

Session 1: War & Peace—Maintaining the Unity We Have in Christ

Colossians 3

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Introduction

- As believers we will have our differences. But if we don't learn how to properly manage those differences, they will divide us.
- Central question: How can believers who differ flesh out Paul's admonition in Ephesians 4:3 to maintain the unity we already possess in Jesus Christ?

1. Why is Colossians 3 relevant to a discussion of unity?

- a. The chapter begins with a discussion of our union with Jesus Christ.
- b. The list of vices and virtues in 3:15-17 is relational in orientation.
- c. There are 4 "one another" references in the chapter (3:9, 13, 16).
- d. Perhaps the clearest indication is found in 3:15: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

2. What does it mean to let the peace of Christ rule in my relationships with other believers?

- It means that I allow the peace that Jesus Christ embodies and the peace that Jesus Christ accomplished by His death to umpire in my relationship.

3. What enables me to allow the peace of Christ to rule in my relationships?

- Having the right foundation and focus (3:1-4)—I must be centered on Christ as lord.

4. What does it look like to be Christ-centered? (3:5-17)

- a. Negatively, it involves putting off the practices of the old man (3:5-11).
- b. Positively, it involves putting on the practices of the new man (3:12-17).

5. What does putting off and putting on have to do with being Christ-centered and maintaining unity?

- a. The barriers that once divided people are eliminated within the new man.
- b. The new man is the new humanity in Jesus Christ.

c. What ultimately governs our relationships within this new humanity is our union with Jesus Christ.

- Jesus Christ is the prototype.
- Jesus Christ is the lord.

6. So what does putting on Jesus Christ look like?

a. What you cannot be wearing if you hope to preserve unity. (3:5-10)

- Anger and wrath
- Malice
- Blasphemy
- Filthy communication
- Lying

b. What you must be wearing if you hope to preserve unity. (3:12-17)

- Bowels of mercies
- Kindness
- Humbleness of mind
- Meekness
- Longsuffering
- Forbearance
- Forgiveness

7. What conclusions should we reject in light of this emphasis on unity?

- Doing our best to preserve unity doesn't mean we cannot (or should not) disagree with a brother or sister in Christ.
- Doing our best to preserve unity doesn't mean that we shouldn't come to conclusions from the Word and have the conviction to stand by those conclusions.
- Doing our best to preserve unity doesn't mean that we cannot critique other viewpoints or practices.
- Doing our best to maintain unity doesn't mean that separation is never an option.