

- **Main Passage:** Colossians 3:12-15
 - **Purpose:** To understand that our new life in Christ is meant to be marked by gracious compassion toward others.
 - **Session Snapshot:** Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, He was often seen showing compassion to those around Him. He has also shown deep compassion to us by defeating our sin and giving us new life. Part of that new life entails putting to death our sinful behavior and putting on a Christ-like nature. It is only possible to sincerely love, serve, and care for others because Christ has already modeled this for us. More than that, He has transformed our sinful hearts and empowered us to do this.
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GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together by reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, remind your group that you're near the beginning of your five-session video series on compassion. Remind your group that it's part of a larger study on what it means to pursue a masculinity that is centered in Christ.

As this is the second session with your group, make it a point to ask your group if they had any new thoughts after last week's session, or if they had any observations in the past week about what God is currently teaching them. If there are any newcomers, consider introducing yourself, if necessary, and having the men in your group introduce themselves. If you have any other housekeeping items, this is the time to share them.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, spend a moment in prayer, asking God to work through His Word to continue transforming the men in your group, working to make them more like Christ. Then, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, if necessary, remind the group of the basic structure of your time together. Explain that you will watch a video that is usually about 15 minutes long, followed by a short discussion of the video. Then, you'll spend a few minutes in Bible study, followed by an opportunity to accept the challenge to be more intentional about how compassion is lived out in our lives. Consider encouraging men to take notes as they watch the video.

THEN, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Rick admitted how difficult it is for him to show compassion. What about you? What would those closest to you say about your compassion? What about strangers you've encountered?**
- **Why does compassion come so unnaturally to us? Why is showing compassion to others so challenging?**
- **Do you find it easier to show compassion and kindness to those you see regularly (such as family and close friends), or those you interact with occasionally? If so, why do you think this is the case?**
- **Are there certain types of people to whom you find it particularly difficult to show compassion? People of a different race, or political party, or socioeconomic status,**

or even faith background? How does your heart need to change toward these people?

- **Rick talked about Jesus having a “holy timetable.” Does your (not-quite-as-holy) timetable sometimes make it hard for you to show compassion? What does this say about your priorities and what you value most?**
- **What was it about the way that Jesus viewed people that allowed Him to prioritize compassion? Did viewing everyone as “sheep without a shepherd” change the way He interacted with them? Through what lens do we need to view everyone?**
- **When it comes to ourselves, do we sometimes feel like we are undeserving of receiving compassion? But what is true for us if we are in Christ?**
- **How is Jesus’ threefold affirmation of Peter encouraging in our understanding of compassion?**
- **Why is it important for Christians to be compassionate people? What kind of testimony do we give to the world if we claim to be recipients of grace and compassion, yet fail to show that to others?**
- **On the flip side, what kind of testimony do we give to the world if Christians are the kindest, most gracious, and most compassionate people—true “salt and light” of the earth?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **Compassion is a core part of God’s disposition toward us, and it should be a core part of our disposition toward others. In today’s passage, we’re going to see Paul instructing the Colossians in this regard.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you’re going to take a more in-depth look at Colossians 3:12-15. As Rick stated in the video, the Bible is far from silent on the topic of compassion. In this passage, Paul explains how our new status in Christ should lead us to show compassion to those around us.

Make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you’ll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** The Apostle Paul identified himself as the author of Colossians.
- **Timeframe:** Most people believe Colossians was written sometime between A.D. 61 and 63, during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:17-31).
- **Purpose:** Ultimately, this letter’s purpose is to emphasize the supremacy of Christ over everything. Paul was writing to combat the spread of false teachings among the church at Colossae. The exact heresy being refuted is not certain and may have been a blend of multiple influences. The legalism, mysticism, and asceticism corrupting the pure faith in Colossae were moving attention away from Christ, placing it instead on self-discipline and the awe of other spiritual things.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read Colossians 3:12-15. When the volunteer has finished, direct their attention back to vs. 12. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **Why do you think we have to “put on” these qualities?**
 - Answers will vary. These qualities don’t come naturally to us. Even if we are in Christ, our flesh is not innately wired to love others like this.
- **Are “holy and beloved” part of the qualities we are to put on, or a description of our status as God’s chosen ones?**

- Answer: The phrase “holy and beloved” is describing our status in Christ. The righteous and sinless status of Christ has been granted to us, so we stand before God as holy and blameless. If we are in Christ, we are also God’s beloved children and part of the family of God.
- **Why does this matter? How is being holy and beloved connected to the following list of qualities?**
 - Answer: We don’t have the pressure of having to work toward these statuses (which we could never achieve on our own anyway). Instead, we are able to rest in the truth of already having been declared holy and beloved. Our natural response to receiving such an incredible gift should be to overflow with joy and delight, which should manifest itself in these qualities outlined by Paul.
- **What do the items in this list of qualities in verse 12 have in common?**
 - Answers will vary. They are all qualities that manifest themselves in our relation to others. The inward transformation of a Christian should express itself through outward action.

Before transitioning to the next question, say something like:

- **Paul’s first few words here in verse 12 are crucial to our understanding of this section. He reminds the Colossians of the good news of their already-declared status in Christ, and this enables them to carry out the Christlike relational qualities toward others. Without the status, without God working powerfully within us, we would be hopeless at carrying out this list.**

Direct your group’s attention back to Colossians 3:12-13. Then, ask:

- **Before we dive into this list of qualities, we find even more motivation for carrying them out at the end of verse 13. In addition to their status as holy and beloved, of what else does Paul remind them?**
 - Answer: He reminds them that they are to forgive others as Christ has forgiven them. Jesus has perfectly displayed all of the qualities in this list during His earthly ministry, and now they are called to imitate Christ’s forgiveness.

NEXT, take a moment to read Ephesians 5:1-2 to the group to demonstrate how often Paul calls us to be imitators of Christ as he does here in Colossians. Particularly emphasize Ephesians 5:2, where we see that our imitation is connected to what Jesus has already done for us.

- **Why is this a big deal? How is Jesus having done these things connected to our doing them to others, as we see outlined in Colossians 3:13? Why does Paul keep saying this?**
 - Answer: As Christ has lavished grace on us and forgiven our impossible debt, our hearts should be transformed and compelled likewise to forgive others. As part of forgiving and loving others as Christ has done for us, this list should describe the way we now treat others.
- **Why do you think Paul cared about such relationships with others? Or better yet, why do you think God cares about such things?**
 - Answers will vary. The idea of loving others goes hand in hand with loving God; in fact, Jesus says these are the two greatest commandments (see Mt. 22:37-40). The Kingdom of God that Christ is ushering in has at its very center relationships that are rooted in deep love and care for another (between God and us, and also among fellow Christians). When we show sacrificial love and grace towards others, it reflects the life-changing grace and compassion that God has shown us.

THEN, return back to Colossians read the next two verses, Colossians 3:14-15. It’s not only important to act in these ways toward one another but to make sure our actions are rooted in love. Explain to the group that love and peace are central aspects of the Christian faith, and Paul writes about the two themes frequently. In these next two verses, Paul is going to show how this whole list of qualities can be simplified. Ask:

- **What does it mean to put on love above all these things?**
 - Answers will vary. Love is the overarching quality that encompasses all of these things he has called us

to. Love perfectly fulfills what God desires of us in our relationship toward others. You can even think about it in terms of “putting on” clothing. Imagine bundling up in winter, and not even caring about what you’re wearing underneath, because you know everyone is only going to see your outermost layer. If your outermost layer is love—if that’s what emanates from you in your relationship with others—then everything else will fall into place.

- **How is the idea of peace in verse 15 important as we think about relationships with others?**
 - Answers will vary. Though we certainly have peace with God (Rom. 5:1), Paul is arguing that the Body of Christ is called to live in peace with one another. We were enemies of God (Rom. 5:10) who were reconciled to Him by an act of sacrificial love. If we are likewise willing to love others sacrificially, we can also experience peace in our relationships in the body of Christ. Such love and peace reflect to the world around us the deep love of God.

FINALLY, have a volunteer read the entirety of Colossians 3:12-15 one more time. Then, say something like:

- **Our status as God’s chosen ones and a reminder of what He has done for us should drastically change the way we view others. It was God’s deep compassion for us that allowed for a restored relationship with Him. If we are willing to show such compassion and kindness toward others, even when it is costly, this will radically restructure our relationships in a way that centers them around love and peace. This is God’s design for relationships in the body of Christ, and it should fill our hearts with joy to be surrounded by such life-giving relationships.**

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group’s attention on one key takeaway from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on one main takeaway from this session. Say something like:

- **During our study today, we focused on some of the big concepts and had to skip over the descriptive list (compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience). Let’s return to that list and see where we might find key areas of growth by thinking through the following questions:**
 - 1) Of the five items on this list, all of us need to pause and ask, “Are any of these qualities a major struggle for me? Would those around me confirm that I am coming up short in some of these areas, or am I personally convicted when reading some of these?”
 - 2) The truth is, we all need to be growing in all five of these areas because none of us are perfect. However, outside of general growth that needs to happen, it’s also possible that one of these areas is a major stronghold in your life and a possible foothold for the enemy. We need to ask ourselves, “Is there a certain relationship in which I am intentionally withholding one of these qualities? How does my heart need to change in such a relationship? Do I need to repent of wrongdoing?” It may be helpful to reflect on how much Christ has forgiven us and loved us, and we may need to own up to our sin and ask for forgiveness if we have been intentionally withholding love from someone.
 - 3) Others of us may not have a specific relationship that comes to mind, but we should be able to latch onto one of these qualities as an opportunity for growth. We need to ask, “How can I begin growing in my demonstration of this quality? Under what circumstances is this quality usually missing, and how I can begin to consciously demonstrate it more this week and beyond?”

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves as we think through these qualities. If it feels appropriate, allow there to be some discussion about the kind of evaluation they find themselves considering.



COMPASSION

SESSION 2

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them, and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.