

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

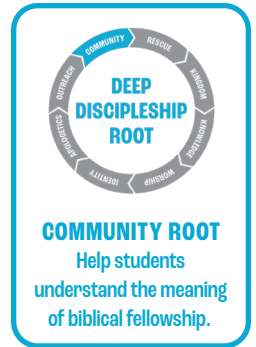
Disciples of Christ share God's grace with the world (Acts 20:24).

MAIN PASSAGES

COLOSSIANS 3:12–17

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF PASSAGE

Paul, with Timothy's help, wrote this letter to Christ-followers living in the small city of Colossae. It's believed that the church in Colossae began while Paul spent a few years in Ephesus. While Paul was there proclaiming the Gospel, it's possible a Colossian named Epaphras made his way to Ephesus (about 120 miles) and heard the good news of Jesus (Acts 19:10), then returned home to share the Gospel with his community (Col. 1:7). Because they have now identified themselves with Christ, "they should set their hearts on heavenly things (3:1–4), put to death sinful worldly practices (3:5–11), and clothe themselves with Christ's virtues (3:12–17)."¹



OPENING OPTIONS

10–15 minutes

Choose from the following options to give students opportunities to connect and have structured and unstructured fun.

I. SEMI-UNSTRUCTURED HANGOUT TIME

Based on your group's size, allow for unstructured hangout or play a game from **Deep Discipleship Games**—we recommend **Stand Up If**. NOTE: Free Deep Discipleship Games are already included with your Deep Discipleship Account. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

II. ARRIVAL ACTIVITY

Wiped Clean Rely

Prewrite a set of common sins on each team's board (e.g., lying, selfishness, disrespecting parents, etc.). Divide your group into two teams. Choose and mark a starting line. Teams will race to wipe the slate clean by having one team member at a time take an eraser, run down to their team board, and wipe off one sin (if using poster boards, have students strike a line through the sin with a marker). The first team to wipe away all the sins wins.

Connection to Lesson

Jesus took the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross. Because of his sacrifice, all who believe in Jesus and repent of their sins have been forgiven (wiped clean, so to speak) and don't have to endure the eternal consequences of sin. Since we've been forgiven in this way, we can forgive others.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- 2 whiteboards, chalkboards, or poster boards
- 1 dry-erase marker
- 2 dry erasers

III. ICEBREAKER

You can use this icebreaker question to transition students from activity to teaching time.

Share about a time when it was difficult to forgive someone.



LARGE GROUP MESSAGE**15–20 minutes**

Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message. Incorporate the suggested discussion questions to keep students engaged with the message.

POINT #1: Chosen, holy, and beloved**(Colossians 3:12)**

Paul wrote a letter to the Colossians so they could more fully understand how to live like Christ. In this part of his letter, Paul points out that people who follow Jesus are “God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved...” (v. 12). *Holy* means “set apart.” As Christ-followers, we’re set apart from people who do not follow Jesus. Not because there’s anything “better” about Christ-followers (we all start off as sinners and enemies of God (Rom. 5:10)), but because people who have accepted Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for their sins have been given Christ’s righteousness and now identify with God’s people. Knowing we are chosen, holy, and beloved by God should humble us and cause us to want to live in a way that pleases God!

ILLUSTRATION

Imagine you’re outside a popular event, but you don’t have a ticket to get in. No matter what you do, you’re not getting in. Then someone gives you a VIP pass with your name printed on it. Suddenly, you’re welcomed in and given special, behind-the-scenes access—not because of anything you did, but because of the pass you were given. That’s what Jesus did for us.

On our own, we’re not holy and can’t have a relationship with God. When anyone repents and puts their faith in Jesus as their Savior, he gives them his righteousness, making them holy and part of God’s people.

- **Ask:** What are we to “put on,” according to verse 12?
- **Ask:** Does being a part of God’s chosen, holy, and beloved people mean that you’ll be perfect here on earth? Why or why not?

POINT #2: Christ-followers follow Jesus’ example**(Colossians 3:12–14)**

Paul lists many Christ-like characteristics that Christ-followers are called to “put on” like clothing. Some of these characteristics we understand, like kindness and patience, but what about meekness? Sometimes people think that meekness is weakness, but it’s quite the opposite. Meekness means having strength or power but choosing to be gentle, calm, and under control.

ILLUSTRATION

Picture a horse. It’s enormous, strong, and fast. If a horse wanted to, it could run wild. But when a person puts reins on it, the horse stays calm, listens, and uses its strength for a purpose. As Christ-followers, we choose to be gentle, using our strength for God’s glory.

When someone does something to hurt us, we could fight back, get angry, or retaliate in some way. But if we have put on meekness, and peace rules our hearts, then we can use the quiet strength Jesus gives us to forgive in those moments. Living as if we are holy and beloved shows others the love of Jesus and helps us to live for God through our actions.

- **Ask:** Why do you think it can be hard to stay calm and gentle after someone hurts you?
- **Ask:** What is one way you have seen someone use strength for good instead of fighting back?



REFLECTION**5 minutes**

Give students a chance to creatively process what they've just learned and to prepare for small group discussion.

Using the space provided on page 2 of their Student Guide, have students draw themselves clothed in a way that represents the characteristics described in Colossians 3:13–17. Have some volunteers share their drawings with the group.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Page 2 of Student Guide or blank paper
- Pen or pencils

SMALL GROUPS**10–15 minutes**

Divide into small groups. Small Group Leaders can guide students through the following discussion questions.

What does the Word say?

- What does Paul say God's chosen people are, and what should they "put on" according to verse 12?
They are holy and beloved. They put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and love.
- How are Christ-followers called to forgive?
We are called to forgive as Jesus forgave us, wiping clean the wrongs others commit against us.

What does the Word mean?

- Paul calls God's people "holy and beloved." What does it mean to be holy?
Set apart for God. We're not holy because of anything we've done, but because Jesus gave us his righteousness when he took our sin on himself.
- Why do you think Paul compares Christlike qualities with clothing we put on?
Just like we choose what to wear each day, we need to choose daily to "put on" these qualities in the way we act, talk, and treat others.

What should I do now?

- Which characteristic from this passage do you have the most difficulty putting on? Why?
Answers will vary, but could include patience with siblings, forgiving a friend, kindness at school, loving others, being thankful, etc.
- What is one practical step you can take this week to "put on" one of these Christ-like qualities?
Answers will vary, but could include praying regularly, thinking about Jesus, reading the Bible daily, etc.



APPLICATION**5 minutes***Reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.*

Have students divide up into pairs or groups of three. Give each group a short, everyday scenario. Each group will respond to their situation twice: once with a snappy response and once with a Christ-like response.

Scenario Examples:

- a friend breaks something of yours
- a sibling takes the last snack you wanted
- someone jumps in front of you in line
- a teammate blames you for a mistake, etc.

Application Question

How can you be more Christ-like in how you respond to others who mistreat you this week?

PRAY

Ask God to help your students “put on” Christ-like qualities, including the ability to forgive others. Thank Jesus for making a way for us to be holy.

NOTES

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¹ N.L. Geisler, in J.F. Walvoord & R.B. Zuck (eds), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures Vol 2: New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor Books, 1983), 679.

