

Small Group Guide

"Freedom and Responsibility" | Colossians 3:1-17

First Baptist Church St. Louis | Pastor Virgil

Overview

This week's sermon explored the responsibilities that accompany our freedom in Christ. Drawing from Colossians 3:1-17, Pastor Virgil outlined five key responsibilities for believers: focusing on our identity in Christ, experiencing a transformation of conduct, recognizing equality before God, displaying a renewed righteousness, and living a life marked by worship. As a group, use this guide to reflect on how these truths apply to your daily life.

Key Takeaways

- True identity is not found in our occupation, relationships, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, but in Christ alone.
 - Salvation is the starting point. Without it, living according to God's Word is impossible in our own strength.
 - The Christian life calls us to "put off" the old self and "put on" the new self, which is being renewed in the image of our Creator.
 - There is no distinction of ethnicity, status, or background in the body of Christ. Christ is all and in all.
 - Forgiveness is not optional for believers. We are called to forgive others just as Christ has forgiven us.
 - Worship is not just singing. It encompasses possessing the Word, living by its precepts, praising God, maintaining a posture of thankfulness, and proclaiming Christ in everything we do.
 - With great freedom comes great responsibility. The freedom Christ purchased at Calvary was not free. It cost Him everything.
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Opening Icebreaker

Take a few minutes to go around the group and answer this question before diving into the discussion:

Think about different seasons of your life. What is one thing you used to strongly identify with that no longer defines who you are today?

Discussion Questions

Section 1: A Focused Identity (Colossians 3:1-4)

1. Pastor Virgil described how people draw their identity from things like occupation, relationships, and life stage. In what areas of your own life have you been tempted to anchor your identity in something other than Christ?
2. Paul opens this passage with the word "if," prompting the reader to examine whether they have truly been raised with Christ. Why do you think Paul felt it was necessary to keep returning to this question even with a church he had invested in deeply?
3. What does it look like practically to "seek the things that are above" while still being fully engaged in everyday life, family, work, and community?
4. Pastor Virgil mentioned that Wednesday night studies are exploring what heaven will actually be like, and that it will resemble a renewed earth rather than a distant, disconnected place. How does a more accurate understanding of eternity change the way you pursue things in the present?

Section 2: A Transformation of Conduct (Colossians 3:5-10)

5. Paul lists specific behaviors that believers are called to put to death, including sexual immorality, covetousness, anger, slander, and lying. Which of these do you think is most normalized or overlooked in Christian culture today, and why?
6. Pastor Virgil referenced Paul's words in Romans 7, where Paul openly wrestled with doing the things he did not want to do. How does knowing that even Paul struggled with this encourage or challenge you personally?
7. Pastor Virgil said that without community, accountability, and small groups, it is easy to slip back into old patterns of conduct. How has being in a group like this one helped you

stay consistent in your walk with Christ? Where do you still feel like you need more accountability?

8. The sermon pointed out that the metric Pastor Virgil values most is not worship attendance alone, but how many people are also being disciplined in God's Word. Why do you think consistent engagement with Scripture is so essential to behavioral transformation?

Section 3: Equality Before God (Colossians 3:11)

9. Paul declares that in Christ there is no Greek or Jew, slave or free. Pastor Virgil applied this to the reality that Sunday morning is often described as the most ethnically divided time in America. What do you think the church can do to better reflect the unity Paul describes here?
10. Have you ever walked into a church environment and felt out of place because of your background, appearance, or economic status? How did that experience shape your understanding of what the church should be?

Section 4: A Renewed Righteousness (Colossians 3:12-15)

11. Paul calls believers to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and forgiveness. Which of these do you find most natural, and which do you find most difficult to consistently display?
12. Pastor Virgil was direct in saying that forgiveness is not optional for the believer. He also noted that unresolved offense can act like an anchor that slows down the work of the church. Is there a situation in your life right now where you know you need to extend forgiveness but have been holding back? What is making it difficult?
13. The sermon described admonishment as the practice of lovingly calling out conduct in a fellow believer that is inconsistent with Scripture. Have you ever been on the giving or receiving end of that kind of correction? What made it helpful or harmful, and what would have made it better?

Section 5: A Life Marked by Worship (Colossians 3:16-17)

14. Pastor Virgil described worship as having five components: possession of the Word, living by its precepts, praising God, maintaining a posture of thankfulness, and

proclaiming Christ in everything. Which of these five do you feel is strongest in your life right now, and which needs the most attention?

15. The sermon closed with the illustration of a concealed carry permit, making the point that freedoms come with specific responsibilities and that misusing freedom has real consequences. How does that illustration connect to the way you understand your freedom in Christ?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to work on before your group meets again:

- **Identity Audit:** Take 15 minutes this week to write down the top five things you tend to draw your identity from. Bring your list back to the group and discuss how those things align or conflict with your identity in Christ.
- **Put Off, Put On:** Using Colossians 3:5-14 as your guide, identify one specific behavior or attitude you need to put off and one you need to intentionally put on. Share it with a trusted person in the group who can check in with you.
- **Forgiveness Step:** If there is someone you have been withholding forgiveness from, take one concrete step this week toward forgiveness. That step might be prayer, a conversation, a letter you never send, or seeking counsel from a pastor or trusted believer.
- **Worship Inventory:** Using the five components of worship from the sermon, rate yourself on a scale of one to ten in each area. Identify the lowest-scoring area and commit to one specific action to strengthen it this week.
- **Word Engagement:** If you are not currently in a Sunday school class, life group, or Bible study beyond this small group, make it a goal to plug into one before the next meeting. If you are already engaged, consider inviting someone else to join you.

Closing Prayer Guide

Close your time together by praying through these themes as a group:

- Thank God for the freedom purchased at Calvary and ask for a deeper understanding of what that cost.

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- Ask for help in anchoring your identity firmly in Christ rather than in the shifting things of this world.
- Pray for the grace to put off old patterns of conduct and to put on the character of Christ.
- Ask God to cultivate genuine unity and equality within your church and small group.
- Pray for anyone in the group who is struggling to forgive, and ask God to soften hearts and bring healing.
- Commit your worship to God, asking that everything you do this week, in word and deed, would be done in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Memory Verse for the Week

Colossians 3:17 —Memorize this verse and use it as a filter for your decisions and interactions throughout the week.

Colossians 3:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ 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.