

Unrestricted Church
Why not just have online relationships?
Col 3:12-17

The church is no ordinary group of people

- We are a family, a body and a building – created by and resting on Jesus
- We see in Colossians we are a new creation – see v9-11
- And so we are called to live and relate in ways unlike the world around us, to be a ‘renewed society requiring a fresh way of living’ (Dick Lucas)
- So this morning we are thinking about those relationships we are to have within the church. We will focus mainly on Colossians 3v12 but go into verses 13-14 a little.

1. How are we to relate to one another?

- 5 virtues are listed in v12 all of which are used elsewhere to describe Jesus
- The first 2 are about how we relate to other people
 - **Compassion** –
 - Matt 20:34 – 2 blind men come to Jesus and it says he had compassion and healed them.
 - Mark 6 – Jesus sees a crowd like ‘sheep without a shepherd’ and it says he had compassion on them – so it isn’t just physical needs that moved him.
 - Compassion is a deep sensitivity to the needs and sorrows of others.
 - Not talking about a natural sensitivity – all Christians are to put this on.
 - And it isn’t a sort of 6th sense – ‘I sense you are feeling pain!’
 - As we come out of lockdown and meet with one another there is a great opportunity to show compassion – ask, how did you find lockdown? – Everyone’s experience has been different.
 - We need to make sure we listen – compassion will give attention to one another (not distracted by others or by our phones)
 - **Kindness** –
 - This term is used of God’s abundant goodness and overflowing generosity
 - Says in Psalm 31:19 – ‘How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you.’
 - Like when you are getting ready for a loved ones’ birthday – maybe you have a cupboard with presents and goodies ready for them.
 - Or Psalm 65:11 – ‘You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance.’
 - Luke 6:35 says God is kind even to the ungrateful and the sinner
 - It is action taken to be generous to another
 - It could be in service, gifts, words or in time
 - This is how we are to be with one another – overflowing with generosity.
- The second 2 are more about how we view ourselves
 - **Humility and Gentleness/Meekness** -
 - It seems hard to pull these apart, what are they?
 - Moses is an example – described at one point as the humblest man on earth (Numb 12:3) (ESV ‘meek’)
 - This was at the time when Miriam and Aaron were speaking against him. Yet Moses didn’t protest. God spoke and judged Aaron and Miriam.
 - Or take Jesus’ example in Philippians 2:6-8 (have a read!)
 - So what is humility and meekness?
 - It is to be done with ‘self’

- Either promoting oneself or defending oneself

Dr M Lloyd Jones: 'The man who is truly meek never pities himself, he is never sorry for himself. He never talks to himself and says, 'You are having a hard time, how unkind these people are not to understand you'. He never thinks: 'How wonderful I really am, if only other people gave me a chance.' Self-pity! What hours and years we waste in this! But the man who has become meek has finished with all that. To be meek, in other words, means that you have finished with yourself altogether...' (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount)

- Rather humility and meekness gladly takes the role of the servant
- Lastly...
 - **Patience** -
 - Or long-suffering – notice also v13-14 the need to bear with one another and forgive one another.
 - What does this tell us about the nature of church relationships?
 - If Paul presumed all relationships would be easy he would not have needed to mention this.
 - Doesn't it suggest that the compassion, kindness, humility and meekness we are to show won't always be appreciated?
 - That thanks won't always be forthcoming, that sometimes people will take advantage of us and that some might never show kindness back?
 - But he says be long-suffering – in it for the long haul
 - When wrongs are done against you – forgive.

2. How is it possible to love like this?

- It is inhuman!
- Human relationships normally involve an exchange
 - We need to be valued, appreciated and loved
 - We notice this when, in a relationship, we don't get back what we need.
 - What do we do? Give up or turn bitter!
 - So how can we love in the way we have been thinking about?

See the start of verse 12

- Paul doesn't start with command but with a reminder of who we are
- 'God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved' - titles used of both Israel and Jesus.
- This means our need for value, appreciation and love have been met already.

Therefore as we relate there must always be 3 people in the relationship

- Me, you and Jesus
- We are to receive forgiveness, meaning, value, appreciation, status and love from Jesus – utterly satisfied in him.
- This empowers us to love one another freely.

Think of the difference being satisfied in Jesus would make to our relationships

- What happens if we love one another with our deepest needs already met by Jesus?
- What if you knew others' deepest needs were already met by Jesus?
- If you aren't a Christian – do you see how only Jesus can meet your deepest needs and free you to love others?

So... 'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness (meekness) and patience.'