

Nov 21/21 – Small Group Leader's Guide

Read Colossians 2:9-12, 3:1-10

1. Paul said that given the Incarnation of God becoming human, we have been filled in Jesus (i.e. we have been fulfilled, completed, or finalised in Jesus). What did Paul mean by that?

In Jesus' humanity and flesh, we see the full, perfect, and complete version, purpose, and design of our humanity. Jesus lived out how humans were meant to exist and live. Because of the Incarnation, we can know and emulate the human life that Jesus lived (albeit not exactly because we are not God).

2. Baptism unites us to Jesus in a mysterious and spiritual bond. If we have been so united to Jesus in His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and session in heaven, how does that impact our present lives today?

Our union with Christ means that we can be counted as perfect, righteous, sinless, innocent, and glorious as Jesus is before God. All that Jesus is has become us, and all that we are is Jesus'. This is the great exchange, the great transaction, the great substitution. This impacts the way we think and feel about ourselves, the way we treat other people, the way we relate to God in prayer, the way we understand our future and hope as to give us a present purpose and goal for our lives. Because of our union with Jesus, we are changed and transformed into His very person and character and quality.

3. Since we have been raised with Jesus in heaven through baptism/union, Paul exhorts us to seek the things that are above. What did Paul mean by that and what are specific examples of our "seeking things above"?

Paul didn't mean to abandon the world because we are all going to heaven. Rather, Paul meant to pursue the version of creation and the version of our humanity which is already in heaven, that is Jesus. And so, to seek the things that are above is to seek Jesus -- the perfect and righteous human person. Specifically, we are to emulate and embody the life of Jesus in our speech, our use of money, our treating other people, our forgiving people who hurt us, our standing up for victims and the helpless, our hands reaching to touch those who have not been embraced.

4. Since we have also died with Jesus on the cross through baptism/union, Paul exhorts us to put to death what is earthly in us (i.e. carnal). What did Paul mean by that and what are specific examples of our "putting to death what is earthly"?

Even though we are counted as dead on the cross when Jesus died a long time ago, our bodies are still habituated with evil and carnal patterns. The lingering death throes of sin and evil in our lives show up every so often in our patterns of sin and idolatry. We must therefore kill and mortify these things in ourselves. This doesn't mean self-mutilation or living an ascetic life, but it means cutting off the sources of sin

and burning the soil that cultivates evil in our bodies. Specifically, in terms of money, we craft budgets and stick to them with our spouses or family and make room for charitable giving, generosity, hospitality, and gifts, rather than make budgets that are simply about our pleasure. Or else, we can download accountability software on our devices to track what we see and look up online. Or we can make more conscientious and sustainable decisions about groceries, online purchases, manufacturing standards, shipping costs, fairtrade, fair wage, etc.