

THIS WEEK

Linked – I Am Made For Community

LESSON SCRIPTURE

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ 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.

Colossians 3:12-17

LARGE GROUP LESSON

FOR LEADERS:

We're going to have an abbreviated large group session so that we have more time for small group. We will skip the group lesson video and have a short video and message from Michael. We should have 20+ min for small groups this week.

Gratitude is defined as the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. But how does that factor into our Christian community?

Think about the TRUE friends you have in your life. What are the qualities that drew you to them and keeps you close to them? Is it kindness...honesty...patience...integrity? I'm not talking about the friends that will do anything for a dare or will always make you laugh. I'm talking about the friends that are there when times aren't so great. When things get serious. You trust these friends to listen when you have a concern, to be honest about their opinion and to treat you with respect and compassion.

How is that trust built?

MARBLE VIDEO

Trust is a vital part of friendship. It's also a vital part of Christian fellowship. Our true friends have built that trust "a marble at a time". And we've built trust with them in the same

way. But life is messy. People are messy. And we don't always do the right thing. So, take that marble jar analogy and imagine you had a friend that you had 100% trust in and they just dumped that jar out. That's how trust is...it's built slowly over time, but it's lost in an instance.

So, how do we respond to those people? Do we cut them off? Do we return the favor and hurt them?

Paul tells the church at Colossae how God expects us to handle the relationships.

VERSE

So, we see here that God wants us to be Christ-like in our building of relationships and in facing difficulty and drama in those relationships. If we get hurt and we treat those people the same way they treated us, we're no better than them and we miss an opportunity to display Christ to the world. It may feel good to "get them back" but that feeling doesn't last BUT the feeling of regret and disappointment in yourself in the face God sure does.

Paul tells the church to forgive as Jesus forgave us. That does two things for us:

- 1 – shows us that we are to love and forgive unconditionally
- 2 – reminds us of the sacrifice on the cross for our sake.

The latter should fill us with an immense sense of gratitude. This is the same gratitude we feel and show in our fellowship with others. We extend that same thankfulness to the relationships that God has given us and the people who love us, and it moves us to forgive and love as Christ did when things aren't going so smooth.

As Paul says in verse 14, "Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

SMALL GROUP LESSON

Main Idea: True community encourages gratitude.

DISCUSSION AND Q&A

1. **Who is it easier to connect with—people who are exactly the same as you or those who are completely different from you? Why?**

We often connect with things we have in common...sports, music, food, etc. So when we find people who share common interests with us, it's easier for us to form a bond over things commonalities. God intends us to use our shared love of Christ to form unbreakable bonds with each other. Read Ecclesiastes 4:12 to your class and explain the idea of a cord of 3 strands.

2. Can you point to a time when you were a part of a community that had a shared purpose?

How did that common purpose affect your community when things became difficult?

When times get tough, we often cling to the people who are in the fight with us. Together we find unity and strength. Jesus knew we would need each other to stay diligent in our faith and He makes it clear that we find strength in numbers. When He sent the disciples out in pairs, He did so knowing they would need each other as they faced questions and opposition. This was by design and that hasn't changed for us today.

3. What does it mean to consider another person?

How might consideration for another person inspire love or good works in them?

When we consider someone else, we place their needs above our own. Doing this can show a heart of love and servitude to another person, inspiring them to reflect the same qualities in their life. Love is infectious, and it spreads by allowing it to come in contact with other people.

4. Why would gathering together with other believers be so important?

We will all face tough times. We will all face moments where it's easier to follow the world instead of Jesus. In these times, God often works through fellow Christians to provide us with strength and encouragement. We don't find those people when we're fighting alone...we find them when we come together in community.

5. Relationships are messy. When have you had an opportunity to show love and forgiveness to someone, who you didn't think deserved it at the time? What did this do for you?

Jesus set the perfect example of selflessness and unrequited love. When we stay in remembrance of His love for us and his willingness to turn the other cheek, it's hard for us to let our old selves win. We find that we handle more situations with grace and humility because we know we didn't earn the love extended to us.

6. Paul instructs us to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Which ones stand out to you most?

If they think of their friend group, which qualities do they hold most valuable. For me, it's patience and compassion. I can be stubborn and hot-headed at times, and the friends that treat me with compassion and patience are the ones that I find to be the most helpful to me. Similarly, I try to return the favor by "wearing these virtues" for them as well.

7. Why does Paul use the metaphor of "clothing" for virtues like compassion and kindness?

I think Paul is helping us to understand that we are to carry these virtues with us everywhere we go and they are to be visible to the world. Just as a shirt goes where you go and is the outward thing that people see when they look at you, so should your compassion and kindness be...it should be an outward reflection of the presence of Jesus in you.