

The Opposite Way (Col. 3:1–11)

Introduction

The opposite way—is that a concept you’ve ever thought about? Doing the opposite of what comes **naturally**—that’s what I mean when I say, “the opposite way.”

Open to **Colossians 3**. Colossians is a four chapter letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to a church that was in the town of Colossae. It’s hard to summarize the general problem of the Colossian church, but it appears that they were mixing Christianity, Judaism, and Gnosticism to get a mish-mash of theology. Paul’s answer to them is basically that a better understanding of Jesus will solve their problem.

Colossae wasn’t a city that’s mentioned in Acts, so we don’t think Paul ever visited there, but a guy named Epaphras heard Paul while Paul was in Ephesus and Epaphras took the Gospel back to his hometown of Colossae. So, in a sense, Paul is the spiritual grandfather of the Colossians. I was actually named for my spiritual grandfather—so I can relate to this relationship.

In chapter one, Paul gives thanks for the Colossian believers and goes into great detail on how he prays for them (focusing on the work of Jesus Christ) and how Paul suffered for them. In chapter two, Paul warns them about their theology and how it is being influenced by factors that it shouldn’t be influenced by (again, he accomplishes this by focusing on the work of Jesus Christ). In chapter three, Paul goes in to great detail in showing the Colossian believers how things are different in light of what Christ has done—and that is where I want to focus. Let’s read **Colossians 3**.

1. Our Minds (vv. 1–4)

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek [demand, crave, search out so that you have to find it] those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. [Why would Paul feel the need to tell them to, “**seek shoes things which are above**”? The Colossians were seeking those things which were below. Sometimes it amazes me at how some things just don’t change in Christianity—you would think after 2,000 years that we would have figured this concept out, but we still struggle

with this. We get sidetracked demanding, craving, and searching out for things that are here on the Earth.] **2 Set** [the tense implies that this is not just a one-time event, but an ongoing process] **your mind** [the Greek word is *phroneo*—the root of that word is where we get our English word, phrenology—the study of the shape of the skull and it's used here to relay the idea of everything that's going on in our heads.] **on things above, not on things on the earth** [Paul is telling us not to be consumed with earthly things, but to be consumed with heavenly things. He's telling us to go the opposite way of what happens naturally. This is a conscious, purposeful, minute-by-minute effort on our part to accomplish this.]. **3 For you died** [How many of you knew that you were dead? Did you know that? I don't know if you've ever thought about it before, but dead people need a lot of help. We have no power on our own. We have no rights. We have no life apart from life that is given to us—and that comes through Christ.], **and your life is hidden with Christ in God** [I have our money in our credit union and it is insured by the FDIC. That's safety. That's security. But—our government could fail. Our government could fall. If that were to happen, that money may or may not be safe. But what if I had something that Christ was holding on to inside the protective custody of God the Father Himself? Do you think that would be safe? Of course it's safe. So let's switch gears—what do we do if we know something is hidden and we know where to find it? We go to that place and find it! If we want to find our lives—the sense and the reality of truly living—we have to find them in **Christ**. The natural response to 'find myself' is to look within myself—and that's not what this verse says to do. This verse says that my life is Christ's possession. That's opposite way thinking.]. **4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.** [It's going to get better one day because of something that's going to happen in the future. It's not about me making things perfect today—I'll go crazy trying to make that happen. Jesus will make things right one day and I'm to look forward to that.

So the first thing that Paul warns us of in **Colossians 3** is our minds—we have to have our minds focused on things above—and when we do, the things here will have their proper perspective.]

Summary of 'Our Minds': When we find our minds focusing on things **here, go the opposite way and focus on things **there**.**

2. Our Members (vv. 5–7)

5 Therefore put to death [to **deprive** of power—to unplug] **your members** [literally, our arms and our legs] **which are on the earth**: [When our arms and legs want to do things and go places that we should not do and should not go, we must deprive them of the power to do so—we must pull the plug on them] **fornication** [illicit sexual intercourse—this is the actual act of sex (example: sex **outside** of marriage)], **uncleanness** [luxurious, extravagant living in a filthy manner—literally, a dirty lifestyle (example = **Playboy**)], **passion** [depraved passions—this is the mental side of a filthy lifestyle (example: a filthy **mind**)], **evil desire** [a destructive desire for what is forbidden: (example: **drugs**)], **and covetousness** [desire to have more (example = **America**)], **which is idolatry** [worshipping a false god]. [Verse five is filled with really bad stuff. I know it is bad stuff because of verse six.] **6 Because of these things the wrath of God** [that’s why the stuff in verse five is bad—because it elicits God’s wrath—and if you need examples, just peruse the Old Testament] **is coming upon the sons of disobedience** [literally, those who are **not** able to be persuaded—several times this ‘unable to be persuaded’ is referred to in the Scripture as “hardening of the heart” (this was done by Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, the nation of Israel, and others)], **7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them**. [Paul’s emphasis is on the past tense as we are not supposed to be doing these things with our members now that we are Christians. Paul tells us to pull the plug on our members when we start to go down these paths: illicit sexual intercourse, filthy lifestyles, filthy minds, wanting that which is forbidden, and desiring more.]

Summary of ‘Our Members’: When we find our members headed toward these things, go the opposite way and **deprive** them of their power.

3. Our Mouths (vv. 8–11)

8 But now you yourselves are to put off [the Greek word used here is a compound word meaning to **separate** from a particular thing. So, we set our minds, deprive our members, and separate our mouths] **all these** [these build on each other]: **anger** [**violent** emotion that stretches us from the normal], **wrath** [anger that rises and **falls** that shows a pattern of anger], **malice** [desire to **injure** combined with a lack of concern for the law], **blasphemy** [**slander** or speech that hurts God’s name—remember, Paul is writing to the church at Colossae—these are believers], **filthy language** [**obscene**

speech—this is total disregard for any measure of what is right and what is wrong—depravity on display] **out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie** [deliberately deceiving speech] **to one another, since you have put off** [wholly put off—a stronger Greek word than is used in verse eight. If the word used in verse eight means to take off, this means to take off and move away from it as well—literally to go the opposite way from it.] **the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on** [literally to **slide** in to. Everyone stand up. There are two types of people in the world—those that jump in to swimming pools and those that gradually get in to swimming pools. Let's split up based on that—jumpers on this side, sliders on this side. This verse is harder to do for the jumpers because they like to get it over with. This is easier for the sliders because their nature is to take things slowly and carefully. The word used for putting on is the word for sliding in to the pool, not jumping in—it's controlled and purposeful.] **the new man** [this is what we are sliding in to—a totally new person] **who is renewed** [**grown** up and not what he was at an earlier point in time. The question here is, "Are you what you were?" If we are, we're not sliding in to the new man. If we're not, we're sliding in to the new man. Your spouse is great at answering this question for you to see if you're going the opposite way of what you were.] **in knowledge** [precise knowledge—not a general understanding of something—this is specific knowledge that's required to combat false teaching so that we can grow as we should. Remember, this section is talking about our speech—things that come out of our mouths, so this specific knowledge would be used properly for God in the opposite way that our mouths used to be used against God.] **according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.** [Verse 11 says this applies to everyone—no matter what category you are in. Nationality doesn't matter. Religious activity doesn't matter. Severity of barbarism doesn't matter (Scythians = the most barbaric of all the barbarians). Freedom doesn't matter. Christ makes us equals and that is opposite way thinking if there ever was. Our nature is to oppress and to enslave—this is why our children fight each other—they are oppressive little pagans. They must be taught to go the opposite way as well.]

Summary of 'Our Mouths': When we find our mouths about to say something they shouldn't say, go the opposite way and **separate from that communication and **slide** in to the new man.**

The Opposite Way (Col. 3:12–25)

The opposite way is doing the opposite of what comes **naturally**

4. Our Mannerisms (vv. 12–17)

12 Therefore, as *the elect* [picked] **of God, holy and beloved** [agape love], **put on** [slide in to—the same word used in verse ten] **tender** [literally **bowels**—the Hebrews felt the seat of all emotion wasn't the heart, but the bowels—you've heard the phrase, 'moved with compassion'? How about, "I love you with all my bowels"?] **mercies** [compassion, pity], **kindness** [moral goodness], **humility** [having a deep sense of one's own moral **littleness**—it's "I'm 'NOT' all that and a bag of chips"], **meekness** [having **power** and not misusing it], **longsuffering** [**slowness** in avenging wrong]; **13 bearing with** [holding **up** **one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*.** [How often do we ignore this? If someone is quarreling with us or complains about us, our manner should be forgiveness, not revenge. This is opposite way thinking if there ever was.] **14 But above all these things put on love** [agape love—verse 14 fills in the cracks with **love**—caulk], **which is the bond** [referring to the ligaments that hold the bones of our bodies in place] **of perfection.** [Paul calls love the "**bond of perfection.**" There's nothing that will hold a group of people together any better than love. I recently learned that there are products you can buy to separate objects that have been super glued together. Did you know that? There are substances that will break down the strongest physical bonds, but there's nothing that breaks down love—love always wins (check out our class page).] **15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts** [literally, let peace be the **umpire** (think about it this way—there's a situation in which you have a choice of how to respond and you let "**peace**" decide which is best)], **to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful** [mindful, agreeable]. **16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly** [abundantly] **in all wisdom** [**general** word for knowledge contrasting the word used in verse 10], **teaching** [teaching via conversation with the intent to explain or expound] **and admonishing** [**warning**] **one another in psalms** [songs accompanied with **music**] **and hymns** [**sacred** songs] **and spiritual songs** [lyrical poems relating to the **human** spirit], **singing with grace** [favor] **in your hearts** [the center of your life] **to the**

Lord. 17 And *whatever you do* [to make or to do—a general word describing action] **in word** [speech] **or deed** [action], **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.** [verse 17 comes along and fills in the cracks again related to our attitude related to our mannerisms—we're to do these things with thanks]

Summary of 'Our Mannerisms': When we find our mannerisms are about to do something without love, peace, and a thankful heart, go the opposite way and slide in to love, let peace umpire, and give **thanks**.

5. Our Marriages (vv. 18–21)

18 Wives, submit [originally a military term meaning to line up under, when used in a non-military sense, it means a **voluntary** attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden] **to your own husbands, as is fitting** [as it comes up whenever it needs to come up] **in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love** [agape love—literally, to welcome, to entertain, to be **fond** of, to love dearly—a reason is not required] **your wives and do not be bitter** [be made angry, exasperated] **toward them. 20 Children, obey** [this word was used to describe the process of answering the **door** when someone was knocking and then to open the door—so there's both the idea of listening (you have to pay attention) and the idea of obeying (you have to open the door)] **your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing** [acceptable—it makes God smile] **to the Lord.** ['The Opposite Way' is clearly seen in this section—the opposite of each of our natural responses is illustrated and commanded.] **21 Fathers, do not provoke** [stir up, excite] **your children, lest they become discouraged** [have a **broken** spirit. I have an eight-year-old and a five-year-old. It's scary to think that I could break their spirit so that they grow up to be discouraged adults. Did you notice the order of the instructions? First to the wife, then the husband, then the child, then the dad. Too often in my home, I have relegated the task of 'the children' to my wife, when in fact, Paul sandwiches their obedience in between God's directions to me. That placement makes me wonder if my obedience and their obedience are related.].

Summary of 'Our Marriages': When we find our marriages about to go against God's ordained structure for the home, go the opposite way and **volunteer** for God's structure.

6. Our Masters (vv. 22–25)

22 **Bondservants** [voluntary submission to slavery; today, this is best illustrated in the employee/employer relationship], **obey** [same word as is in verse 20—we should be listening for our employers’ direction—and we should obey that direction provided God’s laws are not violated] **in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice** [working only when he’s looking], **as men-pleasers, but in sincerity** [a focus on **one** thing that is free from pretense and hypocrisy (this word reminds me of **Philippians 3:13** where Paul writes, “**But one thing I do**”—he didn’t have 20 things he dabbled in, he had “**one thing I do**”) **of heart, fearing God.** 23 **And whatever you do, do it heartily** [with great **breath**], **as to the Lord and not to men,** [Verse 23 fills in those cracks again—this time with great effort (everything about our job should get bathed in effort)] 24 **knowing that from the Lord you will receive** [get paid] **the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.** [Translation: We are really working for **Jesus** anyway] 25 **But he who does wrong** [hurt, damage, do wickedness] **will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality** [respect of persons—God doesn’t hold us to different standards]. [Verse 25 confirms that He will settle everything out in the end because it all comes back to Jesus.]

Summary of ‘Our Masters’: When we find our masters being deprived of great breath, go the opposite way and do the job for **Jesus.**

This series is based off of “The Opposite Way” (a song by Leeland). These are the lyrics:

Living in the same town
For all these years
Doing the same old things
Hanging with the same crowd
And it’s starting to get crippling
You’ve never felt in place
And you tell yourself it’s all okay
But something’s different today
You want to run the opposite way

And it seems like you’re locked in a cage
And you need to find a way of escape
When everyone is setting the pace
It’s okay to run the opposite way

The Father sent His Son down
The light of men
The cross He bore was crippling
Rejected in His own town
They couldn’t see the sun shining
He knelt in the garden and prayed
Father, let this cup pass from me
It’s not Your will for me to stay
Your will for me is the opposite way

Oh, and through the cross He conquered the grave
Oh, He ran the opposite way
Yeah, through the cross He conquered the grave
So you could run the opposite way

Jesus went the opposite way so **I** could too.