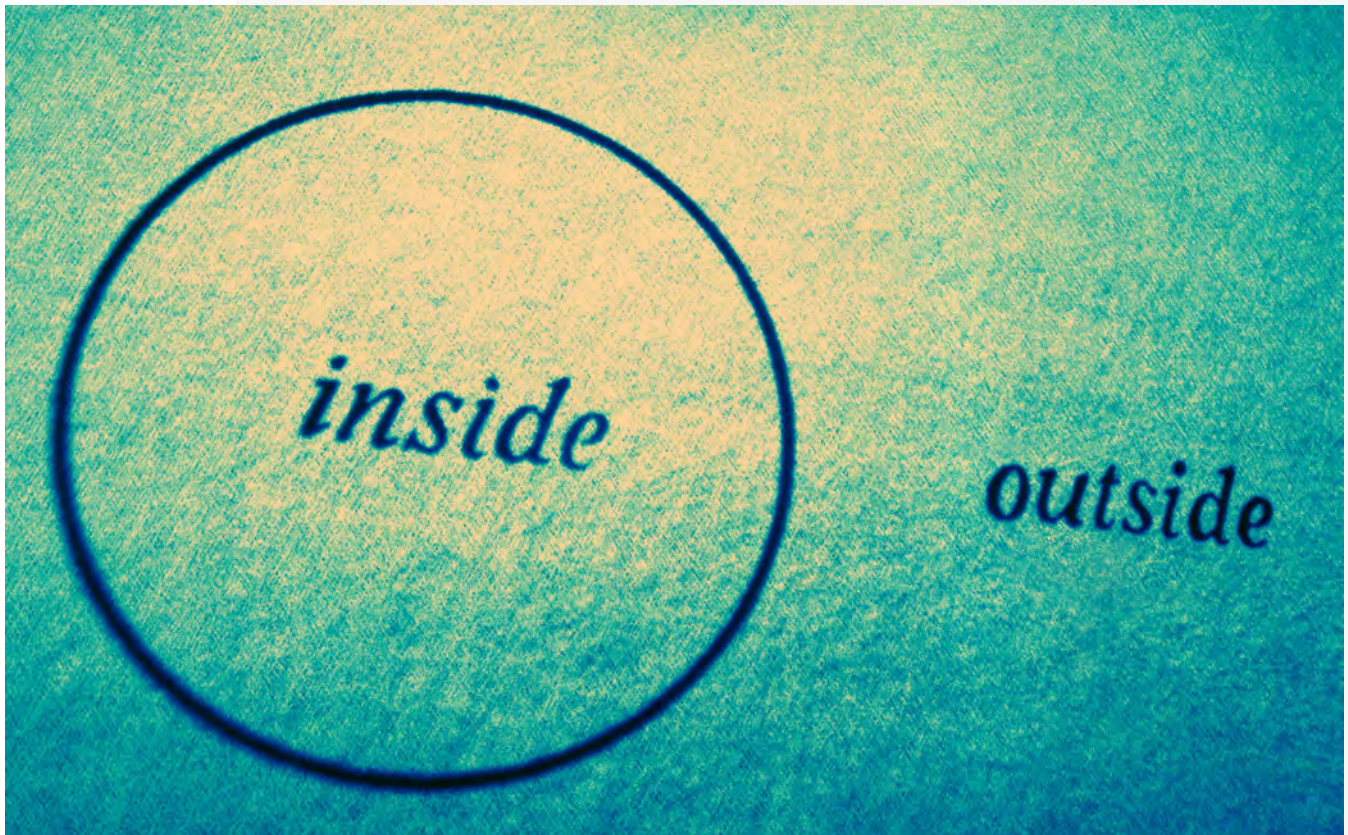


COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

# HOLISTIC CHRISTIANITY



**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Problem

It's been a dreadful week or two hasn't it? So much anger and hate, so much murder and mayhem, so much pain and destruction. I seriously thought about leaving Colossians this week and looking for a text that would bring a relevant message from God's Word that would help us all navigate these days. However, when I looked at the Colossians 3:12-17 passage I had been planning to preach on, I realized that it was perfectly relevant for and suited to our situation. How so?

Well, let me ask you, what's the great need of our society and of the various warring communities in it? **Change**. No matter what side we are on, what community we represent, what color of skin, or what political party, we are all agreed that change is needed. However, although there is some agreement about some of the areas that need change, there's still a

lot of disagreement about other areas, and huge disagreement about how to effect any change.

## Solution?

In this passage, God points us to the area that must change first and also to the way to effect that change:

**Deep, long, and wide societal change is only possible through personal change which is only possible through heart change.**

Yes, changes are needed in laws, training, education, and so on. But these will be shallow, short, and limited without personal change through heart change. People need to change through heart change. Let's see how God uses Paul to point to what needs changed and how to change.

## CONTEXT

Chapter three moves Colossians from the deeply theological to the highly practical. Paul connected the Colossians with their life in heaven as a way of changing their lives on earth (1-4). In verses 5-11, he urged the Colossians to change their designer label from "Old You" to "New You" and live up to their "New You" identity in order to change their lifestyle. He continues that theme of change in verses 12-17 by urging the Colossians to pursue inner change as a way to outward change.

Paul was addressing two temptations that faced the Colossians and have faced all Christians through the ages. (1) Some Christians limit personal renewal to their internal and invisible world. (2) Some Christians focus on outward change but it has no inward foundation or power. These tendencies create two problems:

- Merely inner change damages our public witness.
- Merely outside change cannot last.

Paul, therefore, showed the Colossians how to pursue inside and outside renewal in every area of life.



**Where does Paul start renewal?  
He starts with relationships**



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# 1. RELATIONAL RENEWAL STARTS INSIDE BUT DOESN'T STOP THERE (12-15)

Paul teaches five basic points in verses 12-17.

- God wants to see change in the Colossians' lives.
- God always starts with inner change not outside change
- God never stops at inner change but uses it as the energy for outside change.
- God wants us to put new clothes on our inside life to change our outside life
- God wants not just the old lifestyle to die but a new lifestyle to begin

Below is a list of all the new inside clothes that the Colossians were to put on. There's a space beside each item of heart clothing for you to fill in. Describe a way in which each area of inside renewal will lead to outside renewal in your relationships this week. Name a specific person and specific words you will say or a specific action you will take.

<u>Inside Renewal</u>	<u>Outside Renewal in Relationships (person/words/action)</u>
New identity (12)	.....
New compassion (12)	.....
New kindness (12)	.....
New humility (12)	.....
New gentleness (12)	.....
New patience (12)	.....
New forgiveness (13)	.....
New love (14)	.....
New peace (15)	.....
New gratitude (15)	.....

One of these areas that is greatly misunderstood yet very relevant today is forgiveness. It's especially important with so much recent talk about reconciliation and reparations. But this is often disconnected from God-centered and God-patterned repentance and biblical forgiveness, the essential foundations of reconciliation and restitution.

Paul says the Colossians are to "forgive one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (13). Or as the NIV puts it so succinctly, "Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Key principle: **Our forgiveness is to be patterned upon God's forgiveness** (Eph. 4:32; Matt. 6:12, 14-15).



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## God's Forgiveness

So, let's look at how God forgives, so that we have a reliable model and pattern for forgiving each other.

- 1. God is willing, ready, and eager to forgive everyone:** This reflects God's beautiful nature, his compassionate character, and his constant desire.
- 2. God offers forgiveness to everyone:** God offers to release those who have offended him from their deserved punishment and alienation from him. There's a big difference between offering it and giving it. Offering it is unconditional; giving it is conditional.
- 3. God does not forgive everyone regardless of their response to his offer:** Although he offers forgiveness to all, not all respond. Some don't even think they've done anything needing forgiveness. God does not forgive those who don't want forgiveness.
- 4. God's forgiveness is conditional upon repentance (Lk. 13:3; 17:3; Acts 2:38):** God's forgiveness is conditional upon the offender asking for forgiveness and wanting to turn from his offending ways.
- 5. Forgiveness through repentance produces reconciliation on both sides:** Offering forgiveness reduces the temperature of the conflict; but only the giving of forgiveness, in response to repentance, ends it.
- 6. Forgiveness does not mean the elimination of all consequences.** God may still discipline us for his glory and our education and holiness. God will associate pain with disobedience in order to help us avoid it in future.

## Our Forgiveness

Having seen how God forgives, let's remind ourselves of the basic biblical principle:

**Our forgiveness is to be patterned upon God's forgiveness** (Eph. 4:32; Matt. 6:12, 14-15). Or as Paul puts it in Colossians 3:13: "Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Therefore...

- 1. We must be willing, ready, and eager to forgive everyone:** This is not easy and usually requires Gospel work to be done in our own hearts as we realize how much God has forgiven us.
- 2. We must offer forgiveness to everyone:** This step and the previous step together are a kind of "lesser" forgiveness, sometimes called "positional" forgiveness. We are in a position where we are ready to forgive, and we offer it freely. If this is what people are talking about when they say they forgive someone for a great evil (even if they have not asked for forgiveness), then that's fine. It's more than fine; it's amazing grace and can only be given by God. However, it's not forgiveness in the fullest biblical sense and must not be confused with it.



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### **3. We must not forgive everyone regardless of their response to our offer:**

Forgiving someone before they repent is un-godlike, avoids dealing with serious issues, and, while it might offer some temporary and superficial relief, does not produce long-term satisfaction to the conscience nor true reconciliation.

**4. We must forgive upon the condition of repentance:** According to Matthew 18:15-17, if a person sins, we must reprove them. If they do not respond with repentance, we must take it to another level. If they repent at any stage, we must forgive them, even if it's the 490th time they've done it (Matt. 18:22).

**5. Forgiveness through repentance produces reconciliation on both sides:** Full forgiveness, sometimes called "transactional" forgiveness, is when all five steps occur, resulting in deep and lasting reconciliation. This is the kind of forgiveness that most glorifies God, most benefits the offender, and most satisfies the offended.

**6. Forgiveness does not mean the elimination of all consequences:** There may still be legal and financial consequences.

Both of these kinds of forgiveness, lesser and full, positional and transactional are patterned after God's forgiveness and required by the prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Most Christians are familiar with the idea of fully and freely forgiving others, and how that is powered by one's own forgiveness by God. But the idea of a lesser or positional forgiveness is not so commonly understood. I've therefore provided a prayer you can use that though less than perfect forgiveness will still enable you to experience wonderful load-lightening relief

#### **SAMPLE PRAYER**

"Lord, Jim has done me great wrong, but won't confess it or ask for forgiveness. I can't therefore forgive him without misrepresenting you or damaging his spiritual welfare. However, I'm not going to carry this pain around to burden and burn my mind and heart for years. I'm handing this over to you, because you said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' Lord, you know I don't want your vengeance executed on Jim, but with this prayer I'm promising no more vengeance on my part. I hand that entirely over to you. I promise to not dwell upon this incident, but rather I transfer it all over to you, and trust you to put right in your own time and way. You know I am ready to forgive Jim fully, freely, and forever, should it ever be asked for. Please help Jim to understand your view of sin and to seek your forgiveness and mine. Amen."

**RENEW YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD TO  
RENEW YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS**



**How can we thank God for such renewal of our relationships?  
By singing to God and to one another.**



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## 2. SONG RENEWAL STARTS INSIDE BUT DOESN'T STOP THERE (16)

### Inside Renewal: Receive Christ's Word

"**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom**" (16): "Dwell" means to soak or marinate. Christ's Word will give you a distinctive flavor that will seep out.

### Outside Renewal: Sing Christ's Word

- **Sing to one another:** "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."
- **Sing to God:** "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

## APPLICATION

How much are the media's and social media's words living inside you, marinating you, influencing your mind and heart. How much wisdom are they imparting to you? How are they flavoring you then seeping out of you. Isn't it time to change the marinade to change your words and your songs.

WE DON'T NEED A NEW WORSHIP STYLE  
SO MUCH AS A NEW WORSHIP HEART.

## 3. ALL RENEWAL STARTS INSIDE BUT DOESN'T STOP THERE (17)

Paul's covered a lot of ground in teaching the Colossians this principle of practical theology that all outside renewal must start with but not stop with inside renewal. But just in case anyone thinks that there's any part of life this doesn't apply to, he says: "**And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**"

### Inside Renewal: Do everything in the name of Christ

- Do everything out of love for Christ
- Do everything for Christ's glory
- Do everything like Christ would
- Do everything depending upon Christ

### Outside Renewal: Do everything with thanks to God

- Thank God in all things
- Through Christ with all thanks

Christianity is all or nothing. It's an all-encompassing religion. It changes the entire inside life to change the entire outside life. That's what all Americans need.

WE'LL NEVER CHANGE ANYTHING OUTSIDE  
UNLESS WE CHANGE EVERYTHING INSIDE.



# CONCLUSION



**PRAYER:** Change-making God, change us inside to change us outside and thereby produce powerful change and a powerful witness.

## FURTHER STUDY

### Online Articles

- [Defining Forgiveness](#) by Lyndon Unger
- [What is Forgiveness?](#) by Kevin DeYoung
- [Christians should be Forgiving People](#) by R. C. Sproul

### Books

- [Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds](#) by Chris Brauns
- [From Forgiven to Forgiving: Learning to Forgive One Another God's Way](#) by Jay Adams

### Discussion Questions

1. What other biblical passages speak to our national needs?
2. Complete the table on page 3.
3. Which area do you need to work on most? What Gospel resources will you use to change?
4. How does the teaching on forgiveness help you, challenge you or change you?
5. How does the second point change the way you worship?
6. Apart from personal change, what other changes would help our society at this time?

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## COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

# HOLISTIC CHRISTIANITY

CHANGE YOUR MARINADE TO  
CHANGE YOUR WORLD



Changes to outside life  
> Does not last

Change inside life only  
> Damages witness

**Biblical answer?**



**Relational renewal starts inside but doesn't stop there**

- **Inside:** Relationship with God
- **Outside:** Relationship with others

RENEW YOUR  
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD  
TO RENEW YOUR  
RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

**Thank God for relational renewal?**



**Song renewal starts inside but doesn't stop there**

- **Inside:** Receive Christ's Word
- **Outside:** Sing to God and others

WE DON'T NEED  
A NEW WORSHIP STYLE  
SO MUCH AS  
A NEW WORSHIP HEART

**What else is new?**



**All renewal starts inside but doesn't stop there**

- **Inside:** Do everything in Christ's name
- **Outside:** Do everything thanking God

WE'LL NEVER CHANGE  
ANYTHING OUTSIDE  
UNLESS WE CHANGE  
EVERYTHING INSIDE

**Action?**



**On the basis of inside renewal pursue outside renewal in every area of life for powerful change and witness.**