering families this morning even.

And Lord, we pray for the rescue and the help of those that are still alive and need to be found. And Lord, would you be the God of all providence? And Lord, I pray that your church will be strong.

And Lord, you would use your people to bring hope in a very dire, desperate time. So Lord, we just thank you for the gift of the church. And Lord, we're here to be agents of grace and encouragement to one another.

And I pray that that would occur today. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. So I know how much you guys appreciate my Disneyland illustrations.

[3 : 36] And so I'm just going to keep going with them. Maybe it's because it's summertime and think about going on vacation. But there was a trip that we took when the girls were rather young.

And I decided that I would really nail the Disney experience this year that we were going. And I found this algorithm, this site online where I could basically type in how to make the most of your Disney adventure.

And it basically laid out the map that we were to take so that we could maximize our fun and go on like multiple rides many times. And I was amped. I was like, we're going to do this.

And we got to the park and we got right inside. And then all of a sudden, my plan fell apart. It was a total fail because I had forgotten at the time.

I only had young daughters. And when you get in the park, there's princesses. And then all of a sudden, instead of getting to the Matterhorn or the ride that was on the list, we had to go meet Cinderella.

[4 : 48] And then we had to go meet Minnie Mouse. And then it was like, poke and haunt us, Dad. And I'm like, that's not really, that's an actress. That's not the real thing, you know.

And so my entire plan fell to pieces. And my schedule, it got destroyed within the first few minutes of walking into the park.

And I share that illustration because maybe it's descriptive of how you feel about life at times. You have a plan. You have a strategy.

Or maybe just in terms of walking with the Lord, you struggle to keep momentum, to keep rhythm. You're spinning your wheels feeling like, man, I'm not going anywhere.

I'm not growing the way I want. And I would just say we are, by nature, a rather distracted people. We live in a rather distracted culture, no doubt.

[5 : 49] I saw this just the other day. I was in line at a drive-thru that merged. Yeah, Chick-fil-A. That's where they merged you. And I was behind a car, but this car in front of me, they were like, no, just go.

You can go in front of us. And I don't think they were being kind. It was two gentlemen, and they were so glued to their phones. They were like, we don't need a chicken sandwich. We're just, you just keep, I'm like, okay.

And it was like, that's our culture. We're just so distracted. And I was like, man, how distracted are we? So I was like, how distracted are we on our phones?

And I found this. This was fascinating. There's a study, and it says the average American, they check their phone 205 times a day.

That's almost once every five minutes while we're awake. And so I would just say it's very difficult to be a people in the moment with just anything.

[6 : 50] And in particular, as we think about being followers of Christ, how do we walk with Christ in this life? How do we do that? How do we spend time with the Lord without being distracted away?

And I find so many of us live this very distracted life. We're always distracted from the most important. And we talked about last week of actually missing Jesus. This is sort of like missing Jesus part two in a way.

And the Colossians, they were in jeopardy of missing just the joy of simply walking with the Lord in this life. And Paul confronted them. He said, hey, you're distracted. You've got distractions.

It's not your cell phone, but you've got bad theology, this legalism, this mysticism. And it's really devoid of just relating with the Lord. Well, this morning what Paul's going to do is he's going to continue to help us in this.

He's going to exhort us with our eyes. He's going to exhort us with our hearts to fix them on something better than just the temporary. Because we get distracted all the time.

[7 : 59] He's going to exhort us away from this distracted faith, this distracted life. And I would just say, church, the enemy wants us distracted. Amen? He wants us distracted, especially with the temporary things of life.

Because when we're distracted, we're not useful to him. I recall going to a funeral, a memorial service for an individual. And the defining thing about their life was they were a University of Washington Husky fan.

And they went to all the ball games. And it was a thing that defined them. And they were obsessed with this. But it was like you didn't hear anything related to like they served. They were used of the Lord. They had ministry.

They were an individual tragically distracted by not evil things, just temporary things. And so Paul's going to try to bring focus to us this morning.

We're just looking at the first four verses to get us into this chapter and read with me as I share. Beginning here, verse 1. Paul writes, So the first thing that Paul exhorts us with, he says, Hey, verse 1.

[9 : 33] If then you have been raised with Christ. And so what he's saying here, this is actually true of you, Colossians. This is true. If you have trusted in Christ as your personal Savior in this life for us, this is true of you.

Okay? Since this is true, it's really in the indicative mood. This is a truth statement. God's made you alive. He said that in chapter 2, verse 13. God has forgiven you.

This is who you are. This is your true self. If you call Jesus Savior in this life. You're spiritually alive. In fact, we were spiritually dead at one point because of sin inherited as sons of Adam, as well as because of the sins personally that we committed in our lives.

But today, if we place simple faith in Jesus, then we experience the benefits of an event that took place before we were even born.

It's really wild to think about. Imagine like 20 years ago if before you were born, a distant relative set up a college fund for you. And then you got to the age of going to school and all of a sudden you're like, wow, that's amazing that that person did that.

[10:47] They thought of me 20 years ago and now I've got this college fund. I can go to school and it's all paid for. And it's like, man, you benefited from that. Or go back even further. Let's say maybe 200, 250 years ago.

How about the War of Independence? We benefit from that. We just celebrated like 4th of July. Right? Freedom. No taxation without representation. Right? We get to, you know, we have tax on our latte, but it's routed, you know, through the coffee shop to a local government on this side of the Atlantic.

So we still pay, but we benefit. Go back now even further, 2,000 years ago. We experienced the benefit of God being crucified, shaming himself on a cross.

We get now the opportunity to live lives forgiven, live out meaningful lives as friends of Jesus, then with the promise of eternity before us.

Because of this event that took place 2,000 years ago. This is what's true of us. If you have been raised with Christ. Now, Paul gives us three exhortations to help us not miss out on, I would say, what's the kind of the saying?

[11:59] Live your best life. Is that the thing? Live your best life. Well, let's live God's best life for us. And I think Paul gives us three exhortations to help in this regard.

In the first exhortation, based on this new reality, the identity that we are Christ, that we are forgiven, that we're new creation, new creatures. He says this, seek the things that are above.

That's the first exhortation. Seek the things that are above. Now, what does this mean? Things that are above. Paul's not talking like spatially above, right?

He's not saying ride more airplanes. Like, that's... Watch more birds. Things above.

What's he saying? Seek things that are eternal. Eternal things. Essentially, he's just saying live for God now. You're God's. You belong. Now live for Him, right?

[12:59] Our citizenship is no longer bound to this world. I mean, Christians are a very strange people. We are from a kingdom or a land that we have never been to.

Our citizenship is no longer bound to this world. We're aliens. We're aliens. We're actually not at home here. In fact, we're going to be doing a sermon series in the fall.

1 Peter. Looking at what does it mean to actually live as exiles. In Spokane or wherever we happen to do life. Paul here says, hey, seek the things that are above.

Live for God. Seek. This is a present imperative. It's a command. And what he's saying is, keep doing this. It's not a one-time thing. No. This is to be our lifestyle.

The rhythm in our life. Strive after. And there's a sense of intensity and engagement here. Jonathan Edwards, probably the greatest theologian in America that America has ever produced during the 18th century.

[14:06] This guy was brilliant. You know he's brilliant because he got accepted to Yale College University at the age of 12. But he says this about seeking things above. He says, you know what it is?

It's like setting one's affections on another world. Setting one's affections on another world. Not this, not the temporary, but on eternal things.

And then he rightly defined affections as strong actions of the will. So when our affections are placed in a direction, then there's action associated with it.

It's not just a mental exercise. Okay? It's like when a man courts a woman. A dude for the first time packs a picnic.

Lunch. He's never done that before. He cuts the crust off the bread. He's like, I'm doing a picnic. I'm taking the girl out. Does that.

[15:07] The girl then ends up marrying him and that's the last picnic they've ever had together. I wrote Julia's song when I proposed to her. She thought she was marrying a songwriter.

It was like a one and done. I tricked her. I'm a pastor. That was my songwriting career. She said, yes, I retired.

But there's action. Like, seek. Do something. And why is Paul exhorting believers to live into their new story, their new identity with such zeal?

I think because he's combating the distractions that we face every day. I think he's combating spiritual laziness. I think wasteful days when it comes to our new identity.

In fact, he said this to the Ephesians very similarly. Ephesians 5.15. He says, look carefully how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

[16:12] Don't live. Don't live. Don't live. Don't live. Don't live. Don't live. Don't live what Kamesh referenced a couple weeks ago, the unexamined life, Socrates, Plato.

Know how to walk. Walk as wise. Make the best use of time. Like, we weren't rescued, forgiven, so we could simply accumulate goodies in this life in order to increase our personal comfort.

I mean, you're like, well, Jay, I don't have resources. I don't accumulate a lot of stuff, so I'm good. I just research stuff all the time. And we'll get to that.

Because our affections can be off even if we don't possess much in this life. Paul spoke to the Thessalonians in a very similar vein.

There was kind of a lazy spirit in Thessalonica. They thought Jesus was going to show up any day. They thought, man, Jesus was going to come back. Let's just coast. Let's just spend the remainder of our life on holiday.

[17:23] Paul says to the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 3, verse 10, he says, For even when we were with you, we would give you this command. If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

For we hear that some among you walk in idleness. Not busy at work, but busybodies. It's not a way to approach this life.

I remember hearing a story of a gentleman who sat for six months waiting for the premiere of the latest Star Wars film.

And it was like six months he waited in line. And he was like, man, I'm contributing to society. This is art. I'm like, I mean, what a creative genius, right?

I'm going to sit in my lawn chair for six months waiting for a movie. I love how Eugene Peterson in the message puts Colossians 3.1.

[18:21] He just puts it on the bottom shelf. He says it this way, right? So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Act like it.

Seek the things above. Live for God. Back to Jonathan Edwards. He says people exercise the affections in everything else but religion.

When it comes to their worldly interests, their delights, their honor and reputation, they have warm affection. But how insensible and unmoved are most men about the great things of another world?

That one hits. So good. So good. Beloved, seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

So church, what Paul's exhorting us is, you know what? Center your lives on Christ and His glory. Make that your aim in this life.

[19:27] And that's the aim of our church, right? To make disciples transformed by the gospel for the glory of God.

That's what we want. We want to live our lives now. The affections to be for God's glory that the spotlight of our lives would be on Christ.

The people would see something in us and go, oh, there's a living God in this world. John the baptizer said it best in John 3, he must increase.

I must decrease. So our lives ought to redirect attention to the living Jesus. Jesus.

To the rescuing Jesus. Jesus. To the forgiving Jesus. To the patient Jesus. To the kind Jesus.

[20:25] To the eternal Jesus. To the world's only hope. We want people to see Christ in our lives. We want to be passionate about that.

We want the affections of our heart to go, oh, I want the world to see that God is real. That forgiveness is real. That they can experience that in the person of Christ.

And I don't know why we struggle. It seems like sometimes even Christian influencers, it's almost as if they get off and it's not about Jesus anymore. It's about my brand.

Churches can do this. I want the fame of forth to go forth, not the fame of Christ. We can get off.

You know, we talked last week about the false teachers.

And they were promoting this idea of like worship angels. They give you what you want. You don't have to obey, bow to them. It's kind of part of the mystical approach.

[21 : 28] Versus just delighting and following Christ. And we can learn from the angels, however. They're servants.

They're about God's glory. Staying central. Right down even to their appearance. I think one of the most fascinating descriptions of a certain group of angels in the Bible.

And by the way, the world just has got it. Like when they talk about cherubs, what do you think of? Like, oh, little chubby, you know, babies. And oh, cherubs. No, cherubs aren't that at all.

Ezekiel paints a picture of some of these fascinating creatures in Ezekiel 1 and also in Ezekiel 10.

Similar to the four creatures that we read about in Revelation chapter 4 and 5.

And it's fascinating. It says this about them. As for the likeness of their faces, Ezekiel 1 verse 10.

Each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side.

[22 : 25] The four had the face of an ox on the left side. And the four had the face of an eagle. So consider this image. This is not some, this is scary. It will be shocking to see these angelic creatures someday.

But I think of even the way they look, they point to Christ. Because think about the witness, the fourfold witness of Jesus in the Gospels.

Each painted different picture of who Jesus is. Matthew emphasizing Jesus as messianic ruler. He's king. He's a lion of Judah. Judah, oh, those angels, they've got a face of a lion.

And then the Gospel of Mark, it emphasizes Jesus' humanity, that he is humble Jesus, the humble king. And you have the image or the face of an ox, this beast of burden, this humble creature.

Oh, another picture of Christ. And then Luke emphasized Jesus' humanity, that he's fully man. And these angels have the face of a man. And then John emphasizing Christ's deity, that he's fully God.

[23 : 32] And then you have this creature, the eagle, this creature of the heavens. And these creatures, this angelic group, they have the face of an eagle. And if my understanding is correct, then the appearance of these angels, it points to Jesus.

Even the way they look, they point to Jesus, these four living creatures, the 24 elders, even in Revelation 5. Then they say, hey, worthy is the lamb.

He can open the scroll. What if that were true of us? People couldn't help but see Christ. They couldn't help but see Jesus when they look at us because the way that we live out our lives.

And we live our lives in a way that we're not here merely for the temporary stuff, but actually for something much bigger. Much grander. And I would say at the heart of living for things above, church, there's a shift in what we live for.

Instead of living for self, we now live for God's glory, and we live to become a blessing to others. So we really now live for glory, for the glory of God, and the joy of others.

[24 : 45] And it's a very different trajectory that we now live as those who are forgiven and redeemed. We didn't begin living that way. We didn't have thoughts and care about God's glory. We just thought about us.

So there's a massive shift that takes place. In Greek mythology, there's a story about a handsome youth who falls hopelessly in love with his own reflection in a pool. And he's unable to remove himself because he just sees the image.

And he just gradually pines away and eventually dies. He's like, man, I am so good looking. I know it's hard for you to understand. I mean, me and Scott, we struggle with this a lot. But you guys have some good looking pastors.

I mean, of all the pastors in the Logan neighborhood, we're in the top. We're in the top. I'm just saying. So we get this a little bit.

But this youth, narcissus, it's where we get our word narcissist from. A person just self-oriented, right? And I think narcissism, it encapsulates so much of what actually makes up American culture, unfortunately.

[25 : 54] I love this country. But there's a lot of self-oriented people that live in this nation.

And it's hard to be others focused when we're staring into a pool at our own reflection. It's really a joyless way to live. And the gospel, it reinvents what life is about for the people of God.

Jesus said it this way in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6. He says, hey, don't lay up for yourself treasures on earth. You used to, but don't do that anymore. Where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Where neither moth or rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Church, each one of us have been actually left here. Like when we trusted in Christ, did you notice like we didn't immediately just phase into heaven?

[27 : 04] We're still here. Why? Because God wants us to live lives that bring Him glory and live for the joy of others. So we're here to be a blessing.

We're here to see the gospel advance. And when we're done, when we have completed whatever task the Lord has for us, we go home.

There's a shocking verse. Paul speaks in Acts 13. He's preaching. He's in Antioch, Pisidia. And in Acts 13, 36.

It's fascinating. Listen to what he says. He says, For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption.

Okay? He died and body just did what it does. But it's fascinating. For David, after he had served the purpose of God, then God took him home.

[28 : 06] So the question for us is why are we still here? Why am I here? Is it just to buy nicer stuff? I like nice stuff. Is it just to travel?

I like to travel. I mean, I want to get on an airplane. But I like to travel. I like to see cool stuff. But is that now the aim of why we exist?

No, we've been left here to tell people, to show people through the lives that we're living, right? That Jesus is remarkable. That he is wonderful.

That he's the best. That we possess the pearl of greatest value. That we would trade everything to possess. That we know what it's like to be forgiven.

That we're living. Parents, that's why you're left here to instill this into your kids. And they have to know that mom and dad's greatest affection is for God's advancing kingdom, even over all the other stuff.

[29 : 07] Yes, teach them to play basketball. Or badminton. Or, yes, wonderful. But they have to know that the greatest aim in life is to live for God's kingdom.

Seek the things that are above. And I would say the more that we invest in people and God's advancing kingdom, the more thrilling it is actually to walk with the Lord.

Amen? Because Jesus said, where your treasure is, that your heart is. The temporary stuff is always going to be a draw.

It's always going to be a draw. But don't make it your life. We were in North Carolina a couple weeks ago. We ended up going to, one of the days we went up to Pinehurst, North Carolina.

If you're a golfer, you know what Pinehurst is. It's like a golf mecca, little town, New England town. The PGA Museum is there.

[30 : 09] They have amazing golf. The U.S. Open is played there. It's like golfers heaven. And I'm telling you what, there was a lot of money in this little, little town. And I was just mesmerized when, in the afternoon, I was in a store.

I was looking through the window and I saw this elderly gentleman talking to another elderly gentleman. And they were like all tan. They had their golfing gear on and the gold chains and all of it. And they were kind of being a little crass with one another.

And then this old man, like he was up there. Like, I mean, he was up there. I don't know if he was in the 90s, but he was getting close.

I'm just saying, George. And so, and he then walked to his car and I'm like looking at this car. And it was the fanciest, like, Ferrari I've ever seen in my life.

And it was a convertible. And he barely gets in, starts the thing up. And it's just like, it was glorious. I'm not going to lie. It was like, wow. And he just then kind of drives off.

[31 : 16] And I was like, I was thinking to myself, man. Now, if this man doesn't know the Lord, what a waste. Like, that's actually a tragic scene. And it's just kind of like that image just sort of struck with me.

And as I was thinking about it this week, as Paul's exhorting us, don't just live for the temporary stuff. Which is why Paul gives us this next exhortation. He says this, verse 2. Don't just seek the things above. Set your minds on the things that are above. Not on things that are on the earth. Or rather, think, meditate on this new life that you have. This new identity. And that's why we gather, church. We want to set our minds on the things above. That's why it's important for us to gather every week. To hear God's Word. Because I start looking and then I'm just starting to think, oh, I want this and that and I want to live that life. And then I've got to remind it. Why am I here? This is to refresh our souls and to be reminded.

[32 : 23] This is why we're still here. Set your minds on the things above. I love how the theologian John Lightfoot puts it. He says, hey, you must not only seek heaven, you must also think heaven.

I love that Paul moves us back a level here. Before we can seek something, we have to think that thing. The battle is always in the mind.

Romans 12 tells us that, right? Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Paul recognizes that if we don't saturate our minds with God's perspective daily, what happens?

We aim at the temporary. So he says, don't be conformed in Romans 12, right? The world, wonderful country we live in, but still the world, the culture, the enemy wants to normalize half-hearted discipleship for the Christian.

Oh, I'm glad that you have God, but don't get crazy. Don't get super zealous. Don't actually change your lifestyle. Have God, but don't let it change the way that you date, the way that you work, the way that you play.

[33 : 40] Don't let it infringe on that. Don't let it infringe on that. The battle is always in the mind. What are the meditations of the heart focused on most often?

Especially if we're checking our phone 205 times every day. Jay, you don't understand, man. I got a Bible app. I'm going to that, 180 of those 205?

Yeah. Is our love for researching, and I think this is, I don't know, I don't have insider information on the female persuasion, but as men, we like to research because we like to buy once.

We want to get the right thing. You know, is our love for researching our latest purchase or the next home project, you know, is it commensurate with the time that we hear from the Lord?

Paul says, set your minds on the things above. And by the way, this is not spiritual escapism.

[35 : 06] Oh, you're just no good here because your head's in the clouds. Like, this exhortation is not endorsing just think about God and don't be engaged.

Like, to think on things above, church, it's actually very practical. It's actually very helpful to live well in this world today. In fact, it's the fuel to live well in this world today.

Here's just a simple example. 1 Thess 5.15, Paul says this, see that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another, and here's the hard part, and to everyone.

I've got to seek good? I've got to do good to everyone? I've got to do good to everyone? I need that verse because driving in this morning, there was a guy, like, on my bumper, and I'm thinking, when he passes me, I want to communicate disgust with the way that he's driving incorrectly, but then I've got to preach.

I don't want to have to confess that. I'll just be good in the flesh, but I actually need God's Word because it saturates the heart and the mind. Oh, don't repay anyone evil for evil.

[36 : 21] See how God's Word is fuel so that we can live well in the present? We need that. We need to think heaven. Keeps perspective.

And friends, you will be surprised at how much the Holy Spirit can do even with just a few moments of meditation on God's Word each morning. The Holy Spirit is an artist in our lives, so give Him some material to create with.

Give Him some paints to use in your life. Well, the final exhortation for how to live out God's best life for us, it's found in the final two verses here.

It says, For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ and God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

You want to live God's best life? You've got to remember your story. You've got to remember who you are.

[37 : 35] You've got to know your story. We are God's workmanship. We were created by God, and now we are being recreated each and every day.

Being sanctified. Our new and our forever citizenship is somewhere else. Kingdom not of this world. Which makes us what?

Makes us aliens now. That's your story. You are a stranger here. I forget that. You forget that. And then when we forget, we become complacent, self-oriented, irritable, and oftentimes we just envy the unbeliever.

Why should we not envy the unbeliever? Because, as Paul says, that's not your story. Your story is your life is now hidden with Christ.

That's who you are. That's who I am. Our life is hidden. It's concealed. It's this idea of it's safe.

[38 : 45] It's secure. Your new life can't be taken from you. The thief can't come in and take and find. Our story will end as it should.

Jesus wins. Our salvation is guaranteed. Which means we can actually walk today, despite whatever it is that we're facing, actually enjoy. Joy can coalesce with trial, difficulty.

Your life is hidden with Christ. When we forget our story, it steals joy.

We become joyless creatures when we forget our story. The story of grace. And then, what do we do?

Well, we hijack stories that aren't ours. I guess I've got to find a different narrative to define my life by. Any false stories floating around that we can see reality through, friends?

[39 : 48] Yeah. Yeah. They're a dime a dozen. They're everywhere. Here's one that's not true of you. Victim narratives. The enemy loves this.

He loves this. But Scripture says you're not. Despite whatever evil has touched your life, you're still, as Paul says in Romans 8, you're still more than a conqueror.

God is still for you. Christ is still for you. How about this narrative? Like, I'm living the American dream.

That's a narrative that just can define your life. And really what happens then is your life can be saturated simply in materialism. So life, here's the motto of that approach.

Get all you can, can all you get, then sit on the can. Just accumulate and protect it.

[40 : 56] I mean, most Americans actually believe that more money equals a better life. Yet what's interesting, and you just wonder, is there a correlation here?

Americans use more antidepressants than anyone else on the planet. Americans use more legal drugs than anyone else on the planet.

They also use more illegal drugs than anyone else on the planet. Those are just statistics I looked up and found. We have more stuff than any other society in the history of the world, and yet has it equated to us being a happier people?

So, what's the narrative that's defining you today? Do you know your story? I mean, where do stories that shape hearts of men, shape culture come from?

Where do the stories come from? Who are the poets today sharing these stories? I would say primarily, we find them on screens. Getting back to the cell phone thing.

[42 : 07] We find them on large screens that we sit in front of. We find them on small screens that we carry in our pockets. There's stories that you can glom onto, and that can then begin to define your life.

And screens are not evil, okay? I'm not... Screens are not evil. They can be educational. They can be neutral. They can be beneficial. There's good that can come from them, but they can also be incredibly destructive.

In fact, one theologian writes it this way. Screens are the Trojan horse of the Western culture. That was written a few years ago. I think it's across the globe now, but Woody Allen said this, the great theologian.

He said, in California, let's take a dig on California this morning. You're right. They don't throw their garbage away. They make it into TV shows. And that sums up probably a lot of what's on TV.

I mean, it's so weird that television is now this kind of old technology, right? In a book I read a few years back, Matrix of Meaning, the author traces the evolution of screens going from a technology.

[43 : 23] Screens were just a technology. They then became a salesman. Then they became a teacher. And his argument was, today they have become the parent. And if that's true, then we have storytellers with unlimited access shaping the lens of us and every future generation.

And we have to be careful. I think no way can we be successful to live God's best life for us if our steady diet of stories is coming from the wrong source.

Amen? Because it affects us. That's why prioritizing the gathering is so critical. Being present under the preaching of God's Word is so critical that you would spend time abiding, enjoying, hearing from the Lord yourself.

How does one remember their story? Here's some suggestions. Make time to spend in the eternal story each and every day in a non-legalistic way.

Okay? Not going to take attendance. How much did you read? It's between you and the Lord. But it brings perspective. Make it the first order of the day.

[44 : 33] Then it can shape how you think and do the rest of the day. Yeah, Americans, they look at their phone 205 times a day.

This is another statistic. 80% of Americans check their phones within the first 10 minutes of waking up. That's too convicting.

Let's just move on. Okay? How do you remember your story? Make time to spend in the eternal story. Secondly, hey, here's another great way. Read some Christian biographies of believers who lived well.

I've already purchased our fall read for dead theologians. I've got a missionary biography for us to read. I already got it. We're going to read it.

Then we're going to gather during missions week and discuss it. I think it's one of the best mission biographies around and I think it's going to be encouraging for us. It's going to be like, oh, that's how some other believers lived out their faith.

[45 : 38] What do I need to learn? Where do I need to maybe even repent? How do I reform the way that I have been doing life? What do I need to gain from this? It's actually how the church exhorts one another.

Even for those that have died, they still speak. that's another great way to remember your own story. Read the story of faith of other followers of Christ.

And then thirdly, super practical, change something that's keeping you from any of the above actions. Just change it. Like, Julie and myself, one thing practically we did, we're like moving backwards in time because we used to have our cell phones be our alarm clocks and we, no more. They're like away. We just have old like alarm clocks. I mean, they don't do a lot, they just tell time and wake us up. But we're now getting up to the age, we just wake up because you get older, you're just like, I'm awake, you know, but it's been such a great change because no longer the first thing is like reaching for, oh, what's, like, easy.

Just practical. Change something. Fourthly, how do you remember your story? Spend time with people living for the glory of God and the joy of others.

[47 : 11] That's going to affect you. I mean, that's one of the reasons even we want to have these neighborhood groups. Last week, we had a wonderful conversation around our lunch table and yes, when you gather friendship, talk about the thing, I mean, yes, I know you're going to talk about temporary things.

Talk about your trigger, right? Talk about your, your remodel of whatever, your bathroom or, you know, the new countertop. Great. That's not, that's not evil. That's great.

But then talk about the things of the Lord as well. We got to hear from one of our people and they just shared, this is how I came to faith and it was wonderful and everybody was blessed and we were encouraged.

So spend time with God's people and talk about the things of faith in addition to all the other things that comprise life. Here's the thing, friends.

Our story, the introduction's been written. for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ and God. And guess what?

[48 : 15] The conclusion's set too. Because Paul says in verse 4, when Christ who is your life appears then you also will appear with Him in glory. So the question for us today to wrestle with is what are we going to do with the pages in between?

And I would suggest, I would exhort us to live for God's glory and for the joy of others. And there is great joy in that approach.

So that's going to begin us and we're going to get into the nitty gritty now as we get into the further verses of chapter 3 and it's going to be good. Let me pray. Father, thank You.

Thank You that we don't have to do faith alone. We don't have to seek heaven and think heaven and remember who we are and whose we are on our own.

We actually get to do it together. So Lord, thank You for this church. Thank You for the grace that it is in my life. The blessing it is.

[49 : 27] I pray that I would be a blessing. I pray that each of us would be a blessing to someone today and listening well, if there's a prayer that we need to offer on their behalf, we would do that in joy and there's ways to encourage, there's ways to point people back to You.

Lord, all of us are, we live in the same world, the same temptations. things. We can easily envy the wrong people and the wrong things and Lord, miss out on really Your best life for us and we don't want to do that.

We want to be used of You. We want to know that we have served Your purposes in our day and when You're done with us, You bring us home.

Lord, thank You that we have died and our life is hidden with You. We can't lose our salvation. What a joy. Even on our worst days, Jesus, Your blood has covered us for sins, past, present, future.

And Lord, thank You that the conclusion set that when You appear, that we will also join You in glory. So Lord, we have limited days. We want to use them well. So I pray that we would be cognizant of that and Lord, if there's practical things that we can do just to as it were, maintain focus on important things.

[50 : 52] Lord, that we would have the courage to reform things in our life. Even small things. Just to be able to spend a bit more time with You and thinking Your thoughts.

Giving the Holy Spirit words to work with each and every day. And Lord, as a result, people would come to know You, Jesus. We love You.

It's in Your name we pray. And all God's people said, Amen.