



When Cindie and I began to talk about the kind of atmosphere we would create in our home, we adopted the image of a “hothouse.” We wanted to create an atmosphere where our kids would thrive and reach their full potential in Christ.

We realized there were no “one-size fits all” parenting plans. It was far more important for us to help our kids discover who Christ had created and redeemed them to be, than to remake them in our image, or shape them into the kids we wanted them to be. So we weren’t shooting for a Bono or an Einstein or a Michael Phelps. They didn’t have to be in advanced orchestra or elite volleyball. We were simply shooting for kids who loved Jesus. Our job was not so much to shape our kids as it was to create an atmosphere where they could be and would be shaped by Christ.

The church is simply a larger family. There is a wonderful diversity in the body of Christ. While not everyone will respond to Christ in the same way, the church should be a “hothouse” where we thrive in Christ and reach our full potential in Him. Where the gospel thrives in us and transforms our community.

In Colossians 3:15-17 Paul suggests three vital ingredients for living and thriving in the body of Christ.

RULED BY THE PEACE OF CHRIST (v. 15)

1. While we think of peace as the absence of conflict, the biblical definition is far richer and deeper. In the Old Testament peace was the sense of well-being and contentment that resulted from God's presence. While sin results in alienation, the gospel results in peace with God, peace with ourselves, and peace with one another.

How does the biblical definition of peace change the way you think about peace?

2. In order to broaden our scope of the kind of peace Paul has in mind, take the time to read the passage in context. Start with verse 12 and read through verse 15. What does the larger context add to our understanding of the kind of peace Paul is talking about?
3. Biblical peace, while supernatural in its origin, is neither easy to realize or maintain. In Romans 14:19 Paul tells us, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." In Ephesians 4:3 he tells us "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."
 1. If peace is a supernatural gift from God, why do you think it calls for a concerted effort on our part?
 2. What are our responsibilities in "letting the peace of God rule" in our hearts? ...in our homes? ...our group? ... our fellowship?
4. What do you think Paul means when he tells us we "were called to peace?"

IMMERSED IN THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST (v. 16)

1. The "Message of Christ" is shorthand for "the Message about Christ" or the gospel. Let's go back and review the basics of the gospel from chapter one.
 - a. How does Paul describe the effect of the gospel in verses 3-6?
 - b. How does Paul describe the content of the gospel in verses 15-21?
 - c. How does Paul pray we will respond to the gospel in verses 7-14?

2. What are some of the ways Paul suggests that we "let the message of Christ dwell richly among us?"
3. What are some additional ways we allow the message of Christ to dwell richly among us?
4. What are some ways we prevent the message of Christ from taking root in our hearts and lives?

LIVING FOR THE FAME OF CHRIST (v. 17)

In the name of Christ means: (1) we do everything we do as if we were representing Christ, and (2) we do everything we do in the power of Christ. What are some practical steps we can take to ensure that our love for Christ flows into the ordinary events of everyday life?