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First in My Mind

August 24, 2025
Series: First
Colossians 3:1-11

BIG IDEA – CHRIST SHOULD BE FIRST IN YOUR MIND

Good morning, Two Cities Church. Whether you're down in Lexington or in here, I want to tell you about Jon Tyson for a moment. That was the man on the video with that beautiful Australian accent. Guys, I just want to say this, if you don't know this. It is a massive deal that we have him coming to launch our Heights.

Just this past year, he spoke at Passion. Passion is the largest Christian college conference in the world. They hold it in arenas like the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta. The fact that we have him coming to speak at this conference is quite an amazing experience.

Here's why I want to tell you that. You know, we have three services that all look like *this*. Why am I telling you that? Get to the Heights and get here early, because it's going to be jam-packed. This is September 4-7. Guess what the theme is for this year? I'm wearing it. "Awake, O Sleeper." In fact, if you want to, you're going to be able to purchase hats and shirts when you're there. This will be one of them.

Guys, here's the big idea. Ephesians 5:14 says, "Awake, O sleeper," and some of you… Good morning. You need to wake up. Okay? I mean, I look around here while we're all worshiping, and there are a couple of you who don't sing. I literally leaned over last service to my wife and said, "I see a couple of guys who aren't singing. I'm preaching at them the entire service."

By the way, we're going to be doing prayer the Tuesday morning, Wednesday morning, and Thursday morning of the Heights from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. In the spirit of

expectation, get here. Okay? I know a lot of you "work from home." We want you to come.

Then, I know some of you moms are like, "Kyle, I'd love to be there, but I just have one small problem. They're called *kids*." Well, we thought about that. We're going to have childcare from 8:00 to 9:00 so all of the moms can be here. Are you excited? Yes! Oh, I would be remiss not to welcome back all of our college students. Let's clap for them as well. Welcome.

All right. Now, if you're new, you don't know this, but I was on the college campus for over a decade. No, I'm not that terrible of a student. Could you imagine? Yeah, it took me that long to get my undergrad. No. I was on the college campus for a decade because I went to Elon University, and then I did ministry at UNCG and then at Duke University.

Here's what I want to tell the college freshmen. All college students kind of know this. There is no spiritually neutral button to push in college. At least for most, a person's experience in college is either a spiritual greenhouse or a spiritual wasteland. Very rarely do you meet someone who goes, "College was just kind of in the middle spiritually for me."

Here's the big thing. How do you make the most of your college experience? Well, what will make or break your college experience are the decisions you make before fall break. Let me say it again. What will make or break your college experience are the decisions you will make before fall break.

So, I just want to invite you into our church. I want you to know, if you're a college student, we want to invest in you. We're glad you're here. We think your college experience doesn't have to be filled with regret but can be Christ-centered instead. With that said, let me pray and we'll get started.

Lord, I thank you in Jesus' name for all of the college students we have coming around. I thank you that from day one, nine years ago, our church has had a passion to reach the university, to see students come to faith in Christ, to disciple them, and then, in a short four years, see them sent out all over the world.

Lord, we pray the Heights Conference would be an opportunity, even for some of these college students, to get more deeply invested in our church, for it to be a catalytic moment spiritually for them to encourage them as they head into a busy fall semester. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

All right. Here's my question to start out today: What do you think about when you can choose what you're going to think about? Here's what I mean. Like, what do you think

about when you are driving? You're like, "I don't normally think. I normally make phone calls and listen to music and listen to podcasts." By the way, that's kind of the problem. The problem with us Americans, modern people, is we consume an enormous amount of content…podcasts, songs, streaming services, you know, texting, but we're not thinking very often.

Thankfully, there are people who've done research. You'll find this interesting. What do people think about when they can choose what to think about? Well, there are four things they think about. Guess the number one thing you think about when you can choose what you're going to think about. *You*! People are obsessed with themselves, and we think a lot.

Here's what we tend to think about: "How are other people experiencing me? Was my fly down?" I always check that 18 times before I come out here. "Is my breath bad? Was that joke funny?" We're very aware. There's a part of your brain that tracks your status. You are so aware all the time of how you are compared to everybody else.

Secondly, people think about themselves, but it's a little different. They think about their own well-being. They think about their finances. People are obsessed with their physical health. If anything negative happens…they feel sick, and they have a headache…they start Googling WebMD. They're like, "Oh no! I have a dangerous fatal tropical virus." Right? That's what we all do. We think about our own health.

Here's the third thing: we think about other people. We let people live rent-free in our brains, and we love to be the armchair psychologist. "I texted him this really long text, and he just texts back, 'Okay'?" Like, "Why is Uncle Frank late to everything?" Literally. We just can't… This is why couples, when they leave dinners, have the conversation, like, "What was he doing?"

"I know. Did you see what he ate?"

"Yeah. I know."

We just have all of these conversations. We're obsessed with other people and what they're doing. Fourthly, we think about all of the logistics of our day. "Is the stove on? Do I have the grocery list? Did I get all my schoolwork done? Okay, how are we going to get *this* kid over *here* and *this* kid over *here*? Are we doing dinner tonight still?" That's what consumes all of our thoughts.

Why am I talking about this? Because if you'll turn to Colossians 3, Paul says the problem with you is your thinking…*how* you think, that is. We're calling this series *First*, and the

big idea today is Christ is to be first in your thoughts. Or maybe we should say it more generally: *Christ should be first in your mind*.

If you're new to Christianity, the mind is a big deal. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, shows up. He comes on the scene, and he says, "Guys, I want you to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all of your strength." So, he comes on the scene and says that.

Then the apostle Paul, in Romans, chapter 12, after writing this long letter of 11 chapters of theology, says, "Do not be conformed to the patterns of this world…" Well, how do I not do that, Paul? He goes, "…but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

So, today I'm going to talk about the mind, which is a little different than the brain. The brain is, obviously, the physical organ that, when you die, gets buried with you. The mind is interconnected to the brain, but the mind is a part of your soul. What we want to avoid, by the way… We want to be intellectual. We want to go deep in our knowledge, but we don't want to be brains on a stick.

We're going to talk about this today, because if you love God rightly with your mind, it's going to affect your heart and your hands. So, with that said, we're going to start on Colossians, chapter 3. If you're new, this is what we do. Literally, we walk through books of the Bible, verse by verse, line by line, and I try to show you what God is saying and apply it to our lives.

Here it is. ***"If then you have…"*** By the way, notice as you're following along, Paul says four things happen to you, Christian. If you're here and you're a Christian, there may be things that happen to you that you don't even know happen to you. Here it is. ***"If then you have been raised with Christ…"*** That's the first thing.

"…seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died…" That's the second thing that has happened. ***"…and your life is hidden with Christ in God."*** That's the third thing that has happened. ***"When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."***

So, there are certain things you need to know if you're going to think differently. Here's the first thing. Here's what I want you to understand. This is the big idea. Paul says something happened to you that should change the way you think. Something happened *to* you, Christian, that should change the way you think.

He mentions four things. Two in the past. "You've died with Christ. You've been raised with Christ." We're going to return to that. He mentions one in the present. "You are

presently hidden with Christ in God." Then he mentions one in the future. "When Christ who is your life appears, you'll appear with him in glory."

Okay, that's a lot of stuff, but here's what I want to start with. All of us know… It doesn't matter how young we are. We all know that things happen *to* us that change the way we think. Let me give you an example: marriage. Every married person knows this. As soon as you get married, you're like, "I am forever connected to another person who I always have to think about and consider in every situation."

My brother is three years younger than me. I love my brother. This was years ago. He was newly married. He comes home from work with takeout for just him. My sister-in-law, whom I love, is like, "Mitch, why didn't you get takeout for both of us?" He goes, "I didn't think of it." She goes, "Okay. I'm cooking dinner for both of us." You have to think a little differently.

This is really interesting. When you have a kid, it changes the way you think so much that we can tell how a person is going to vote based on whether or not they've had a kid. I mean, there's a lot of research on this. "If you're single, you're probably just thinking about yourself, so you're probably going to vote like *this*, but as soon as you become responsible for another person, you think completely differently, and most likely, you're going to vote like *that*."

This can be trauma that happens in your life. You could have had somebody near you die when you were young and they were young. If that happens to you, you're like, "I just think differently." You meet people like this. Like, "I just think differently about my life. I realize life is short. I realize I'm finite. I realize I'm fragile."

Sometimes you just lose your job, and you think completely differently. You're like, "I hated that job." You're like, "I don't even want to go back into that industry. I hated my boss. What am I doing with my life?" So, here's what I want to focus on. I want to talk to you about those four events, and then we're going to talk about how to think differently, because this isn't a TED Talk. We are rooting this in these theological truths. So, let's just take each one.

The first one is that you *died* with Christ. Do you see that in the text? That's in verses 1-4. He says you died with him. Now listen. If you've been paying attention in our church, you'll notice that a lot of times I get up here, and I'll say things like, "Jesus Christ died for you." I'll try to say it 15 different ways. "He died instead of you. He died as a punishment in your place." I'll even give it big names. "It's called *penal substitutionary atonement*." It's a big phrase.

That's not what Paul is saying here. He *does* say that Christ died for us in other places, but here's what he said: "You died with Christ." Look. I don't fully understand it, but you don't need to fully understand something to believe it. Somehow, when Christ died and you transferred trust to him and believed, in the mind and heart of God, spiritually, you died with Christ.

In other words, the most important event in your past is that you died with Christ. The most important event in your past is not something terrible that happened to you, although we care about that. Listen. You worry that something you did in your past, especially with AI, is going to show up in your present and destroy your future. The gospel says the most important event that happened is that you died with Christ.

Then it says you were *raised* with Christ. What does *that* mean? I thought the resurrection happens way in the future and that Jesus is going to return and raise my body and unite it with my soul. It's part of what we call *eschatology*, end-times thinking. What do you mean I died with Christ, but I was also raised with Christ?

Here's what this means: eternal life begins not when you die but when you believe. A lot of people think, "Okay, when I'm 89 years old and I die in my sleep with a Bible on my chest…" That's how we all want to die. Right? We're going to die in our sleep with a Bible on our chest somewhere in our late 80s or 90s, something like that.

Then, when we do that, we wake up in heaven, and then we have eternal life. The Bible says eternal life starts not when you die but when you believe. Here's what Paul is trying to say: you should now be alive to Christ. You're alive *with* Christ, so you should be caring about the things he cares about, loving the things he loves.

Then he says you're *hidden* with Christ. This is security. I don't know all of the reasons, but this younger generation… And I love the younger generation. Now I'm midlife, so I talk about the younger generation more. This younger generation is very insecure. I don't know what it is. I think one of the reasons people are so insecure is people are trying to find their security in things they feel insecure about.

They're insecure about how they look, but they're trying to find their security in how they look, even though they're insecure about how they look. People are trying to find their security in their job, even though they're insecure about the job they have. You need your security in something that's outside of you that can't be changed.

So, here's what it says. You're hidden with God in Christ. The Bible also says you're sealed with the Holy Spirit. Do you understand that means the Devil would have to go through all three members of the Trinity to get to you? You're secure.

Then he says you will *appear* with him. This is the future. You have to get your life ordered. It's like, "Okay. I have to understand my past, I have to understand my present, and I have to understand my future." In the future it says we're going to appear with Christ. Here's what this means: if you really believe certain things about the future, it will change how you live now and how you think now.

Exhibit *A*. The married couple that gets pregnant… Here's what happens. They immediately… I've seen this happen. It happened to *me* three times. This is what happens. As soon as you find out you're pregnant, the hourglass flips, and you're like, "We have nine months."

What happens is the first time a married couple gets pregnant, they start to ask all of these questions, like, "Is our apartment big enough? I guess I don't have a study anymore. The guest room is becoming the newborn baby…" They start asking, "Who's working? Who's not working when the baby comes?"

They start saying, "We probably should have been nicer to the grandparents. We need them now." That's a beautiful picture of how when you really believe something is coming in the future, it changes how you live right now. Okay. So, that's all what's called the *theological framework* behind what Paul tells us to do. Now look at what he tells us to do. We'll look at a couple of things together.

The first thing he says is in verse 1. ***"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is…"*** What are the things that are above? Well, to know that you would have to go to your Bible and go, "Okay. What does he mean 'above'? Do I just look up? Like, what's above me?" Well, you'd have to go and read other places in the Bible where we're told to seek things.

By the way, some of you need to embrace this. Christianity is the passionate pursuit of God. Christianity is not yawn, yawn, show up at church, read a little Bible, you know, show up at Community Group for two hours as a willing victim. It's the active pursuit of God. In fact, there are all of these verses in the Bible… God says in the Old Testament, "Seek me with all your heart." Then he actually says, "If you seek me with all your heart, I promise that you'll find me."

So, the number one thing we're supposed to seek if we're seeking that which is above us is we're supposed to seek God. The second thing we're supposed to seek, Jesus says, is the kingdom, but we can only seek those things if we do this second thing. This is where I want to focus a lot of our time. Turn with me to verse 2. ***"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."***

Here's the big thing. He says, "Don't set your mind on things on earth; set them on things above where Christ is." Okay. Let's talk about this. When he says, "Don't set your mind on things on earth," he's not saying… Now, we'll get to something different in a few minutes, but when he says, "Don't set your mind on things of earth," don't think the things of earth are like explicit, gross, sinful thoughts. That *can* be earthly. We'll get to that.

Here's what it means to set your mind on things of earth: to think about life apart from God, to think about earth apart from heaven, to think about life apart from an eternal perspective. See, the thing is there are a lot of places that we can go to set our minds on things on earth. Right? Social media will help us do that. Watching the news will help us do that. Watching certain shows will help us do that. It's very, very easy to set our minds on things on earth.

In fact, here's what's interesting. Do you know what the greatest rebuke that Jesus ever gave to any of his disciples was? Not the Pharisees (he rebuked them a lot) but to his actual disciples. It was right after Peter says, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God," and he goes, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you, Peter." But then Jesus says, "I have to go to the cross," and Peter goes, "No! You can't go to the cross." Jesus goes, "Get behind me, Satan."

Most people know that part, and we're shocked by it because, you know, to call Peter "Satan" is a big deal. What we don't often pay attention to… Do you know what Jesus says right after he says, "Get behind me, Satan"? He says, "For your mind is not set on the things of God but on the things of man." This is the problem with you and me. We're so obsessed with the instant, so obsessed with the immediate, we don't have a long enough perspective.

So, what I want to talk to us about for a little bit (I think it's going to be really helpful) is how we can set our minds on things above. If you're new here, I don't just want to give you Bible verses and say, "You should do this." I want to help you with *how*. So, literally, I'm going to give you the most practical way. Like, you can do it. We're going to play "Tag, you're it," and you can decide if you want to do this afterward.

If you want to get serious about your Christianity and you want your life to change and you want all that stuff to happen, you're going to have to get serious about setting your mind on things above. So, here's how you do it: through the spiritual disciplines. Let me explain.

The great thing about it being 2025 is there have been 2,000 years of Christians before us. Part of humility is going, "Okay. What does the Bible say, and then, for 2,000 years,

what have Christians done?" What they've done is they've practiced the spiritual disciplines. The spiritual disciplines are also called the *means of grace*. "How do I get the grace of God? I can't earn it, but how do I enjoy it? How do I get more of the grace of God in my mind and in my heart?"

The spiritual disciplines are like superhighways on which God travels. Let me give you just two of them. They're really simple. The first one is *prayer*. So, literally, how do you set your mind on things above? The answer is prayer. In fact, watch this. Next time you're fighting, whether you're fighting with your roommate or fighting with your spouse or fighting with your teenage son or daughter or your sibling or whatever…

If you're both Christians, try this. You won't even be able to do this because you won't want to. Ready? If you're fighting with somebody and you're both Christians, you should say, "Can we stop and pray about this?" I'm just telling you, one or both of you… Your flesh will not want to do that. Why?

Because as soon as you've been talking about something and you both decide to go up, you know immediately it's going to change your perspective. What you do in prayer is you basically immediately invite God into the situation, and you immediately become at least… If you're not just saying your prayers, if you're really praying, you become Godward in your orientation.

I'll give this to you. This is a dangerous thing to ask somebody, but someone did this to me years ago, a guy who was discipling me in college. Whenever he would call me to a decision… He'd be like, "All right. I need you to come to this retreat, and it's going to be…" I'd be like, "I can't come to the retreat," when I really could have. But I'd be like, "I can't come; I'm busy." Blah, blah, blah.

He would say, "Okay. All I want you to do is commit to praying about it, not just thinking about it." That is a discipleship powerhouse move. That's a great way to talk to your kids. "Fine. Listen. I want you to pray about it, not just think about it." That invites God.

Here's the second one. You know what I'm going to say, but you still need to hear it, and you still need to do it. How do you get the Bible into you? The answer is *Bible intake*. Here's what I want you to understand. Some of you… I don't know. It depends on if you grew up in a good Christian home and a good youth group and maybe a good college ministry and you learned how to do your devotionals. Some of you ladies have, like, 14 different markers you use for your little devotional.

Here's the thing: the point of a devotional is not to mark up your Bible but to be marked *by* the Bible. Some of you have done "Bible in a year" and "New Testament in a year" and whatever. Some of you do New Testament twice in a year or whatever it is. Listen. I just

want you to know this. The goal is not to get through the Bible; the goal is to get the Bible through you.

Now, this is hard. So how do you do it? Well, first of all, you're going to have to know some Bible. You know, sitting here while I'm teaching and preaching, or whoever it is… That's helpful. I would say today, guys, the fact that we can have the entire Bible on our phones for free and somebody can read it to us… Do you understand that? For free!

I can decide I want… I always like an English guy to read me the Bible. I just like English. And I like a little bit of music in the background, but not too dramatic. You know what I mean? Guys, it wasn't that long ago, 20 years ago… I know that sounds like a lot of time to some of you.

Twenty years ago, I was a brand-new Christian, and I bought an audio… I don't even know what to call it. I tried to buy the audio Bible. It was $150. It came with 75 of these things called *CDs*. No, this is not a joke. I actually found this a year ago, and I was like, "I can't throw away the Bible, but what am I going to do with this? I don't have a CD player. I don't even know anyone who has a CD player."

So, here's the thing. The key thing is you have to get the Bible in you. I'll just give you the one key word, because you can read it, and that's helpful; you can listen to it, and that's helpful; you can memorize it, and that's helpful. The key word is to *meditate* on the Word of God.

As soon as I say the word *meditate*, people get Buddhist thinking, or something, or they think Eastern philosophy stuff, and they think, "Kyle, I've tried it before, and I just don't know how to meditate." Well, what do you call worrying? Have you ever noticed that? What is worrying? It's meditating on all of the horrible things that could happen in my life but won't and how those things would compound.

Guys, if you think you don't know how to meditate, what is envy and jealousy? By the way, do you guys know what the Greek word for envy and jealousy is? *Instagram*. It's very clear in the Greek. If you've ever been like, "How are they on vacation again?" okay, you're meditating. Lust is meditation on that which is forbidden. Guys, actually, what you're going to find out is much of the sin you struggle with is misplaced meditation.

He says, "Set your minds on things above." We talked about prayer. We talked about the Word. Here's the third thing: *heaven*. We should think about heaven more. This is what Paul is saying. That's what's above us. We should think about heaven for two reasons.

The number one reason you need to think about heaven is it's where our Lord and Savior is. If you're a Christian, heaven is where our Lord and Savior is, and when we love certain

people, we think about where they are. Right? You just sent your kid to Liberty University, and all of a sudden… You never thought about Liberty in your whole life, and you're thinking about it. You're thinking about going up there again, and you're thinking about Virginia, and all this. Right?

So, one reason is our Savior is there, so we should think about that. The second reason is… Well, think about it this way. A lot of you, one day, if you could just figure out your finances and you get the right promotion and, you know, the kids get off the payroll, one of your dreams would be…

Nothing too crazy, but you would love to have a second home. Well, the Bible says, actually, we already have a second home in heaven. If you know anything about anybody who has second homes, they think about them a lot. By the way, if you have a second home, I want to talk to you after service. (I'm just kidding.)

My whole point is it's like, "Wait a second. I have this second home in heaven." Oh, this is important. We're supposed to not just hope for heaven; we're supposed to plan for it. This is why the Bible says with our generosity… You know, we can't take it with us, but we can send it on ahead.

I knew of a dad who used to say to his kids during their devotional times every once in a while… He was a solid Christian dad and had a solid Christian wife who was a solid Christian mom, and he used to say… Imagine how this would affect you if you heard this when you were 5, 7, or 10 years old.

He would sit around with his kids and go, "Hey, guys. Mom and Dad are going to heaven. When we die, we're going to heaven, and we would like you to be there with us. We can't take many things to heaven with us, but we're hoping to take our children with us to heaven." When you start to think about heaven, it becomes not just a destination in the future but a motivation in the present.

Then he switches from "Set your mind on things above" to… Look at what he says in verse 5. ***"Put to death…"*** Literally, kill, murder. ***"…therefore what is earthly in you…"*** Then he mentions five different acts that are all sexual in nature. I'm not up here trying to be the guy who's always talking about sex, but I can't avoid it when it keeps coming up again and again and again.

Look. ***"…sexual immorality…"*** Guess what that Greek word is: *porneia*. I wonder what word we get from that. ***"…impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."*** Now, you might go, "Well, why is *coveting* in the sexual list?" Because even the tenth commandment… The tenth commandment is "Do not covet."

If you read it in Exodus, chapter 20, it says, "Do not covet your neighbor's [this, that, and the other thing]," and then it says, "…your neighbor's spouse." Don't be on Instagram going, "Why doesn't my husband make that much money?" "Why doesn't my wife look like that?"

There are passions in you that you need to put to death. Now, this is not moralism. This is not willpower. This is *why* power, by the way. He's like, why? Well, because you've died with Christ. You're risen with Christ. You've died, so put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you.

Okay. Let's talk about this. This is what's called *mortification*. There was a book written in the 1600s by a guy named John Owen. He was a famous Puritan, and he wrote the book *The Mortification of Sin in Believers*. If you want to read a book… It's in modern English. You can find it. It's long.

He talks about something I've probably not named as much, and I need to. He talks about what's called *indwelling sin*. It's this tension we live in, that though I've been made completely new in Christ, and though I have the mind of Christ, and though I'm a new creation, there is in me indwelling sin.

Here's the thing about indwelling sin: it has a personality. Think about this. The first time the Bible mentions sin is the story of Cain and Abel. God says to Cain, "Hey, Cain, listen. Sin is crouching at your door. Its desire is for you. You must rule over it." So, wait a second. The first time you talk about sin, you talk about it as a sexually aroused animal.

Here's what I want you to understand about your indwelling sin: it will make intellectual arguments for why you need to give in to it. This is why you have the experience where you come here, you pray with the prayer team, you tell your Community Group, and you say, "I will never…" or "Never again," and then you're traveling by yourself, and all of a sudden, you start having these thoughts. How does this happen? There's such an intellectual willpower.

He says what you have to do is put the sin to death. Okay. Here's how you put sin to death: you have to starve it. You can try to shoot it. It doesn't normally work. You don't normally kill it quickly. Why are people still struggling with the exact same sins? Because it's so painful to put them to death, obviously.

So, here's how you starve sin: you cut off the supply lines that bring that sin life. So often, you're finding yourself in the same temptation. I've told you this before. It's so much easier to *stay* out of temptation than to *get* out of temptation. The way you stay out of temptation is you take extreme measures to cut off the supply lines. Okay. I'll tell you a story from the past. You can't even do this anymore. It doesn't even work anymore.

Back in 2004, I was a freshman or sophomore in college. Back then (you're not going to believe this), they did not have Wi-Fi, or at least not in *my* dorm. So, literally… This sounds silly, because I know we have 5G on our phones and everything else. Literally, the only way you could get the Internet was you had to have what was called an *Ethernet cord*, and it had to plug into your wall and then into your computer. There was no smartphone. There was no iPad. That was it.

Well, one night, at 11:00 or 11:30, I hear knocking on my door, which in college is not too late. I'm like, "Are we going to dinner? What are we doing?" So, I opened the door, and there was my friend. I'll never forget this. He was holding his Ethernet cord. He said, "This is causing me to sin. Will you please take this and make sure I never get one again?"

This sounds silly, but I watched my friend have to go to the school library and use a computer at the library to answer his emails for the rest of the year. The other reason we often don't starve the sin in our lives is because it will at least temporarily make things more difficult.

Oh, by the way, here's another thing. He says "sexual immorality." He names all of these things. Another way for you to put sin to death… We're going to get real for a second. If you're new here, we just get real about things. You're going to have to start specifically naming the sins in your life that you want to put to death, and you have to stop using euphemisms. You can't kill a sin you won't even name.

What's powerful is not when someone says, "Oh, yeah. You know, I eat a little bit too much. I've just always been big boned," but when they say, "I have a problem with food. I'm a glutton, actually. This is a massive problem. My relationship with food is so dysfunctional."

By the way, when you start acting like that, the people around you will want to give you an enormous amount of grace and help you, because they're so tired of you lying to them and lying to yourself. It's a powerful moment. In that moment is the beginning of the healing.

You can't go, "I'm just a fun guy. I just like to relax every night and have a few drinks." No, you have to say, "I have a problem with alcohol." You can't say, "I just get frustrated a lot." No, that's a euphemism for anger. You have some real anger issues. You have to say something like, "I don't just like to work. I don't just want the promotion. I'm not just trying to be a good dad and provide for my family. I struggle with greed."

Tim Keller, who ministered in New York City for 40 years, said one of the most amazing things about ministering as a pastor in Manhattan for 40 years was no one, one time, confessed or asked for help with greed in their life. I mean, that is *the* sin of New York

City. You go to L.A. to be famous. You go to Boston for intellect. You go to D.C. for power. You literally go to Manhattan for money. He said there's such an unawareness or an unwillingness to confess the real sins we struggle with.

Well, Paul warns us. Look at what he says in verse 6. ***"On account of these the wrath of God is coming."*** In other words, he's like, "You actually should fear God." Fearing God is a legitimate motive to say no to sin. Not just loving God, not just the rewards of God, but the fear of God.

Look. He mentions a second list. He says, ***"In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away…"*** By the way, notice he starts with putting to death passions. Now he's going to say, "Put away practices." Put to death passions; put away practices. Look at what *these* are. ***"But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices…"***

What's interesting is when you take these two lists… These are called *vice lists*. Paul will occasionally give us a vice list, like, "Avoid these things," and later he'll give us a virtue list. By the way, the virtue list is coming next week, but here we get two different vice lists. Here's what's interesting. The first vice list has to do with sex or sensuality; the second has to do with hostility.

This is interesting. This is what Freud noticed. Obviously, Freud wasn't a Christian, but it doesn't mean there are not common grace observations. Freud noticed, after working with people for decades, that there were two areas of people's lives that they could not control and that would show up in their fantasies: sex and anger.

Think about it. Those are the two most common types of fantasies people have. I won't go into details of sexual fantasies. For the anger fantasies… I mean, people have fantasies of finally telling their boss exactly how they feel about him. Right? Or confronting their ex. I mean, people can stir on these.

Well, if you're going to say "no" to these passions and these practices, you're going to have to say "yes" to a greater passion. Basically, here's what you're going to have to do. There was a guy named Thomas Chalmers. He delivered a sermon in 1819, two hundred years ago, and it went viral. By that, it means they took his notes and turned them into a booklet and sold it. That's how things went viral back then.

The title of the sermon was *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*. You can listen to it for free online. *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*. What he basically said is if you're going to say "no" to the passions of your flesh, you are going to have to have a greater

passion stirred for Christ. So, here's the second big practical thing I want to talk about before we close: Do you know what stirs your affections for Christ?

Just so you know, from the way we built this room, to the technology we use, to the worship songs we sing, to how I preach, to the videos we show… We're not trying to manipulate anyone, but just so you know, when you come in here, we are unapologetically trying to stir your affections for Christ. But you're going to need more than just a one-hour or one-and-a-half-hour experience every week.

Here are some practical things. Do you have a worship playlist that stirs your affections? I know Donovan and his team sing it better than anyone else. I know that. But on Spotify or iTunes, or whatever, do you have…? For me, I can go back, and I can listen to Shane & Shane. When I listen to their songs from the early 2000s, it brings me back to when I first believed.

Maybe there are certain places. When I go to Elon University and walk the campus and think about what God did, it stirs my affections. For some of you, it might be a short-term mission trip. That's why about once a year I have to get on the mission field somewhere. I have to be meeting missionaries. I have to be seeing the work of God somewhere else, because it just stirs my affections.

Here's even a little silly thing. You're different. Who knows? I love to watch certain scenes from movies. The other day, literally, my whole family was sleeping, and I was like, "I don't want to go to bed yet." I was like, "You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to watch the end of *Rudy*." I just watched the end of it. Literally, I'm watching it, going, "Am I as passionate about Christ as he is about football? Am I willing to do anything?"

Well, how Christlike was it? I'm sorry; I'm ruining the movie for you. He gets in the game at the end. There you go. He makes the Notre Dame football team. But I'm watching these guys. Remember that scene where they lay down their jerseys? "I want Rudy to play for me." "I want Rudy to play…" The whole team comes in. How Christlike is *that*? "I'm going to give up my spot for someone else." So, whatever it is for you, you have to find what stirs your affections for Christ.

Look at what he says in verse 10. ***"…and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."*** Look. As you set your mind above, as you put things to death… Do you see that it says we're *being* renewed? I want to just pastorally… Because I know we've talked directly about a couple of things. I just want to let you know that becoming the godliest version of yourself, becoming the most Christlike version of yourself…I just want to be honest with you…is a lifelong process.

When John Piper… Some of you will know that name. He's a very famous Christian pastor. He was asked, "What has been the hardest thing about being a Christian?" He was asked that. He's in his 70s. He said, "How slow my sanctification process has been." Guys, wouldn't it be amazing…? Like, we wish it was you just read the Bible, and as soon as you read, "God loves a cheerful giver," you're like, "I get it. I'm in." Wouldn't that be amazing?

Wouldn't it be amazing if the first time you read, "Love your wives as Christ loves the church and gave himself up…" "I'm in." And you just did it. Or you said, "Okay. It says, 'Forgive others as Christ has forgiven us,'" and you went, "Okay. I've been mad at my dad for 10 years, but that was easy." It doesn't work that way, guys.

We're launching new Community Groups today. This is why we talk about being in a Community Group. By the way, if you're in our Community Groups, here's what you know. We do what's called *sermon-guided discussions*. Some people think, "Is that because you think the sermons are so great?" No, that's not why we do it. We do it because we don't think the average Christian needs to be studying a different passage when they have barely even applied the first passage.

Guys, you have to understand. Part of what I do when I'm up here preaching is I'm always asking this question: "Why do we resist this?" It's one of the top five questions I ask when I'm preaching. I'm like, "Well, it just says… Why isn't everybody doing this?" By the way, guys, that's what we're doing in Community Group. Because you get up here, and you go, "You know what? I don't know…"

You know, you might say, "I don't know how to set my mind on things above this week. I've got this issue with anxiety that's showing up." Well, you talk about it in your Community Group, or you break up guys and girls, and you go, "Guys, here are the two vice lists. Is there any area in here you need to repent of? How can we pray for you?" That's what we're trying to do.

He says, "You're being renewed in the image of God after the Creator." Then, look at what he says in verse 11. ***"Here…"*** He brings it all back to community. ***"Here there is not Greek…"*** These are all of the dividing lines back then. ***"…Greek and Jew…"*** There was division. ***"…circumcised and uncircumcised…"*** There was division. ***"…barbarian, Scythian…"*** This is the only place *Scythian* is mentioned. That's the worst type of barbarian. So, the barbarians are at each other. ***"…slave, free…"***

Then he says this. He summarizes the first three chapters in half a sentence. ***"…but Christ is all, and in all."*** He basically is saying, "When you learn how to set your mind above,

seek the things above, put sin to death, put off, put on, and all that kind of stuff, here's what happens: it brings unity in the church."

What a divided nation needs is a unified church. I can promise you this. Anywhere you find division somewhere, there's sin. So many of us desire to have these incredible relationships, and it starts with us taking personal responsibility to put the sin in our life to death and to set our minds above.

In fact, let me go back to verse 1 and read you this first verse one more time, because I skipped over something I want to spend time on. ***"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."***

This is very important. The Bible says not just that Jesus Christ rose from the dead but that he ascended to heaven, and not just that, but he is now seated at the right hand of God. Why are we told that? What does it mean that Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God? It means the work of Christ is done and finished for you.

What Jesus Christ did on the cross was he bought not only your salvation but all of the grace you will need for the rest of your life to say "no" to sin and "yes" to righteousness and "yes" to Christ. So, if you'll bow your heads and close your eyes for a minute, I want to give us a moment to set our minds on things above.

Maybe some of you do this all the time. For some of you, maybe it has been a while. Some of you maybe never have said, "I'm going to set my mind on God. I'm going to set my mind on heaven. I'm going to think about Jesus Christ. I'm going to think about the great realities that I've died with him, that I've been raised with him, that I'm somehow hidden with him, I'm secure in him, and that one day I will appear with him."

Paul says we've died with Christ, that we've been raised, and that one day we'll appear. He says we have to think about the things above, which is, in part, to have an eternal perspective. Sometimes an eternal perspective starts with realizing how short and temporary this life is. I just want to give you an exercise to think about now and maybe to do later at length. Think about your funeral. Think about one day, it's your funeral.

Think about all of the people who will be there…your kids, your grandkids, your spouse, your friends. What do you want them to say about your life? That'll help stir your affections. "He was a good man," or, "She was a good woman." Maybe you want people there who say, "I came to Christ because of his or her influence." My guess is if you're in Christ, you're going to want people to talk about the impact you made for Christ and his kingdom. Let those realities stir your affections.

Lord, would you help us set our minds on things above? Would you help us to put to death that which is earthly in us, to put away and to put on, that we might honor Christ and have peace with one another? We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.