

SETTING OUR EYES ON NEW LIFE

By Melana Walker

SCRIPTURE

Colossians 3:1-11 (NLT)

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

OBSERVATION

A couple of years ago, we took a group of our senior students on a Caving Adventure Tour in Austin, Texas. This wasn't your typical, walk-through, stay-behind-the-ropes kind of cave tour. Upon arrival we were each given elbow pads, knee pads, a helmet, and a head lamp. Once in full gear, we descended into the entrance of one of the largest underground caves in all of Texas. Our tour began with approaching a small hole to the side of a main tour path that was a straight shot down with what appeared to have no end. Our tour guide confidently asked, "Who wants to go first?" We all gave a small laugh thinking it was a playful joke. Nope. It became real very quickly. One by one, I watched our students step into this hole and completely disappear from sight. For the next four hours, our group was roughly seven miles beneath the earth's surface. We were shimmying against cave walls, army-crawling under different cave formations, climbing, scooting, and jumping further into this cave, all at the mercy of our tour guides and head lamps. When we finally resurfaced, in the light of day, it was easy to see how filthy every single person was. We were covered in dirt, mud, sweat, and drenched from passing through 45° water. Needless to say, we were not going to make the trip back to Lufkin in our rented van in that condition. After much needed showers at a truck stop, we were ready to make the journey back home.

How silly and pointless would it have been if after cleaning our bodies, we put the same filthy clothes back on? Unfortunately this is a reality for some believers, if not all of us at

some point in our Christian walk. Despite the fact that Christ gave us a new identity, called us His own, and counted us blameless, we can have a tendency to choose to put on our old, sinful nature. But as stated here in Colossians 3, we have been raised to *new life* with Christ. The word *new* is defined as not existing before, made, introduced, or discovered recently or now for the first time. We are no longer a people who chase after fleshly or worldly desires. We were made *new* creations when we put our faith in the blood of Christ and His resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:17). Because we are made new, we don't have to and are called not to be held captive by our old ways of thinking and our former sins. We have the wonderful opportunity to claim and set our eyes on our new life found in Christ.

Not every thought is your own. If I were to tell you not to think of a soccer ball being kicked about a field, would you? The reality is that you most likely automatically imagined a soccer ball after reading that sentence. Now, who's fault was it that you pictured a soccer ball? Was it your fault, or mine? It was mine. Yes, we have a Father who knows every fiber of our being. But we also have an enemy who has studied our sinful tendencies, knows exactly how to entice us, and is intimidated by our possible kingdom impact. He knows that there is nothing that he can do to rip us from the Father's grip, but he strives to have us convinced that we aren't truly changed.

God is all that matters. His kingdom is all that matters. We have been made right with Him, and we will raise up with Him at the last day. Because of the cross and the mercy that is continuously poured out for us, we have new life. We have a new purpose. We have Him.

OBEDIENCE

Anytime there's any thought or the slightest temptation that doesn't align with scripture or our new identity, take it captive. We can easily turn thoughts like these into praise for Him saying, "I know this isn't from You and doesn't line up with the new life I have in You. Thank You for completely changing me and giving me Your identity."

Examine how your daily life and actions are or are not furthering the kingdom.

Wake up every morning choosing to put on your new identity.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank You so much for the cross. Thank You that the old us doesn't even exist anymore. Thank You for giving us Your heart, Your mind, Your Spirit, and new life. Father, we ask that You shift our focus from worldly desires, our old life, and our old sinful nature and set our sights on the realities of heaven. Continue to renew our minds and our souls as we look toward You and take on our new role in furthering Your kingdom. Thank You for this new life! Amen.