



Clothed With Compassion

A Themed Devotional Series

For CVM Students and Professionals

By CVM Staff



**Christian
Veterinary Mission**

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This series of devotionals was created around CVM's annual theme of *"Clothed with Compassion"* from Colossians 3:1-17. We hope you enjoy getting to know the CVM staff better while studying the Compassion of Christ. We encourage you to prayerfully journey through the study with your Bibles open, looking up the *scriptures* (in italics) and contemplating the **questions** (in bold). The devotionals are really just intended to be a jumping off point to go deeper in God's Word.

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Timeless Truth

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

– Colossians 3:1-2

Compassion compels. One Father’s Day I decided to celebrate by going fishing. We went to a close by, barbless fishing pond since the kids were young, simplicity was key, and we didn’t need to catch fish that day. Suddenly one of the kids hooked a big one! ...A big snapping turtle! The celebratory fishing trip turned into a lesson of compassion as the kids joined me at the local veterinary ER where I anesthetized the turtle to get the hook out. His injury required rehab... Therefore, we adopted him for the night and then safely placed him in the hands of a local rehabilitator.

Praise the Lord compassion compels! The book of Colossians was written by Paul to warn believers against false doctrinal teaching and encourage Christian maturity. The book highlights Christ is Lord over all creation visible and invisible. It proclaims His sufficiency as our Redeemer who enables us to take part in his death, resurrection, and fullness of life¹. Colossians chapters one and two teach us Christ’s ultimate compassionate love for us and victory on the cross empowers us². Chapters three and four teach us believers are equipped to radically live for an audience of One (Jesus) which will impact how we live with and love others³.

As it was then in Colossae, so too it is now... False beliefs influence and come from false connections *and* a lack of true connection. Trust impacts the timeless truths we choose to connect with and live from. To trust in Jesus is to: 1) Live for Him because we love Him, not to earn His love; 2) Seek His will over our own (in love, submit to His sovereign control)⁴, not actions just seeking rewards; 3) Be empowered by His Holy Spirit, not self-determination, self-motivation, and self-control, and 4) Be in constant contact and communication with Him to lead to unity with Him and those who follow Him. Are you connected⁵?

False connections syncretize (blend) worldview philosophies and non-Christian beliefs and distracted the Colossians from faith in Christ alone as they do us, too. These are the “hooks of life.” Remaining on these hooks, ends in death⁶. Obtaining knowledge⁷, stuff or status⁸ is temporal and *will not* last...

What *will* last, Colossians 3:1 tells us what our heart and minds should be set on... And even reveals how... By getting connected to timeless truth... Set your heart and mind on eternal things. Like the turtle on the hook, so we all are born into this fallen world “trapped on the hook” of sin⁹. Yet, in God’s unfailing compassionate love, while we were sinners, He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty of our sin (eternal separation from him) by dying on the cross in our place. He could have left us on the hook - we deserve(d) it¹⁰, but God desired a relationship with us¹¹.

Therefore, if Christ is your Lord and Savior, you have been raised with Christ, so live out this connectedness! While navigating seasons of life, I found this filtering phrase to ask myself... *Will*

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Timeless Truth

it matter in Eternity? Holding onto the non-eternal things impacts living connected... Instead, we are called to abide (to dwell, to remain, be present, be held and kept) in the Lord¹². This also impacts our interaction with others¹³.

As believers, a life focused on things above (eternal matters) where Christ is now seated at God's right hand in Heaven (not on earth, nor in the tomb and honored because Jesus is fully man and fully God as our triumphant, living Redeemer interceding on our behalf before the throne in heaven¹⁴) impacts what captivates our heart. This focus means that the things that break God's heart, will break ours as we abide in Him. Begin here: Who do you know far from God?

Discuss: Like the turtle... Why are you "on the hook of sin" or no "longer on the hook of sin?" How does that correlate to your relationship with Christ?

Ponder: Are your heart and mind focused on eternal things? Are you attached to what is temporary? Need clarity? ...Ask yourself, what if you set everything you value on an altar of fire... What would burn away? What would last? Sometimes hearing, reading, memorizing, or meditating on the word of God can be insufficient to staying focused on eternal things. James 1:22 says to be doers of the word not just hearers otherwise you deceive yourself. John 14:15 says to do what Christ says if we love Him... Could you be like Noah and by faith build the Ark when it had never rained and while enduring ridicule from others for 100 years in the process¹⁵? Action to obey and follow Christ will have a cost, Jesus showed that to us on the cross¹⁶.

Believers: Call upon the Holy Spirit to empower you to stay eternally focused... Colossians 3:1 states you were raised with Christ. The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead sealed you from the day you call upon the Lord as your Savior¹⁷. Watch out for "hooks" and fix your eyes upon Jesus!¹⁸



Dr. Nancy Moore is a Nebraska native. Scholastic blessings led her to the University of Florida for vet school, graduating in 1995. Small animal private practice and a love for the Lord propelled her into short-term missionary work with CVM's Native American Reservations and Urban Outreach. In obedience to the Lord, she completed a master's degree in Ministerial Leadership at Southeastern University in 2020. Nancy and Carnell have five precious children: Ebriana, Jordan, Logan, Damian, and Reagan. Nancy serves as CVM's Southeast Region Representative. Email: nmoore@cvm.org

Footnotes: **1)** Ephesians 1:4-10; **2)** Colossians 1-2; **3)** Colossians 3-4; **4)** Luke 22:24, John 14:15 **5)** John 15:5; **6)** Proverbs 14:12, John 14:6; **7)** Colossians 2:8; **8)** Matthew 6:19-21; **9)** Colossians 2:13-14, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:6-8; **10)** Isaiah 64:6, Romans 6:23, John 3:16; **11)** Colossians 1:16; **12)** Colossians 2:20; **13)** 1 John 4:20-21; **14)** Romans 8:34, Hebrews 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:18; **15)** John 5:39-40; Hebrews 11:7; **16)** John 15:12-17; **17)** Romans 8:11, Ephesians 1:13; **18)** Hebrews 12:2

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Hidden with Christ

“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” – Colossians 3:3-4

Last spring, my husband and I decided to take a risk and plant a grapevine. Now, this may not sound like a risk at all to you, depending on where you live. But for us – who make our home in the heart of the Canadian prairies – it is indeed an uncertain proposal. Winters here are harsh (-40F is not uncommon), windy (think whiteouts and windchill that freezes skin in under 60 seconds), and long (up to six months under snow cover). Only the heartiest of vegetation dares try to survive.

We took extra measures tending the vine in the fall, particularly its delicate new shoots and tendrils that had branched out during the summer. Once its last leaves had turned and fallen, we wound the fledgeling branches carefully in a circular fashion, tucking them close to the main vine for stability and protection. We then wrapped the entire plant in layers of burlap, to give it the best chance of withstanding the onslaught of weather to come. And we hoped for next spring.

I’ve been thinking about the grapevine while pondering our devotional passage above, *“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God”* (v.3). One of Paul’s recurring points in Colossians, and in his other writings, is that we identify with Jesus through his death, resurrection, and life. When I accepted Christ, I understood, as much as one can, that He died to pay for my sin. But Paul is saying here that our coming to Christ is more than that. We also die with him. In Galatians 2:20, he puts it like this: *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”* The person we were before – our sinful self (Romans 6:2) and our attachment to the world (Galatians 6:14) are things that are to die through our union with Jesus, so that we are no longer under their control.

Then, as Jesus was raised, he raises us as well. To new life in faith – his life – and he holds us close to himself. The Vine, as Jesus calls himself – giving life and sustaining us, the branches (John 15:5). He sustains us through sometimes harsh and long seasons where what he is doing is hidden. I’m no viticulturalist, but I have read that during winter dormancy, the grapevine is not actually dormant at all. Rather, it is carrying out significant work – directing its energy to building its root system and absorbing nutrients deep in the soil. This for the good of the branches, for the growth and nourishment of shoots, leaves, and fruit in the coming season. In the same way, Christ is forming us – rooting, fortifying, deepening us in himself, so that our new life will look more and more like him. We are being transformed into his image, from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). I find tremendous comfort in this, that our deep pain is not meaningless. Our losses, failures, struggles – these are not necessarily an indication that we are far from God, in fact they could mean quite the opposite. And through our hardest times, he is producing in us an eternal glory beyond comparison (2 Corinthians 4:17).

The second part of our passage also brings me great hope, like the anticipation of spring on the desolate Canadian prairie. *“When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear*

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with him in glory,” Colossians 3:4. Two things strike me here. First, there is a great reveal coming. The life which Jesus is working, renewing, and transforming in us will come to fullness when he returns in glory. What we will be has not yet appeared, and we will be like him (1 John 3:1-2). Secondly, in the “in between” from our salvation to his appearing - where we live now - he is our source. He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) and our example to live by. Through the rest of Colossians 3, Paul gives us instructions on how our minds and actions need to change, how being united to Christ in new life requires us to also clothe ourselves in something new. We’ll walk through these verses together, as our Compassion series continues.

As for my grapevine, I can tell you (with a smile) that the story isn’t finished. It did survive our bitter winter, its once-lifeless branches emerging from the burlap wrap dotted with fuzzy new buds. This season, those tiny branches and shoots grow thicker, longer, and stronger, looking more like the vine they are attached to; their leaves larger and more plentiful. And perhaps this year, we will even see some fruit.

- 1. What does it look like for my life to be hidden with Christ in God (v.3)? Do my actions reflect this? See also Romans 6:2, Galatians 6:14.**
- 2. Are there losses or pain in my life where I feel like Jesus is far away? Read Romans 5:3-5, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, Psalm 46:1. What truths can I hang onto from these verses?**
- 3. Does the hope of a future with Christ impact my priorities now? How?**
- 4. How would I explain Jesus as my source, my life, to someone who has never heard about him?**



As CVM Canada’s Executive Director, Lisa Balzer fulfills the role of Canada Region Rep in student ministry, workplace ministry, and supporting and mentoring members toward short-term and long-term missions. Prior to joining CVM, Lisa and her family spent 15 years in southeast Asia, serving in community development and refugee ministry. She has a deep love for students – to help them grow and flourish in their walk with Jesus – as mom to a vet student daughter who went home to heaven in 2020. Email:

lbalzer@cvm.org

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Put to Death

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.” – Colossians 3:5-6

I'll be sharing a devotion today on this cheerful little passage from Colossians. It's probably a favorite memory verse, so I bet many of you know it by heart. Jokes aside, Paul, our author of Colossians, also wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that, *“All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* It is important that we face all of Scripture, and cling to the encouraging passages, the passages that remind us of our salvation, and the passages, like this one, which have challenging words but attempt to steer us from calamity.

Hang with me here, because I'm about to talk about a dream I know that God used to get my attention. This is not a way I rely on for guidance from God, and my denomination does not rely on dreams and visions – but, they do appear in the Bible, so we know they can be good. And, if something is good, lines up with Scripture, it may be of God, then we need to pay attention. Just before college, I really became serious about my faith. I would say that I went from being a believer in God to a disciple of Jesus, but there were many aspects of the old self that were still around. I was excited about my faith, but I was not ready to let go of the earthly nature. One night in college, I had a dream that I was being held back from playing in a game by the coach, that I had to get rid of some things before I could play, and the details of the dream were so vivid and real, that I woke up and knew the Lord was trying to tell me to deal with some of 'old self' that was still around. I knew God was trying to show me what Paul is trying to help the Colossians see – sin is dangerous, his letter is not some arbitrary list of rules from God. It's more like guardrails that keep us on a good and healthy road, and once we commit to Christ, we need to start living 'the new self' and let the earthly nature of the old self go.

Paul telling the church at Colossae to 'put to death' something of themselves is a strong command. It sounds painful, messy, challenging. Yet this language of 'death' and 'earthly nature' relates back to verse 3, when Paul reminds the readers 'you have died.' That's the reality of the life change that takes place when we come to Christ. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has passed away; the new has come”* – 2 Corinthians 5:17. Paul uses this reference of new creation and new self across many letters (Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 4:23-24, Romans 7:6). I think we like the idea of being a new creation, but I'm not sure we are as enthusiastic about identifying and putting to death things of our earthly nature. Maybe we can still be a new creation and just hide these things in the basement out of sight? Unfortunately, when things like this remain alive but are kept hidden, they thrive.

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So, how do we identify what is earthly in nature, like the items on this list? Sin is tricky because it is often a twist on something that is good. Sexual immorality makes Paul's list here with good reason, but sex itself is not a sin but a gift, in the proper context. Greed makes Paul's list here. Wealth itself is not a bad thing, but did we accomplish this by good fortune, hard work, God's blessing – or greed. Pride is another challenge - it can be hard to discern when someone is a good leader and confident in who they are – or if they have strayed into pride. From the outside, it can be hard to tell, and it's very dangerous to try to guess the motives of others. But Paul is not asking us to judge others here – he is asking us to take a good look at ourselves. God knows the heart and the motives, and I believe, through Scripture and the Holy Spirit, we can allow God to reveal to us the aspects of our nature that are the old self. The good news is, that we are a new creation - saved by grace, in Christ, and we can walk forward in that confidence.

- 1. Reflect back on when you first gave your life to Christ. What has changed for the better? What are some of the first things of the old self that you left behind?**
- 2. Do you have people in your life that spur you into greater discipleship in Christ? Would you describe them as examples for you, or people who can speak truth into your life? (This is not easy FYI, but it's worth it!)**
- 3. How do you reconcile a God of grace with a God that is also just? (We didn't have much opportunity to engage in verse 6, but I encourage you to not turn away from the challenging things of God. I do believe, the more you seek and understand God, the more you will realize He loves you, and I believe you will continue to love him back.) Here are some verses for reference: Romans 5:12, Romans 3:23, John 3:3, John 3:36, Ephesians 2:8-9.**



Curtiss Gibbs joined CVM full-time after 12 years of pastoral ministry in the local church, mostly focused on youth, college students, and missions. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia and his Master of Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary. Curtiss loves connecting people to their calling and working to see individuals and groups thrive as they serve God. He and his wife, Shannon, have been married for 20 years, and love to spend time traveling, in the outdoors, and in the company of family and friends. Email: cqibbs@cvm.org

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What Not To Wear

“You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” – Colossians 3:7-8

I got in an argument with my husband while putting our kids to bed tonight. After leaving their room feeling very disrespected, I threw two loads of clean laundry on the bed and started rage folding. It crossed my mind to leave his clothes in the hamper and just fold everyone else's. But I remembered I'm not a child and don't need to act like one.

As I was nearing the end of the piles, I noticed a hole in the armpit seam of one of his T-shirts. The Scripture I studied with CVM a couple of years ago from Romans 12:20-21 came to mind, *“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* Basically, if your enemy's shirt needs mending, mend it... So, I got out my sewing kit.

The first time I turned the shirt right side out to check how my work looked, I noticed my suturing skills were super rusty and instead of a simple continuous pattern I should probably switch to like an everting mattress pattern to hide my mismatched thread, so I did. When I turned it back over the next time, I saw that there were two holes in the other armpit! At that point I realized that this must be just a work shirt for him now and he probably didn't care a bit about the holes, nor would he be blessed by my fixing them, so I might as well stop. But I didn't, because you know who was blessed by my fixing them? Me.

It's really hard to be kind to someone, or pray for them, and stay angry with them.

Sometimes clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, as we'll see God calling us to do in verse 12 soon, means clothing our enemies with shirts that don't have holes in them. Or better yet, maybe realizing our husbands aren't our enemies.

One thing I like about verses 7 and 8 is that we are called to action. The Fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:21-22 *“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,”* are characteristics I sometimes long for, but feel that all I can do is plead with the Holy Spirit to give them to me. However, in this chapter, Paul, who wrote both Galatians and Colossians, tells us to intentionally rid ourselves of *anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language* and instead put on *compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience*.

I can't say that I fully comprehend how to achieve the Fruit of the Spirit, but if we're walking with the Lord, I think it may mean we need to actively die to ourselves and get out of the Spirit's way. As long as I allow myself to be consumed with anger, or rage cleaning, I can't very easily put on these characteristics of Jesus.

Or what if we choose to put on compassion first... Instead of ridding ourselves of anger *then* clothing ourselves with compassion, wouldn't having compassion on someone help diffuse our

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What Not To Wear

frustration with them? Truly empathizing with their experience would shift our malice into kindness. When we learn what that client has going on at home, our patience grows. When we understand how a co-worker feels unseen or mistreated, gentleness comes easier. Even with our patients, when we know they're in pain, our tolerance for their snapping at us increases naturally.

For many, anger stems from fear. Two other causes seem to be at the root of my own anger, which embarrassingly still sometimes leads to rage, malice, slander, and every once in a while, filthy language. I think for me at the heart of my anger is a feeling of not receiving the respect I "deserve." Relinquishing my pride and putting on the humility Jesus modeled so beautifully (see *Philippians 2*) would serve me well in regulating my emotions. After all, Jesus was the only one who actually did "deserve" to be respected, and even he took on the very nature of a servant and was obedient to the point of death on the cross.

The other root cause of my anger is not fully trusting God's plan. Isn't that the underlying reason for pretty much all of our sin; believing that we know better than the Creator of the Universe? If I trusted that the Lord's timing for my life is ultimately the best then I would reframe interruptions as divine appointments, I would look at irritations as opportunities, I would not be frustrated when my plans go sideways.

"I used to walk in these ways in the life I once lived," but now *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ in me,"* – Galatians 2:20. Let's rid ourselves of anger and clothe ourselves instead in the beautiful life and ways of Jesus.

- 1) **Compare and contrast this passage in Colossians 3 to Galatians 5 and the Fruit of the Spirit.**
- 2) **What comes to mind as the underlying cause of your anger, rage, malice, slander, or filthy language?**
- 3) **What are some ways you rid yourself of those and regulate your emotions in different situations with classmates, difficult clients, and family?**
- 4) **What attitudes of Christ would you like to put on?**



Dr. Lauren Charles is a graduate of Auburn, CVM, class of 2005. She grew up in Louisville, KY and lives there again now. After a number of short-term mission trips to Latin American countries, she lived and served in Bolivia from 2009-2012, working primarily with veterinary students. Lauren adopted her daughter in Bolivia, then got married and came back to the US. They now also have 3 biological children, a son-in-law, and a grandbaby! She serves as CVM's Workplace and Student Ministries Director and Mideast Region Rep. Email: lcharles@cvm.org

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The Old Made New

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

-Colossians 3:9-10

A popular saying goes, "The only things in life that are for sure are death and taxes." I would like to add another sure thing in life...weight fluctuation. If we are honest with ourselves, we hear it (or hear reference to it) mentioned everywhere...the doctor's office, the gym, our job, church, etc. How many times have those older than me warned that one day, ONE DAY, eating a banana split, three cookies, pizza, and Mountain Dew for a midnight snack will surely catch up to me? I suppose they are correct. But it tastes so good! For now. That is the very definition of sin (gluttony in this case) being fun for a season.

In Colossians 3:9-10, Paul continues his plea to the Christians in Colossae by telling them to put off the old self and put on the new self. Unintentionally, Paul is placing the mental image in my head of someone in their 30s who had far too many late-night snacks trying to squeeze into a tight t-shirt that fit back in middle school. I can pull and push and pray that this Abreadcrumb and Fish shirt from youth group suddenly slides on perfectly. But for some reason, that size small just doesn't fit like it once did. And guess what, that's quite alright! We grow, mature, change, and move from adolescence to adulthood.

Scripture lists plenty of sins we should not take part in including greed, idolatry, murder, hatred, etc. It is easy to read those and think, "Well, yeah, those are terrible, and I would try to never do those." We could call these sins the most blatant, notorious, or greater ones. However, the sins Paul tells us to do away with in verses 8 and 9 are just as important. We may consider them lesser or below the surface, but these are the ones that will cripple us without us even knowing what is happening. They are the silent killers.

It is important to keep in mind what N.T. Wright said, "When a tide of passion or a surge of anger is felt, it must be dealt with as the alien intruder it truly is and turned out of the house as having no right to be there at all, let alone to be giving orders." You and I have been made alive in Christ and a completely new creation! We give far too much credit where it is not due by passively saying, "Well, that's just my sin nature, so it is what it is." Paul is pleading with us to see that we can throw off the hand-me-down rags of the first Adam and put on the new and fresh garment of Christ, the second Adam. You and I were intimately united with Christ and clothed with His righteousness at the moment of salvation. You see, the "image of God" here does not refer to the shape of our bodies, but instead to the mind and heart. Our divine character is displayed through holiness, love, humility, compassion, kindness, and forgiveness.

If you are a Christian, you are a new person. You no longer live under the threat of eternal judgment. So, why do we allow our lives to be controlled by buying the newest technology, eating until we pass out, comparing our outward appearance to others, trying to make more

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The Old Made New

money, and intaking so much negativity through social media? Since Christ purchased us with His blood, His very life being given up for us, why do we try as hard as humanly possible to go back to the days before we met Him? We lie to everyone, including ourselves. A white lie, a fib, a tall tale, deception, whatever we want to call it, all happen because we are not happy with the reality of the situation where we find ourselves. Is Christ not good enough? Glamorous enough? Interesting enough? Even saying that He is more than enough does not fit. He is ALL.

You and I were bought at a price. We have been given the greatest gift the world has ever known, our salvation in Christ. How can we look around and not feel compassion and empathy for the lost person beside us who has no hope of eternity with Christ? How can we not look at the orphans, the homeless on the street, the depressed, the suicidal, the beaten down, the dying, the poor, the rich, the popular, those living the “perfect American dream,” and so many others with anything but an intense compassion in our hearts that drives us to our knees? We have been clothed with a new self, one that is made, in part, to show compassion. Open the closet today and see the wonder that you have been given.

- 1) Who can you show compassion to this week who desperately needs it?**
- 2) What imperfection do you struggle with that can and should be given to Christ?**
- 3) What is one hard truth/reality that you need to face this week?**
- 4) Who can serve as a mentor in your life to help guide you and point you to Jesus, especially when you are struggling?**



*Ryan serves as the Short-Term Missions Coordinator at CVM. He is responsible for facilitating **all trip** opportunities, training trip leaders, maintaining current host relationships, and educating volunteers about domestic and international short-term missions. He attended Liberty University where he obtained his M.Div. and Ed.S. degrees. Before joining CVM, Ryan served in East Asia for five years. While there, he helped start and lead an international school. He also has experience managing a non-profit organization as well as leading more than 15 international mission trips. Ryan and his wife, Alyssa, along with their three young children (Lydia, Abel, and Juliana), live in Louisville, KY. He enjoys sports, traveling, running, and teaching ESL. Those interested in short-term missions at CVM can contact him at rjeffers@cvm.org.*

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United in Christ

“Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” - Colossians 3:11

In our world today, it seems we are divided in every way one could imagine. It's enjoyable to consider all the differences that we have culturally and ethnically, sharing our experiences with others. Increasingly, however, our world is encumbered by divisions that are damaging and leave many hopeless, longing for justice, hope and peace.

I grew up in New York City, born in Brooklyn and lived in both Brooklyn and Staten Island. I was privileged to live in such an incredible place, and I have always had a sense of pride about where I am from. Throughout my childhood, I was surrounded by people from about every walk of life, which is made possible by the sheer scale of the city. It wasn't something I thought about much while I lived in the city, but people living, working, and enjoying life all around me were from nearly every part of the world, and yet collectively, we were all New Yorkers, with shared experiences being from the same city, same borough, same neighborhood.

Watching young children interact with others, without animus or prejudice, is such a beautiful thing to witness. I can remember times at school or in the many parks around NYC, playing baseball, basketball, and handball with friends. We made up teams, selection was usually based on knowledge of skill level for each person, and we would play hard for our team, we would play to win. None of our differences seemed to matter at that time, we focused on winning and working together as a team.

God has created each of us to be an important piece of the most incredible tapestry we could ever imagine, His Kingdom. It is such a travesty, that with all the beauty God has made in us and around us, there could be so much hate, anger, and destruction. It is important for us to remember that God has crafted every person and has put His image on us.

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the church in Corinth, writes some important reminders to us. We are one body, with many parts; no one can tell another part of the body that it isn't needed or isn't important. We ought to value the other parts of the body and recognize how much we need each other to thrive. The body requires various parts to function properly.

“The eye can never say to the hand, “I don't need you.”

The head can't say to the feet, “I don't need you.”

-1 Corinthians 12:21

Making observations of our world today, watching tensions rise, and turmoil erupting on streets throughout our country and the world, it certainly makes me think about what the response should be for followers of Christ. We are to be clothed in compassion as it says in Colossians 3:12 and to also have kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

The body of Christ, the Church, need always remember that we are part of each other. Regarding the Kingdom of God, our earthly distinctions seem to take a back seat in comparison

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United in Christ

to the grandeur of being part of the body of Christ. This of course doesn't mean that we should throw away the things that make us who we are, God gave those things to us, and it is quite an extraordinary thing to consider the lineage that has led to each person's existence.

Just like the teams we would form on baseball fields, basketball courts, and handball courts, we would function as a unit and cheer each other on to the whole team's success. It would be rather strange if members of the same team were quarrelsome or maligned against one another. A team built on dysfunction and strife won't be a winning team. Unity is needed to make a body function well. Jesus teaches this lesson to His disciples when they are inquiring of Jesus how others would know that the disciples were indeed followers of Christ; Jesus tells them:

"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." -John 13:35

Following Jesus, we must decrease so that Christ may increase in us. This is not an easy thing to do, just look at the letters in the New Testament written to the churches. There should be a delightful, dare I say, refreshing, unity in the body of Christ. When others see the love that we have for one another, they should be able to recognize Christ in us, it is proved by our character and conduct within our members.

"Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." - Colossians 3:11

How do we show compassion to a world that desperately needs solace and reprieve from the constant bombardment of negative news, destructive words, and increasing anxieties? We learn to encourage, love, show kindness, and genuinely care for one another. This will be the proof that we belong to Christ and will be a powerful example to our world, one that cannot be refuted.

- 1. How can you be a bridge to help others overcome barriers that are imposed by society?**
- 2. What can you do to stir up unity among your classmates or veterinary professionals?**
- 3. How can you encourage someone who feels hopeless, with the hope of Christ?**



Jeremy Rodriguez was born and raised in New York City and began volunteering at his church when he was 12 years old. He moved to Seattle and served as the Executive Pastor for a church in Seattle where he was introduced to Christian Veterinary Mission. In 2022, he moved to his current home in Central Wisconsin where he serves not only CVM as the Communications Coordinator, but also serves as a lead pastor in a local church. Jeremy enjoys sharing Christ and is an avid aviation enthusiast. Email: jrodriguez@cvm.org

Clothed With Compassion

A Gift For You, Really

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” – Colossians 3:12

I felt the weight of the wrapped treasure in my hand and a wave of excitement washed over me. I had done it. I had successfully snuck a gift from under the Christmas tree, smuggled that gift to my room, and with no Mom or Dad in sight I was going to open it. What a rush. Who could imagine what I was holding in my hand. My mind raced with possibilities, hoping, of course for a new toy. I was confident that, whatever it was, it was going to be the best thing I had ever opened.

This scene takes place near Christmas, sometime in the hazy glow of the 1980’s, and I was a girl on a mission. Had I been able to read, I would have already understood that this gift was going to be a disappointment. The tag on this gift read DAD, not RACHEL. As my little fingers carefully slid behind the tape to unwrap what was surely going to be the most amazing gift ever, I was crushed to reveal the most practical and boring of all dad gifts...a value pack of white t-shirts.

You might not believe this, but to this day I can remember how deflated I felt. I can’t remember if any planning went into my clandestine operation or what happened after I overcame my disappointment with this gift, but the memory of opening that gift to reveal t-shirts for my dad still evokes an overwhelming sense of disappointment. This gift didn’t fit me and was ultimately a disappointment because it wasn’t meant for me.

This is the memory that came to mind as I was meditating on Colossians 3:12 because I can relate to my younger self as I read this verse. The gift of salvation and the ongoing sanctifying work that is being done in the lives of believers is such a beautiful gift, but there are times that I hear a little whisper in the back of my mind question if this gift is really for me?

Do you ever feel like that when it comes to the gifts that we receive in Christ? I mean, do you ever read titles in the Bible like: “forgiven,” “loved,” “holy” and question if those titles are *really* for you and if you can *really* claim the gift of salvation? Or do you feel like little Rachel, a surreptitious imposter who took a gift that wasn’t really hers?

If you can relate to this, let’s be encouraged together by Colossians 3:12:

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience”

This verse reveals to us a perfect gift that has been given to us by our loving Father. Who is this “gift” for? Let’s read the tag: “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.” This is who we are in Christ. Chosen. Holy. Dearly Loved. These titles put us in the right posture as we receive this gift because we realize that as believers, we are all these things, and they are completely undeserved.

This gift of salvation doesn’t just change our status before God, but through the ongoing work of sanctification we *clothe ourselves in* the characteristics of Jesus, becoming more like him. The

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A Gift For You, Really

first in this list is compassion. I like how this reads in the King James Version where it is translated as “bowels of mercies” which is a more literal translation of the Greek that incorporates the words for “inward parts” and “compassion.” This is a depth of *care that comes from deep within us*.

The next is kindness or *meeting needs God’s way, free of harshness*. Then humility, which is the result of *comparing ourselves to God, not others*. Followed by gentleness. Gentleness is not a popular character trait because it has become synonymous with weakness, but when we look to the original Greek, we can see that this type of gentleness *expresses power that is divinely constrained*. And finally, in this verse we have patience or the *ability to wait sufficient time before becoming angry*.

This is a picture of what we look like when we clothe ourselves in Christ. When we view ourselves as God does: Chosen. Holy. Dearly Loved. These things that we put on do not feel like a gift meant for someone else, instead they are received with humble excitement. I *get to* have a deep care for others because I remember who first cared for me. I *get to* be kind and gentle in my interactions because I know who was first kind and gentle with me. I *get to* restrain my anger because I know who restrained his anger towards me.

I can’t go back and console young Rachel in her disappointment with her ill-gotten, ill-fitting gift. But as I read Colossians 3:12 today, I am reminded of a better gift and overwhelmed with a different feeling altogether. As you go about your day, remember who you are in Christ. Chosen. Holy. Dearly Loved. Accept the gift and the reality of those titles and look for ways to clothe yourself in these characteristics that were demonstrated to us through Christ.

- 1) The passage in Colossians 3:12 describes us as "chosen, holy, and dearly loved." Does this resonate with you? Why or why not?
- 2) How can we cultivate the characteristics of the gift we receive in Christ (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience).
- 3) The passage says "we are clothed" in these characteristics. What does that metaphor mean to you? How is it different from simply trying to be good people?



Rachel graduated from Warner Pacific University with a B.S. in Business Administration in 2007 while working in non-profit management. She went on to teach 5th/6th grade in Mexico City for a year. She met and married her husband, Daniel Graham, and they moved to Soroti, Uganda in 2012 where they served for 9 years with CVM. Rachel and her family transitioned from Soroti back to Portland, OR in 2021. Currently, she serves as CVM’s Customer Relations Coordinator, where she is combining her love of spreadsheets, her penchant for witty emails, and her desire to see God’s name proclaimed to the nations. Daniel and Rachel have a son, Nathan, who is 11 years old. Email: rgraham@cvm.org

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Forgiven to Forgive

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” – Colossians 3:13

In Colossians, Paul is writing his letter to the church and instructs the Christians to make allowance for each other's faults. He expresses this same command in Ephesians 4:1-2, *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.”* Considering Paul wrote this sentiment to two separate churches, it seems to me that even for early Christians, it was tough to get along. And it must be important if he wrote it twice! This longtime human struggle continues to be something I wrestle with today.

Recently, I was part of a discussion in our CVM Support Staff Bible study. We were talking about Christian community and how it is a fundamental part of our Christian walk. Then the conversation took a turn as we discussed how Christians in our community sometimes do not behave like Christians. Specifically, when we experience deceit, exclusion, selfishness, or just plain rudeness. Within 24 hours of the discussion, a fellow Christian was inconsiderate of me. I became angry and my feelings were hurt. Forgiveness was the furthest thing from my mind; I was immersed in my reaction instead.

It is most difficult for me to forgive when the person does not (or will not) apologize. Why should I forgive someone that isn't sorry? 1 Peter 4:7-8 says, *“Be clear minded and self-controlled so you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, as love covers over a multitude of sins.”* What I hear when I read that verse is, *“Take a breath, settle down, and pray. Love deeply and allow your love to cover over the mistakes of others.”* Holding a grudge is not living out love for my brother or sister.

What holds me back from offering forgiveness? Pride. And as I have learned over time, pride is a deadly sin that alienates us from God. To move into forgiveness means I no longer put myself or my feelings as the center of my focus; I choose to follow Jesus instead. Expecting perfect behavior from fellow believers (and myself) is unrealistic, as we are all human and fall short. In Matthew 18:21-22 Peter asks Jesus, *“Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”* Jesus said to him, *“I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”* When I think about the undeserved mercy that Christ lavishes on me on a repeated basis, I am disappointed in my lack of grace for others.

As Christians, we cannot escape quarreling with one another. When we know we have hurt someone, we must apologize. And when we have been hurt, we must offer forgiveness. We have to turn our humanity into humility and pray. We have received in this an Advocate that will help us through conflict into reconciliation – call on Him. Jesus commands it.

- 1. Think of a time when a fellow believer upset you. What did you do to work into forgiveness?**

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Forgiven to Forgive

2. Think about a time that you caused hurt to a fellow believer and apologized. How was it received?
3. In what ways does the sin of pride affect your walk with Jesus?
4. As Christians, how can we hold each other accountable to apology/forgiveness?



Nancy Kruttsch's involvement with CVM began with a short-term mission trip to Haiti. It was there she felt God's call to serve through the veterinary profession. As a Certified Veterinary Practice Manager and sales rep, Nancy had ongoing opportunities for relationships and mission trips through CVM. When the right set of circumstances aligned, she jumped into the Region Rep position while also assisting her husband with their farm. Nancy's husband and three grown children stand behind her passion for missions and veterinary medicine. Nancy serves as CVM's South Central Region Rep covering 8 states and 7 universities. Email: nkruttsch@cvm.org

Clothed With Compassion

Put on Love

“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

– Colossians 3:14

Growing up in rural Colorado, one of the common places that I frequented every couple of weeks was the Kit Carson Barber Shop. As a young boy, 30 min in the chair getting a haircut and teased by John or Merrel was a much better experience than getting my ears lowered at home with dull clippers that my dad offered. Through the years I noticed that upon arrival of the lunch hour or 5:00 PM, John was quickly out the door and headed home. John’s wife had a disability, and he would go home and make her lunch and dinner each day and care for her. He was so faithful you could set your clock by his actions.

We also had a farm on the South side of town where I spent much of my time fixing fence or breaking colts. Along the west edge of our property was Highway 109 that ran south into the canyon country and had a great view of the Rocky Mountains about 60 miles west. Most evenings from about 6 to 6:30 PM I would see John drive by taking his wife on an evening journey. John’s faithful care for his wife day in and day out for most of my childhood really impressed on me what love looked like. Now that I am older, I respect it even more. When I was in the barber chair, John did not talk about what love looked like, but I saw him put on and wear it every day in caring for his wife.

Colossians 3:12 calls us to *“clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”* As you think about John’s story, I am sure each day John had to make a conscious decision in caring for his wife to put off many choices and put on actions that cared for his wife. He clothed himself daily with these attributes which are bound together in love. Living a life like this day in and day out is not natural without dying to our own desires and living for others. Colossians 3:14 says *“And over all these virtues (listed in vs 12) put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”* How do we put on love and is it even possible on our own?

1 John 4:7 says *“beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”* If love is from God, how do we access it? It comes from our restored relationship with God when we die to self, are hidden in Christ, and accept Him as our savior and take steps to walk in obedience to God (Colossians 3:3-7). Love is an interesting attribute because God does not call us to work harder at it but to abide in Him and to allow His perfect love to live in and flow from us. Jesus describes this process of abiding in John 15 where we are encouraged as believers to abide in him like a branch abides in the vine. Jesus says in John 15:8-10 *“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”* As we go through the challenges of day-to-day life, abiding in Christ results in him pouring out His love in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

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Put on Love

God did say if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love. Keeping all God's commands can seem like a mammoth task, but Jesus simplified our understanding of this in Matthew 22:37-40 when he summed it up this way, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."* While God gives us freedom in our actions, He calls us not to use that freedom to serve the flesh but to love and serve others (Galatians 5:13). For it is in doing so that our loving actions fulfill the law and commands (Romans 12:10 and Romans 13:8-10).

Not only does love fulfill God's command but this passage in Colossians is a good example to show how love is a special attribute that helps to harmonize many of the other attributes God calls us to put on. It says that love binds them together in perfect unity. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience are all made better in love. We see in I Corinthians 13 God describes love and compares it to Faith and Hope but refers to love as the "greatest" virtue. Also, in Galatians 5:22 love is listed as a Fruit of the Spirit. Love is also an outcome of an effective growing faith in 2 Peter 1:5-8 *"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

In summary, God's love is perfected in us as we love Him and others. Each day as we abide in Christ, we can find the peace and joy of serving God by putting on love.

- 1. To put on God's love what actions should we first take?**
- 2. Why is abiding in Christ important to our putting on love?**
- 3. Why does loving God and loving our neighbor sum up all the law or commands of God?**
- 4. How can putting on love bind together other attributes in perfect unity?**



Dr. Brad Frye is the husband of Angela, a Certified Foot Care Nurse, and the dad of 8 children and 10 grandkids. He got involved in CVM as a student at Colorado State University and served with his family long-term with CVM in Uganda. He serves as a local Awana and Home School leader. Both he and Angela do pre-marriage counseling for their church. Email: bfrye@cvm.org

Clothed With Compassion

The Peace of Christ

“Let the Peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.” – Colossians 3:15

The context for Colossians 3:15 is instructions for living together in harmony in the Body of Christ. One of the fruits of the Spirit is peace (Galatians 5:22).

We are to let His peace rule in our hearts. Not that we are never immersed in anxious thoughts, not that we are never startled or discomfited. But these are not the rulers of our hearts; they are temporary. In the spiritual battle we may retreat to the hospital tents, but we don't dwell there.

Does this sound super-human? It is. That's why He helps us. He is sufficient, not us. He is our peace. His Gospel brings peace.

We lived in a country under communism for over a decade. One government official in the Gideo region of southern Ethiopia sent soldiers to bring me to his office. I dreaded what he might demand of me, but God was at work.

He said, “I grew up in this country; now I'm the communist cadre in charge here. We have 4 clans—that used to always fight. Now when I return from my education, I find 3 of these clans live at peace while the 4th is still always fighting. The people explained that the Gospel of Peace has come to the 3 clans, but not yet to the 4th. Do not tell anyone I said this—but I need you to take the Gospel to this 4th clan. I'm tired of constantly dealing with all their unrest.”

Down where we lived in southwestern Ethiopia, a man from the Bunna tribe got drunk at market and killed a man from the Mali tribe. This would normally lead to vengeance killing back and forth; but a government official asked me to go with him—so they wouldn't shoot him in the presence of a foreigner.

They met at a creek, the border between the Mali and Bunna lands. They took a goat, stepped into the stream, and killed it. Then they cut open the stomach, and elders from each side took out some of the contents and washed it away in the creek, declaring that they were washing away the offense of the other tribe.

Each side took turns shouting deprecations upon whoever should dare to break this treaty—“let such a fool become like this goat!”

The government official muttered, “What a backward business.” But I thought it was a fantastic analogy for how Jesus became peace for us—He took the guilt to make peace between God and man!

Look at Ephesians 2:14-18. *“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with*

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The Peace of Christ

its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

You know what they did next? They cooked the goat, and we all sat down together under the acacia trees and ate together as new friends. Is this not a bit like sharing the Lord's Supper together, in remembrance of how Jesus brought us peace?!

Years later, when communism fell, the country was without governance for a season. Each people group did whatever they wanted to do. The Bunna people we lived among met together for a whole week to decide whether to kill us or not! You'd think we'd be anxious?

But the peace of Christ ruled in our hearts. We can't explain it; we should have been freaking out. We should have laid awake all-night listening for someone coming to kill us.

But instead, we never missed a night of sleep. The Lord gave His inexplicable peace, as He promised in Philippians 4:7. *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

By ourselves, we could never have let His peace rule in our hearts. But He did it. He also gave us Psalm 4:8 during that time: *"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone O LORD, make me dwell in safety."*

- 1) How are you sleeping? What are you anxious about today?**
- 2) What do we know about God that helps us surrender our anxiety to trust Him in peace?**
- 3) Can you look at the character and work of Jesus, and let His peace rule in your heart?**



One month after vet school graduation (WSU, 1983), Fred Van Gorkom went to Ethiopia with Christian Veterinary Mission. While working in veterinary projects, famine relief, refugee, and discipleship ministries he met Vicki, also a veterinarian (OSU, 1982). They married in 1986, returning immediately to remote southwestern Ethiopia where they raised their four children while doing community development and church planting. In 2008, they moved to CVM Seattle where they serve to help mobilize others for the privilege of international missions.

Email: fvangorkom@cvm.org

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Teaching, Admonishing, and Song

“And be thankful. 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.”
-Colossians 3:15b-16 (ESV)

How do you let the word of Christ dwell in you while teaching and admonishing? What does that look like in your daily lives? And what does that have to do with songs? For me, this looks like my discipleship relationships. I am both a discipler and a disciple.

On a mission trip to Honduras, I acted as a discipler. We tried to pray with every owner after the pet's surgery. When I noticed an owner was up the hill and had someone bring the pet to us, I felt called to go to the owner. The student with me was fluent in Spanish so I encouraged her to pray with the owner. She was timid and unsure so she asked me to pray, and she would translate. During the trip, I continued to encourage her to be bold. By the end, she was leading prayers with the owners and inviting others to join just as I had invited her. On the card the students gave me, this stood out from her “Most of all thank you for encouraging me to be bold.” How can you disciple someone else so they may be bold and share Christ with others?

As a disciple, I get together with two other ladies. One is our discipler and the other is my fellow disciple. Like Paul and Timothy, our discipler is just someone who is more mature in the Christian faith, who teaches and admonishes us. We do life together. What does this look like?

We regularly get together and check in on how our lives are going. How is our relationship with God, our spouses, and others. Do we regularly spend time with God and what does that look like? Where are we struggling and need help? What sin issues have cropped up that need addressed?

Sometimes the answers aren't apparent until we sit in a passage and discuss it. Currently we are doing a discovery Bible study where we pick a passage and go through a small selection of inductive study questions.

- What stood out to you or what did you not like?
- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about mankind?
- What does this say about the life God wants us to live?
- What will you do to act on what God is saying to you this week? (This is our I will... statement)
- Who can you share with this week about what God is teaching you?

As we read the passage, God might put something on our hearts that we have been struggling with and we discuss it as a group. Our discipler will ask probing questions to get us thinking and to help us figure out what might need to change or what action we might need to take. Ultimately, she challenges us to live grace filled lives reflecting who we are in Christ.

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We start by reading the passage aloud and many times my fellow disciple and I will look at each other and laugh. Why? Having both grown up listening to Christian music, we had the same song pop into our minds. This is one of many ways we connect not only to God and the passage but also to each other. Our discipler has come to enjoy these moments and laughs along with us when she realizes we had yet another song pop into our heads.

In the original Greek, this part of Colossians is one run on sentence. It was therefore up to translators to impart punctuation. In some translations there is no punctuation after wisdom. This makes it seem like we are to teach and admonish through songs. Other translations separate teaching and admonishing one another from singing to God with a thankful heart. I tend to read this verse more like the latter. Christianity can be such an intellectual venture that songs can help us connect emotionally resulting in an outpouring of thankfulness and grace. However, I also find that the meaning behind songs can teach as it would have in Paul's time.

Just think about children's songs and the simple but powerful words in those songs and how they stick with us. Or hymns like It is Well With my Soul. As I have grown in my faith, I have gone from liking Christian songs for their catchy tunes to preferring songs that have lyrics with meaning. Now that I have a child of my own, I am enjoying children's songs and remembering/realizing just how much meaning is in them. I find when I start my day off listening to songs with my daughter, I become more joyful and thankful throughout the day. I even tend to go around with a tune in my head finding myself singing it to God with a thankful heart.

- 1. How does your discipleship relationship teach and admonish you? Consider asking another Christian to disciple you if you don't have a discipler.**
- 2. What does it look like to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly?**
- 3. Read Ephesians 5:18-21. This is a parallel passage. In what ways is being filled with the Spirit vs being filled with the Word similar?**
- 4. How has worship influenced your walk and resulted in thankfulness to God?**
- 5. What will you do to act on what God is saying to you this week?**



Dr. Kara Song is an Ohio State grad, class of 2018 with roots in New England. It was during school that she found a heart for missions and a passion for CVM. After graduating, she moved to Northeast Ohio where she worked in a busy companion animal general practice for four years. During that time, she and Sadie, her Australian Shepherd mix, added to their family. First with a Golden Retriever named Caspian and then with her wonderful husband, Paul. They have since added a daughter, Liliانا, to their family as well. Despite thinking she would stay at her clinic for some time yet, Kara felt God calling her to join CVM where she now serves as the Northeast Region Representative. Email: ksong@cvm.org

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Whenever the Time, Whatever the Work: Team Up with Jesus

“And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” -Colossians 3:17 (NLT)

My first experience outside the US in volunteer veterinary work was in August of 2012. My employer fully sponsored me to serve as a veterinarian in a huge spay/neuter campaign in Quintana Roo, Mexico. This was not a Christian organization but by that point in my growing faith, the Lord had placed missions deeply in my heart. So, by my expectations, this was a mission trip! I was looking forward to using my veterinary skills to serve local people and their animals. I prayed for opportunities to share Christ's love with my teammates. As we were landing over the lush, Mexican rain forest of Cancun, a rainbow followed us all the way in behind the wing of the plane. It was a beautiful reminder from the Creator of the universe that He was with me.

We were warned up front that this would be a very intense week. Our team of vets would be expected to do 90-100 surgeries per day in August, in an un-air-conditioned community building, in tropical Mexico. I remember our team leader telling us that if we did not use the restroom at least once a day that we would be in big trouble! Now, being a young vet at the time, this sounded exciting! Right up my alley and full of adventure ahead!

The night before the first day of the clinic, I prayed, *“God give me your strength to persevere in the conditions tomorrow. But most of all help me to show your love, compassion, and true joy to those around me.”* I arose the next morning with great anticipation of the day ahead. That first day, I spayed about 8 of the 100 animals we were hoping to care for. There were only 8 surgery tables. I was expected to do 12-13 surgeries and I missed that mark by far. I remember feeling angry and pretty devastated because I thought I was a decent surgeon after 7 years of being out of school!

The next day, the leaders placed me in “receiving.” I didn't even get delegated to anesthetic induction or monitoring. I got placed at pet intake. I had to use my elementary Spanish to speak with owners about their pet's health and wrangle dogs and cats that were covered in ticks and fleas. As you know, this was a dirty job. Amidst the sweat and dog saliva, it dawned on me: *“Elizabeth, THIS is what God has commanded you to do. Work with the people, show them compassion, and proclaim Christ.”*

I don't dare assert that I always had a stellar attitude moving forward but I started asking the Lord if this was more of what He had planned for me in the veterinary profession. Would He use the skills He gave me as a veterinarian to create relationships with **people**? As the week of hard work finished, I was exhausted yes, but I was completely full of joy as God showed me a picture of what it looked like to work for Him: to do the work that He had called me to do. My body was

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Whenever the Time, Whatever the Work: Team Up with Jesus

tired, but my heart was alive. In Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV), Jesus says “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” An ox yoke is often custom fit for each animal. The younger ox is teamed up with another, more mature ox. When we team up with Jesus, we get to do the exact work that He created for us to do. Our yoke becomes easy because, in His kindness, He designed the work specifically for each of us.

In Colossians 3:23, Paul writes, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.” The NLT version says to work “willingly.” This experience in Mexico showed me that when I work, I am working for the Lord, it does not matter what the task is. I can do it joyfully because He has created the work particularly for me. My work will glorify God and my attitude should be one of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We cannot meet this challenge in our own strength. In Philippians 4:12-13, Paul reminds us, “...I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.” (NIV) Chuck Swindoll says, “Our attitude at work is an announcement bigger than any gospel tract you put on someone’s desk. So: wherever, whenever, whatever, however...Christ.”

- 1. Brainstorm some areas in your life where you are seen as a representative of the Lord. Where are you a representative and you may not even be aware of it?**
- 2. What are some ways that you can work willingly for the Lord on your college campus or in your clinical setting?**
- 3. In what ways can we have a more compassionate attitude at work or school?**
- 4. In closing our study of Colossians 3:1-17 in this series of devotions, what passage or verse most stands out to you?**



Dr. Elizabeth Mendoza is a 2005 graduate of the University of Tennessee CVM. She practiced small animal emergency and general medicine in southern CA until 2014 when she and her husband, Jaime, moved back to TN to raise their family and try their hand at farming. She serves as the North Central Region Rep for CVM. Email: emendoza@cvm.org