



*Small Group Discussion Guide*



## PREPARATION

### STUDY

Spend the week studying Colossians 3:12–17. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

### DETERMINE

Determine which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

### PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

### LANDING POINT

I choose to live in my new identity in Christ by His values.



## GROUP DISCUSSION

❑ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

❑ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

❑ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

❑ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



## INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

# SOMETHING MORE THAN RULES

Many people see Christianity as simply a list of rules to follow. Chances are, someone has told you, “Christians are . . . intolerant . . . hypocrites . . . narrow-minded.” Caricatures like Saturday Night Live’s Church Lady portray Christians as judgmental, mean-spirited and out to spoil everyone’s fun with their beliefs about what’s right and wrong.

Are there professing Christians in the Church today who are judgmental and legalistic? Sadly, yes. You might know some. But Christianity is something more than dos and don’ts. Christianity is about a relationship based on love. It’s about knowing Christ so deeply that you become more like Him in every way.

Last week Paul described how believers are to be active in killing sin and living in their new identity in Christ. He mentioned sins that believers are to put off like an old, dirty shirt. This week Paul calls his readers to step into a new way of living in their relationship with Christ by putting on a new set of values based on who He is.

**Q:** *How have you heard others describe Christians?*

**Q:** *What’s the difference between a relationship based on rules and one based on love?*



Select 2–3 questions to discuss as a group.

## WHO YOU ARE

As Paul turns from vices to virtues in this passage, he addresses the Colossians as “God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved.” Here Paul once again brings his readers back to who they are in Christ:

- They are *chosen*. God doesn’t choose someone because of their success, good deeds, religious devotion or intellect. His choice is based on His love. It’s all grace.
- They are *holy*. God set apart a people to be His own. Through the work of His Son, God made their sin-stained clothes as white and pure as snow. In Christ, believers are empowered to live a holy life to God.
- They are *beloved*. God cherishes His own. He is the Good Father who delights in His children. He is the Good Husband who takes pleasure in His beautiful bride.

**READ:** *Colossians 3:12–17. How does it feel to be chosen by someone?*

**Q:** *How have you experienced God’s pleasure and delight in you recently?*

## CLOTHED IN HIS CHARACTER

New identity in Christ means a new set of values that changes how you live. What do each of the values have in common? Each is rooted in love, the one value that binds all the others together. Love is the supernatural, energizing force that makes us live differently. God’s love makes us forgive an offense rather than be bitter about it, show patience instead of frustration and find peace where we might be fearful and anxious.

These new values are more than a list. They represent a Person. In every value we see Jesus and the way He lived and related to others. Paul is saying, “Colossians, do you see now? To be *in Christ* is to be like Him. Therefore, be clothed in His character.”

Q: *Where is love lacking in your life and relationships?*

Q: *What's one practical thing you can do this week to put on the character of Christ?*

## THE HEART OF WORSHIP

Then Paul gives the Colossians a picture of worship and its characteristics. First, Paul tells his readers, “Abide in Christ by coming back to His Word regularly. Dwell in it and use it to teach and instruct one another. The new you is growing in wisdom and maturity.” Second, Paul mentions thankfulness: “Sing songs of praise to God and do it with a full and thankful heart. Let Jesus be in your every word and action. The new you is thankful to God every day and in every way.”

Q: *What are some creative ways you can abide in Christ this week?*

Q: *How does being thankful change your outlook on life?*



LIVE

*Select 2–3 questions from this section to answer.*

## VALUES DETERMINE ACTION

Everyone has values, and those values determine what choices they make in life. If you value education, you go to the library and study hard for the exam. If you value health, you eat the right foods and exercise regularly. If you value money, you put in the hours and effort to get a promotion and better salary. Watch a person's actions and you'll see what they value most.

It's not bad to value education, health or money. But we know how easily we can place something—a goal, a desire, a pursuit—or someone at the center of our hearts. All our time and effort go into that thing or person we value more than anything.



To be *in Christ* is to place Him and His way of living (i.e., His values) in the center of your heart. Everything about you—your relationships, circumstances, decisions—revolves around who He is and what He has done for you.

♀: *Think about what you spend most of your time, money and effort on. What values do you see?*

♀: *How does someone who places Jesus and His way of living at the center of their heart live differently?*

## LOVE IN EVERY DIRECTION

Jesus was once asked, “What is the greatest commandment?” (Matthew 22:34–40). His response was, “Love God with all you have and love others like you would want to be loved. Every other commandment depends on these two.”

The Christian life is about experiencing the love of God in every direction. It’s *loving in*—receiving God’s love as one chosen, holy and beloved by Him. It’s *loving up*—responding to God’s love with praise and thanksgiving for all you have in your new identity in Christ. It’s *loving out*—taking God’s love into the world by letting it radiate out from your heart and into your home, neighborhood, workplace and city.

♀: *What does it look like to experience God’s love in every direction as a community?*

♀: *Who in your life needs to experience God’s love through you? How could you express it?*



## LEAD

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

# SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Do you see the encouragement in Paul's words? He gives the Colossians (and us) every reason to step into a new way of living. Sin kills and enslaves us, but Christ gives us new life and freedom. We have a new identity in Him that changes everything about us. We're no longer sinners condemned to experience the wrath of God and spend eternity separated from Him.

He experienced God's wrath so we could experience God's grace. We now have peace with God and the assurance that nothing will ever separate us from His love.

Step into the new you by looking to the One who has shown you a new way of living. Remember that to be *in Christ* is to be like Him, or as the Apostle John tells us,

*Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

1 John 2:6

Q: What are some things that might keep you from stepping into the new you?

Q: Split into pairs and encourage one another to step into your new identities in Christ.



## PRAY

Pray through Scripture by reading Colossians 3:12–17 out loud. Praise God using your words or in song. Spend time thanking God and ask Him to help you love in every direction in your life.



## FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read Romans 8:31–39 and reflect on the power of God's love in your life.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their lives.



**A FOUNDATION OF LOVE** See Matt. 5:43–48; Mark 12:28–33; Rom. 13:8–10; 1 Cor. 13:1–13 for passages about how love is the foundation of all other Christian virtues (or values).

**SET APART** “Because we have trusted Christ, we have been set apart from the world unto the Lord. We are not our own; we belong completely to Him (1 Cor. 6:19–20). Just as the marriage ceremony sets apart a man and a woman for each other exclusively, so salvation sets the believer apart exclusively for Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup> See also 1 Pet. 1:13–25.

**VALUES DEFINED** Max Anders defines each new value that the Christian is called to live out:

- Compassion – “Heartfelt sympathy for those in need.”
- Kindness – “The friendly and helpful spirit which meets needs through good deed.”
- Humility – “An attitude free from pride and self-assertion.”
- Meekness (or gentleness) – “Power under control” or “refusing to demand one’s rights.”
- Patience – “The capacity to bear injustice or injury without revenge or retaliation.”
- Forgiveness – “Believers have been fully forgiven by Christ (Col. 2:13–14), and the forgiven are obligated to become forgivers.”
- Love – “Without love, all the other virtues may amount to mere moralism and little else (a thought found also in 1 Cor. 13:1–3). When love is present, there is harmony and unity in the community.”<sup>2</sup>

**ENDNOTES:**

1. Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1989), Kindle edition.
2. Max Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishers, 1999), Kindle edition.