

Colossians 3:12 - 4:6

Title: Week 4

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*Leader note: This Message Guide is intended to help you facilitate discussion with your group. You can use the guide exactly as it is, ignore some of it, or add to it. We hope you view this guide as a flexible teaching tool, and not a rigid teaching task.*

### **Welcome & Icebreaker**

If you HAD to give up one of your senses (hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting) which would it be and why?

### **Biblical Context**

In 753BC Rome started as a single city on a peninsula of the Mediterranean Sea. As Paul was writing to the Colossians, the Roman Empire had entirely surrounded the Mediterranean and reached from Britain in the Northwest to Egypt in the South. As the Roman Army conquered new territory, most of the inhabitants were made slaves or at the very best “freedmen.” Only a small percentage of freedmen would be granted “full citizenship” in Rome. It is estimated that only 20% of all the people in the Roman Empire ever held the status of “Citizen” or better. Which meant, if you were a Roman citizen (such as Paul), you were pretty special. That also means that 80% of the Roman Empire knew what it was to be a slave or just one step above the status of a slave - a freedman. This would also be true of the Colossians.

### **Initial Question**

By what means do you keep your faith journey on the right path? How do you know it's right and by what do you evaluate it against? (note, this is the same question as the first week. Are your answers the same or different by reading through Paul's letter to the Colossian church?

### **Looking at the Text**

1. Read Colossians 3:12-14. Paul is winding down his letter of exhortation with some final instructions to the body as a whole. In the verses prior to 12, Paul told the church what traits to get rid of (put to death). Beginning in verse 12, what is he telling them what to replace those things with? (also read Galatians 5:22,23)
2. Read verses 3:15 - 4:1 and block out all subtitles, chapter numbers and verse numbers. Some people have the tendency to break apart the final verses of chapter 3 and see them as individual instructions to individual groups of people. Rather, Paul is describing unity among a single body with many parts. It was never intended to be separated. How is Paul's admonishment different if it is read inclusively (one body) rather than exclusively (individuals)?

### **Life Application**

3. After Paul wrote this letter, he sent it with Tychicus and Onesimus to be delivered directly to the church. When the two men arrived at Colossae, they would have

stayed with one of the church members until the day they all met together. On the day of the meeting, one of the church leaders would have introduced the two men, disclosing their credentials and one of them would have stood up and read the letter to the whole church. So, he is reading to wives, fathers and children who are either slaves or freedmen and not many would have been actual Roman citizens. In most situations entire households would be at the meeting together. The head of the household was the man. If he had a wife, she would be there with him. If he had children, they would be there with them. If he had slaves, he would have them with him too. Also, it was common for non-Christian slave owners to allow their Christian slaves to practice their faith by going to meetings. How should this play out in our lives? Who do we take to church with us? How responsible do we feel for the people we take to church?

4. Paul was trying to paint a picture of unity in these final verses. He said; “as members of one body you were called to peace.” He described this peace where they all worship together and where wives submit to husbands who love them and are not harsh to them and the children obey their parents; where parents also do not embitter the children. In addition, for those who are slaves they performed their duties as unto Christ himself. If they were masters, they would treat slaves as they envision their heavenly master treating them. What portions of this thinking is true in our lives? How do we make efforts to create unity in our households?

### **Action Step**

Be wise in the way you act toward people you don't know; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.