

## Colossians 3:12-17 — How Does Jesus Change The Way I Treat People?

**November 26, 2017**

Good morning. I hope everyone had a great thanksgiving and stuffed themselves with turkey. I love thanksgiving because it reminds us to be thankful for all the good things God has done for us. A heart of thankfulness is very good.

Today, on both of our campuses, we continue our study in the book of Colossians. Last week, we began the third chapter of the book. The first two chapters of Colossians are filled with truth about Jesus. The last two chapters are filled with practical instructions on how we live because of Jesus.

Last week, Paul taught us how our new identity in Jesus takes over our lives. Sexual immorality, anger and lying are not to be part of our life because that is not who we are in Jesus.

This morning, Paul will review who we are in Jesus and tell us things that are now part of our lives because of Jesus. Since Christ is in our hearts, the character of Christ will become part of our lives.

### Who Am I?

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved... Colossians 3:12 (ESV)

**I am chosen by God.**

How many of you feel like you are chosen? For most of us, when we are chosen, it feels like it is only for bad things. You are chosen, but it is to be laid off at Polaris. You are chosen, but it is to have your taxes audited. We tend to feel like we are chosen for bad things. God chooses us for good things. That is Paul's point.

...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love Ephesians 1:4 (ESV)

Before the world began, God chose to adopt us into his family. Don't think you were chosen by God because you were better than anyone else. We were chosen to be loved by God before the world began, before we had done anything.

God chose us to make us the most blessed beings in the universe. For all of eternity, nobody will be closer to Jesus than we will be. For all of eternity, nobody will be more like Jesus, than we will be. Being chosen by God for this blessing is all God's choosing. It is none of our choosing.

Some of you get hung up on the question, "Why?" You want to know why God chose you. I don't know why God chose some of us. It is not because any of us were more deserving. In Ephesians 1:6, we learn God chose us for the praise of his glorious grace.

...he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:5-6 (ESV)

That means the reason he chose us was so that we would be a display of God's undeserved grace. If there is any reason God chose us, it is not because we are more deserving than other people but because we were less deserving than other people so God would get more praise for his undeserved grace.

It is like marriage. After a while, the best thing we can do is stop asking why and just be thankful for the relationship. For example, I still don't know why Cindy said, "Yes" when I asked her to marry me. I am just glad she said, "Yes." I

can spend all my time getting hung up on why she said, “Yes” to my marriage proposal but it is smarter to just be thankful.

Be filled with gratitude. God chose you for a good thing, to be the most blessed being in the universe through Jesus for all eternity. If that doesn't put a spring in your step, I don't know what will.

### **I am holy for God.**

How many of you have holy on your Linked-In page? The Bible tells us that is what we are. We are a holy people. Holy means set apart. God adopted us out of the world. When we don't act differently from the world, we are going against the grain of our new identity. This is why we feel greater conviction of sin as Christians than we felt before we were Christians.

The opposite of holy is profane. That is to treat something special as if it was ordinary. This is why we have certain days called holidays. They are holy days. These are days we treat different from the rest. Thanksgiving is a holiday. We set it apart as different and as a time to be thankful. We eat turkey and get together with family.

Maybe the best way to think of the difference between holy and profane is our cell phones. Cell phones love to intrude on holy moments and make them profane. For example, how many times have you forgotten to put your phone on mute and it has gone off at the wrong moment. One Sunday, in the early days of cell phones, I was preaching, and a guy's phone rang in the back row. Guess what he did? He answered it in church and started having a conversation during

the service. You don't need to talk on your cell phone while in church. That is a holy time. It is time set apart to be treated differently.

In the same way, as the most blessed beings in the universe, we are a holy people. As a holy people, we are set apart to be different in the world, not to act like everyone else.

### **I am loved by God.**

This means God has great affection and devotion toward us. Some of you feel like you are insignificant or unimportant. Some of you feel like nobody loves you. It feels like if you died, nobody would attend your funeral. As children of God, we are the objects of his love. God loves you more than you can imagine. You are special. He cares about you. God loves you more than your own parents loved you on the day you were born. Every one of us wants to be loved. That is what drives marriage. I just want somebody to love me unconditionally. God loves you more than anyone can love you. Let that soak in for a moment.

We are the chosen — holy and loved by God. We cannot be more blessed, honored and exalted for all of eternity than we are through Jesus. That means we must live differently. It especially means we do relationships differently. We treat people differently. The character of Christ starts to come out of our lives. Let's see what that character looks like.

### **How does Jesus change my character toward others?**

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, [compassionate hearts](#), [kindness](#), [humility](#), [meekness](#), and [patience](#)... Colossians 3:12 (ESV)

## Compassionate Hearts

This means God gives us hearts that care about other people. A compassionate heart has a deep awareness and sympathy toward others suffering. In the Hebrew, it is called a feeling in your stomach, because God gives us the ability to feel other people's pain. We care about other people in pain because Jesus changes our heart. We see Jesus' compassionate heart in Matthew 9:36. When he saw the crowds, it says Jesus had compassion on them. He literally felt their pain. This is Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus. Even though he knew he would raise Lazarus, he felt Mary and Martha's pain at the death of their brother.

In the ancient world, the sick, injured and elderly were often left to fend for themselves. People didn't care about them. As Christians, God didn't remake us to be indifferent to the sufferings of others. We are a compassionate people. When we see people in pain, we feel that pain, and we do something about it. Years ago, I read a great book called What If Jesus Had Never Been Born by D. James Kennedy. In the book, he describes how orphanages, hospitals, nursing homes, civil liberties, and medicine plus a host of other social graces in the western world have their origin in Christian charity that grew out of the Christian heart of compassion for those in need.

The heart God put in us is not indifferent to others in pain. As Christians, like Jesus had compassion on the crowds, we have compassion for people in need. It is a distinctly Christian quality.

## Kindness

Kindness is becoming more concerned about our neighbor's good than our own. It is being warmhearted toward others and sympathetic toward the needs of others. It is getting our eyes off ourselves and thinking about how our actions influence other people. It is not insisting on what I want but being willing to relinquish what I want because it could be inconsiderate toward you. If you are a teenager, this is picking up after yourself. It may not bother you to live in a pigpen, but it bothers everybody else when you are a slob.

We do not live in a world of kindness where other people are the focus. We live in a world where people typically focus on themselves. For example, we used to take pictures of other people because other people were important. A photo of someone else mattered. Now, we turn the camera around, and it is a photo of me, another photo of me, another photo of me, a photo of you —oops, that is a mistake, delete, another photo of me. We live in a world where we are the center of attention. In all honesty, kindness is on the decline because of the selfie. You hear it all the time when people talk about me, me, me. Kindness is a focus on you, you, you. That was the heart of Jesus. He died for us. His focus was on us, not himself. When he died for us, he didn't take a selfie while doing it.

## Humility

In the classical Greek, humility always had a negative connotation. In our culture, humility is also not thought of as virtuous. I checked William Bennett's [Book of Virtues](#), which is usually a good book. Humility is absent from the table of contents. In our culture, pride is considered good. Humility is considered bad.

Humility is about how we think about ourselves. Humility is to think of yourself as small, not to think of yourselves as big. In the news this past week, there was a tweet war between LaVar Ball — who refuses to thank Donald Trump for helping free his son from a Chinese jail — and President Trump. A thank you from LeVar Ball would require humility. Humbling himself is not something he wants to do. He doesn't want to think of himself as small. He wants to think of himself as big.

Jesus is the one that taught us humility is a virtue, not a vice. In Philippians 2 we see that Jesus set aside all of his rights as God. The one who created the universe took on a human body. He died in our places for our sins. Jesus humbled himself. He could have thought about himself as big. After all, Jesus is big. He chose to think about himself as small. He didn't self-promote and have an ego issue. In the same way, as God's people, we don't promote ourselves. We think about ourselves as small and leave the ego behind. If God wants to lift us up, that is OK. We don't lift ourselves up.

The reason we have so much conflict in our culture is proud people. There is a lack of humility. Proud people produce conflicts because they won't humble themselves. I have never seen a nasty conflict between two humble people. Humble people don't escalate conflicts and problems. They don't bring difficulties. They are willing to sacrifice themselves to find solutions to difficulties.

### **Meekness**

When we think of meekness, many of us think of weakness. A meek person isn't easy to control, easy to roll over and as spineless as a jelly fish. That is not what meekness means. Jesus was meek. Moses was meek. Meekness is

strength under control. It is someone who is very tough but also very tender. Meekness is knowing when to be tough and when to be tender. Let's say there is a Navy SEAL. He fights the bad guys. He punches people in the face for a living. He is tough. When the SEAL comes home and is with his family, he is tender, not tough. That is meekness. This is a father that works out at the YMCA lifting weights, but when he comes home he wrestles with his kids in the living room. He can be tough and pin them, but out of love for his kids, he is tender and lets his kids put him to his back.

This is Jesus. Jesus is tough for his people but he is also tender with his people. Jesus was tough with the devil, but he is tender toward us.

Meekness is understanding that most of the time, we need to be tender, not tough. There is a time for each. Meekness is strength under control.

### **Patience**

This is not getting angry with other people. It is willing to endure unhappiness. It is taking insults without seeking revenge. Some of you are in difficult marriages. You tell me you have suffered long enough. Your spouse will never change. You want out of the relationship. You shut off the emotional light switch in your relationship. That is the earthly response. It is not the Christ-like response. God has given us patience. Galatians 5:22 tells us patience is a fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Every time you think you cannot endure your marriage any longer, I want you to remember 2 Peter 3:9.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

God was patient toward us. After all the hair-brained, stupid and foolish things we have done, he didn't zap us. He was patient with us, waiting for us to repent. For some of us, he was patient a long time. I am to be patient toward others like Christ is patient toward me. I can be patient with others because Christ is living in me.

Those of you who struggle in this area are already thinking I spent too much time on this point and can't wait for the next point in the outline.

### **How does Jesus change my conflicts with others?**

Jesus doesn't just change our character when he lives in us but he also changes our conflicts. Christians handle their disagreements differently than the rest of the world.

...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Colossians 3:13-15 (ESV)

Let's see how God changes the way we handle conflicts.

#### **Bear with one another.**

This means we put up with other people in spite of our differences. It is not giving up on people or holding grievances against other people. After we get to know people, we discover what is annoying in their lives. We can choose to make an issue of their issues or we can bear with it.

Let me give you an example — snoring. When your spouse snores, you can make a huge issue of it or you can figure out a way to put up with it. You can become critical of them and shove them on the couch in the next room or you can bear with it and wear earplugs.

When we bear with people, we allow our relationship to continue even despite differences. In the modern church, bearing with other Christians is not a strong suit. When we read the Bible correctly, we will love people, even if we don't agree with them. A number of years ago I pastored a church working in our local ministerial on a community outreach project. One church in town refused to work with us because we didn't use the King James version of the Bible. It broke apart from other Christians because of our differences. That church couldn't bear with our differences.

Does this mean issues don't matter? No. It simply means we need to keep relationships and issues separate. Issues are important but relationships among Christians are most important. If someone is wrong, you won't be able to help them unless you have a relationship with them. If you invest in a relationship with people, the relationship you have with someone will be strong enough to deal with an issue when it arises. If issues are more important than relationships, every issue will blow up your Christian friendships. Loving relationships are the mark of a healthy Christian. Loving relationships allow us to deal with issues. In conflict, we bear with people, we do everything we can to not break up a relationship.

**If there is a complaint, forge like we have been forgiven.**

Have any of you had a complaint with another person because he or she did something weird, hateful or stupid? When there is a complaint or a problem, between people, how do we solve it?

We start by forgiving them — as the Lord forgave us, so we must forgive. When someone is frustrating us, annoying us or offending us and we feel like we have a legitimate complaint against them, the first thing we need to do is remember all of the things God forgave us of, then forgive them. When someone is driving you crazy, stop and think of all your own wrongdoing, not their wrongdoing.

Most of the time it doesn't work that way. We like to think about everything someone has done wrong to us, not everything done wrong by us. When we start by remembering everything done wrong by us we can begin to forgive others for what they have done, even if they aren't asking for forgiveness. Before we think of what somebody else needs to be forgiven of, think of what we have been forgiven for.

Since forgiveness is such a big issue, let me explain a little more about forgiveness.

**Forgiveness is putting the case in God's hands.** It is letting the issue between you and another person go. You leave it in God's hands. You are no longer the judge. It is in God's hands to handle the outcome. You let God be the judge. He is a just judge. When we forgive someone, we need to let the case go. Let God take care of it.

**Forgiveness is not the same as trust.** Forgiveness is a gift. Trust is earned. Forgiveness can happen in a moment. Trust takes time. In a marriage, if someone is unfaithful, forgiveness can happen in a moment of time. Regaining trust will take a long time.

**Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same.** We can forgive someone and still part ways. Maybe you are friends with someone and he or she violates you by accessing your personal information in your desk. He or she learns your income and serious numbers. The act is border-line criminal. You can forgive the person but it doesn't mean you need to have the same kind of relationship you had with him or her before he or she violated your trust.

**Forgiveness often needs to happen more than once.** While forgiveness happens at a point in time, what often happens is the hurt and pain of what someone did to you comes back. You need to forgive the person again and again. Sometimes we learn more about a situation and the scab is picked open. We need to forgive someone again. Sometimes we may need to keep forgiving because we are struggling to put the issue behind us. That is the way forgiveness works.

**Forgiveness frees us from demonic torment.** Satan and demons love to torment people who are hurt. Some of you live tormented lives where you can't stop thinking of what was done to you. You are haunted by it. When the Bible talks about forgiveness, many times it talks about Satan and demons in the same context, such as Matthew 18 and Ephesians 4. Satan and demons never forget anything. They never forgive anything. They bear a grudge, and they keep a record of wrongs. If you bear a grudge, keep a record of wrongs and don't forgive, you are acting demonic. You are opening yourself to demonic influence.

When we refuse to forgive, it is saying, I am forgiven but I won't be forgiving. It is saying I want God to give me the gift of forgiveness but I don't want

to share the gift of forgiveness with anyone else. It is saying what someone has done to me is worse than anything I did to God.

## Love

The key to getting through a conflict is love. The only way we can work through a conflict is to genuinely love our enemies. If we don't love people, it doesn't matter how eloquent our words are in a conflict, everything we say will be noise.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 1 Corinthians 13:1 (ESV)

As Jesus genuinely loves us, we are called to genuinely love people, especially with those we have a difference. Think of the people where you have a conflict, do you genuinely love them? We were enemies of God, but God genuinely loved us. He didn't just love us in words. He loved us by actions. He sent his own son to die for us. When we are in a conflict with someone, ask God to help you love him or her, not just with words but in actions. The only way to work through conflict with someone is to love him or her. Even if you can't work through the conflict with him or her, by genuinely love and showing actions of love, we will have done as much as we possibly can to bridge the conflict between us. This is not the way the way the world works. It is the way Christians work.

## Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.

This is saying that in relationships, when things go south and our emotional temperatures start to rise, we need to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.

This means we let the peace we have with God through Jesus govern and control the emotional temperature in our hearts. Instead of getting wild, yelling and being irritable, as we have peace with God, we let our peace with God govern and control the way we operate in a conflict.

We all know that when words get louder and people start raising their voices, there is no more progress being made. We put up our defenses. Dialogue goes away, and our defenses go up. That is not the way Christians handle conflict with the spirit of Christ controlling their hearts. We let the peace we have with God control our emotional temperature.

### **Be Thankful**

When we are in a conflict, it is easy to become critical. The Bible describes this as having a critical spirit. We start to see and remember every flaw with everyone. Sometimes we become archaeologists. We dig up flaws from the past. Next we start using absolutist language. “You always do this.” “You never do this.” A lack of thankfulness for people justifies our hatred.

Paul said, instead of making a list of everything someone did, make a list of everything someone did right. Make a list of the things for which you are thank in the life of a person with whom you disagree. In a conflict, the first thing we need to do is remember the things we admire about someone. Before we talk about things we need to correct, we need to talk about things that are correct. The problem is, when we are in a fight, we get hurt. We get emotional. We don't remember the things we're thankful for. We only remember the things we don't

like in people. That is not Christian conflict. We begin with thankfulness for people.

### **How do we cultivate this character and conduct in our lives?**

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:16–17 (ESV)

#### **Let the word of Christ dwell in me richly.**

Jesus said man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Just as our bodies need food, our souls need the Word of God. People are healthy when they are fed by the Word of God. If you feed people spiritual junk food, they grow up unhealthy. The world is filled with junk food teaching. The Word of God isn't always what we want, but it is always what we need. Years ago, I heard Alistair Begg say, we don't give our kids whatever they want for dinner. We give our kids what they need to eat, not always what they want to eat. In the same way, the Word of God is what we need to eat. Like broccoli, it is not always what we want to eat but it is what God uses to grow the character of Christ in us.

Teaching refers to imparting knowledge. In good Bible teaching, we should be growing in our knowledge of God. Admonishing means to give correction. While we can study the Bible on our own, teaching and admonishing takes place best in the church. In the church we experience the correction of God's Word and growth from God's Word.

Growing a Christian is like growing a Christmas tree. It involves both feeding and pruning. In the same way, the Word of God builds us up and it cuts us up so we start to look more like Jesus.

### **Singing songs, hymns and spiritual songs**

One of the ways we learn God's Word is by songs, hymns and spiritual songs. The point is we learn the Word of God by singing the Word of God. Singing is a part of the church. Singing is one of the big ways we learn the Word of God at church. The words are a big deal in Christian music. It is also the way we learn about God and the character of Christ is nurtured in us.

Men, in our culture we don't sing. When you go to Menards, there isn't a song leader in the plumbing section because it isn't cool for men to sing. In church, it is cool for men to sing. Most of the men miss this. As men, when we go to a sporting event, do we cheer? Absolutely! We hoot and holler for our team and celebrate when it scores. Church is like a sporting event. It is our weekly celebration of Christ's victory. Jesus scores. Jesus reigns. Satan is defeated. Jesus wins. Men, we get to cheer! That is why men sing at church.

### **Whatever I do, do everything in the name of Jesus.**

This is serving. We serve because of what Christ has done for us. It is healthy and helpful to serve. We live in a world where we exist to be served. The kingdom is not about being served but about serving others. That is what Jesus did when he came to earth. He didn't come to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for us.

Serving is also the fastest way to spiritual growth. It allows us to take all of these things and put them into practice as we work with people.

## Conclusion

Since we are the most blessed people in the universe, we live out the character of Christ because we have Christ living in us. That changes the way we do relationships. We genuinely care about people in need. We are kind and considerate of others. We don't think of ourselves as big, we think of ourselves as small, like Jesus. We are meek. That means being tough and tender. We are patient with others like Jesus is patient with us.

In conflicts, we handle ourselves differently. We put up with other people. We forgive other people when they hurt us. We genuinely love our enemies. We let the peace of Christ control our emotions. We are thankful for the good things in people; we don't just focus on the bad things in people.

This Christmas season, as we face all the pressure of the holidays and the friction of families mixing together, let our new identity in Christ change the way we treat people. Amen.



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