



## RESOLUTIONS 2

### RESOLVED: TO FIND YOUR PURPOSE

Resolutions are made by people at the start of every new year and there are many common resolutions that we see year after year. For the year 2023: to exercise more (52%), to eat healthier (50%), to lose weight (40%), to save money (39%), and to spend more time with family/friends (37%) to name a few.

However, many of these resolutions never stick. Very easy is it for someone to declare a change but not to act on it in the long run. A month or two goes by and the resolution that seemed so clear is dropped to the wayside. This year, our church would like to encourage our congregation to make a new resolution: to find your purpose.

Our purpose as Christians is to follow the Lamb. Our purpose is to seek the things that are above. We are a new creation secured in Christ.

## BELONG

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can **belong** by sharing their lives with one another in genuine fellowship.

- We all hate things that have no purpose, like a meeting that could have been avoided with an email. What are some 'purposeless' things that bother you?
- Purpose is sought by everyone. What do you see as your purpose?
- Many times, we define our purpose by what we do. What do you do that you tend to see your purpose in?
- As Christians, our identity should drive our purpose. What does that mean to you?

## BELIEVE

Move into the relevant Bible passages and read along together. This is where the body of Christ can learn together to **believe** in Jesus more and love Him better.

### Colossians 3:1-4 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

A person's purpose is ultimately found in their identity. Who they are, or who they see themselves as, will determine their direction. As Christians, we should be resolved to renew the understanding of our true identity as born-again sons and daughters of the most high God.

If our identity is found in Christ, Paul says we are to seek the things that are above. Notice that this is a command rather than a given. Just because we have been born again does not mean we cease to live with sin. We must actively make a choice to seek the things of God or otherwise be conformed to the old image of who we once were.

Verses 3 and 4 identify three things about our identity as sons and daughters of God:

- **We died with Christ** – “For you have died...”  
Christ's death on the Cross in our place (substitution) saves us from the wrath of God and punishment for our sin. However, when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, it is as if we have died with Christ on that same Cross (identification). The 'old self' has been crucified with Jesus and is gone for good. We are now a completely new creation in the eyes of God. This is because, in the same way that we identify with Christ's death, we also identify with His resurrection. We have spiritually been born again.

We have no dual nature. We have a tendency to see ourselves as imposters because the Bible says we are a new creation, yet we feel as though we are the same person that we were. While we will always struggle with sin in our flesh, our true identity is with Christ who we have metaphorically died alongside.

- **We are hidden with Christ** – “...and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”  
We no longer belong to the world, but to Christ Himself; and the sources of life that we enjoy come only from Him. The idea of our being hidden with Christ is meant to denote security and satisfaction. The actual Greek word for hidden used here by Paul connotes that God fully completed the action in the past with permanent results. Jesus' death on the Cross and the effects of it are forever and require no addition. When we identify with Christ, our name is written the Book of Life never to be blotted out.

We can have confidence in our salvation. If God has hidden away our name with Christ, we have no need to doubt our identity and who we are.

- **We live in Christ** – “When Christ who is your life...”  
Christ is literally our life. Without His sacrifice, we are condemned and sit under the wrath of God. In fact, eternal life is not some heavenly substance that God imparts to us, but rather Christ Himself is eternal life.

1 John 5:12 (KJV)

<sup>12</sup> He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

We are dead and alive at the same time – dead to sin and alive in Christ. Our identity must be understood as living within Christ Himself. Separate from Him, we are nothing.

Paul continues by telling us what we must do as sons and daughters of God. His commands to us are rooted in our identity. By understanding who we are, it becomes not only easier to live a godly life, but also more urgent.

We must be clear that this is not legalism. The Bible is clear in its command for us to perform good works and to deny bad works. Our doing good works is an outflow of our identity in Christ. Because we are called sons and daughters of God through Christ, in gratitude we should not abuse what has been done for us by continuing to sin, but rather live out the calling on each of our lives.

### 1. Put off the old self

Colossians 3:5-11 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> On account of these the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Paul says we are to put to death a long list of sinful actions. This is of course not a literal statement, but it is put in such extreme terms by Paul because our body's, saved or not, have a propensity to sin. When we set our sights on heavenly things, putting to death such things as listed will become a practical outworking of our identity.

So much of Paul's list is glorified in our culture in the United States today in one form or another. By centering ourselves on who we are in Christ, it will be harder to be susceptible to the temptations of our day, but we cannot properly worship and follow God if we are feeding our old dead life. We must be willing to kill the sin in our life because we are consumed with God. John Owen puts it like this:

“Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

- John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

## 2. Put on the new self

### Colossians 3:12-17 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Paul provides a contrast with who we once were with who we are now. The qualities we are to put on are rooted in our identity in Christ. This is not moral self-help, but rather a call to embrace Christ.

Because we are a ‘new man,’ we are as verse 10 told us being renewed in knowledge of what we are now. Because our identity is found in Christ, the Holy Spirit will continue to act upon us to conform us into the image of Jesus (sanctification). If we are truly a Christian, we should be becoming more like Jesus each and every day. However, although the Spirit helps, we still have responsibility to follow God’s commands in order to help the renewal process along. We must choose to make an active effort to pursue love and good works God has put before us.

Paul uses the word ‘bearing’ to express the habitual manner in which believers exhibit these stated virtues listed above.

### **Our Purpose**

God’s purpose for our life is that we be conformed to the image of His Son, and our being identified with Christ allows us to meet his purpose. As we become more like Jesus, we will live more like Jesus. We will show tender mercy, kindness, humbleness, meekness, and longsuffering to others.

As we exhibit Jesus’ qualities, we will exhibit His actions. God has set before each of us good works for us to perform for the sake of others. Our purpose is to do these good works by being conformed to Christ’s image. By understanding who we are and our identity in Christ, we can begin the process of becoming more like Him and living the right life He has laid before us.

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## **BECOME**

Wrap up the discussion by asking some closing questions. We can **become** more like the people God is calling us to be by reflecting on what we've learned and applying it.

- Do you have a clear picture of your identity in Christ? What does your life look like when you are not rooted in your God-given identity?
- What do you make of the tension between being saved completely by grace and not of your own works, yet still being expected by God to do good works?
- Do you feel as though you are becoming more like Jesus since you have been saved? Why or why not?
- What negative quality listed by Paul do you struggle with the most? What positive quality listed by Paul are you best at?