SESSION 6
LEAD IT: COLLEGE AGE

GOALS

As students experience this session in Colossians, they will…

- discover a hefty set of commands in chapter 3.
- make the connection between gratitude for what God has done for us and obedience to what He asks of us.
- be challenged to adopt these commands as a way of life.

MATERIALS: Group

- a white board and colored pencils

MATERIALS: Each Student

- student journal pages for Session 6
- Colossians Scripture sheets
- a Bible, pen, and notebook
- optional: a copy of the list of "earthly things" from Colossians 3:5 for each student (see Putting Into Practice)

Prayer
Once your students have gathered, give them a moment to exhale the pressures of the day. Then pray that God will take the group to a new level of obedience with today's study.

Review
To stay connected to the big themes in Colossians, ask a few review questions.

What was God's big secret?
He intended for the Gentiles to be part of the plan all along. Through Jesus, Israel's Messiah, He was going to bring together Jews and Gentiles to establish the Church.

What were the five eras of God's plan that we looked at?
- *The mystery was in place before time began.*
- *God gradually rolled things out to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, choosing them and their offspring (Israel) to someday be a blessing to all nations.*
- *God let Israel know that someday everyone (including Gentiles) would get to enjoy the promises of God—that is, without first becoming a member of Israel.*
- *Jesus began His ministry by going to the lost sheep of Israel. He concluded His earthly ministry by sending His apostles to all nations (Gentiles) and establishing the Church (the people, not the building), in which His Spirit would dwell.*
- *Mystery explained: Jesus is the point of the mystery! The coming of the Messiah is how God made the offspring of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob a blessing to all peoples.*

What does understanding this mystery do for us?
It keeps us from being deceived by fine-sounding arguments.

Bonus Question: Who was the first person ever to get in on God's secret?
Abraham

OPEN

Intro your subject matter by discussing these questions:

How do you respond when someone does something nice for you out of the blue—a "random act of kindness"?

How would you define gratitude?

What's the best way to express gratitude?

Can you fake gratitude? If so, how?
Use this question to distinguish between saying you're grateful (words) and showing your gratitude (deeds). Actions are the true indication of gratitude.

DIGGING IN

Before diving into Colossians, explain this pattern in Paul's letters:

Paul usually spends a large section teaching about all God has done for us through Jesus. In the shorter letters, like Colossians, this takes up the first half of the book. Then Paul shifts gears and spends the second half of the book describing the behavior grateful people should display based on all he's described. In this session, we hit that transition in Colossians.

Give your students a chance to review their journal pages from sessions 2-4 if they are handy. See if they can dig out a few key things God has done for them through Jesus.

Then ask students to designate a symbol they could use to mark the instructions and commands in Colossians. (If they're short on ideas, suggest a megaphone, a bold exclamation point, or two stone tablets.)

Have them read Colossians 3:1–17 from their Scripture sheets and do this:

Mark every instruction or command you find with the symbol we designated.

When most have finished, ask them to look back at what they marked. Ask whether any patterns or themes stand out in these commands. Can any of the commands be grouped into categories? Here are some categories your group may see:

-Commands about the personal spiritual life.
-Commands aimed at group life.
-Instructions related to external behavior.
-Instructions related to internal changes.
-Commands connected to thankfulness.
-Commands that use colorful imagery like "put to death," "put on your new self," or "clothe yourselves."

After identifying a few categories, explain that this chapter is a mini-version of Paul's other letters in that most of the commands are linked to something that's been done for us by God.

Ask students to read the passage a second time and do this:

Using a different color, underline the reminders of things God did for us. Key words to look for include "since," "for," and "therefore."

TAKING IT INWARD—Solitude

After most have finished, explain that you're going to give the group time alone to think about the instructions they've seen. Invite your students to find a place where they can listen to God—perhaps a corner of the room, a hallway, or an empty room nearby—taking their journal pages and pens.

Before they spread out direct their attention to their journal page for Session 6 and explain how the chart works: In the middle column, they are to list every command that's connected to a reminder (these are already noted in the left column). If a command doesn't seem to be connected to a reminder, still list it in the last row of the chart. The right column is where it gets personal. Ask them to rate themselves on a scale from 1 to 5 as to how well they're doing at keeping each command.

The exercise is printed below for leader reference.

Reminders	Commands	My 1-5 Rating
I've been raised with Christ. (v. 1)	*-Set your heart on things above. (v. 1)* *-Set your mind on things above, not earthly things. (v. 2)*	
I died and my life is now hidden with Christ in God. (v. 3)	*-Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature. (v.5)* *-Rid yourself of such things as: anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language. (v. 8)*	
I've taken off my old self and put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of God. (v. 9-10)	*-Don't lie to each other. (v. 9)*	
We're all in Christ; there is no Greek or Jew; Christ is all and is in all (v. 11) We're God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved. (v. 12)	*-Clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (v. 12)* *-Bear with each other. (v. 13)* *-Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. (v. 13)* *-Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (v. 13)* *-Put on love, which binds all these virtues together in perfect unity. (v. 14)*	
As members of one body we're called to peace. (v. 15)	*-Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. Be thankful. (v. 15)* *-Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. (v. 16)* *-Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom as you worship with gratitude in your hearts to God. (v. 16)* *-Whatever you do, do it all in Jesus' name, giving thanks to God through Him (v. 17)*	

TAKING IT INWARD—Group

Call your students back together after they have had a few minutes to rate themselves and discuss the following questions.

Which command(s) got the lowest rating?

Which command(s) convicted you the most? Did any personal situations come to mind?

What do you think things would be like around here if we took these commands seriously? (Think about personal interaction, ministry potential, and the way outsiders view the group.)

Point out the chart on their journal pages entitled "One Thing." Ask them to choose three commands—either the two most convicting, the two that scored lowest, or their top two priorities—and write these in the left column. Give them a few minutes to pray and think about one specific action they could take in the next 24 hours, in order to obey each command. They should write that action in the right column.

Then ask any volunteers to share one of their actions.

Use a few of the following questions to help your students take Colossians 3:1–17 to heart.

What do you make of the connections between things God did for us (the "Reminders" column) and what He's asking us to do?

Agree or disagree? If these reminders don't cause a wave of gratitude to come over us, then we're out of touch with what God has done in our lives!

If your gratitude for what God has done for you is measured by how well you measure up to Colossians 3, how grateful are you?

When a group of believers obeys these instructions, a whole lot of love, honesty and forgiveness is generated. It's an atmosphere you can't find anyplace else on earth! So on a scale from 1 to 10, how willing are you to do what it takes to generate this atmosphere?

What can we start doing right now to be a Colossians 3 group?

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Stress the following to your students:

It's easy to want the invigorating atmosphere, especially since it can cause our group to grow in numbers. And it's easy to make a list of these commands and enjoy clicking them off as we do them. But the real motivator for being the people God wants us to be is gratitude for what God has done for us.

Closing Activity Option 1:
Distribute copies of the list of the "earthly nature" things in Colossians 3:5 (sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry) to each student.

Ask the students to tear or cut the sheets into slips of paper, each slip containing one "earthly nature" thing. Paul tells us to put these things to death. Invite students to devote a day to each "earthly nature" thing by praying about it, meditating on it, and asking God to remove it from their lives. At the end of the day they can have a small ceremony of ripping up the piece of paper and "burying" it

Closing Activty Option 2:
Have students pair up with an accountability partner and discuss their One Thing chart. Then spend some time praying for each other.

Before ending the session, give your students time to write something (maybe a reminder/command from Colossians 3) on their review page. Suggest that they choose something that raises their gratitude level and motivates them to express that gratitude with a new kind of behavior.

Close in Prayer.