

October 29/30, 2022

Life IN Christ
Rooted in Christ Series
Colossians 3:12-17
Pastor Jeff Petersen

Imagine if someone who knows you really well, a family member or a close friend, imagine if they were to write a letter describing you. What would it say? Now I guess the first thing we would think of is, we'd start to write out something about what we do. But what if that was against the rules? What if this letter couldn't say anything about what you do? It could only describe who you are, what you are really like, in your character, in your heart. What would it say? What would you want it to say?

You know, I have some really strong desires about what that letter would say for me, and for you, because we talk all the time these days about *being a people who are coming together to know Jesus, to actually become more like Him, and to help others do the same*. So right at the heart of our vision, is for you and me to actually be becoming more like Jesus. This raises a really important question. What would it look like to look like Jesus?

Well, our passage this morning has some great insight. If you'd open your Bibles with me, we are in Colossians, Chapter 3. Last week Bryan began this passage, this chapter for us, by reminding us that we are called to put off the old life in the flesh and of the self, and to put on clothing for ourselves in Christ, getting rid of those old dirty ways, those old dirty clothes, and somehow instead, being clothed in Christ. That theme continues as we pick up the text this morning in Colossians 3, verse 12:

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; (*NASB, Colossians 3:12)

The apostle Paul immediately uses five descriptive words of being clothed in Christ. First is **compassion**. This is *other centeredness*. Rather than thinking simply about ourselves and going through life not concerned about the people around us in this room, or the people around us in our world, Jesus modeled for us a heart of compassion, moved within, genuinely concerned for the needs and the cares of others.

First compassion, second is **kindness**. We live in a world that is filled with rudeness, even with cruelty, and it's so easy to get sucked into that kind of dialogue. But do you realize that even if we're not cruel, and even if we're not rude, that doesn't necessarily make us kind. Kindness requires intentionality, to love and care for another.

Next is **humility**. Philippians 2 is the perfect passage to understand humility, for Jesus is the ultimate model of humility. He who is in very nature God, humbling Himself and not holding on to that position, but becoming a man, and even being willing to go and die on a cross for you and

me. Jesus modeled humility, and it has been rightly said that, just as was true of Jesus, humility is not thinking less of yourself. It's simply thinking of yourself less.

Then **gentleness**. Many people don't like this word because they think it somehow connotes weakness. But actually this is a powerful word. The root and the origin of this word is a picture of what it's like to have a horse, which is a beast of great strength. But for that horse to then be gentled, it's even more powerful. You see, it's one thing to have great power. It's even more amazing, more beautiful and more powerful when we are able to restrain and control that power, using it, through gentleness, for the good of others, rather than running over others and through others.

And finally in verse 12, Paul speaks of **patience**. My impatience reveals to me my self-centeredness. I am impatient when I see all of the people around me, and all of the things around me as merely obstacles to getting what I want. And I become impatient because I want what I want, and I want it now, and someone or something stands in the way. And yet if we are to clothe ourselves in Christ, we are to grow in being people who trust God, that He is in control, and therefore we are able to be patient.

So Paul gives these five characteristics, and then in verse 13, there's two actions:

...bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Here in verse 13, also in Ephesians, Paul speaks of this concept of **bearing with one another**. And at the heart of it all, is simply recognizing the diversity of how God has created men and women in this world. Even this very room is filled with very different people who have different ideas, different thoughts, different desires, different passions, different preferences. And so often, what we see happening all around us, is people are on a mission to make sure everybody thinks and acts like them, rather than bearing with one another in love, letting someone else be who God created them to be, and loving them, even if they're different than you.

And then this issue of forgiveness: **...forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone**—and the standard is absolute. Paul makes it clear: **...just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you**. There has never been a person in all of human history more forgiving than the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who was in very nature God, and allowed sinful man to spit in His face, to mock Him, to beat Him, to nail Him to a tree. And in the very process of that, what did He say? *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* Even in the most horrific of circumstances, Jesus demonstrated the most incredible forgiveness. Why did He do all of that? He did it for you and for me, that all of the iniquity in us—all that is broken in us—might be nailed with Him to that tree, that our sin might be forgiven by His blood, that we might be completely forgiven in Christ. And so, to be like Christ means to be a forgiving people...no matter what. Whatever complaint someone has, whatever someone has done to you, *"Forgive as the Lord has forgiven!"*

And then in verse 14, as we think about clothing ourselves in Christ, this is like the belt which brings it all, and ties it all together,

Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Love is like the umbrella under which all of these other things are subsets. Do you remember what the teacher asked Jesus? He said, “*Of all of the laws,*” (and there were so many) “*what is the most important?*” And Jesus said, “*The most important is this: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all of your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.*” And then He said something really interesting. He said, “*All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two.*” What He meant was, if we would perfectly live out this standard of love—truly other-centered care and concern—we would end up fulfilling all of the rest. So what Paul is telling us, as we clothe ourselves in Christ, is that which binds us together in perfect unity is love. Remember what Jesus said to His disciples? “How will the world know that we’re the church, that we’re the followers of Jesus Christ?” He said, “It is by your love for one another.” So, love binds them all together.

So as we think of what would it look like to look like Jesus, Paul gives us a beautiful description right here in verses 12, 13 and 14. But notice, Paul began by saying, “Put on, or clothe yourself with these things—these five characteristics, these two actions and love—which binds them all together. But how do we do that? So often we think that these things are part of a human self-improvement program, something we’re supposed to just figure out how to conquer. But the secret to becoming like Christ, to looking like Christ, is *Life IN Christ*. It is everything that we’ve been talking about so far in this letter from Paul to the Colossians.

Do you remember how we began back in chapter one? I mean, Paul started out with this description of Jesus as the incomparable One, the supremacy of Christ, just how amazing He is! But then he came to the end of chapter one, and he said something truly incredible. As he’s talking about his ministry, he says that he has this ministry to the Gentiles, to the people of the world who do not know God and the plan of God. And it is his ministry to reveal a mystery, a mystery that has not been known, and he is making it known. And what is that mystery? Well, in Colossians 1:27 he tells us, *The mystery is Christ in you, which is the hope of glory*. You see, it is Christ in us that changes everything. It is when we come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, that everything about our past, present, and future changes.

In Colossians 2, Paul begins to unpack what that looks like. He said in verse 6: *...as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him...* live in Him! Our moment of salvation is the beginning of an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ, in which bit by bit we are being transformed more to be like Him as we live in Him. So in verse 6 he says, “Walk in Him.” In verse 7 he says, “You are rooted in Him. Now be built up in Him.” In verse 9 he reminds us that, “In Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.” And verse 10 he says, “In Him you have been made complete.” Verse 11 reminds us that, “In Him, you have been circumcised, not of the body, but of the heart.” And then in verse 12, he says that “We have been buried with Him in His death; we have been raised with Him to new life.” And verse 13, he says that, “He has made us alive together, with Christ, taking all that is wrong with us, and nailing it to the cross once and for all!”

Friends, life is *In Christ*. If we want to experience becoming like Christ, we have to continually learn how-to walk-in Christ. And thus, chapter 3 begins to give us very practical advice. Bryan

started with it last week in the beginning of chapter three, “***Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.***” It’s the first step to reorient our perspective, to look up, to see Jesus.

And then right here in our passage, Paul said some very important truth about us, and I skipped right over it. Did you notice it? The beginning of verse 12, as he’s talking about this concept of being clothed in Christ, he says, **So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on...** (or clothe yourself with ***those who have been chosen of God***). If Christ is your Savior, if you’ve come to saving faith in Jesus, do you understand that this means God chose you? The God of all of the universe, the God who made the heavens and the earth, He chose you because He wanted you. He wants to give you freedom and hope and joy. He wants to do life with you. Scripture says that ***He chose you in Him from before the foundation of the earth to be holy and blameless in His sight.***

Interesting that he says that which leads right to the second thing Paul says in verse 12...**chosen of God...holy.** I don’t know about you, but I don’t think I’d use the word holy to describe me very often. I think of the holiness of God, and most often I think of how I don’t measure up. But what I forget in those moments, is this amazing truth of what Christ has done for me and for you. And that is this: If I am in Christ, there is never a millisecond when God looks at me and sees only me. He sees me now *In Christ*, for the very holiness, the very righteousness of Christ has been given to me as a gift of God’s grace, and salvation in Jesus Christ. And so, literally, when God looks at me, He doesn’t just see me, he sees me in Christ. Therefore, I am chosen of God, and I am holy.

And did you see that third word **...and beloved? Beloved!** You are the beloved. You know we read in John 3:16, about God sending His beloved Son, but, in Christ, *you* are also now a part of the beloved, holy, and dearly loved by God. God longs to be gracious to you. God longs to reveal Himself and His infinite goodness to you, that you might walk in it, that you might live in Christ, and experience the wonder of Him changing you bit by bit to be more like Jesus. So, again, what is our part in all of that? After all, we’re told here to **put on** these things.

Well, I love how our team had this imagery that they put up on the stage for this series. I’ve sat out during messages, and I’ve looked at those trees. I thought of the beauty of what that looks like, and it reminded me of times when I’ve been out in my neighborhood around the world, and I’ve taken pictures of trees. I want to show you just a few of them this morning. I love the beauty of the trees and the leaves, especially against the backdrop of a blue sky, and the light and the sun shining through. And if the wind is just lightly shaking the leaves, they shimmer in such a glorious way. And I love to take pictures of those and reflect on the beauty that they represent. It lifts me up; it lifts my eyes. And I think those trees are a living metaphor that God has given us of Colossians 3, because what did we start with in Colossians 3:1? ***Get your eyes off of yourself and the things of this world, and fix your eyes on the things above, where Christ is. Fix your eyes and set your heart on Christ,*** and those trees are this visible means of reminding us, “Look up, look up!”

As I was going through photos this week, there’s one thing I didn’t find. I didn’t have any pictures of the bottom of a tree or the ground around the tree. I don’t have any pictures of the roots of trees, mostly because they’re underground and you can’t even see them. This is why I am so thankful

that Janelle and our team chose that picture right in the center to represent this series on the theme of being rooted in Christ. Look at those roots! Powerful, strong, amazing! And here's the thing. So often in our lives, we spend so much time and energy trying to grow up and out, and so little time and energy seeking to grow deep and strong. But if our roots are not growing deep, eventually we won't have the strength to grow high.

You remember how we started the whole series in Colossians, the very first thing that was shared? Ryan opened up this series and he talked about that biosphere out in Arizona, and this weird thing that happened. They had these trees grow up, and they looked beautiful; everything looked great. But suddenly these trees literally just started to fall over, and they couldn't figure out what in the world was happening. They then realized that in this biosphere, there was no wind. There was no resistance, and these trees did not grow deep roots. They literally grew to a size where their very own weight was too much, and they simply fell over.

My friends, every single one of us, if we do not focus our lives on growing deep, and growing strong in Christ, at some point we will get to the place where it's all too much, and we too will collapse. To live a life in Christ and to partner well with God, means to sink our roots deep into Him and to be built up in Him. And the Apostle Paul gives us three incredible ways to partner well with God in this process, right in this text. The first one is in verse 15. He says,

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

This idea of the **peace of Christ** *ruled* within us, it's the same language from which we get the term *umpire*. So you think in a game when the ball goes the wrong way, the umpire calls, "Foul!" Well, literally Paul is saying that God has given us this notion of peace, to help us, to guide us, and if we will heed it, it will help us when we're going afoul. Every single one of us is tempted to live for ourselves all the time. Every single one of us is tempted to go our own way, do our own thing, to live for the things of this world. But if you are in Christ, then God has placed this umpire within you, and when you start to go down that path, this umpire is crying, "Foul, don't go that way!" Because, my friend, the self-life and the Christ-life, they are completely incompatible. And we must choose: Will we trust in ourselves, go our own way, do our own thing, or will we believe that God truly is good...and that life actually is in Christ? And when that umpire cries foul, will we turn back toward Christ rather than running headlong on our own path?

You know that's true individually, but did you notice how Paul wrote it right here in verse 15? He wrote it corporately. He said, **the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body**. As we've been going through this text, did you notice that every characteristic and action described, has something to do with how you relate to others? They're all descriptions of how we show up to our family, to our friends, our small group, in our church, and in the lost world around us, because God has called us to this one-another existence in community. It's why a Life Group is such an important place to start here at Lincoln Berean, because we need to learn to live this out together. And that umpire can call to us, not only in terms of ourselves, but if you're experiencing division in your family, division with your friends, with someone you love, with a co-worker, in whatever situation, that umpire is probably calling out, "There's a problem here, look up, pay attention."

And what causes that division? James made it clear and simple. He said, “What causes fights and quarrels among you, is you want something, and you don’t get it. So you go after it, trying to get your way, and your will, instead of trusting in God.” And the umpire calls a foul. You’re going your own way; doing your own thing, and the result is division in your relationships. And one of the ways that we partner well with God to become more like Jesus, is to heed the umpire, to let God call us back to His presence and His way when we’re going astray. The second one is in verse 16.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

I love this wording. *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.* You remember a couple of weeks ago, Bryan was using an illustration, talking about how do you know when a bucket is full? He said, “You can try all kinds of things, but if you walk out into the ocean, and you take that bucket, and you submerge it; you immerse it; it’s completely full. It can’t get any more full. That’s the picture that God is painting for us in verse 16. If you have this much of the word of Christ, of the truth of Christ in your life, you will have roots that are this deep. God calls us to immerse ourselves in His truth, in His perspective, in the word of Christ, not only individually, but corporately.

Once again, look at this picture. It’s **teaching and admonishing one another.** It’s literally singing to one another with **psalms** and **hymns**. It’s, in every way, every day, being a community that is immersing ourselves in the goodness and the truth of God.

Do you realize that every day, every moment, every single one of us shows up in this life as either a giver, or a taker? Most often we are showing up in this world as takers. The reason is, we have unmet needs. We’re trying to find something which will fill us up, and we look to all kinds of things to fill us. But we go out into our families, into our relationships, into our jobs, into our world, looking to get something, looking to find that which will fill me, looking to find that which will satisfy me. We are taking, taking, taking. What if we were the kind of people who were so immersed in the goodness of God, that we were full to overflowing? See, it is when I am seeking Christ, and walking in Christ, and seeing Christ, and experiencing His goodness, that I now know there’s a good, good Father who’s taking care of me, who is fully able to supply all that I need through His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. And I am now free to give, to show up in life with the description that Paul has just painted, because I am not looking to you and the world to fill me and meet my needs. I’m immersed in the truth of Christ. So we heed the umpire; we listen to the teacher, and we immerse ourselves in truth!

And then in verse 17, we focus continually on the goal.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Wow, that is all encompassing. Do you see what he said? **Whatever you do.** Oh, by the way, **in word or deed.** In other words, whatever you say, any word you speak, or anything you do, **do it**

all in the name of the Lord Jesus. That means, as a representative in this world of the Lord Jesus Christ, showing up as Jesus would show up. The way we understand what that looks like and what that means is to think, “What would Jesus say in this moment, if He were here, living my life in my shoes today? What would He say? What would He do?” And the calling here is that we are to do whatever in word or deed is in the name of the Lord Jesus. It’s all encompassing. It is the goal upon which we are to focus if we want to partner well with God, living out this life in Christ. We are to heed the umpire and listen to the teacher, immersing ourselves in truth, but we are also to continually renew our mind of the goal, focusing on living our lives, not for ourselves and selfish gain, but for the glory of the One who gave everything for me...doing all in the name of Christ, becoming bit by bit more like Christ.

So where do we start? Well, I think Paul actually embeds in this text a spiritual discipline, a practice, a place for us to start in cultivating life in Christ. He just said it three times. And I bet we didn’t even notice it. Look again at verse 15: **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts and be thankful.** Verse 16: **Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with thankfulness in your hearts to God,** and verse 17: **Whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. With thanks...be thankful...giving thanks...over and over and over.** Why does he embed that? Why does he insert that in all three of those verses? I believe it is because the practice of learning to give thanks appropriates, by faith, the life of Christ within us. Let me explain what I mean.

If I am going to actually give thanks in all things, in whatever circumstance I’m facing, what must I do? Well, first of all, I’m probably not feeling very thankful. I’m probably seeing some problem or issue in my life, and I’m more prone to grumble and complain, because my eyes are fixed on me and on that. So, the first thing I have to do is look up. I have to *seek God*. I have to set my mind; I have to set my heart on things above, not on earthly things. That’s the first step in giving thanks. But it’s not enough.

If I’m going to genuinely give thanks, I need to seek God, but I also need to *see God*. I need to get a perspective which transcends my circumstances in order to give thanks. And that means seeing God for who He is in His Majesty, looking at my story in the context of all that God has done in me, for me, and through me. This begins to change my mind. But still, if I’m going to genuinely give thanks, another thing is still needed.

I’ve got to seek God; I’ve got to see God, but I also must choose to *believe God*. I must believe that God is God, and I must believe that God is good. And when I come to that point being settled, having been seeking God, seeing God, and now believing God, something happens within me, and I can freely and joyfully give thanks, no matter what I’m facing in my life.

And from there, I now actually live, *trusting God*, depending upon God, drawing from His strength, His power, His Spirit, His perspective, to enable me, rather than living in my own strength in the mess of my world. Giving thanks is an exercise that leads us to seek God, see God, believe God, and actually live depending on and trusting in God. I think that’s why Paul embeds this and calls us repeatedly to give thanks.

You know, what would it look like if you and I were to begin to do that? If you and I were to seek to partner well with God in these ways, would we start to look more like Jesus? I believe we would. I believe God can and wants to change you and me so much, that we can look like Christ and show up like Christ, no matter what we face in life, even in the worst of circumstances. I mean, think about it for a moment. What if the worst happens? The very worst! Take, for example, what if someone actually tried to kill you? I mean, literally tried to kill you? How would that affect you? How would you show up then?

Well, in 2016, I was in a meeting here at Lincoln Berean, when we got word of a terrorist attack in Brussels, Belgium. Ryan Harmon and I immediately talked to each other because we have long-term missionaries in Brussels: Fred and Janet Young. And we thought, could they have been in this? And we thought: it's a big city, no way they were in that place at that moment. We were wrong. They were there. And this summer they were here in Lincoln. And in preparation for this message, our Dan Rush sat down with them and captured some of their story. Let's take a look:

Video:

(Fred) We're Fred and Janet Young and we have some work going on in Brussels, Belgium that helps young men and women develop as basketball players through our basketball camps in the summer leagues. And the elite players have an opportunity to visit the United States and try out for scholarships. I was at the airport on March 22, 2016, to lead a trip into America to introduce players to college coaches, and Janet was dropping me off at the airport.

(Clip of Newscaster 1) And we're interrupting programming right now with this breaking news that is coming in literally right now from Belgium, Brussels where a series of...

(Clip of Newscaster 2) ...deadly bombs—at least one packed with nails—killing dozens, injuring hundreds.

(Screen) A series of deadly explosions rattled Brussels on Tuesday morning. At least 30 people have been killed. ISIS has claimed responsibility.

(Janet) I remember the ball of fire coming and we were unconscious for several minutes following that.

(Fred) When I regained consciousness, I was facing the carnage. We would learn later that 12 people were killed in that bombing. My hand was full of blood, and I just had two words in my mind. "It's here." It wasn't me watching a movie. It wasn't a video game. I was in a terrorist attack. I thrust my hand towards the ceiling, and I just yelled in my loudest voice possible, "God help us! Help us God!"

(Screen) Fred and Janet were less than 15 feet from the blast that day. Their recovery over the last six years has been slow.

(Fred) For me, I think, it's been drawn out because every year I've had a surgery for five years. They did the major surgery of opening my ear like a car door, putting on a skin graft from the cartilage in my ear, and then a year later they did this side. But they discovered this had a cyst growing underneath it, so they had to take that off. And when people have asked me over these years now, have I felt vengeful? Have I thought about retribution? Have I been bitter about this? I would be wasting a lot of my time and energy trying to find my own retribution for what happened that day and for the years and consequences that followed me. But I can't, because I've already been convinced that these other issues that I've encountered,

God will take care of that. He must; I can't. So, I haven't felt that tension or an emotion of vengeance or wasting my time on those directions.

(Janet) I think it was maybe even two years later, having lunch with a friend of mine and all of a sudden out of nowhere she says, "If he was in front of you, what would you say to him?" And I just went blank as if I was incapable of a thought. And then I blurted out, "God loves you." And I wanted to swallow that back. I was like, "I'm not saying this." It just, you know, I think God shapes our mind when we read the Bible, and He shaped mine to remind me to even love this guy.

(Clip of French newscaster interviewing Janet) If you had a message to send on this special day to the population, to the authorities, to all the journalists, what would that message be; what would you like to share?

(Janet) I would like to share a message of hope. I thought that I was dead, that I was dying, but at the same time, I realized that I was ready to die and it gave me a lot of strength when I got up and I went out and saw injured people there. I can testify that Jesus says that when we follow Him, He guarantees us His peace.

(Fred) And we can say that the faith we have, and what we read, gives us an emotion. It gives us hope; we feel hopeful. And feeling hope then motivates us and helps us to love. Our response then is to love.

(Janet) We always have something to do with the little strength we have left, and God can turn terrible things that people do to us, to others, for good. When we follow Him, He finds a way to make it good for us. And it's true. Because if we don't have that burden of hating someone, then we're free. And Jesus said, "It's my peace I give; not like the world gives." We're talking about something counterculture, and He knows best. And to put the first little toe in the right direction is all we can do. And it's good news, where we don't have to be alone without God in the world. We have hope!

I've known Fred and Janet for over 25 years. And long before 2016, they were learning to partner well with God. They were learning what life in Christ was about. I would have written a letter describing Fred and Janet like what we read here in Colossians 3. That prepared them for such a moment. And you know what they didn't have the chance to share in the video is, God prompted Janet to actually write a book about the horror of the bombing, and about the hope in Jesus Christ. And across Belgium, it became a best seller. It was read by the Queen, by high government officials. Fred and Janet have been on news program after news program, interviewed in newspapers, magazines, done live appearances all across Belgium, proclaiming the hope that is found in Jesus Christ, because they were partnering well to become like Jesus, even in the worst. Just about a week or so ago, I heard a news story about another person who was in the Brussels bombing. They just committed suicide. They still couldn't get past it. What a difference we have in life in Christ!

In just about four weeks, we'll all celebrate Thanksgiving. But I really want to encourage us to not just think of the fourth Thursday in November. What if we take the next four weeks, and we make this a month of giving thanks? What if we heed Paul's advice, and we decide to have a daily practice, a daily discipline where each one of us will just one time a day stop and lift up our eyes and seek God, and to seek to see God? That we might actually believe God, no matter what we're facing, being free to give thanks to God, that we might live trusting in God? Do you think it would change you? Do you think it would change us? I believe that even in four weeks, God could make

us more like Jesus. I invite you to take up that challenge as we seek to force our loved ones and our friends to continually rewrite that letter, as we partner well with God, to actually look more like Christ.

Lead us, Jesus, into Your presence. Help us to understand that all sufficiency is in You, that we actually can have all that we need for life and godliness in Christ Jesus. Draw us to Yourself. Help us to not focus our lives just on getting taller and reaching out more, but growing deeper and stronger. Bring us toward Your heart. Help us to walk in You, to live life in Christ, becoming more like You and helping others to do the same. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
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CHURCH-WIDE THIS OCTOBER

lincolnborean
OUTREACHLIFE
GROUPS

All month we've been focusing on loving our neighbors, one way to do this is to **Build Relationships**. This can look like inviting your neighbors over for dinner, a fire pit, or fall gathering. Gathering together is a great way to build relationships; try this as a way to love your neighbor!

Introduction

We move forward in Paul's message to acknowledge how our salvation offers us the opportunity to be alive in Christ because we are rooted in Him and He is sufficient for everything we need. As we learned in the first part of Colossians 3, seeking Christ in our lives often involves the shedding of sinful behaviors and patterns. Why would we continue to carry the burden of these sins if our lives are now hidden in Christ? The next step is to live as God's chosen ones, putting on the Christ-like qualities that ultimately bring glory to God.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) What has a family member said or done for you this week that was very thoughtful?
- 2) If a friend were to write a letter describing who you are (not what you do), what would it say?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
 - 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.
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Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) In light of the last couple weeks of scripture, sermons, and worship, what comes to mind when you think about putting off the old self and putting on the new?
- 2) Living as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved looks a certain way. In verses 12-13, what are the seven characteristics we are to put on to rightly represent the new self in Christ? Describe or define each one and what it looks like to live it out in daily life (at home or at work).

A common thread among the seven characteristics is that they tend to take shape and form in a community setting, not in isolation. **How is *bearing with one another* a challenge for you? What are some barriers that keep you from growing in Christ with others by your side?**

- 3) It is our tendency to try and manufacture compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness. We can work at each one of these things in our own strength by prescribing them to situations that need to be fixed. **Of the seven characteristics, which one is easiest for you to produce in your own strength? What does it look like to be more dependent on Christ in this area so that it is an outflow of the heart rather than disingenuous?**

Read verse 14. **What is central to the other qualities of our new self in Christ? How does love motivate your ability to be compassionate, kind, humble, meek, patient, forbearing and forgiving with others? Give an example.**

- 4) Verses 15-17 point us to some things we can let into our lives to help us flourish. **How are you encouraged by the notion to let Christ's peace rule and let Christ's word dwell? How does this help you to be discerning when you face challenges or make decisions, doing everything in the name of the Lord?**

What are some tangible ways you can make peace and God's word a priority in your thoughts and actions this week? How can your group encourage and hold you accountable in this?

- 5) **Where do you notice elements of forgiveness and gratitude in the process of putting on the new self? Which of these spiritual exercises is more of a challenge for you? Why?** Based on how you answered this question, consider focusing on this in the Personal Spiritual Exercises section.

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

Practice Forgiveness: Use the new-self characteristics (compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience) as a way to determine if forgiveness needs to occur. Ask yourself, *when am I not compassionate? Why is this?* Ask yourself these questions for any or all of the characteristics. You may discover that you need to be forgiving or ask for forgiveness as a next step. Identify and commit to a peaceful next step that is supported by scripture.

Practice Gratitude: A church focus for the month of November is giving thanks. In this next week start a gratitude log. Each day, for five days this week, take time to notice what you are grateful for throughout your day and write it down. At the end of the week read your gratitude log and perhaps share it with someone close to you (e.g., spouse, friend, or life group).

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?

Next Week: Read Colossians 3:18-4:1