

## Taking AIM at 2019

## Colossians

How many of you would say that 2018 went by quickly? It came with a lot of uncertainties. There were challenges and changes.

There were changes in families.

Some of you had changes in your employment status.

Some of you have had changes to your health.

Some have experienced great encouragement and others times of great discouragement.

We have all gotten a year older.

Through it all one thing has remained constant and that is the Lord and His faithfulness.

As we approach 2019, the coming year will also be met with changes and challenges, uncertainties in what it will bring. Oh, we have plans, but they can change in a moment. The dawn of a new year is always a time to have hope that it will be a year of new and bright opportunities.

Maybe it will be a time of change in health for the better.

Maybe it will be a time of change in relationships.

Maybe it will be a time of spiritual growth.

Like the coming of spring after a long, cold winter when we eagerly await the return of warmer weather so a new year is one of anticipation of new things in our lives for various reasons some of you want next year to be better.

As we sit on the brink of a new year my message today is one of taking AIM at it and what we can accomplish as individuals, as families and as a church. Only the Lord knows what will unfold for each of us in the coming year as we walk by faith trusting Him in all the circumstances we will encounter each day.

This morning we will take a broad brush stroke look through Colossians at six areas I am praying about for the coming year for each of us and our church. From this little letter to the church of believers in Colossae a theme passage for the year for us to pray

about and apply it would be Colossians 3:15-17.

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.

And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

That is my prayer for the coming year for each of us and for our church, to grow in our love for each other and for the Lord so that together we might take AIM maturing in Christ likeness.

Take AIM at application of God’s Word through active study.

Take AIM at interaction through active fellowship and genuine worship.

Take AIM at ministry through outreach into the community that is evangelistic.

These six areas we will consider this morning aren’t in any particular order of importance except that the first one I believe to be foundational and determines what will happen in the other five. It is the catalyst or springboard that launches us and directs us into the proper application of the other five areas.

So if you are ready to take AIM at 2019 let’s dig in. We might call them our goals for the coming year for balanced spiritual growth- and ministry. Let them be areas of prayer and progress for Christ likeness.

#### I. STUDY INTENTLY – Colossians 1:9; 3:16

Paul’s desire is that these believers would be filled full or completely with the knowledge of God’s will. Paul doesn’t mean that they just be filled with a bunch of facts about God’s will for them. Instead the idea conveyed here is that both knowledge and wisdom would lead to something that would be practical. When you read Paul’s letters to the different churches he begins with teaching them doctrinal truth and then follows it with application.

He tells them how to use what they have just learned.

Back in chapter 1:3-8 Paul had heard a good report about their faith and love for others and how the gospel was bearing spiritual fruit in their city. Because of that report he was constantly praying for them asking God that He might fill them up with the knowledge of His will for them. Paul is praying that they would have a full and complete understanding of the Lord and His will for them. Dr. Jeremiah asks a pointed question in his study in James: as we think about 2019 is it our desire to follow the Lord or do we want Him to follow us. Are we willing to do what the Lord wants of us or do we already have plans that we want the Lord to bless.

Knowing the will of God comes from two sources and you need both to work together. You will not grow as a Christian without either working together in your life. They are the indwelling Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit who is our teacher (John 14:26) who will guide you into truth (John 16:13-14) uses the Word of God to teach us. He can't guide us as a teacher in the truth if we aren't involved in study and I want to add that it should be regular study.

In his second letter to Timothy Paul told him to present Himself to God as one who correctly handles the Word of truth (II Timothy 2:15) and then instructed him on the value or profitability of God's Word which would equip him for every good work (II Timothy 3:16-17).

To the Ephesians Paul wrote that God had gifted the church with Pastors and teachers who would build them up so that they would reach unity in the body and knowledge of Jesus so that they would be mature and not infants who would be blown away by false teaching (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Those of you who have followed the Detroit Tigers have watched them over the years trade a mediocre player to another team only to find that play be very

successful. We wonder why they couldn't do that with the Tigers. A lot of times it has to do with the new coaching staff they are under who can give them different teaching that grows your skill.

We cannot grow in Christ if we aren't in the Word. The Holy Spirit has little or nothing to work with. Paul was impressed by the Bereans because they diligently studied Scripture.

Joshua 1:8

Psalm 1:2-3

We must intently study the Word of God so that the Holy Spirit can teach us.

We must be methodical in our study and I think that includes both memorization and meditation on what we are studying.

In the fall, if you can, I encourage participation in Bible Study Fellowship. It's an intense study that doesn't just fill in blanks on a worksheet. They also look at application of the truth.

If you have never done an intense study in the Bible you might wonder where to begin. In college we learned a simple but effective method of studying God's Word.

What does it say?

What does it mean?

What does it mean to me?

Sunday school is another opportunity to study. It focuses on the passage for the message. If you can't make it to Sunday school, which I really encourage, then pick up a set of questions and do the study on your own. You can get them off the internet on our web page or you can get a hard copy in the classrooms. I'll even mail you a set of questions if you let me know.

Get a copy of the Daily Bread or find another devotional that will get you into the Word. There all kinds of devotionals available at the Christian bookstore or on-line. If you're not sure about an author, because there are some you should avoid,

then ask me.

There are also devotionals that can arrive in your email inbox. I get them from Dr. Jeremiah, Moody Bible Institute and Allistar Begg. If you have a smartphone you can listen to broadcasts from John MacArthur's Grace to You or Dr. Jeremiah's Turning Point or Allistar Begg's Truth for Life. If you don't have a smartphone watch them on TV. But don't let that be your only source of study. Be sharpened Sunday and Wednesday.

In men's study we are looking at *Balancing the Christian Life* by Charles Ryrie.

I'm praying that we can get a women's study going again, but it takes someone who would be committed to leading it.

We can't know God's Word if we are not in the Bible allowing His Spirit to teach and guide us.

My desire and prayer is the same as that of Paul. Colossians 3:16

The point Paul wants to drive home is that God's Word should be at home in our heart. It is to become a permanent abiding part of daily life. Our heart is to be the residence of God's Word, not a motel or travel trailer with temporary residency. Notice that it also says that it is to dwell there richly. The word can be translated abundantly or extravagantly rich. Let it overflow in your life. God's Word should affect or impact every area of our life – our thinking, our speaking, our doing.

John MacArthur writes "The Word dwells in us when we hear it (Matthew 13:9), handle it (II Timothy 2:15), hide it (Psalm 119:11), and hold it fast (Philippians 2:16)."

Take AIM at studying intently.

## II. SERVE INTENTIONALLY – Colossians 3:12-15a

When you read the lists of spiritual gifts that are

found in Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12, serving is one of the spiritual gifts that is given to some in the body of Christ to benefit others. Spiritual gifts aren't for the benefit of the one with the gift, they are intended to help others in the body.

When I look at a passage like Colossians 3 I see imbedded that each of us has an obligation to serve each other. I'm not off the hook if my spiritual gift isn't serving. The fact of the matter is that every spiritual gift when used by the direction of the Holy Spirit's guidance is an act of service.

I can serve others by doing something for them.

I can serve others by giving to a specific need.

I can serve others by encouraging them in tough times or circumstances.

Every time we use our spiritual gift for the benefit of others it is an act of service.

In Galatians 5:13 we are told to serve one another in love. It demonstrates that we love the Lord.

Our verse outlines some of the characteristics of serving.

Being compassionate

Showing kindness

Demonstrating humility

Displaying gentleness

Exhibiting patience

There are a lot of different ways to serve. If we are being led by the Spirit He will show us ways to serve others and that includes serving others beyond the four walls of the church. We should also be looking at serving our community and neighbors. Serving the community is a way of sharing Christ to others who need to see Christ in the actions of His followers.

Over the past couple of years I have brought in different ministries from our community. These ministries provide opportunities to serve.

Youth Have always has service projects..

Just down the road on 59 between here and Howell

is Wildwood Ranch. They need maintenance things done around the grounds or on buildings and help in the kitchen.

Forgotten Man Ministries serves a specific population of people in jail.

Some of you have helped out at Carriage Town Ministries up in Flint reaching the homeless.

It's been several years ago now, but we had a lot of fun with the teens on our rake and run going to the homes of some of our widows and others who were experiencing some health issues and couldn't rake. Can we do that in our community for neighbors?

There are so many ways of serving our community and doing so intentionally.

### III. SPEAK INSIGHTFULLY – Colossians 4:6

Just after it came to the theatres we went and saw Ralph Breaks the Internet. The movie is about what characters in arcade games do after the lights are turned out. In the first movie Ralph develops a friendship with Venelope from another arcade game. They become inseparable. In the second movie Ralph wants to do something special for his friend who complains that her game is boring because she always wins. In the process of helping her out, the game breaks. If they can't get the part to fix it the game will be trashed. So they decide to go to the internet and find the part. They find it but don't have any money to buy it so they meet someone who can help them earn points and money by getting likes on social media. Ralph does all kinds of crazy things and at first the likes and money are rolling in, but then Ralph wanders into a chatroom where he discovers all these negative things that people are saying about him. As you can imagine he is devastated.

Words can help, words can hurt. They can wound and even destroy a person's sense of self-worth. Every word has the potential to build up or tear down. I'm not suggesting that we never use words

to correct. We have a generation of kids who don't know what's it's like to be corrected. They can't handle it and need their little safe spaces, coloring books and pet therapy.

Paul suggests to us that our words should be salty, not laced with expletives, but with words that flavor and preserve. Our speech to one another should be wholesome, edifying, and encouraging.

Too many people young and old alike get their self-worth from social media. We've heard about a 13 or 14 year old taking their life because someone on social media, someone they don't even know, body shamed them for being overweight or not pretty or not smart. Being called fat or stupid or ugly cuts them like a knife and they can't handle it.

Folks, let's make sure that when we speak with others we speak words that are full of grace, words that encourage them, words that edify them. Yes, there is a time to speak words that will correct, but we are reminded that those words of truth are to be spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15). Speaking with grace means that we say things that are spiritual, wholesome, kind, gentle, truthful, loving and thoughtful. Our words should have a positive effect on others.

I Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

Ephesians 4:29 "Let no corrupt or unwholesome communication proceed out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their need."

Our words are a witness to the lost. Be thoughtful not rude, be respectful not curt, be loving not harsh. The capstone to speaking insightfully is found in verse 17 where we are admonished to do everything in the name of the Lord. Have that in mind before you say whatever it is you're going to say.

Let's make sure that our AIM this year is to speak

graciously, insightfully, to build up and encourage. James 3:2 “If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”

Let’s make Psalm 141:3 the gatekeeper of what we say and how it is said “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.”

Next we see in Colossians 3:18-22 that we are to submit immediately.

#### IV. SUBMIT IMMEDIATELY – Colossians 3:18-22

A lot of people don’t like that word. It speaks of subservience, but yet, it is a biblical principle. Essentially submission whether wife to her husband or a husband loving his wife or children obeying parents or slaves their masters or modernizing it to say employees to their employers is all about humility, putting the other person and their will ahead of our own. Submission is an act of the will.

Submission means to put yourself under. We don’t submit by compulsion or coercion but willingly. The term is used in Luke 2:51 where it speaks of Jesus putting Himself under His parent’s rule.

Submission does not mean inferiority. Submission is not absolute meaning you are to do whatever the other person wants. It does not include anything that is immoral or illegal. Submission does not give the right of the other to be overbearing or demanding.

Our submission is first of all to be to the Lord and then to each other. We are reminded in Ephesians 5:21 “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

AIM to submit as if submitting to Christ.

#### V. SING IMPASSIONEDLY – Colossians 3:16-17

This is all about worship. Of all people we should

be most joyful and expressive in our worship.

Warren Wiersbe suggests that “if the Word of God is not in our hearts, we cannot sing from our hearts. This shows how important it is to know the Word of God, for it enriches our public and private worship of God.”

Yes, we can sing with our lips and with our mind, but is it with our heart? Does our singing resonate with joy and gratitude to God?

Notice the variety of worship styles. Sing the psalms. For centuries that’s all they had and most thought that’s all you needed. But people like Isaac Watts thought otherwise and began to write and incorporate hymns to include in services. There were those who didn’t like the new music style and banned hymns and anything other than the Psalms. So yes, the Psalms should be part of our singing, like, As The Deer Panteth for the Water or Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet.

Hymns refers to music that expresses praise to God. Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Hymn #3 – Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty

And then there are spiritual songs. I admit there are some good and fun secular songs, but a lot of it isn’t worth the paper they’re printed on. Spiritual songs identify or differentiate the kinds of songs we should sing in worship. But let’s be careful about what we consider spiritual. There are some songs that have some bad theology or could be about a guy or gal like Debbie Boone’s “You Light Up My Life”. The qualifying word is spiritual. Let’s make sure they are biblical and glorify God, after all we are singing to Him in worship.

I have mentioned that as part of my morning devotions I try to read or sing one or two hymns from a hymn book. It doesn’t matter if you can sing or if you sing out loud or silently. Sing to the glory of God.

Chuck Swindoll told a story about driving with his kids when they were little. It was a nice day. All the windows were rolled down and they were belting out a song. As they rolled up to a stop light the kids sank down in the back seat so they couldn't be seen. He looked out the side window as he was singing and noticed the people in the car next to him staring. He told them he was singing with his kids, but the people in the other car didn't see any kids. Psalm 27:6; 95:1-2; 99:4; 108:1-5

Ephesians 5:19 "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."

I have said this before, but pray for Elaine as she takes the passage each week and selects songs for us to sing in worship to God. Our next study will be a challenge as we work our way through Genesis.

In the new year let the AIM of our songs of worship be impassioned with praise to God for who He is and all He has done for us. As we grow in love for God an immediate response is one of praise and worship. Others can see if you are filled with the Word and by the Holy Spirit through your expressions of praise because of God's grace.

#### VI. SUPPLICATE INTELLIGENTLY – Colossians 1:3-14; 3:17b; 4:2-4, 12

We aren't going to take the time to read 1:3-14, but it's a long prayer. Things Paul had committed to praying about for the Colossian church.

He always thanked God for them.

He prays for them because of their faith and love which is an example to others around them.

He prays for their growth and spiritual fruit.

He prays for them to be filled with the knowledge of God's will.

He prays that they may live a life that pleases God. He prays that they might be strengthened by God to have great patience and endurance.

He prays that they might joyfully give thanks to God who has qualified them to share in an inheritance.

He rejoices that they were rescued from the dominion of darkness and placed in the kingdom of God's Son through whom they have redemption and forgiveness of sins.

In 3:17 he encourages them to give thanks.

In 4:2-4, Paul tells them to be devoted to prayer and then asks them to pray for him that he might boldly and clearly preach the gospel.

And then in verse 12 he tells them how to pray by using the example of Epaphras who always wrestled in prayer for them. He prayed constantly and he prayed fervently that they might be mature and stand firm in the Word of God. He prayed with zeal.

By all means pray for bad backs and sore throats and post-surgical rehabilitation and job stress and retirement decisions and financial concerns and voting guidance and anything else that comes to mind. But above all pray for spiritual maturity using Colossians as a template of how to pray intelligently. Make that your AIM in the new year.

Let me close with a quote from Francis Chan which gives us something to think about as our AIM for 2019 as individuals, families and as a church. "Are we producing lovers of Jesus that the world notices?"

We should never be content with where we are in our walk with Christ. Let's take AIM to grow.

How will you take AIM this year in your spiritual life?

Will you study intently?

Will you serve intentionally?

Will you speak insightfully?

Will you submit immediately?

Will you sing impassionedly?

Will you supplicate intelligently?