

## Perspective

1. Warm up: Jeff began with a story about Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson on a camping trip. When their tent was stolen, Holmes was preoccupied with the stolen tent while Watson gazed at the night sky. What has been your best or worst camping experience?
2. The story about Holmes and Watson is a reminder that there is always more than one way to see a situation. We can get stuck in the immediate and mundane – my tent is missing! – or we can see the bigger picture – wow, look at the sky! We can look down or look up. We can be nearsighted or farsighted. That’s what this week’s scripture passage is about. It challenges us to ask: How do I see the world? Through what lens do I view life? Let’s read together Colossians 3:1-11, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. The first verse in our passage begins with a big “if.” “**If** you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above.” The Message Bible paraphrase of that verse says, “**If** you’re serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it.” Do you feel like you’re living the resurrection life with Christ? Explain your answer.
  - b. Verse 2 says, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.” The Message Bible paraphrase of that verse says, “Don’t shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ – that’s where the action is. See things from his perspective.” Tell us about some random situation you faced this week – large or small. In that situation, do you feel that you were “shuffling along, eyes to the ground,” or “looking up and alert” to how Christ might handle the situation?
  - c. Verse 3 repeats a familiar New Testament refrain, “You have died and your life is hidden in Christ.” Baptism itself is a powerful visual picture of how we’re called to repeat Jesus’ pattern of death, burial, and resurrection. Falling back into the water symbolizes dying to our old way of life, going under the water symbolizes burying that old way of life, and coming up out of the water symbolizes rising to a new way of life. Jesus described this as “being born again.” If someone were to ask you, what does it mean to be “born again,” how would you explain it?
3. Our scripture passage draws a sharp distinction between our old way of life and the new way that we’re called to live into. The Message Bible describes the old way as “doing whatever you feel like doing whenever you feel like doing it.” In other words, the old way is driven by our primal impulses – things like anger, pleasure, lust, safety, greed, gluttony, etc. The result is a very egocentric way of being that’s all about me and my wants, desires, and needs. As you reflect on your past, at what point in your life were you most driven by primal impulses. How did that feel? How did it impact you?
4. Today’s scripture draws a sharp distinction between a life driven by Primal Imposes versus a life driven by what Jeff called “Subliminal” Impulses. The word “sublime” refers

to something that's "of such excellence, grandeur, and beauty as to inspire awe." Verse 2 of our scripture challenges us to make a conscious choice between a Primal and Subliminal mindset. It says, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Philippians 4:8 describes what it looks like to set our minds on things above: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

- a. There's an old Native American parable about two wolves at war within each of us vying for ascendancy – one is Primal, the other Subliminal. The parable indicates that which wolf wins depends on which one we feed. Consider how much food you feed your Primal wolf and Subliminal wolf in a typical day by percentage. In other words, in recent days what percentage of your mind's bandwidth would you say each wolf is getting? E.g., 50/50 or 60/40 or 70/30?
  - b. What are some practical ways to feed our Subliminal wolf?
  - c. What are some practical ways to weaken and starve our Primal wolf?
5. In our scripture, Paul offers a long list of Primal Impulses that need to be tamed and subjected to our Subliminal Impulses. Take a look at the list of Primal Impulses on p. 3.
- a. Which impulse on the list are you most susceptible to? And why do you think you're so susceptible to that impulse?
  - b. Sunday's sermon zeroed in on three items on Paul's list. One was lust. Lust is the impulse to use sex in selfish life-hurting – rather than life-giving – ways. Sexual desire is a profound force in most of our lives. It can be a wonderful blessing or cause deep pain. Without getting into graphic detail, tell us about a time when you managed your sexual self in a way that you celebrate or regret.
  - c. Greed is another item on Paul's list that Jeff highlighted. Greed is the desire to get as much as we can and keep it all for ourselves. Jeff described greed as America's favorite sin. What are some key evaluative factors we should consider when we're evaluating whether greed or generosity has the upper hand in our life? In other words, how do we know if we're living a generous life in God's eyes?
  - d. Anger was the third item on Paul's list highlighted on Sunday. Jeff said, "Anger is a gift God has given us to warn us and motivate us when something needs to change. But to be productive, anger must be tamed and channeled in a positive direction by our higher nature, our Subliminal side." Give an example you've witnessed or experienced of anger being channeled in a productive direction to actually make something better.

## **Colossians 3:1-11**

So if 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 is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). <sup>6</sup>On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup>These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. <sup>8</sup>But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of our Creator. <sup>11</sup>In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

### **List of Primal Impulses Mentioned in Colossians 3**

Fornication  
Impurity  
Lust  
Evil desire  
Greed  
Anger  
Wrath  
Malice  
Slander  
Abusive language