



# CONNECT GROUP NOTES

## Sunday 09.07.2023

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### “The One True Story”

#### **Preacher**

Dr. Rev. Adam Dodds

#### **Scripture**

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Colossians 3:1-4

#### **Thought**

Paul is telling the Colossian Church their true story. In a culture of competing ideologies, Paul reminds the early Church that their true identity is in Christ and Christ alone.

A few thousand years later, Paul's words still ring true in our current context. We are often bombarded with stories from our culture, messaging which tries to paint a picture and shape our identity. We are living in a time of worldwide storytelling. Each story claims to know who we are, where we are going and what's important. It's a battle where the winner takes all, and one where the battlefield sits mostly in the realm of emotion.

Many stories revolve around freedom from oppression. Consider the 1960's - the story was that if we rebel from 'oppressive morality', we'll find happiness.



Or more recently, cultural stories of overthrowing religious constraints to find true authentic freedom. We only need to look at Lennon's song "Imagine" to see what a well articulated cultural story can look like.

And yet, these stories are not based on ultimate truth. The ultimate story from oppression to freedom was, is, and always will be found in Jesus. As we return to Colossians, we see the grand story of how God creates humanity to be perfect, and yet we push God away and experience relational distance as a result - and things go bad. Yet, Jesus comes and brings new life and we are restored.

However, an even more powerful way to look at this story is from the perspective of Jesus. Jesus, who enjoyed perfect relationship with The Father, becomes human and in doing so, leaves His place of glory in order to identify with humanity. He suffers the ultimate humiliation of death on a cross, but then rises to life and ascends once again to the Father, and in turn, we are raised to life with him. He became what we are so that we might become what He is.

Love, loss, love. It's the pattern that we see repeated in life, and it's often the pattern that forms the majority of stories told - yet there is only one overarching true story which brings true resurrection life.

What does resurrection life look like? An inner contentment and deep confidence in God's goodness. It's a clarity of purpose and a life permeated by peace. It's a developing history with God that inspires confidence in His goodness. As we become more like Jesus, we bring life to others around us.

Yet, the entry to this expression of love, is death to self. Death to living our way. It's such a harsh way to describe it, but it's appropriate. We can't live a resurrection life without first dying to our own ambition. One is either dead *in* sin or dead *to* sin. Death happens, we just have to choose which.

So which stories are we believing? Which stories are we dwelling on? There are some ways to tell; firstly, what do we think about when we're not thinking about anything in particular? Or maybe, what would we choose if we had three wishes? Or what is your first thought or action in the morning, or last thing at night? The answer to these could be a clue to the



true desires of our heart, and therefore, the story we are believing and following.

Stories are not always bad, they're just not always true, and not always helpful in living a life of selflessness. It could be a culture of consumerism, a culture of outrage, or even just an insistence that we are right and others don't see the truth. These things begin to crowd our mind - they might be good things or neutral things, even true things, but it's just stuff. It squeezes out the ultimately important.

Paul reminds us to set our minds on things above. To actively seek those things above - to actively seek Jesus. To be still, and let the noise of our minds, with all its nuances, become still in the presence of Christ. He makes us lay down in green pastures, He leads us beside still waters, He restores our soul. Will you let Him this week? Will you set aside that which clutters your mind, the stories that run through it - no matter what those stories may be, but lay them at the foot of the cross. Die to self, and truly find new life and peace in Christ.

### **Discussion Points**

1. What things consume my mind? They might be worries or desires or struggles. Do they reveal a particular story I may be believing?
2. How has God been challenging me recently - what things do I feel to change in my own journey or thought life?
3. As we set our minds on things above, and on the beauty of the story of Jesus - how does that change the way we see (and act towards) others who may not yet follow Jesus?



## **Personal application + Prayer**

Dear Lord,

You and You alone have the words of life. Grant me the wisdom to lay down my own intellect, my own desires, my own thoughts, and my heart at the foot of the cross. Fill me with your resurrection life, make me new afresh and truly let me dwell on things above. May I be challenged and inspired afresh by the reality of your presence and transforming love this week.

Amen