

## SESSION 8

# Christ's mind

## SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Colossians 3:1–4

## BUILDUP THEME



INTERNALIZE GODLINESS

God expects believers to value heavenly things above all else.

## MEASURABLE RESPONSE

The learners will determine their values by examining their choices and will write a commitment to value heavenly things above all else.

## MEMORY VERSE

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1, 2).

## Teacher Preparation

- ❑ "The Secret" by Rhonda Byrne came out in 2006 as a self-help book after previously being released as a movie. Byrne sold over 30 million copies of the book and had it translated into 50 languages. The book suggests that people can attract positive experiences to themselves by having positive thoughts. Byrne claims the universe vibrates positive waves that will be attracted to people's positive thoughts. People then can think their way into a better position in life. In 2020 Byrne published "The Greatest Secret" as a follow up to her original book. The Secret is essentially a way to play God and get what you want out of life.
- ❑ Read Colossians 3:1–4. Paul calls believers to set their minds on things above and seek those things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. To seek "heavenly things" is to make sure our interests, attitudes, and ambitions are focused on Christ. Our outlook should be all about Christ. We should seek His will for our lives, model His passion for the lost, and be active in growing in Him.
- ❑ An outlook that is all about Christ is not at all like the outlook proposed by Rhonda Byrne. She desires a problem-free life that is filled with pleasures, and she sells books to millions of people who want the same. All of those who follow her teaching will in the end be disappointed.
- ❑ Challenge your students to examine what they have set their minds on. Are they, like Rhonda, focused on earthly things? Or have they set their minds on heavenly things?

## Session Summary

Paul reminded the Colossian believers that they were united with Jesus Christ in His resurrection. Paul urged them, therefore, to value heavenly things above all else and to anticipate Christ's appearance in glory. To seek "heavenly things" is to make sure our interests, attitudes, and ambitions are focused on Christ. Our outlook should be all about Christ. We should seek His will for our lives, model His passion for the lost, and be active in growing in Him.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—"The Secret" Is Back

### Steps

1. Review the following information on the book and movement called "The Secret."

"The Secret" by Rhonda Byrne came out in 2006 as a self-help book after previously being released as a movie. Byrne sold over 30 million copies of the book and had it translated into 50 languages. The book suggests that people can attract positive experiences to themselves by having positive thoughts. Byrne claims the universe vibrates positive waves that will be attracted to people's positive thoughts. People then can think their way into a better position in life. In 2020 Byrne published "The Greatest Secret" as a follow up to her original book. The Secret is essentially a way to play God and get what you want out of life

2. Talk about "The Secret" and its connection with the book of Colossians.

**ASK:** What similarities do you see between Rhonda Byrne's teaching and the form of Gnosticism infiltrating the Colossian church? *Both claim to have a special, secret knowledge; both claim to solve man's biggest problems; both are man-centered and utterly false.*

**ASK:** What have you heard from people who are trying or have tried to live according to "The Secret"?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Rhonda Byrne desires a problem-free life filled with pleasures, and she sells books to millions of people who want the same. All of those who follow her teaching will in the end be disappointed. Paul called on believers to set their minds on heavenly things rather than earthly things. Those who follow his instructions will be grateful they did.

## Option 2—"I've Got My Eye on . . ."

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write the following on the board: "I've got my eye on . . ." Students think about how they would finish that statement. Perhaps they have their eye on a particular type of car they would love to have.

2. Students share what they have their eye on.
3. Discuss getting obsessed with having things.

**ASK:** What is the difference between wanting something and becoming obsessed with having it? (Q1) *The obsession becomes controlling of the person's thoughts and actions.*

**ASK:** What might it mean to become obsessed with heavenly things? (Q2)

4. Transition to the Bible study.

Paul commanded the Colossians to set their minds on things above rather than on things on the earth. We will investigate his command in this session. In the end we will be challenged to evaluate what consumes our thoughts and directs our actions.

## Bible Study

People's main interests in life vary widely. Some people are chiefly interested in making a lot of money. Some are mainly interested in promoting themselves; they crave fame or attention or power. Some relentlessly pursue pleasure. A stock market report determines some people's moods, while the moods of others range from extreme elation when their favorite sports team wins a game to depression when it loses. Of course, it isn't wrong to be interested in career advancement and a comfortable lifestyle. Nor is it wrong to enjoy legitimate pleasures, including the pleasure of following sports. But we ought to keep everything in proper perspective. If our values are right, our lives will be productive in God's estimation.

### I. Instructions for Pursuing a Heavenly Life (Col. 3:1, 2)

The Colossians lived in difficult times, just as we do. The Roman world was pleasure mad, power hungry, and spiritually impoverished. The believers, on the other hand, were new creations in Christ. Their citizenship was in Heaven, and their main responsibilities on earth were to glorify God and share the gospel. Those responsibilities demanded that they hold Christian values and consistently pursue heavenly things. Their neighbors would be more strongly persuaded to trust in Christ if they saw His character in the lives of His followers.

#### A. Seek heavenly things (3:1)

**READ:** Colossians 3:1.

To seek "heavenly things" is to make sure our interests, attitudes, and ambitions are focused on Christ. Our outlook should be all about Christ. We should seek His will for our lives, model His passion for the lost, and be active in growing in Him.

**ASK:** What is the difference between *seeking* those things that are above and *acknowledging* them as important? (Q3) *The first requires action and commitment; the second does not.*

**READ:** Philippians 3:12–14. **ASK:** What did Paul tell the Philippians about his personal record of seeking those things that are above? (Q4) *He had not yet reached what he sought, so he kept reaching toward it.*

If Christ's life had ended at Calvary, our interest in heavenly things would be meaningless. But Christ arose from the grave and ascended triumphantly to Heaven. His presence at God's right hand (Col. 3:1) assures us of His power and provision now and of a home in Heaven in eternity.

## **B. Set your mind on heavenly things (3:2)**

**READ:** Colossians 3:2.

Paul urged the Colossians to stay mentally focused on things above instead of on earthly things. Although we must live as responsible citizens and stewards of the possessions God has entrusted to us, we must put a higher value on eternal treasures than on earthly treasures.

**ASK:** What happens to your actions when you set your mind on something? (Q5) *A person will act in accordance to his or her mindset.*

A flood, fire, earthquake, or storm can destroy in seconds the possessions a person took a lifetime to accumulate. But nothing can destroy a believer's eternal treasures. Thieves and robbers can empty a home of valuables, but they can't back a van or truck up to Heaven's door and haul away our eternal treasures. If it weren't for insurance, our lives on earth would seem even more tenuous than they already are.

**ASK:** What are some past or current insurance company slogans? (Q6)

**ASK:** What ideas do those slogans create in our minds? (Q7) *Insurance slogans create the ideas of safety and security. The slogans are meant to give people a sense of peace.*

**ASK:** How might having home, auto, medical, and life insurance blind us to the temporal nature of our lives? (Q8) *Being prepared financially in the event of tragedy makes us feel secure even though insurance does nothing to prevent tragedy or death.*

Paul's instructions echo Jesus' teaching. Jesus said to lay up treasures in Heaven rather than on earth, for our treasures in Heaven are safe and sound.

**READ:** Matthew 6:21; Colossians 3:2. **ASK:** What connection do you see between these verses? (Q9) *They both teach that what you value in your mind affects what you follow with your heart.*

**ASK:** What might indicate that a person values heavenly treasures more highly than earthly treasures? (Q10) *He or she gives generously to the Lord's work, doesn't waste money on lavishness, actively looks for opportunities to give, and doesn't feel a need to show people his or her latest toy.*

**READ:** Hebrews 11:24–26. **ASK:** What choice did Moses make concerning values? (Q11) *He chose suffering with the Israelites over enjoying the temporal pleasures of being the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. He esteemed, or appraised, the reproach of Christ as more valuable than the treasures of Egypt.*

**ASK:** How did he make this choice? (Q12) *By faith in God.*

Paul challenges our values. What occupies center stage in our thinking—heavenly things or worldly things? Do we often think of ways to serve Christ, or do we usually think of ways to serve ourselves? Do we feed our minds truth or trash? Do we ponder eternal joys of Heaven, or do we just pursue elusive thrills? Do we enjoy spiritual conversations, or do we simply endure them? Are we overjoyed at the prospect of a mansion in Heaven, or are we obsessed with the goal of a mansion down here?

Hebrews 11:6 promises that God will reward those who diligently seek Him. That promise is important to grab hold of. Often worldly-minded believers will look at the life lived for God as a disappointing and boring way to live. They see those who choose to do without the thrills and things of this world for the sake of God as people to feel sorry for. When God rewards His servants according to how well they sought Him, those who were earthly minded will finally see the folly in their thinking.

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10.

As we looked at previously in this course, Christ will reward believers who live in such a way to be found well-pleasing to Him. Those rewards are part of the believer's heavenly treasures.

## **II. Incentives for Pursuing a Heavenly Life (Col. 3:1, 3, 4)**

Paul gave the Colossians—and us—three motivations for pursuing heavenly things.

### **A. Union with Christ (3:1, 3a)**

**READ:** Colossians 3:1, 3a.

Paul underscored the truth that believers share a vital union with Christ when he said we are raised with Christ and are dead to sin (3:1, 3). When Christ died to sin, we died to sin too (Rom. 6:2, 3). Sin can no longer possess us or condemn us. We draw our new life from Christ. Because we are no longer in sin and are now in Christ, we should live differently from the way we used to live. Our conduct should honor Christ.

**READ:** Romans 6:2, 3.

## **B. Security in Christ (3:3b)**

The moment God saved us, the Holy Spirit placed us into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). We are secure in our Savior, because our Savior lives forever as the victor over sin and Satan and over death and the grave. Paul wrote that our lives are “hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). Such security motivates us to pursue a heavenly life.

The ancient Greeks often referred to the burial of a treasure or a body as a hiding of that treasure or body in the earth. Our new life is buried in Christ, where it is safe. We can never lose eternal life because it is in Christ, Who conquered death and Satan. The apostle John testified to the truth that God has given believers eternal life right now (1 John 5:11, 12).

The Gnostics boasted about their books of wisdom. They said those books contained knowledge hidden from everyone except themselves. They claimed to have used secret passwords to solve mysteries about God and life. The truth is that a believer’s life in Christ exists as a mystery to the unsaved. It is hidden in Christ, and an unsaved person “just doesn’t get it” until he or she, too, trusts in Christ. Someday, though, the whole world will be aware of the treasure we have in Christ.

**ASK:** Has anyone criticized your value system? If so, what specifically did that person criticize? (Q13)

**ASK:** How do you react when an unbeliever calls your “religion” a crutch? (Q14)

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 4:4. **ASK:** According to this verse, what hinders the unsaved from attaching true value to the gospel? (Q15)  
*Their minds, which have been blinded by Satan.*

## **C. Glorification with Christ (3:4)**

**READ:** Colossians 3:4. **ASK:** What will happen for believers when Jesus appears? (Q16) *Believers will appear with Him in glory with glorified bodies.*

Occasionally we read about a successful salvage operation at sea. The long months, and sometimes years, of careful research and exploration paid off. Those who dredged up gold and jewels from a barnacle-covered

Paul informed the Romans, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

galleon celebrated their good fortune. They had in hand everything they had pinned their hopes on. Like discoverers of sunken treasure, we, too, will have in hand everything we have pinned our hopes on. Christ will return for us at the Rapture, and we will receive glorified bodies and be free of every vestige of sin (Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:1–3). After the Tribulation, when Christ sets up His Kingdom on the earth, He will reign in glory, and we will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12). Our life in Christ will be manifested fully and clearly at that time. Paul encouraged believers to pursue a heavenly life, knowing that glory is our destiny (Col. 3:4).

**READ:** Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:1–3. **ASK:** What aspect of Heaven are you anticipating most eagerly? (Q17)

**CREATIVE PROJECTS:** Divide your learners into groups according to their interests. Identify the groups as an art team or a writing team. Give each team paper and pencils and instruct them as follows:

**Art:** Sketch something that symbolizes the beauty of life with Christ in Heaven.

**Writing:** Prepare a poem that will motivate believers to pursue a heavenly life.

Knowing that Christ is coming and that glory awaits us, we ought to look above and live with hope. As we keep on seeking those things that are above and setting our minds and affection on things above, we will properly evaluate situations and events. We will be able to cope better under stress, and we will exercise better stewardship of our time, money, and possessions. We will show others that there really is a different way to live. A far better way!

## Session Application

### Steps

1. List luxury items in a vertical column on the whiteboard (e.g., Sports car, seaside mansion).
2. Have your learners suggest the value of each item on the list. Write the estimated value next to the item.
3. At the top right side of whiteboard, write "Eternal Value." Have the learners attach eternal values to the items.
4. Finally, list these items on the whiteboard and have the learners estimate their eternal values:
  - Salvation.
  - Fellowship with Christ.



- The fruit of the Spirit.
- Rewards in Heaven.

5. Challenge the learners to let eternal values influence their daily choices.

**ASK:** What do your recent choices reveal about your values? (Q18)

**ASK:** What are some situations that might cause you to hope that the Rapture doesn't happen for a while? (Q19) *Purchasing a new car, starting a new career, or just moving into a dream home.*

Wanting the Rapture to be delayed for a while longer while we enjoy our earthly life might be an indicator that our affections are set on earthly things.

6. Challenge the learners to set their affections on heavenly things. Have them record a commitment to set their affections on heavenly things. (Q20)

