

A Heavenly Mindset

This past week I did a search on Amazon on the word “mindset,” which returned over 60,000 titles! When I narrowed the search to new releases in the past 30 days there were still hundreds of titles including the following:

- *Mindset Matters: Shifting from Thought to Action*
- *Mindset Matters: Developing Mental Agility and Resilience to Thrive in Uncertainty*
- *Build Your Millionaire Mindset: In 10 Steps*
- *All Pro Mindset: Living A Life All In*

The list went on and on, but here is one that I especially loved:

- *Beast Mindset: 25 Concrete Techniques to Boost Your Charisma, Overcome Fear and Hardship, and Become Even More Untamable Than You Already Are!*

I’m inspired by just reading that title! Who needs to read the book?! With all these books obviously a lot of people think that your mindset is important. And you know what, it is! A mindset is a set of beliefs that shape how you make sense of reality, of the world, and yourself. It influences how you think, feel, and behave in any given situation.

The Bible has a lot to say about our mindset. For instance, when Peter rebuked Jesus saying that surely Jesus would not go to the cross, Jesus replied to him that Peter was setting his mind on the things of man, not of God (Matt. 16:23). Paul teaches that the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace (Rom. 8:6). Peter tells us that we are to be prepare our minds for action and to be sober-minded by setting our hope on the grace that is to be brought to us with the coming of Christ (1 Pet. 1:13).

Your mindset matters, because **where you set your mind will determine your focus and thus how you live**. Where are you setting your mind? What is your focus? And what is shaping your mindset? Are you allowing God and His revealed truth to be THE thing that is determining your mindset? Or would you say that there are a lot of other voices that are shaping your mindset? My guess is that for many of us, we haven’t given this much thought. This morning, I want you to think about it.

Today, we are looking at Colossians 3:1-4 where Paul addresses the issue of our mindset. He is going to urge us to have a heavenly mindset – a mindset that is counter to the self-effort, self-focused, mindset of the false teachers that he has been addressing in the previous section. And so let’s look at the passage. Paul begins by saying that we must . . .

I. Focus On Heavenly Realities (vv. 1-2)

¹ *Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

At the end of chapter 2, Paul made the statement that none of the things advocated by the false teachers was effective against the indulgences of the flesh. In fact, what they advocated resulted in not holding fast to Christ who is the only source of spiritual strength (2:19). And so *therefore* Paul says, “Let me tell you what is effective” and that is a heavenly mindset.

When Paul says, *if you have been raised with Christ*, just like he did back in 2:20 where he said, *if you have died with Christ*, he is assuming this is true. The Colossians had believed in Jesus (2:6) and as a result of their faith in Him, not only had they died with Christ, they had been raised up with Christ (2:12). They shared in the resurrection life of Christ. The verb, *have been raised up*, is passive, which means that this is something that God did for them. He raised them up. It is not something they accomplished through their own merit. This is a direct rebuke of the false teachers who were promoting self-effort as the way to spiritual attainments.

It is interesting what Paul is saying here. The false teachers were encouraging the worship of angels (2:18). They were seeking things in the heavenly realm, but it was misguided. Their focus was on angels. Paul says that the focus is to be on *the things above, where Christ is*. The focus is to be on Christ, the one who is *seated at the right hand of God*. To say that Christ is seated at God’s right hand points to the truth that Jesus shares in God’s sovereign rule. He is in the place of highest honor.

In verse 2, Paul gives a second command, which is very similar to verse 1, but the command shifts a little. Verse 1 is about seeking. Verse 2 is about thinking. He says:

² *Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.*

To *set your mind* refers to the need to dwell intently on something. It is a present, active command and so we are to make this our daily, moment-by-moment habit. And Paul says exactly where our thinking is to dwell. Our focus is to be on *the things above, not on things that are on earth*. It is to be a heavenly mindset.

Paul is not saying that we should not think about family, or friends, or not give appropriate attention to our work. That’s not the point he is making. As we talked about last week, Paul is addressing the false teaching that the Colossian believers were being exposed to, which was a mix of Jewish legalism, and asceticism, and angel worship and these kinds of things. These are the *things that are on earth*. They don’t reflect heavenly priorities and values. And so do not focus there, but rather on the *things above*.

Again, the *things above* refers to Christ. Our mindset, our focus, our thinking, is to be on the resurrected, victorious Christ who now sovereignly reigns with the Father. To be focused on the things above is to focus on the values and priorities of the kingdom of God. It is to be focused on the truth of the Gospel. It is to be focused on who we are in Christ.

We are to make it a daily, consistent practice to focus on heavenly realities. And this matters because **where you set your mind will determine your focus and thus how you live**. And so,

keep developing a mind that is focused on and oriented to heavenly values and priorities. Keep setting your mind on the good news of the gospel. Keep your focus on Christ.

Now, as Paul goes on in this passage, he gives the reason why your focus is to be on heavenly realities. Paul says. . .

II. Focus on Heavenly Realities because of Who You Truly are in Christ (vv. 3-4)

³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Paul is giving the reason for what he has just commanded in verses one and two, and the reason is all about who you are in Christ. Paul talks about a past, a present, and a future reality of who you are in Christ.

In terms of our **past**, Paul says, *you have died* with Christ. By believing in Jesus you have been united with Him in His death. In dying with Christ, you have died to sin and are no longer under its dominating power. This is who you are in Christ. This is why you are to focus on heavenly realities.

In terms of the **present**, Paul says that your life is now *hidden with Christ in God*. This idea of being hidden with Christ has a sense of safety. But as well, it has the sense that there is something that is real and true about you that is now hidden or veiled. You live in this world, but you belong to heaven. You may not look any different from those around us who still belong to this world, but verse 4 affirms that this will one day change. Who you truly are in Christ is not yet visible to the world or even to you, but it is real; it is real now! And so, because of this truth, we are to focus on heavenly realities.

Finally, in terms of a **future** truth about us Paul says that when *Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory*. At the end of the age, when Jesus returns and his full glory will be on display, we too will be *revealed with Him in glory*. Philippians 3 says this:

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

When Jesus returns, we will share in His glory; we will be given our resurrection bodies and we will have a glory that is like Jesus'. And because this is true, this removes any need to focus on the things the false teachers were advocating. When we rightly understand our future hope in Christ, there is simply no need to pursue such things. And so, because of this, keep focusing on heavenly realities.

Focus on heavenly realities because of who you truly are in Christ. Bottom line, if you sum up what Paul is saying about us, he is saying that in our union with Christ we no longer belong to the realm of this earth but to the heavenly realm. We are IN Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). And we need to focus on this reality because **where you set your mind will determine your focus and thus how you live.** So, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Develop a mindset constantly focused on the priorities of heaven, of God's kingdom.

Now, how do we do this exactly? How do we develop a mindset that is consistently on heaven? Though I'm sure there are more than this, let me give you three suggestions. They all start with "W" and so it will help you remember.

First, and most importantly, we must **be in the Word.** There is nothing more important for you in developing and keeping a mindset focused on heavenly realities than being in God's Word. The only way we could ever understand kingdom priorities and values is if it is revealed to us. And it is revealed to us through God's Word.

If you are not regularly, consistently reading, studying, hearing, pondering, and meditating on God's Word, you simply will not develop a heavenly mindset. We belong to heaven, but we live in this world. And while we continue to live in this world there is a lot that is seeking to shape our mindset to be focused on earthly things. As we've already seen in Colossians, we are in a battle with our flesh – our bent towards self and sin. As well, we have an enemy, the devil, who seeks to deceive us and lie to us. He is crafty and subtle making wrong seem right. And then there is the whole world system under the influence of Satan. 1 John 5:19 says that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And so this world system affects every area of life including entertainment, government, philosophy, business, ethics, the arts, and media and on and on. The world system is godless and opposed God and His ways.

From birth all these things have been influencing you and shaping your mindset. It has been the air you've breathed your whole life. Once you became a believer in Jesus you were given the capacity to understand the things of God, but make no mistake, these things still influence you. This is why Paul tells us in Romans 12:1 to not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We talked early in the service about the issue of abortion. As you think about that issue, what HAS shaped your thinking? What IS shaping your thinking? Is it the culture or God's Word? Where are you going for answers for how you think about this important issue? Is it the news or the eternal, revealed truth of God's Word that teaches that all life is sacred? And what is shaping your thinking about how you apply the truth that all of life is sacred, both unborn and born? To develop a heavenly mindset you simply MUST be in God's word.

Second, **walk with other believers.** Typically, we call this "fellowship," but that didn't start with a "w" so this is the way I'm saying it. If you are going to develop a heavenly mindset, you need to be part of a community of people who are seeking the same thing. You need to be walking

with such people. When you walk with other believers who are seeking a heavenly mindset, you let them speak into your life. Life can get so disorienting and busy and chaotic at times that if we are left to ourselves we can so easily get off track. We can find it hard to keep seeking the things above. But when we are relationally connected to others who are also seeking to focus on heavenly realities that can be so helpful. We say it over and over, but this is why we do Rooted, this is why we have Life Groups, that we might walk with each other and help each other in this way.

Finally, if you want to focus on heavenly realities **regularly Worship**. In worship we focus on and declare the greatness, and beauty and glory of God. Obviously, this is something that we do when we gather here each Sunday. My encouragement to each of us is that as we come on Sunday mornings that we would show up with a sense of, “God, reveal yourself to me. Help me to think rightly about you.” Come on Sunday mornings and truly seek to focus on the truths about God that are declared through song and the Word.

But worship is more than Sunday gatherings and it is more than singing. It is a posture of our heart before God. It is remembering that He is the Creator; we are the created. It’s about thinking rightly about God and responding in praise, adoration, and thanksgiving. As you regularly worship God, it gets clearer in your mind that your life is about God; not you. Worship helps bring us to a place of humility before God and a dependence upon Him that spills over into how we live. And so regularly worship God.

Now, of course there are other things that you can do to have a heavenly mindset, but you get the picture. It is not just some abstract thing we try to do on our own. We do it through the Word, through walking with others, and through worship.

Today, we are celebrating communion, which is an aspect of worship that helps us develop a heavenly mindset. This celebration, which we do each month, helps set our minds on Christ. In 1 Corinthians 11:26 the Apostle Paul says this about what we are doing in this celebration:

²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

As we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are proclaiming His death. We are reminded that He offered His life on our behalf that we might be forgiven. But Paul also tells us that we do this *until He comes*. And so, this celebration not only proclaims his first coming, but His second coming as well when He will take us to Himself, which is when we will be revealed with Him in glory. And so today, reflect on these things. Use this time to set your mind on heavenly realities. Christ died for you. You are united with Him in that death. Christ is coming again and when He does, you will be revealed with Him in glory.