

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Colossians 3:5-17

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do Jesus and Paul draw attention to the attitudes or sins within us rather than just outward actions or sins?

Jesus did this especially in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, chapters 5-7). A person can act “nice” outwardly or act morally outwardly while at the same time hating someone or maintaining ill-will toward them. Though being morally right on the outside may not hurt others, remaining immoral on the inside will hurt us. For example, feelings of unresolved anger or hatred of someone can create mental, spiritual, and physical diseases in the person who does not turn from these feelings and turn to Christ, Who can make us new and help us change our attitudes and behaviors.

2. Read Colossians 3:5 and Colossians 3:8 again. Which of the sins listed include outward actions, and which of the sins can reside within us without our acting them out?

Fornication involves sinful behavior with other people that will hurt everyone involved and sometimes innocent people not involved. Impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed can reside within us, and if given the opportunity can be acted out or outwardly expressed. For example, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed can lead to the outward act of fornication. Since God’s laws are for our good always, forbidden inward attitudes and outward actions are both destructive. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth can all be expressed outwardly, as well as impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed. Malice, slander, and abusive language are outward expressions of the inward reality of sin.

3. Which is easier to do, eliminate outward acts of sin or inward acts of sin? Give a reason for your answer.

Outward acts of sin are easier to eliminate with acts of the will than inward acts of sin. For example, a person may stop cursing in order to keep his or her job, while still feeling

ill-will on the inside (they may simply curse in their mind). The outward life can be reformed easier than the inner life. The scribes and Pharisees could reform their outward life, but they could not reform their inward life without the help of Jesus Christ. If we reform our inward life through faith and reliance on Jesus Christ making us new and working within us, then the outward acts of sin will not be committed except possibly under extreme provocation or temptation. Make the tree good and the fruit will be good.

4. Read the virtues listed in Colossians 3:12. How are these virtues both inward virtues and outward actions?

To “clothe” ourselves with “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” is to let others see these virtues in us as we live our daily lives. These virtues from the inside to the outside always relate to someone else. We either show someone “compassion” or we do not, when “compassion” needs to be shown to them. “Kindness” is expressed toward both animals and people. “Humility” and “meekness” involves seeing ourselves as we really are as the children of God, without allowing that knowledge of ourselves to puff us up with pride and arrogance toward others. “Patience” is expressed toward people or events that would tempt us to become impatient. These virtues are expressions of love within us toward others.

5. What does Paul say believers need to let Jesus do for them? Why is this important?

See Colossians 3:15, 16 — “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” and “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” If we let Christ rule in our hearts that will give us peace with God and peace within ourselves and sometimes enable us to be at peace with others. Lest we be misled, we need to not only read “the word of Christ,” the Bible, which is the inspired “word of Christ,” but we need to let Christ and His word dwell within us as we study and memorize His word and as we meditate on the meaning and application of His word and power in our daily lives. The word of God will dwell in us richly as we try to live according to the word of God, rather than just make Christianity a formality of public performance on a Sunday, and pray for the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit to help us do the will of God in everything.