

BEYOND THE WEEKEND

For the sermon on March 9-10, 2013
"The Challenge of Change"



Welcome to *Beyond the Weekend!* The experiences below are designed to connect with the weekend message and fit a variety of learning styles. They provide additional readings from other sections of Scripture such as the Old Testament, Psalms, Gospels, and Epistles (letters). Take 20-30 minutes each day and enjoy your pursuit of God!



Prefer e-mail? ***Beyond the Weekend*** is also available via daily e-mails, which include links to the Scripture (both written and audio), the sermon video, and a weekly blog post. To sign up for the daily e-mails, go to adabible.org/btw.

The New You | Reading Plan

Over the four weeks of this series, we will explore Paul's letter to the Colossians. The sermons will focus on Colossians 3.1-17, but to enrich your experience, we invite you to soak your heart and mind in the overall teaching of the letter. To help you, we are providing a simple reading plan (in addition to the regular BTW reading). At the end of the sermon series, you will have read the letter five times!

Each day this week read Colossians 3.1-17.

Day 1 1 Corinthians 15.1-8 | Conversion

As we begin our journey in Colossians, an important thing to remember is that Paul wrote it to Gentile followers of Christ. Unlike their Jewish neighbors (but a lot like us), these people were not raised with concepts like being "in Christ" or "in the Messiah" (Colossians 3.3-4). They were more familiar with the Greek/Roman pantheon of gods. Converting to the Jesus Way was no small change. **To believe in Jesus was to repent from old ways of thinking and living and to start a new path. The same is true for us today.** Becoming a follower of Jesus is a radical change of allegiance, a commitment to new beliefs, priorities, and behaviors.

The beginning of a convert's journey was to confess their new belief in and allegiance to Christ. They would affirm statements like in today's reading, 1 Corinthians 15.1-8, or later the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed (go to crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds). It was expected that new behavior would then follow. Today, spend a few minutes reflecting on these confessions and how your beliefs compare. If you have questions, contact tnelson@adabible.org or dyoder@adabible.org.

Day 2 Ezekiel 36.26-27 | New Hearts, Old Habits

Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above... (Colossians 3.1).

In writing these words, Paul alludes to a profound truth. Being "raised with Christ" and having the ability to "set your hearts" on something other than sinful desires is truly a miracle of God's grace. According to the prophet Ezekiel, the people of Israel (and by extension all people) had **hearts of stone**—cold, unresponsive, unable to change. However, God promised to replace them with **hearts of flesh**—warm, responsive, willing to change. He did that through Christ (Ephesians 2.1-6).

True followers of Jesus have been changed at their core. They have new hearts. They genuinely love God and desire to follow his ways. However, as Paul points out, those new hearts still need to shake off old habits and learn new ones. Today, reflect on that image of receiving a new heart. Do you see yourself in that way? If it really is true that you have a new heart and God's Spirit living in you, what is keeping you from putting off your old, sinful habits and putting on new, more Christlike, ones?

Day 3 Romans 6.1-14 | The Past

"For you died..." (Colossians 3.3). With these loaded words, Paul describes one of the few things that give us hope for real life change. If you are a follower of the crucified Christ, you have died. Not physically yet, but you *have* died to sin's power over you. Paul describes this in more detail in his letter to the Romans. Spend a few minutes in today's reading to learn more.

The image Paul uses is that your old sinful self has been crucified and no longer has control over you. Instead, your new self in Christ is alive and free. One of the most powerful ways to live in that freedom is to allow yourself to feel a deep gratitude for it. When you do, your sinful desires will begin to lose their grip.

Today, celebrate your freedom in Christ and listen to "Rooftops" by Jesus Culture (search youtube.com). The chorus sings, "I lift my hands because you set me free. So I shout out your name, from the rooftops I proclaim that I am yours..."

Day 4 2 Corinthians 5.14-21 | The Present

"...your life is now hidden with Christ in God..." (Colossians 3.3). Earlier in this letter, Paul admits what he is saying is mysterious. The mystery is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1.27). Through the Spirit, our lives are intermingled with Christ's. He lives in us, and our life is hidden with him. It's good that Paul calls it a mystery. That gives us permission not to understand it fully!

However, we can know something confidently: our present situation has truly changed. In today's reading, Paul calls followers of Christ "new creations." Just as we died with Christ (see Day 3), we now have new life in him. Our sinful desires no longer control us because Jesus' Spirit is living in our hearts (John 7.38-39). **It's by his power (not our own) that we are changed.** Today, identify one sinful behavior in your life (e.g., bitterness, impatience, arrogance). Instead of trying to change, ask God to live his life through you. Remind yourself often that change comes not by trying harder but by depending more fully on God.

Day 5 1 Peter 1.13-2.3 | The Future

"When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3.4). Paul is pointing to a future reality for all who have given their lives to Christ. When Christ appears, we also will appear. What he means is that, when Christ returns, we will be raised from the dead and given new physical bodies to live with him forever (1 Corinthians 15.50-58).

That future hope should shape our lives today. We should begin to live now according to who we really are—our new true selves in Christ. In today's reading, Peter says we should live now in light of what is coming. Because Jesus will return and because we have new life in him, we should live obediently. Today, spend 15-20 minutes meditating on Peter's comments in 1 Peter 1.13-2.3. What is one thing from the passage that speaks to you? Ask God to show you how to put it into practice.

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Small Group Discussion | For a discussion guide related to the sermon, e-mail rcorlett@adabile.org.

Questions or Comments | Contact Tim Nelson, pastor of spiritual formation at tnelson@adabile.org.

BTW Blog

Ada Bible Church staff and leaders share how God is meeting them through the sermons. BTW blog posts are hosted on Sabea, our blog for spiritual formation, and go live on Wednesdays.

This week we hear from Lindsey Bandy, story coordinator.

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