I do not know what it was like growing up in your house, but growing up in our household, us five boys learned early and quickly that words matter and actions matter. We did have a sister that was added to our family when I was about ten years old, but I learned a lot before she came along. I am grateful that our mom and dad never cussed. Oh, they got mad at us a lot of times because of what we did but I do not remember my parents ever using any bad language. As a child, I really did not know what bad language was. One day one of the neighborhood kids told me when I went home that day to say this word to my mom. I did not know it was a bad word so I did it. That was the wrong thing to say. After calling my mom this word, she marched me into the kitchen and washed my mouth out with soap while my brothers watched. I learned that words matter and there are consequences to the things I say. From that point on I had a very clean mouth, that is until I joined the military.

At a young age, I remember going into a grocery store with my family and taking a pack of gum off the shelf. When my mom saw us boys chewing gum she asked where we got it. Of course, my brothers pointed at me. I pointed to the shelf and said something like, it was just setting there. Mom took us to the cashier and explained the problem. My memory tells me I heard them talking about the police and taking me to jail if someone didn’t pay for the pack of gum. I was nervous and afraid. I am glad my mom paid for the gum and I got a lecture on not stealing afterwards. I learned that actions matter and they have consequences.

In Paul’s letters to the churches, he was teaching people who had chosen to believe in and follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. These people were now called to be dead to their sinful nature and called to live as a Christian. As a Christian, our actions should change. Before these people came to trust Jesus as Lord, they lived like most people in the world and they may have thought nothing wrong with the way they lived. Then they heard the gospel of Jesus. They heard about sin. There is wrong behavior that God does not want people to do. They learned that they needed to repent, to stop those wrong behaviors and do things that pleased God. They learned to trust God and follow Him. Paul, here in Colossians 3:5 gives a short list of what some of their behaviors were before knowing Jesus as Lord. For a more detailed list of sinful behaviors please read Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

Colossians 3:5 "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”
What if my mom was not bothered by what I called her? What if she did not correct me when I stole the gum? What would I have learned? I would say that there was probably something in me that was trying to tell me these things were wrong. In some way God has revealed Himself and His right ways to everyone. He has given us some knowledge of what is right and wrong, though we can and maybe often suppress that awareness (Romans 1:19-21). Fortunately for me, my mom confirmed my initial thought. I had done something wrong. What if I refused to listen to my mom and dad? What if they taught me that these things were alright to do by not being bothered by my choices? My life would have been very different. God has given the Church the responsibility to tell the world the gospel along with the speech and lifestyle that pleases God and the speech and lifestyle that is offensive to God. What if the Church taught the wrong things or it avoided teaching what was offensive to the people?

Sexual immorality was common among the young and the old in the Roman Empire. Uncleanness was associated with lots of different immoral behaviors. The Gentile nations may not have known that many things they did were immoral or offensive to God. What Christians called sexually immoral behavior was accepted religious behavior in their society. Societies and families taught moral behavior based on what they understood as acceptable. Christianity brought a new way of living into the world. Christianity teaches that we live for the loving God not for selfish desires. Christianity teaches that there is a universal moral standard that God gives all people to live by. God, our Creator knows what is best for all people. That does not change from generation to generation or culture to culture. People try what they think is fun and pleasing for them, only to find out later on that their choices were not so good.

Paul mentions passions and desires. Everyone has passions and desires. Some are good. Some are destructive. Again, there were societies and certain families that taught and encouraged self-control in many of these areas. They had learned from experience that certain ones are evil and destructive. But what societies allow and what God has determined as good and bad can be very different. Why should people seek to control their passions and desires? If society allows those passions and desires or encourages them, what is wrong with doing them? We can reason in our minds that they are not illegal or we are not hurting anyone. Yet, God has set His universal standard for humanity. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, we come to Him to help us control these passions and desires.

Then Paul concludes this list with covetousness and he calls it idolatry. Greed is part of our sinful nature. People seem to want more and more. What makes covetousness idolatry? People love those things and the lifestyles more than they love God. This
can be seen in their daily and weekly choices they make. My guess is that most people probably don’t even realize the greed they practice, because it has become such a part of their lives. Paul calls those people who have died with Christ, who believe that Jesus died for their sins, that we are to die to these sinful behaviors. **Our actions matter.** Our actions reflect our faith, our belief, who and what we hold dear, what we covet. Paul rightly says that these actions, these sinful behaviors are of the earth. They are of this world. John put it this way, “For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16). Peter wrote that we are “not to conform yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance” (1 Peter 1:14). And James wrote, “lay aside all filthiness and the overflow of wickedness” (James 1:21).

All the New Testament writers wrote about this change. Why do we need to change? Isn’t believing in Jesus enough? Can’t a person just go on with the way they are living and believe in Jesus too? No, a Christian cannot. **Jesus calls people out of a worldly lifestyle to a godly lifestyle.** God wants us to know that we are made in His image. We bear the image of God. That means we should live reflecting His image in all that we do. We are not to reflect the image of the sinful fallen world. There is no sin in God, no uncleanness. He is pure and holy. He has no evil passions or evil desires in Himself or for anyone of us. He is righteous and just in all He does. God is full of compassion and grace. He is not greedy. He does not covet. He loves us and is merciful towards us. We are not forced to believe in Him or follow Him. He gives us the freedom to choose. He also let us know the consequences of our choices.

God calls people to be like Him because He is perfect. He is good. He is love. This is why we are to change. Before coming to a saving faith in Jesus, we are not like Him. We are dead in our trespasses and sins. There is only one way to be like God. To be like Jesus we must realize that we cannot change ourselves or save ourselves. We need His forgiveness. We need His Life in our lives so that we can be alive and put to death all sexual immorality and all other immoral, unclean actions in our lives. With God’s help we can put to death all evil passions and evil desires in our lives. You may have some that I don’t have. I may have some that you don’t have. If you wonder what yours are, just ask God to reveal them to you and be ready to deal with them. Don’t let them live in your life. Take them to the cross of Jesus. Let them die on the cross with Jesus. Let Jesus give you a new life without them, a life in Him.

**Verses 3:6-7** “Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.” Let me rephrase this. Because of these sinful, worldly actions that people let live and control their lives, the wrath of God is coming into this world and onto the people who refuse
to respond to God’s love. Actions matter and actions have consequences. Paul reminded the Christians in Colosse that they once walked and lived in those worldly, sinful ways. But they responded to God’s call to repent and believe in Jesus. That action mattered. Paul did not want them to fall back into their former habits. He encouraged them to move forward into the new life of faith in Jesus. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). It is the grace of God that teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly lusts (Titus 2:11-12). We need to keep living in Jesus.

Verse 8 “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.” Not only do our actions matter to God but our words and attitudes matter to God. When we come to faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, He wants us to remove our bad language and angry attitudes towards people. James has a lot to say about the tongue. If we can control what we say and how we say it, with God’s help of course, we can control a lot of our actions as well (James 3:1). Our tongues can be destructive (3:5). We should be “slow to speak” (1:19). Is there a difference between the wrath of God and the wrath of man? Yes, there is. The wrath of God demonstrates the righteousness of God. Whereas “the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God (1:20). Don’t let your mouth lead you into trouble.

Verses 9-10 “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” When we die to our sinful nature, we die to lying. Every time we lie, we do not reflect God. God never lies. Who is the father of all lies? The devil, lying is his personal language (John 8:44). As a Christian, we live in Christ. We live according to the knowledge of God. We believe and live His truth. We live reflecting His image and His likeness because He created us.

Verse 11 “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. These standards of Christian living are universal to all. You might expect more from me as your pastor, but when you come to Christ, He expects the same from you as He does from me. As a Christian, let Christ be your all. Reflect His love & goodness wherever you go.

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Our mission statement: Spread the gospel of Jesus Christ;
Teach believers to worship God; Foster growth in the Christian faith