



## BIBLE LENS

JANUARY 9, 2023

Shining a light on the weekly Bible Lessons published in the *Christian Science Quarterly*®

## Life

January 9–15, 2023



### from the **Responsive Reading**

#### Colossians 3:12–16

*Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives.*

—New Living Translation

Paul apparently never visited the Greek city of Colossae, and his authorship of this letter is uncertain. Many sources, however, think the epistle was drafted by him to express his deep concern and love for a group of Christians he had never met. His tender counsel in this passage exemplifies this love.

Commentators point out that being chosen of God doesn't release believers from responsibility. Having put on their "new nature" (v. 10, NLT), they are now to "clothe" themselves in the virtues that represent this spiritual selfhood. A Bible expert suggests, "They are to be the living advertisements of what God's grace does in human lives."

*Rule* is translated from the Greek verb *brabeuō*. In addition to meaning to control or govern, it can also signify the action of an umpire. Another scholar explains that peace “is to arbitrate, to umpire, to discipline the mind to a decision where there is a conflict of motives or impulses, to promote a unity of purpose in a spirit of thankfulness.”

## Ephesians 5:1, 2

*Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*

—New Living Translation

In ancient cultures, children were encouraged to imitate their parents, and demands to imitate Christ occur frequently in the New Testament (see also [Romans 15:7](#); [Colossians 2:6](#), for instance). However, although Christians called themselves children of God, the mandate to imitate God was rare. A well-known exception is [Matthew 5:48](#): “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

“Pleasing aroma” (“sweet-smelling savour” in the King James Bible) alludes to the scent of sacrificial offerings. Here the writer is charging the faithful to embrace Christ Jesus’ example of self-sacrifice and obedience to God.

## Ephesians 5:21

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

—New Living Translation

*Hypotassō*, the Greek term rendered *submit*, refers to subordination and subjection, often in a military sense. In this admonition, though, the emphasis is on voluntarily serving each other as a natural outcome of yielding to Christ. Jesus urges this selfless work throughout his ministry (see examples in [Mark 10:42–45](#); [John 13:12–17](#)). And Paul teaches, “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” ([Philippians 2:3](#)).

## from **Section 1**

### 1 | [John 5:26](#)

*As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.*

#### **Translation**

*The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son.*

—New Living Translation

### 3 | John 3:1–7

*There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Little is known about Nicodemus, who appears only in John's Gospel. A member of the ruling council of Israel, he nevertheless recognizes Jesus as a "teacher come from God"—a portrayal generally rejected by his fellow Pharisees—and a worker of miracles.

Nicodemus is mentioned in just two other biblical accounts, both times in support of the Savior. He deters his fellow officials from arresting Jesus and, after the crucifixion, joins Joseph of Arimathea in preparing Jesus' body for burial (see [John 7:50, 51; 19:38, 39](#)).

Over the arc of these three stories is seen a man's growth from cautious searching to measured defense—and finally, to an open demonstration of faith and love. One source describes the scriptural record of Nicodemus as "a beautiful illustration of the working of the Spirit, of how belief in the Son of Man is in truth a new birth, and the entrance into eternal life."

### 5 | Ephesians 4:23, 24

*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; . . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

#### **Translation**

*Your hearts and minds must be made completely new, and you must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy.*

—Good News Translation

Many Greeks of the time considered desires and passions to be corrupting influences and reason to be the hallmark of maturity. This author advocates spiritual renewal—a reorientation of self from the "old man" (v. 22) to right thinking and godliness. "After God" is viewed as a reference to the likeness of God presented in [Genesis 1:26, 27](#). Similar wording occurs in [Colossians 3:10](#): "after the image of him that created him."

Of *ktizō*, the term translated *created* in this text, a scriptural authority explains that the writer of Ephesians is describing the founding of institutions, communities, or civilizations. And because the context is Christian, he is designating a new outlook, way of life, and/or community—the bringing into being of a new people.

## from **Section 2**

### 7 | [Lamentations 5:21](#)

*Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.*

#### **Translation**

*Bring us back to you!  
Give us a fresh start.*

—Contemporary English Version

### 8 | [Psalms 36:7, 9](#)

*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. . . .  
For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.*

#### **Translation**

*Your love is a treasure,  
and everyone finds shelter  
in the shadow of your wings.*

. . . . .

*The life-giving fountain  
belongs to you,  
and your light gives light  
to each of us.*

—Contemporary English Version

## from **Section 3**

### 10 | [Matthew 4:23](#)

*Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*

Each synagogue Jesus visited would have been started by a group of about ten learned Jewish men. Synagogues were centers of justice and schooling and provided regular reading of the law as well as talks on theological points. Any man with knowledge of the law could read or speak, furnishing the Master opportunities for public preaching.

A scholar outlines the distinction between preaching and teaching: “Preaching is the uncompromising proclamation of certainties; teaching is the explanation of the meaning and the significance of them.” Writing about Jesus’ healing career, this source continues, “He was not satisfied with simply telling men the truth in words; he came to turn that truth into deeds.”

### 11 | [Matthew 5:1–3, 8](#)

*Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

#### **Translation**

*Jesus saw the crowds who were there. He went up on a hill and sat down. His followers came to him. Jesus taught the people and said:*

*“Those people who know they have great spiritual needs are happy.*

*The kingdom of heaven belongs to them.*

. . . . .

*Those who are pure in their thinking are happy.*

*They will be with God.”*

—International Children’s Bible®

From early Hebrew history, mountains have been vital places of refuge and communion with God (see examples in [Exodus 34:1–28](#); [Joshua, chap. 2](#); [I Samuel 23:14](#)). Christ Jesus’ transfiguration occurs on a mountain, and he often chooses mountainsides for prayer and refreshment (see [Matthew 14:23](#); [Mark 9:2](#); [Luke 19:29](#)).

“When he was set” depicts the traditional seated position of a teacher. And “he opened his mouth” is more than an introduction—it signals a formal or heartfelt saying. A commentary notes: “. . . the very use of this phrase indicates that the material in the Sermon on the Mount is no chance piece of teaching. It is the grave and solemn utterance of the central things; it is the opening of Jesus’ heart and mind. . . .”

## 12 | Colossians 3:12–14

*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

### **Translation**

*You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity.*

—Good News Translation

## from **Section 4**

### 14 | Luke 10:25–29

*A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*

As an expert on religious and civil law, this lawyer has no difficulty replying to the Savior’s question “What is written in the law?” To love God was central to Jewish doctrine (see [Deuteronomy 6:5](#)) and its corollary to love one’s neighbor echoed God’s instruction to Moses for His people (see [Leviticus 19:18](#)). But he persists: “Who is my neighbour?”

Since neighbors were frequently considered to be those sharing common blood or religious beliefs, the lawyer probably expects confirmation of this understanding. Christ Jesus, though, redefines the debate. In his subsequent story, the despised Samaritan isn’t the person in need, but the caring neighbor—and “Who is my neighbour?” is answered with guidance about how true neighbors act.

### 14 | Luke 10:30–37

*Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

At this time, a traveler from Jerusalem to Jericho would need to walk about 17 miles (27 kilometers) through rocky terrain. This treacherous route descended from about 2,500 feet (760 meters) above sea level to some 800 feet (245 meters) below sea level. Notorious for thieves and outlaws, it was called the Way of Blood. Yet, in spite of its danger and rugged landscape, Israelites who wanted to avoid Samaritan territory used this course.

Longstanding animosity over theological and political differences characterized Jewish-Samaritan relations. Given this hostility, Jesus' choice of a Samaritan as the good neighbor in his parable—especially over the highly regarded priest and Levite—conveys a pointed message about love for others. With the simple directive “Go, and do thou likewise,” the Master illustrates his earlier teaching “Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you” (6:27, 28).

## **from Section 5**

### **17 | Psalms 92:13, 14**

*Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.*

#### **Translation**

*Like trees planted in the Temple of the LORD,  
they will grow strong in the courtyards of our God.  
When they are old, they will still produce fruit;  
they will be healthy and fresh.*

—New Century Version®

Distinct from the wicked, who resemble ephemeral grass to be “destroyed for evermore,” God’s righteous children are like continuously green palm trees (see [vv. 7, 12](#)).

*Dāšēn*, the Hebrew noun translated *fat*, has the figurative meaning of abundance and fertility. *Ra<sup>a</sup> nān*, rendered *flourishing* in verse 14, is most often translated *green*. In a similar image, for instance, [Psalms 52:8](#) proclaims, “I am like a green [*ra<sup>a</sup> nān*] olive tree in the house of God.”

## 18 | Isaiah 40:28–31

*Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

### Translation

*Don't you know who made everything?*

*Haven't you heard about him?*

*The LORD is the God who lives forever.*

*He created everything on earth.*

*He won't become worn out or get tired.*

*No one will ever know how great his understanding is.*

*He gives strength to those who are tired.*

*He gives power to those who are weak.*

*Even young people become worn out and get tired.*

*Even the best of them trip and fall.*

*But those who trust in the LORD*

*will receive new strength.*

*They will fly as high as eagles.*

*They will run and not get tired.*

*They will walk and not grow weak.*

—New International Reader's Version™

## 19 | II Corinthians 3:4, 5, 18

*Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; . . . We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

### Translation



*We can say this, because through Christ we feel sure before God. I do not mean that we are able to say that we can do this work ourselves. It is God who makes us able to do all that we do. . . . Our faces, then, are not covered. We all show the Lord's glory, and we are being changed to be like him. This change in us brings more and more glory. And it comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

—International Children's Bible®

In [verses 7–16](#), Paul contrasts an “open face” with Moses’ veiled face upon his return from Mount Sinai with the Commandments (see [Exodus 34:31–35](#)). As the Israelites were unable to look on Moses’ radiant face, so nonbelievers are blind to the gospel of Christ. To receive the gospel is to remove the veil that obscures understanding.

“Beholding as in a glass” portrays the concepts of reflection and self-examination. To the Christian, spiritual transformation—being “changed into the same image from glory to glory”—takes place as God’s glory is seen.

*Metamorphoō*, the Greek verb rendered *changed* here, occurs only three other times in Scripture—to describe Jesus’ transfiguration (see [Matthew 17:2](#); [Mark 9:2](#)) and in Paul’s charge to the Roman Christians “Be ye transformed [*metamorphoō*] by the renewing of your mind” ([Romans 12:2](#)).

## from **Section 6**

### 23 | [I Corinthians 3:9](#)

*For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

#### **Translation**

*For we are God's fellow workers [His servants working together]; you are God's cultivated field [His garden, His vineyard], God's building.*

—Amplified® Bible

### 24 | [I Peter 1:22, 23](#)

*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

## Translation

*Love each other with a warm love that comes from the heart. After all, you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth. As a result you have a sincere love for each other. You have been born again, not from a seed that can be destroyed, but through God’s everlasting word that can’t be destroyed.*

—GOD’S WORD® Translation

Mention of unfeigned love in First Peter has a parallel in Paul’s words “Let love be without dissimulation” ([Romans 12:9](#)). And James affirms that the wisdom from above is “without hypocrisy” ([James 3:17](#)). All three verses use the Greek adjective *anypokritos* to depict genuineness and sincerity.

In this text, *corruptible* (Greek, *phthartos*) denotes the perishable and mortal—a state redeemed by the sowing of the seed of eternal life in Christ. As Paul declares to the Christians at Corinth, “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” ([I Corinthians 15:53](#)).

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Read a related editorial, “[Born again!](#)” by William E. Moody, at [jsh.christianscience.com/born-again](http://jsh.christianscience.com/born-again)

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## Resources cited in this issue

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