

LifeSharing & Pioneers Lesson 1 "John 3:16-19, Romans 3:10-18
Do I Really Need God?"

1. What is the difference between a child who regularly comes over to your house and a child that has been adopted into your family?

The adopted child has legal rights that entitle him/her to the same privileges as other children born into the family. The adopted child has the right to be there and no one can demand that he or she leave the family. The visiting child has a greater claim on his/her life by someone else.

2. Before we come to Christ, according to the bible what is our biblical standing before God, and what does the following verse mean to you about you 1 Peter 2:10 (New International Version)¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Before coming to Christ, we are outside of the family of God. Our natural birth did not mean that we were automatically children of God in the spiritual sense of the world.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.^{NRSV} This verse is an adaptation of [Hosea 1:9-10](#) and [2:23](#). Hosea, God's prophet, was describing God's rejection of Israel, followed by future restoration. Paul used these same verses from Hosea and applied them to the Gentile believers ([Romans 9:25-26](#)). Peter applied these verses to the New Testament church as a whole. Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1 & 2 Peter and Jude.

Just as Israel had been, at one time, rejected by God without any hope of forgiveness for their sins, so Christians had been, at one time, rejected by God without any hope of mercy. But believers are now *God's people* because they have been chosen by him ([2:9](#)) and *have received mercy*. "Mercy" means God's compassionate treatment of us even though we deserve the full measure of his justice. God had no obligation to gather a people together to

whom he would show mercy; not one of us deserves his slightest concern. God drawing a people unto himself and lavishing mercy on them gives overwhelming evidence of his great love. This mercy ought to affect the way every believer lives, as Peter will point out in the following verses

3. We hear a lot of talk about everyone on the planet is a child of God. From a biblical perspective, what does that mean and what does it not mean?

All of humanity has been created by God in the image of God. God is definitely the creator of us all, and because we are in God's image, we all have value and worth. God's love extends to all of humanity and God desires to save all of humanity. However the bible teaches there is a kingdom of darkness and a kingdom of light. Because of our sinful nature, we are born into the kingdom of darkness. We must choose to become a part of the kingdom of light. John 3:18 makes it clear that we are all already condemned. It is because of God's love for us that we are able to become uncondemned. Jesus never speaks of the Father as being the father of everyone. He told the leaders, you are of your father the devil. Jesus speaks of the Father as blessing the just and the unjust alike. But he does not call everyone children of the Father or children of the light. We are brothers and sisters in our humanity. That is not the same as saying we are all brothers and sisters spiritually. One has to be adopted into the family of God.

John 3:16-19 (Today's New International Version)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned

already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

4. What does this passage above tell us about loving God's nature.

We see that God did not love us because we had chosen to follow him. God chose to love us while we were condemned and on our way to eternal destruction. God is going out of His way to pay a great price for a people who had rejected him and insisted on going their own way. God desires to be our Savior far more than God desires to be our judge.

The entire gospel comes to a focus in this verse. God's love is not just to a certain group of individuals—it is offered to *the world*.

God's love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in. Here God's actions defined the pattern of true love, the basis for all love relationships—when you love someone, you are willing to sacrifice dearly for that person. Sacrificial love expresses itself without assurance that the love will be returned in kind. The timing of that love was highlighted by Paul's words, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" ([Romans 5:8](#) NIV).

Sacrificial love is also practical in seeking ways to meet the needs of those who are loved. In God's case, that love was infinitely practical, since it set out to rescue those who had no hope of rescuing themselves. God paid dearly to save us; *He gave His only begotten Son*, the highest price he could pay. The term translated "only begotten" (monogene) expresses Jesus' unique value and position as God's only Son. The salvation God offers freely was costly to him.

This offer is made to *whoever believes*. To "believe" is more than intellectual agreement that Jesus is God. It means putting our trust and confidence in him that he alone can save us. It is to put Christ in charge of our present plans and eternal destiny. Believing is both trusting his words as reliable and relying on him for the power to change.

Jesus accepted our punishment and paid the price for our sins so that we would *not perish*. *Perish* does not mean physical death, for we all will eventually die. Here it refers to eternity apart from God. Those who believe will receive the alternative, the new life that Jesus bought for us—*everlasting life with God*.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – John.

5. What does the passage tell us about the ultimate destiny of humanity and why it will be as it is?

All of humanity will either spend eternity with God or be eternally lost. Those who choose Christ will have life. Those who reject Christ will continue on the road to condemnation, for Christ is their only hope of escape off the pathway.

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world."^{NKJV} Why condemn an already condemned world? All people are already under God's judgment because of sin—specifically the sin of not believing in God's Son ([16:9](#)). The only way to escape the condemnation is to believe in Jesus, the Son of God, because he came "that the world through Him might be saved."^{NKJV} He who believes in him is saved from God's judgment. And God *wants* people to believe: He is patient, "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" ([2 Peter 3:9](#) NKJV).

When we consider ways to communicate the gospel, we should follow Jesus' example. We do not need to condemn unbelievers; they are condemned already. We must tell them about this condemnation, and then offer them the way of salvation—faith in Jesus Christ. When we share the gospel with others, our love must be like Jesus'—willingly giving up our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God's love

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – John.

"This is the judgment."^{NRSV} Or "this is how the judgment works" (TEV). What follows describes the grounds for judgment: "Light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."^{NRSV} This is the same conflict between light and darkness that John presented in the prologue ([1:5](#), [9-11](#)). The full arrival of the light in the world signals that God has carried out his plan for the salvation of his creation. *Light has come* means that with the coming of Jesus we have: (1) an absolute source of truth; (2) condemnation of sin; (3) guidance for our daily decisions; and (4) illumination to learn about God more clearly.

What a tragedy that people have turned away from God's offer, embracing instead the darkness in hopes of covering up evil actions. There is probably no more painful moment than when we honestly confront our tendency to love darkness, to twist or withhold the truth. The Son did not come to judge, but in the light of his character the sharp shadows of our sinfulness stand out.

6. The word of God says this about us in Romans 3:10-12. This passage is specifically speaking about all of us? Why does this passage offer no hope of us being able to be seen as being good people in God's eyes.

Romans 3:10-18 (Today's New International Version)

¹⁰ As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." ^[a] ¹³ "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." ^[b] "The poison of vipers is on their lips." ^[c] ¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." ^[d] ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know." ^[e] ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." ^[f]

God makes it clear that all of us is in the same boat defiled by sin. None of us will ever be declared righteous by God. There is no distinction made between Jews and Gentiles here. No one has a privilege place in the eyes of God based on what they have done. We are often tempted to think that there are some good people who do not know Christ. This simply is not the case. All of us are bad and corrupt.

7 . Are you willing to plead guilty as charged under the above passage of Romans 3:10-18. Why or Why not?

WE ALL FALL SHORT

This list of sins, quoted from the Old Testament, tends to strike us as harsh and unfair. We can usually spot one or two for which we can claim exemption. After all, we think, we don't kill or openly practice deceit. But, as Scripture

often requires us to do, a second look is helpful. The implications of the list are difficult to avoid, They force us to ask ourselves:

I How well do we understand God? ([3:11](#))

I How diligently are we seeking God? ([3:11](#))

I How much goodness would God find in our daily life? ([3:12](#))

I In the wake of our actions and words, do we leave people helped or hurting? ([3:13-15](#))

I What is our record of peacemaking? ([3:17](#))

I In what sense do we fear God? ([3:18](#))

Paul's point, of course, is that an honest look at the facts of sinfulness will inevitably include us under God's judgment.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Romans.

8. Why is it important to understand the impact of our own sin and our own rebellion against God in our lives before making the decision to give our lives to Christ?

If we do not understand how bad off we were, we will tend to minimize what Christ has done on our behalf. The love we have for Christ will be much smaller than it should be. Jesus dealt with this in the story of Simon and prostitute. The woman realized the extent of her sin and was very grateful to Jesus. Simon did not, and he cared only a little for Jesus.

Luke 7:39-47 (NIV)

³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰ Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.

⁴¹ "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

⁴³ Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.

⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Having a low view of our sin leads to a very low view of our Savior. The motivation for giving our all to the cause of Christ is minimized as well.

9. The Christian is in battle at all times between the sinful nature and the spirit of Christ within him or her. The sinful nature is what causes us to do the following things:

Galatians 5:19-21 (Today's New International Version)¹⁹ The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

How much of the sinful nature automatically disappears when we give our lives to Christ?

The sinful nature does not disappear when we give our lives to Christ. It is our spiritual nature that comes alive and the sinful nature is exposed for what it is. The sinful nature is in rebellion against God. In giving our lives to Christ, Christ brings our spiritual nature to life so that we can live an alternative life in which Christ is in charge. We are therefore told, to put the sinful nature to death on a daily basis. If we do not, it will quickly seek to overshadow the new spiritual nature we have been given in Christ. Christ gives us the power and the ability to live victoriously over the sinful nature, but makes it clear, that it is our job to say no to that nature.

10. How is the sinful nature impacting your relationship to those closest to you?

It is my sinful nature that causes me to be impatient and irritable with others especially when they fail to live up to my expectations and demands. It is my sinful nature that causes me to think of me first and how I am in the right in each situation. The anger I express is not a righteous anger leading to justice, but a sinful response to a disappointment I have experienced.

11. How do we stop the actions of the sinful nature from ruining our lives?

We must first identify and admit the sinful nature is at work in our actions. We stop it by taking responsibilities for our sinful actions without making excuses or trying to justify ourselves in any way. We confess, repent, and seek restoration through an apology or granting forgiveness. We then make a conscious effort to allow the new nature to reign in us. We allow God to work His will and plan through our lives for the situation.

Life-Sharing & Pioneers Lesson 2 John 15-16, John 3:1-6, Ephesians 2:8-10

How Do I Get Into the Family Of God

1. Does a person's journey with God start with 1) a person crying out to God for help or 2) God drawing a person to Himself by opening the person's heart?

God loved us before we first loved Him. I think we would be surprised at how long God has been sending things, people, and events into our lives long before we thought about giving our lives to God. Jesus says that no one comes to the Father being drawn to him.

2. What comfort or assurance do you find in the following verse:

John 15:16 (Today's New International Version)¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

The comfort I found in this verse is that God chose me, knowing all my faults and weaknesses, so I don't have to worry about not being able to make it in my life with Christ. Christ chose me with the intention of completing the work he began in me. So when I fall, I don't have to feel as though I must give up and quit. God knew about my failure before it happened, but he still calls me to be His child.

Jesus made the first choice—to love and to die for us, to invite us to live with him forever. We make the next choice—to accept or reject his offer. Unless he chose us, we would have no choice to make.

Philippians 1:6 (New International Version) ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

3. Many people try to get the benefits of Jesus' teachings, without going through the process of being a follower of Christ. Why does simply following a list of rules not work to give us the lives we desire?

Keeping rules is not the same thing as having our hearts changed. I can obey rules on the outside and still have myself at the center of my heart. As long as I am on the throne deciding which rules I will keep and which ones I will not, I am not yielded to Jesus Christ and no real change is taking place inside of me. The life that Jesus wants to give us, is a life in which we put our trust and confidence in Him each day of our lives. It may mean saying no to a certain mindset that the world is constantly trying to get me to adopt. It may mean saying yes to seeing the world and seeing people in the same way that Jesus sees them, and moving to do things that Jesus would do. The life we receive is found in surrendering our will to God's will everyday. We also cannot keep all the rules in our own strength long enough to find any life in them.

John 3:1-6 (Today's New International Version)

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

¹ Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." ³ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again. ^[a]" ⁴ "How can anyone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit ^[b] gives birth to spirit.

4. What does Jesus mean in verse 3 when he says "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again"? What was wrong with our first birth?

The Scriptures teach that we are dead in our trespasses and sins. A dead person does not have the ability to see. We are made alive to Christ. It's the person who is willing to repent that has his or her eyes open to what the kingdom of God is all about. Our first birth simply makes us part of the human race or human family. But everyone in that family is born with a sinful nature that is passed down from our fathers and mothers. Our first birth is a guarantee that we have a rebellious nature toward the things of God.

5. What do you think is meant by the phrase "born again." How is the second birth different from the first birth?

To be born again, is to make the decision to enter into the family of God. The second birth is different in that the second birth is a spiritual birth in which we have a choice in whether or not the birth is going to take place. Being born again means we recognize that there is a name claim on our lives and new family to become a part of.

The actual Greek word for born again can also mean to be "born from above". We get a greater emphasis on what's happening in our new birth when we use the term "born from above" rather than "born again." But Nicodemus clearly thought Jesus was talking about being born again as being born a second time.

6. What is the role of the water and the Spirit?

Most likely Jesus is referring to the water as the cleansing agent of the Spirit's work in our lives in granting us salvation. Titus 3:5 lends support to this view in that it says,

Titus 3:5 (New International Version) ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

There are two other views on the this passage as can be seen from the following discussion.

[3:5](#) "No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit."^{NRSV} This statement has perplexed and divided commentators for many centuries. Some traditions have taught that the *water* denotes physical birth (referring to the "water" of amniotic fluid or even semen) and *Spirit* to spiritual birth—in which case Jesus would be saying that a person has to have two births: one physical and the second, spiritual. This view builds upon the preceding context when Nicodemus referred to physical birth. It also points to the parallel Jesus makes in [verse 6](#): "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (NIV). According to this position, Jesus would have been granting the Pharisee's point in order to highlight the nature of the second birth as spiritual. Two strengths of this interpretation are that it avoids making the physical act of water baptism a necessity and that it avoids bringing almost a "third birth" idea into the discussion. If *water* doesn't refer to natural birth, say its defenders, then Jesus seems to be saying that a person must be born of their parents, born of water, and born of the Spirit.

Several weaknesses undermine this view: (1) the Greek grammatical construction does not separate *water* and *Spirit*—together they replace the single expression another ("again" or "from above" in [verse 3](#)); (2) there is no evidence that *water* was specifically connected with physical birth in Jesus' and Nicodemus's cultural context; and (3) it would be reasonable to expect that if Jesus was explaining *water* and *Spirit* as separate terms in [verse 6](#), he could have said, "Water gives birth to water and spirit gives birth to spirit." This interpretation turns out to be based on better motives than reasons. The concerns over making this verse say more than is true about the nature and place of water baptism are valid, but not best served by this approach.

Other traditions have taught that the *water* refers to baptism and the *Spirit* to spiritual regeneration—thus, Jesus would have been saying that a person must both be baptized and receive the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God. This view is at times influenced by the belief that the sacrament of baptism is itself a requirement for salvation.

A parallel view makes *water* refer to baptism but places the emphasis on teaching two steps of baptism; one by water, the other by the Spirit. For support, these views point to the larger context in John where John the Baptist and water baptism are mentioned just preceding the events in Cana and following this encounter with Nicodemus. They also rely on the tendency of previous generations of Christians to equate the mention of water with baptism. But in the first seven chapters of John, water appears in some way (naturally or symbolically) in each chapter. To associate water and baptism too closely makes baptism a higher priority than the Scriptures give it. Here, for instance, if Jesus was speaking of two completely separate acts, two

baptisms, it is odd that the rest of the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus never again refers to the subject but revolves entirely around the work of God's Spirit. Still other traditions have taught that Jesus' reference to *water* is not physical in either the sense of birth or baptism. The term *water* is simply another description of the Spirit—or the Spirit's activity of cleansing and life-giving action of the Spirit (see [John 7:37-39](#)).
Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – John.

7. Is there a difference between being “born again” and” being saved”?

Although there are people who will claim a difference to be born again is to surrender your life to Christ. To be saved is to have surrendered your life to Christ. They are essentially the same thing in that both mean you are in the family or kingdom of God.

8. What is it that we are being saved from or saved to?

We are being saved from a life of sin, a way of thinking, and a certain judgment to a life being lived for Christ as our Master, who wants to change our way of thinking, and remove us from the punishment of our sins. God saved us to put us to work for the kingdom of God. God saved us to change us to be more and more in the image of Christ, in order to reach more people for the gospel. God's love for other people is part of the reason we have been saved from our sin, in order for us to reach them in their sin.

9. If someone were to ask you, how can I be saved, what would you tell them if they only had a few minutes left to live?

God loves you. God knows that you need him in your life to escape a terrible judgment which is coming. God loves you so much, he has made it possible for Jesus Christ to pay for the wrong you have done. Jesus loves you and willingly

died in your place. If you ask for forgiveness and put your trust in Him, you can be saved. Would you like to do it?

Ephesians 2:8-10 (Today's New International Version)⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

10. What is God's purpose in reaching out to us according to Ephesians 2:8-10?

God has reached out to us, because God has a mission for us to do. We are to be God's handiwork in the world doing good works to glorify God. It's not about living for ourselves, but living for the cause of Christ. If we have ceased to do good works, then we have ceased to be the kind of handiwork that God desires for us to be.

11. When did you make a conscious choice to choose to follow Christ so that you know you are saved?

I made a decision in 1973 in a hospital room at St. James Hospital in Hornell NY.

12. Do we need to make more than one decision to give ourselves over to Christ? Explain your answer? Yes. We do not lose our salvation, but we do need reminders and rededications when the enemy has come in or we have drifted from the Lord.

Lesson 3 Life-Sharing & Pioneers John 14:23-24, Matthew 7:21-23, Philipians 3:12-14

Will I Be Recognized By God

1. How do you know that someone loves you?

They begin to offer to you something of value, that you either want or need. They then prove to be willing to pay a price in order for you to have your needs met above their own desires. They then sacrifice a part of themselves in order for you to be pleased. You know that person has your best interest at heart in their dealings with you.

2. Jesus makes the following statement in John 14:23-24

John 14:23-24 (Today's New International Version)²³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

Do you think it's fair of Jesus to base our love for God on how well we obey his teachings? Why or why not?

We like to make a distinction between our love for God and our obedience to God as though they were quite different from each other. We have all heard the phrase, "I may not be living, but God knows my heart." We sometimes think a professed verbal love for God will outweigh or overcome a disobedient action on our part, but it does not. The only thing we truly have to offer to God is our obedience.

^{NRSV} **Obedience comes from love and trust. Thus a person who does not love Jesus will not obey him. A sobering way of stating Jesus' point is to say, "The quality of our obedience is a direct reflection of our love for Jesus."Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – John.**

3. Conflict is an inevitable part of life as we relate to each other. It may be between family members, between friends, between workers, or between strangers? What is at the root of our refusal as Christians to keep the commandments of Christ in our relationships in times of conflict with each other?

At the root of it all is the desire to please ourselves more than we desire to please God. The thought of lashing out or making our point means more to us at that point than yielding our feelings for the cause of Jesus Christ. Getting our own way is at the center of it all. We choose to no longer look to Christ for direction to determine our behavior. Our goal is simply to please ourselves no matter what the cost.

In chapter 4 of James, the apostle writes James 4:1-3 (NIV)

¹ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

4. Is God more interested in building good works through us or good character in us? What does each of them look like? Which is the more difficult of the two and why?

We all like the idea of being used by God to do some great work for God. It can be from teaching a class, singing a song, building a church to becoming whatever we can imagine. Far too many people think the main reason God called them was to go forth and do the work of the ministry. But God's call on our lives is to first to be in relationship to Him. Relationship does not exist apart from our obedience as we saw earlier. God may give us a great job, not to

continue to promote us in the company, but to develop patience in us, integrity in us, or faithfulness within us. He's not trying to show people our ability to evangelize on the job, as much as He is trying to get them to see what an honest hardworking person is. God can use anybody at anytime to do a miracle. God can only develop character in a person over a period of time by allowing that person to experience some trials and difficulties in life. Good works are much easier to produce than character. That is why a person will eagerly go do something for God, while letting their behavior at home be far less Christ like. Showing others our works is much less humiliating than showing them the depth of our character. Jesus is never impressed by our good works. Even the devil does good works at time, if that's what it takes to keep people away from entering into a life changing relationship with God.

5. Many people develop a good works mentality as to why they are going to go to heaven. They have a list of things to take to God of what they have done and believe God is going to be impressed. Read the following passage and explain, why the people being described felt comfortable addressing Jesus as their Lord.

Matthew 7:21-23 (Today's New International Version)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

These people had many good works done in the name of Jesus. They were certain that they had taken the proper steps to give Jesus the credit for the works they had done. They thought good works in the name of Jesus would override the flaws in their character. Giving Jesus the credit, does not make Jesus your Lord. The people talking about Jesus, had a ministry centered around Jesus, and appeared to be used by Jesus to make a difference in the lives of others. Yet their obedience outside of their ministry moments was lacking. They were still their own lords.

LIP SERVICE

Jesus is not impressed by thoughtless and heartless piety. Superficial religion might satisfy the casual observer, but Jesus demands obedience from the inside out. Saying "Lord, Lord" without really obeying Christ simply breaks the third commandment: "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God" ([Exodus 20:7](#) NIV).

Many are tempted toward pretense and dishonesty. A shell of spirituality may preserve our reputation with others, but it undermines real growth. We are deluded if we think that God might be fooled by fake holiness. God desires "truth in the inner parts" ([Psalm 51:6](#) NIV). What does God find under the surface of your life? Do your actions live up to your words?

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Matthew.

6. What do you think Jesus means by the term “do the will of my Father” as it relates to our dealings with other people? What does it mean to call Jesus Lord?

The will of the Father in relating to other people is for us to love them as Jesus loves us. Can you imagine any circumstance we could do that would cause Jesus to curse us out? To call Jesus Lord, means to have the desire to please Him in all areas of our lives. That desire is coupled with a will to put into action, what we know God would have us do in a situation even when it costs us or hurts us to do so.

To do God's will implies a relationship with God—the ability to communicate with him, know his will, and then be able to perform it. Such "fruit" reveals one who will enter the kingdom of heaven.Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Matthew.

7. What does Jesus mean by the term “evildoer.” Can we as Christians be considered as evildoers?

The term evildoer simply is one who breaks God’s commandments. It is a category that we all fall into. The key in this passage is that these people did not

have a living relationship to Jesus. They chose to become comfortable in their sin, by relying on the works they were doing in Jesus' name.

8. Think of one of the last sins you recently committed. How was your behavior different from the person who was not a believer who committed the same act?

Well there was a sense of guilt, shame and remorse on my part. I confessed to God that I had blown it and sought forgiveness. I believed God heard me and granted me my request. I left the confession with a sense of being restored back into fellowship with God so that I could go forward in growing in my relationship with God. I don't think an unbeliever would have gone through the steps of seeking restoration to God.

9. Who has the higher expectation of us living a near perfect life after becoming a Christian, God or those around us? Why do you think so?

God is not under any delusion about the sinful nature inside of us. That is why the Bible commands us to put it to death. God knows that we are going to blow it, even when God makes it possible for us to say no to temptation. We find in John the following.

1 John 2:1-2 (NLT)

¹ My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

² He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

Unfortunately, those around us tend to be a little less forgiving of the sins and mistakes we make. They will quickly say, “I thought you were a Christian”, thereby implying a Christian is perfect and no longer sins. We know that is simply not the case, however we can often give the impression we no longer sin by pretending to be holier than we really are. The bible is full of people who walk with God and know God, yet had moments in their lives of moral failure. The key is found in what do we do with the failure.

Philippians 3:12-14 (Today's New International Version)

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

10. Having read Philippians 3:12-14, what is the difference between trying to become a perfect Christian and trying to become a mature Christian?

To try live life as a perfect Christian is to set one's self up for failure. For one thing there is no standard of perfect behavior in every situation for each believer. God never says come to me and let me make you perfect so I can show you off to others. One Christian is never a more perfect Christian than another. We are perfected in God's eyes when we are in Christ, because we claim the perfection of Christ. Our goal as believers is to reach for maturity in our relationship to Christ. We aren't comparing ourselves to any one other than ourselves in the eyes of God. Maturity means I am learning and demonstrating what it means to love God and to love my neighbor as myself. Those are the two commandments that we have to master, because everything else we do has to be governed by

them if we are to grow in maturity in Christ. The possibility for maturity is the same for every believer regardless of his or her circumstances or situation.

11. Where does the group need to pray for you to mature further in Christ?

Lesson 4 LifeSharing & Pioneers Colossians 3:1-10

Do I Really Need To Change?

Wouldn't it be great, if the day you signed up at a fitness center, you'd automatically lose 25lbs and look great immediately. Many Christians think this is what happens the moment they gave their lives to Christ. Instantly all of their old behaviors and desires immediately disappeared never to be heard of or from again. This is not what happens. Becoming a Christian equips you with the possibility of growing into a completely new person. Your salvation is instantly granted, but your growth is not.

1. What would you tell a new believer who says, "I've been a Christian a month, and I still am giving in to temptation to sin. What is wrong with me?"

I would tell the person although we are saved instantly, there is a process called sanctification in which we are to grow and mature as believers. We learn to resist temptation in order for us to be drawn closer to God. Temptation is a battle we will have throughout our lives as Christians. The things we are tempted to do may change, but the temptation is still going to be there.

Colossians 3:1-4

¹ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your ^[a] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

2. What does it mean to be raised with Christ, and why is it necessary for growth in the Lord?

To be raised with Christ, means that we have a new nature, a new birth, and a new power. To be raised in Christ is to follow in Christ's footsteps. It's great that we have been saved, but now comes the part of allowing the Holy Spirit to work

in and through our lives. If we are not willing to be changed by the Holy Spirit, then it is impossible to grow as believers.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.^{NIV} Paul did not want to leave his readers with merely a negative dimension to their faith—for example, "Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world" ([2:20](#) NIV)—so he turned their focus to the positive. They had died, but they had also been raised. The Greek words in the phrase *since . . . you have been raised with Christ* express certainty. There was no doubt in Paul's mind of the sincerity of the Colossians' faith. Once dead in their sins, they had been raised from death, just as Christ had been raised from the dead by God's power ([3:3-4](#) will explain this). They had received new life from God through the power of the Holy Spirit. They did not need to struggle and work to attain that life, as the false teachers were trying to tell them; they already had new life! What remained was to work out its implications in daily life. Because they had been raised, they had a clear responsibility to Christ, who had raised them.

3. How would you define the word "heart: in this passage and what does it mean to "set your heart on things above?" What are some of the things we would see above?

In the Bible, the "heart" is the center of one's being. Jesus had told his followers, "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" ([Matthew 6:20-21](#) NIV). Paul explained that their hearts should be *set . . . on things above*. The Greek word for "set" (zeteo) means to seek something out with a desire to possess it. Their hearts should be seeking after what is above (in the spiritual, eternal world) in contrast to what is below (in the earthly, transitory world). Paul contrasted the desirable "things" with the basic principles of the universe ([2:20](#)) and the human commands and teachings ([2:22-23](#)). They were to get their direction from Christ, not from the ascetic principles discussed in [2:8-23](#).

The other religious teachers stressed "heavenly things" also, but Paul was appealing to the highest power of all, the exalted Christ. The believers must take their focus off the world and turn it to Christ, who *is seated at the right hand of God*. Jesus had told his accusers that "from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God" ([Luke 22:69](#) NIV). Even David saw the coming Messiah and his position: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'" ([Psalm 110:1](#) NIV). Christ's seat at God's right hand reveals his power, authority, and position as both judge and advocate.

Because the believers had been raised with Christ, they were participating with Christ in the spiritual realm to which he had been exalted. Indeed, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" ([Ephesians 2:6](#) NIV). The Colossian believers already had experienced this exaltation; they needed to set their hearts and treasures there so that they would live out their lives on earth as citizens of heaven.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon.

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Christians have one calling and two venues, one purpose and two passports. We are to both love God with our heart and soul and love our neighbor as ourselves. And we do that here and now, where we are, with the life God has given us.

Proper strategy for this lifelong calling requires us to set our minds on Christ daily. In practical terms, that means we

- regard money as a means to do God's will, not merely to accumulate or to use for our own pleasure;
- find a spouse who shares our desire to seek Christ and things above;
- not set our hearts on clothes, cars, and entertainment options;
- find a church that is spiritually on the move;
- get the best training we can for our particular area of service, whether medical school or ministry, jazz performance or journalism.

We must do our best for Christ.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon.

Setting their "hearts on things above" ([3:1](#)) meant "striving" to put heaven's priorities into daily practice. Setting their *minds on things above* meant "concentrating" on the eternal rather than the temporal, letting their thoughts dwell in the realm of Christ. They were to focus on the Lord Jesus. Thoughts can influence actions, so if the believers would place their thoughts above and not on the earth, their actions would please God. The ascetics stressed the body; Paul stressed commitment of the whole person, not mindless bodily discipline. *Not on things on the earth* refers to the legalistic rituals, the false methods used to achieve holiness, and even to the basic principles of the world described in [chapter 2](#).

But on what "things" were they to set their minds? Paul had explained this in another letter: "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" ([Philippians 4:8](#) NRSV; see also [Colossians 3:12](#)).

They were not to live as ascetics in some mystical, visionary realm; rather, Paul was saying that, by setting their hearts and minds above, their lives on this earth would be pleasing to God and would help accomplish Christ's work.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon.

4. Why do we set our minds on earthly things?

We set our minds on earthly things because we are constantly being drawn back into this world's way of thinking through advertisements, through the media, through programs and through living our every day lives. Our selfish nature continually seeks to push Christ off the throne of our hearts so that we can begin to once again think primarily of meeting our own needs in our own way independent of God.

5. What are some good earthly things we can set our minds on that will distract us from our call to follow Christ?

We can place way too much emphasis on our children and trying to give them all they want. We can try to put them on career paths much too early and walk away from our call to grow in the Lord. Their being in soccer or dance or whatever becomes more important than bible study or youth meetings. We can place way too much emphasis on being successful in a career. We can place too much emphasis on the American idea of success or recreation and be distracted from having time to serve Christ. We can even put too much emphasis on doing good works and not enough on developing a walk with the Lord.

6. How do we allow for Christ to be our life in this world when we are in the midst of pain, suffering, or unemployment.

The first thing we are to remember is that God is still God in the midst of the various challenges and circumstances we find ourselves in. God has not given up on us, because of our present predicament. God is even working behind the scenes to do a work in us through these circumstances. We have to believe in Romans 8:28 which tells us

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Our call to trust in the Lord remains the same whether we have a job or not, have our health or not, or have things going our way or not. By being raised to life, we know that we are not in this thing alone. We also have to be humble enough to accept assistance from our sisters and brothers in Christ and to make our needs known.

Colossians 3:5-10 (Today's New International Version)

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

7. How do we go about putting to death the things that belong to our earthly nature?

We make a conscious choice to say no to the very things that we at times may want to do. God is not going to send an angel to deliver us from each temptation. We have to be willing to kill it when it arises by choosing to do something different.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature:^{NIV} While Paul opposed the false teachers' asceticism and regulations, he still forbade certain activities that had no part in believers' lives. If the Colossian believers were to

live as examples of Christ, they had to *put to death* certain aspects of the *earthly nature*. "Earthly nature" refers simply to the sinful nature, the old self. Again, Paul was describing the "already" and "not yet" of believers' lives. Although they had died with Christ and had been raised with him, they were still susceptible to temptation and the evils of the sinful nature. Just like diseased limbs of a tree, these practices must be cut off. It would take conscious, daily decisions to remove anything that supported or fed the desires of the earthly nature and to rely, instead, on the Holy Spirit's power. Believers are not to live as they lived before. They died and were raised with Christ, so their lives must show evidence that they are new creations. Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon.

8. We often connect lust with sex, but this passage uses lust slightly differently. What are some of the things we lust for that we deem acceptable?

This passage makes a distinction between sexual immorality, impurity and lust. Lust can refer to having a strong desire for something that turns it into a perversion of one kind or another. In our society we can lust for power, we can lust for beauty, we can lust for fame or we can simply lust to have more and more and more. These things are often deemed acceptable, but they always have tragic endings.

In the passage, two sets of sins are listed. Below are some of the slight differences in meanings to the first five. The first five refer to sexual sin; the second five to sins of speech. These first five were related to the cultural background of the Colossians and were particularly deadly to the life of the church ([3:7](#)).

Sexual immorality^{NIV} (porneia). Any form of illicit sexual relationship. The term serves to spotlight forbidden sexual behavior between people or indirect participation as an audience. We derive our term "pornography" from this Greek word. In contrast to the loose morals of the ancient Greek world, believers ought to show self-discipline and obedience to God in this area.

Impurity^{NRSV} (akatharsia). Moral uncleanness. Perhaps no sexual act has taken place, but the person exhibits a crudeness or insensitivity in sexual matters. Like the other characteristics mentioned on this list, impurity points to activities before knowing Christ and should have no place in a believer's life.

Lust^{NIV} (pathos). Evil sexual passion that leads to excessive sexual immorality and perversion. (See [Romans 1:26](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:5](#).)

Evil desire^{NRSV} (epithumia). Wanting something that is sinister and vile in order to satisfy one's desires (see also [Galatians 5:16](#)). Sinful human nature cannot help but have evil desires. Thus Paul admonished the Colossian believers to get rid of the evil desires that could easily control them and which had been part of their lives before Christ.

Greed [pleonexia] (**which is idolatry**)^{NRSV} Relentless urge to get more for oneself. In this context, Paul may have been focusing on greed for satisfying evil desires and for sexual immorality. The greed is described as *idolatry* because its focus is on filling desires rather than on God.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon.

9. Why would greed be considered as worshipping an idol?

When we are full of greed, we have made ourselves little gods because our primary thought is on pleasing ourselves. We have become an idol, having taken over the number one spot in our hearts that truly belongs to God. We are more interested in satisfying our personal desires than in being pleasing to God.

10. How are we to go about ridding ourselves of the list of sins in verses 8 and 9?

But now you must get rid of all such things—^{NRSV} **Precisely because of their new life in Christ, the believers are to put to death the deeds and desires of the earthly nature (3:5) and get rid of those things listed above and others listed below. "Get rid of" means to put off or disrobe. The old, filthy clothes must be taken off before the new clothes can be put on. The believer "removes" the old life of sin and "puts on" the new life of Christ. The Colossian believers had experienced this; Paul asked that they act it out in their lives.**

Not only did they need to deal with sexual immorality in all its variations, they also needed to deal with misused anger that often spilled over into evil speech. Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon.

11. Several of the sins listed have to do with words coming out of our mouths. Why do you think God is so concerned with the words we are using? What is at stake here.

What comes out of our mouths is always an overflow of what is being held in our hearts. The words we use either bless or curse God because we represent God at all times. The reputation of God is at stake based on the language we choose to use. James tells us that a fountain does not produce fresh and salt water at the same time. James 3:9-12 (NIV) ⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.

¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?

¹² My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Anger (orge). A continuous attitude of hatred that remains bottled up within. This could refer to what is under the surface, while "rage" (below) refers to what bursts out. Anger would destroy the harmony and unity Paul called for among the believers.

Rage^{NIV} (thumos). Outbursts of anger or quick temper for selfish reasons. This could mean continual and uncontrolled behavior.

Malice (kakia). Doing evil despite the good that has been received. This word is a general term referring to an evil force that destroys relationships. It can mean anything from trouble to wickedness. It is a deliberate attempt to harm another person.

Slander^{NRSV} (blasphemia). Destroying another person's good reputation by lies, gossip, spreading rumors, etc. Malice often manifests itself through slander. From the Greek word we get our word "blasphemy," a term used to describe speaking against God. The Greeks used the word for defamation of character. Again, this destroys human relationships.

Filthy language^{NIV} (aisxrologia). Crude talk, abrasive language, expletives. Paul admonished the believers that such language must be caught and stopped before it escapes their mouths.

These behaviors have no place in any Christian or in any church. These are part of the "old life" before knowing Christ. Christians must resolutely "put off" these repulsive sins of anger and speech so that they can "put on" Christ's attitudes and actions.

Sometimes Christians and churches fall into the trap of concentrating on one of these lists to the exclusion of the other. Some churches might be horrified at sexual sin in the congregation, all the while ignoring backbiting and gossip. On the other hand, some churches want so much to keep peace and quiet that they will not confront sin, even sexual sin. But Paul doesn't leave room for any such behavior. The believers were called to get rid of it *all*.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary –
Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon.

12. How often do you think about the presence of God truly being with you each moment of the day? How does it affect your interaction with others?

Probably not nearly enough. When I do, I see people more as God sees them.

13. How do we put on the new self and what exactly is it going to look like on us?

What is that "old self" or "old nature"? It was each person before he or she came to know Christ. The person was enslaved to sin, bound to the earth, without hope. But believers have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.^{NIV} The *new self* or "new nature" from Christ frees us from sin, sets our hearts on "things above" ([3:1](#)), and gives us the hope of eternity. Paul was appealing to the commitment the believers had made, urging them to remain true to their confession of faith. They were to rid themselves of the old life and *put on* the new way of living given by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit.

But how can this be accomplished? How can people "put off" and "put on"? Paul explained that they are not left alone in the process. This new self *is being renewed in knowledge*. Every Christian is in a continuing education program. Renewal is constantly needed in the believer's battle against sin and the old self. The "knowledge" referred to here is personal knowledge of Christ that is *in the image of its Creator*. The goal of the knowledge is Christlikeness. The more believers know of Christ and his work, the more they are being changed to be like him. Because this process is lifelong, we must never stop learning and

obeying. There is no justification for drifting along, but there is an incentive to find the rich treasures of growing in him. It takes practice, ongoing review, patience, and concentration to keep in line with God's will.

**Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary –
Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon.**