

Prescription for Spiritual Health “In the Mean Time”

Colossians 3

Background:

Colossae was one of many cities in the Roman province of Asia (modern day Turkey). Being situated on a major east-west and north-south intersection, Colossae enjoyed a cosmopolitan atmosphere. The Colossians were first introduced to Christianity during Paul's third missionary journey while he was ministering in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Epaphras, himself a resident of Colossae, and co-laborer with Paul, brought the Gospel to them (1:7; 4:12). Several years later, Paul wrote to this church in order to correct the message false teachers were propagating in the Body. These teachers were painting a thick coat of Judaism, Greek philosophy, mysticism, and asceticism over the Gospel. By doing so, they were diverting the Colossian believers away from the preeminence, supremacy, and centrality of Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

Wouldn't it be great if we could take a pill to help make our spiritual lives healthier? If only there was a prescription available to help us be successful Christian husbands, wives, and children. If only we could call the church office to get a 3 month supply of “effective member” medicine. Sure, the Bible teaches that when we meet Jesus face to face we'll become perfect, just like Him (1 Jn. 3:2). The problem is, how do I get spiritually healthy and stay spiritually healthy “in the mean time?” The truth is there is such a prescription for “in the mean time” spiritual health and success. The Apostle Paul provides us with a fantastic prescription to help us relate to one another in our homes and in our church successfully, exactly like God intended. For those willing to follow the doctor's orders and swallow the medicine, there is Divine help available to see real success in your spiritual life! Let's take a look at what the doctor has to say to us today...

I. The Prescription Rooted in Fact - positional sanctification Col. 3:1-2

Principle #1: That God has identified me with Christ implies **completed forgiveness**. I can rejoice in my union with Christ! *Understanding **acceptance** and **forgiveness** is the first step in spiritual health.*

Our union with Christ means we are joined with Him in His resurrection – the past tense verb emphasizes this amazing FACT!

An elderly couple was on vacation in the Holy land and the wife suddenly died. A Jewish undertaker told the husband it would cost \$8000 to ship his wife's body back to US but only \$1000 to bury her in the Holy Land. The old man thought for a minute and said, I think I better go with the \$8000. The undertaker couldn't believe it, “Why spend all the extra money?” “Mister, you didn't know my wife Eunice,” the old man said. “But sir” replied the undertaker, “I understand you wife deserves the best – but this is such a good deal, How can you pass it up?” The old man replied back, “You see, about 2000 years ago there was a man buried in this same city, and three days later HE rose from the dead, and with my wife Eunice, well... I just can't take that chance.

Our resurrection with Christ is a reality – though we can't see it, we can't feel it, we can't touch it, though our circumstances are the same, and we look the same – there has been an eternal change in our lives, we **already have been raised with Christ** – our life is now not here, but with Him.

Lewis Sperry Chafer said it this way...

The resurrection body will be “limitless in power, infinite in glory, Eternal in endurance, and adapted to the spirit... All this is assured both by unfulfilling promise and incomprehensible rights through identification with the glorious Savior.” (Chafer IV p. 125)

Principle #2: The world offers many activities that can **absorb** our lives. Believers must guard against allowing good things to become the enemy of the best. *Developing a healthy spiritual life requires me to make spiritual things a **priority** and a **habit**.*

Principle #3: Focusing on Christ and my relationship with Him is critical to developing spiritual health. *Spiritual health is about a growing **relationship** with a person not an on-going list of **activities**. Who motivates me to do what I do?*

Joe Stowell said it this way –

“If Christianity is dull and boring, if it is a burden and not a blessing, most likely you are involved in a project, not a Person – a system not a Savior, rules rather than a relationship.”

Principle #4: To maintain spiritual vitality I must live moment by moment calculating my activities, wants, desires, ambitions, and priorities from a **Heavenly perspective**.

Charlie Ferguson – “we are one breath away from being in heaven every second” If we could only move through each moment understanding there is a very thin line between us and eternity and we could cross that line at any moment. Live as if you have your boarding pass to heaven in hand and that boarding could start at any moment!

II. The Prescription Reassured in Hope - future sanctification Col. 3:3-4

Why should I develop a new mind-set for my time on earth? The answer is because those who are identified with Christ have a new life “hidden” with Him. We have the amazing hope that we will one day be made perfect. God desires that we begin to live out our new heavenly-identity NOW, “in the mean time”, even though we’re still on earth. How long is the prescription in effect? Until we see Him.

Principle #1: *Those who desire spiritual vitality must adopt the new **heaven-oriented** thinking* because they have been severed from the old earth-bound orientation. When a person receives Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, there is a **transfer of ownership** that takes place with their life – Christ holds the title to that life.

Principle #2: *Understanding my **security** in Christ is a key to spiritual success because I discover my **value to God**.* This gives me a desire to love and serve Him in return.

Leanne and I have been greatly blessed with two very precious girls, both of whom today are in College. When God gave us girl #2 it took a couple years, but we discovered that God had given us a little keeper – a lover of containers. When our little keeper would get a toy from a happy meal, or some small insignificant thing, she would put it in a box, or maybe a small bag. The small box or bag would then be placed into a slightly larger bag. This then would be placed into something bigger, until the bag was so large it was difficult to carry, and certainly wasn’t overlooked. God has done that same thing w/ our spiritual lives – Our spiritual life is hidden in Christ, and in addition, in God. We’re safe – not just once, but twice.

Jesus said it this way in John 10:28-29...

and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. " My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Principle #3: Even though my union with Christ doesn’t make me look any different on the outside – because the full effects of my spiritual transformation are **temporarily hidden**, my behavior should reflect the **inward reality** of a radical change. I should live out my life “in the mean time”!

Stephen Covey – 7 habits of successful people:

“to begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you’re going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction. It’s incredibly easy to get caught up in an activity trap, in the busy-ness of life, to work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of success only to discover it’s leaning against the wrong wall”

III. The Prescription Reflected in Experience –progressive sanctification Col 3:5-4:6

A. My Body (3:5-7) -

In the mean time, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to...

immorality... any sexual activity apart from marriage

impurity, passion – a driving force that will not stop until satisfied,

evil desire – a broader word to cover ANY evil longing

and greed which amounts to idolatry– anything that gives satisfaction other than God.
Insatiable selfishness

B. My Emotions (3:8) -

in the mean time... But now you also put them all aside anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech from your mouth”

Notice how the list begins with the heart and flows from the mouth

C. My Church Family (3:9-17) -

in the mean time... don't lie to one another, don't act w/ favoritism, bear w/ one another, forgive one another,

in the mean time beyond all these things put on love

Favoritism: Winston Churchill observed, “Dogs look up to you, cats look down on you, pigs look at you as an equal” there is NO distinction in the body of Christ.. we're all equals.

D. My Marriage (3:18-19) -

in the mean time...

wives be subject to your husbands, voluntarily subject yourself to the headship and leadership of your husband based on God's divine order of things.

husbands love your wives and don't be embittered against them, don't be sharp, harsh, or bitter. Don't cause friction by being impatience and thoughtless nagging. One writer said “If love is absent, obedience will not be secured by perpetual irritation and fault finding.”

E. My Family (3:20-21) -

in the mean time...

Children - obey your parents

Fathers - do not exasperate your children

Fathers should make it easy for children to obey

Authoritative Dads = high love + high discipline

Authoritarian Dads = low love + high discipline
Permissive Dads = high love + low discipline
Dead beat Dads = low love + low discipline

F. My Business (3:22-4:1) -

[in the mean time...](#)

Slaves – work as to serve the Lord

Masters – don't forget you have a Heavenly Boss!

G. My Neighbors (4:2-6) -

[in the mean time...](#)

Pray for opportunities

Be wise

Be ready

Life Response

Sometimes life “in the mean time” is difficult. Why does God allow tough things to happen to us even though we are only here temporarily? Read 1 Peter 1:3-9. How do these verses help us answer this question? What IS the payoff, and how can we use this to encourage others who may be struggling?

Read Philippians 3:13-21. How does Paul describe his attitude toward “life in the mean time” in these verses? What clues does the Apostle give us in these verses that demonstrate how he was able to maintain that heaven oriented mindset? How does he paint the picture of those who don't adopt this heavenly mindset?

God desires that we all apply the “prescription” to our Church Body relationships. Review Colossians 3:13-17. In what ways are you working to develop an atmosphere of love in your care group and mini-church? Consider one person in your mini-church. Think of one tangible thing you can do this week to demonstrate love to them in an active and tangible way.

Husbands, evaluate your marriage on a scale of one to ten. What is one thing you can begin to change as one “seeking the things above” that can bring a positive spiritual impact to your marriage relationship? Are you man enough to follow through?

Wives, consider one way you can show your husband this week that you acknowledge his role as the spiritual leader in your home. What can you say or do to positively encourage him in that leadership role?

Leadership, spend some time with those in your care and discuss the 7 key areas for applying a heaven-oriented mindset one by one. Discover their areas of success and strength – affirm them in these areas. In what area(s) are they not applying the heavenly-mindset, or not doing it well? Pray together and seek for a strategy to more effectively apply an eternal perspective in that area. What are you doing personally to help model and encourage the heavenly-mindset among your people in each of the seven areas?