



# WOODLAND HEIGHTS

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CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## Part #2 – Learning to Let Go: The Power of Forgiveness

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### Small Group Discussion Guide on Colossians 3:1:13-14, 3:12-15

#### Woodland Heights Christian Church Core Value Connection

This sermon on Colossians 3:12–15 aligns with the core values of Biblical Authority, Biblical Worldview, and Community at Woodland Heights Christian Church. We believe that the Word of God is our authority for life and that a Biblical worldview is necessary if believers are going to respond to wounds, offenses, and broken relationships in a way that honors Christ rather than the flesh. We also believe that Biblical community grows stronger when grace, patience, truth, and forgiveness shape the life of the church.

This message reminds us that unforgiveness is not a small issue hidden in the heart, but a toxic spiritual force that can steal freedom, disturb peace, and drain joy. It calls believers to remember the forgiveness they have already received in Christ, to put on Christlike character, to extend grace to those who have wronged them, and to let the peace of Christ rule where resentment once ruled.

#### Section 1 – ENCOUNTER

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##### Observing God's Word

Imagine a wound that has never fully healed. The words may have been spoken years ago, the betrayal may be long past, and the offender may not even realize the damage that was done, yet the pain still lingers beneath the surface. It is replayed in the mind, carried in the heart, and felt in relationships long after the moment itself has passed.

That is the heartbeat of this message on forgiveness. In Colossians, Paul reminds believers that the Christian life is not merely about managing outward behavior; it is about allowing the grace of Christ to transform what is happening inside the soul. Unforgiveness may feel justified, but when it is left unchecked it becomes a quiet war within, and only the Gospel has the power to break its hold.

Let's start our study by anchoring ourselves in Scripture. Read Colossians 3:12–15 (ESV) as a group, family, or an individual, letting God's Word sink in.

##### Core Questions

- What words, commands, or themes stand out to you in Colossians 3:12–15? Why is this relevant today?
- What do these verses teach you about the connection between receiving grace and extending forgiveness?
- What do you learn here about the kind of heart Christ wants to form in His people?

## Section 2 – EXPLORE

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As we dig deeper into Colossians, we discover that forgiveness is not treated as optional advice for unusually spiritual people. It is part of the normal life of those who belong to Christ. The sermon's Big Idea says it clearly: **"When Forgiveness is Given, Freedom is Found, Peace is Restored, and Joy is Renewed in Your Life."**

Paul writes to believers whose identity has already been changed by the Gospel. They have been rescued from darkness, transferred into the kingdom of Christ, and forgiven of their sins. Because of that, forgiveness begins not by staring at the offender, but by remembering the Savior and living out the grace He has already poured into His people.

### Lesson #1 – Build Forgiveness on the Foundation of God's Mercy (Colossians 1:13–14)

Paul begins by reminding believers what God has already done for them in Christ. He has delivered them from the domain of darkness, transferred them into the kingdom of His beloved Son, and given them redemption and the forgiveness of sins. The sermon emphasizes that forgiveness does not begin by asking whether the other person deserves mercy; it begins by remembering that none of us deserved the mercy God gave us in Jesus Christ.

This means the extent of our forgiveness in Christ becomes the foundation for the forgiveness we extend to others. Forgiven people are called to be forgiving people. Christian forgiveness is not powered by willpower alone, but by a heart that has been humbled and changed by the cross.

- Why is it important to begin forgiveness by remembering what God has done for you in Christ?
- How does the Gospel confront the idea that forgiveness is mainly about whether someone "deserves" it?
- In what ways can forgetting your own forgiveness make it harder to forgive others?

### Lesson #2 – Put On the Christlike Character That Prepares the Heart to Forgive (Col. 3:12)

Paul tells believers to "put on" compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. The sermon points out that forgiveness does not grow well in a proud, angry, self-protective heart. It grows in a heart that is being clothed daily with the character of Christ.

These virtues matter because forgiveness is not only an act; it is also a posture. People who know they are chosen, holy, and beloved by God are free to respond differently to wounds and offenses. They do not have to defend their identity at every turn, because their identity is already secure in Christ.

- Which of the qualities in Colossians 3:12 do you most need to grow in right now?
- Why do compassion, humility, and patience matter so much in the process of forgiveness?
- How does knowing you are deeply loved by God help loosen the grip of anger and self-protection?

### Lesson #3 – Practice Forgiveness Through Endurance, Grace, and Love (Col. 3:13–14)

Paul calls believers to bear with one another and forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven them. The sermon explains that this includes both endurance and grace. Endurance means believers do not treat every offense as an immediate reason to walk away, while grace means they choose to release the debt instead of holding it over someone's head forever.

Paul then adds that above all these things believers are to put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Love does not erase truth, pain, or wisdom, but it keeps grace active where resentment would rather take over. Forgiveness in action looks like endurance shaped by grace and held together by love.

- What is the difference between bearing with one another and simply pretending sin does not matter?
- Why is grace essential if forgiveness is going to move from theory into action?
- How does love help hold relationships together when they have been strained by hurt and disappointment?

#### **Lesson #4 – Let the Peace of Christ Rule Where Resentment Once Ruled (Colossians 3:15)**

Paul closes by saying, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” The sermon notes that the word “rule” carries the idea of an umpire or referee. In other words, peace is to call the shots in the believer’s heart, not bitterness, resentment, or the constant replaying of an offense.

This is one of the fruits of forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean memory disappears or trust is instantly restored, but it does mean the poison of resentment no longer gets to dominate the inner life. Where grudges die, gratitude begins to grow, and Christ’s peace starts to rule where inner war once lived.

- What does it mean in practical terms to let the peace of Christ “rule” in your heart?
- How have you seen resentment quietly affect joy, peace, or other relationships in life?
- Why do gratitude and forgiveness belong so closely together in the Christian life?

### **Section 3 – EMBRACE**

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#### **Applying God’s Word**

Go deeper into the Word of God by applying what you’ve learned to your life today. Reflect on these action steps and discuss how you can live out the truths from Colossians.

##### ***Remember the Extent of Your Forgiveness***

Take time this week to read Colossians 1:13-14 slowly and thank God for rescuing, redeeming, and forgiving you in Christ. Before focusing on the person who hurt you, spend time remembering what Christ has forgiven in your own life.

##### ***Put On Christlike Character Daily***

Ask the Lord to help you “put on” compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience in one difficult relationship. Choose one of those virtues and pray over it each morning this week, asking God to make it visible in your words and actions.

##### ***Practice Peace Over Retaliation***

When the offense returns to your mind, ask yourself whether you are letting resentment referee your heart or whether you are letting the peace of Christ rule instead. Take one practical step this week toward peace, whether through prayer, a changed attitude, wise boundaries, or a gracious conversation led by truth and love.

### ***Memorize and Reflect***

Memorize the sermon's key verse, Colossians 3:13 (ESV): "Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

### **Closing Challenge and Prayer**

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Unforgiveness promises strength, but in the end it quietly drains peace, freedom, and joy. Christ offers something better. He calls His people to live as those who have been forgiven, to put on His character, to extend His grace, and to let His peace rule in the deepest places of the heart.

As a group, pray for one another to walk in the freedom that forgiveness brings. Ask the Lord to heal old wounds, soften hard places, break the grip of resentment, and help His people reflect the grace they have received in Jesus Christ.

- Father, thank You for rescuing us from darkness and forgiving us fully through the blood of Your Son. Thank You that when we had no way to pay our debt, Jesus Christ paid it in full. Forgive us for the times we have held on to offenses, replayed wounds, and allowed resentment to shape our hearts more than Your grace. Teach us to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Help us bear with one another, forgive as we have been forgiven, and let the peace of Christ rule where bitterness once ruled. Use our lives to show a wounded world that real freedom, real peace, and real joy are found in Jesus. In His name, Amen.