

CULTIVATE COMMUNITY

Part 4 of Confident Living

Colossians 3:12-14. The Cornerstone Church, May 30, 2021

INTRODUCTION

We all need friends, now more than ever before.

Our experiences with COVID-19 have revealed how harmful it is to feel alone. A June 2020 research report outlined dramatic increases in loneliness, distress, mental and physical health problems, substance abuse, domestic violence, sleeplessness, and suicide. The author concluded: **"The pandemic has shown how fundamental social contact is in our lives ..."**

(The Double Pandemic Of Social Isolation And COVID-19: Cross-Sector Policy Must Address Both. By Julianne Holt-Lunstad. Health Affairs Blog. June 22, 2020. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20200609.53823>)

It's not good to be alone.

That's why God designed the church to be a community of friends who help each other stay strong through the challenges of life. We don't need to be alone.

SERIES: CONFIDENT LIVING

This is week 4 of our CONFIDENT LIVING** teaching series. **We're focused on ten spiritual practices** that help us prevail under pressure.

Today's spiritual practice is called **CULTIVATE COMMUNITY**.

BOTTOM LINE

Friendships can be challenging and we've all had bad experiences. **BUT ... when we do the hard work of cultivating community, we avoid the high cost of isolation.**

COLOSSIANS 3:12-14

The New Testament letter to the Colossians was written to a church in turmoil. False teachers had infiltrated the community and relationships were frayed.

The apostle Paul wrote to correct the errors and to help them rebuild their friendships. In Colossians 3:12-14, he outlines the spiritual discipline of cultivating community.

Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Healthy friendships help us through the hard times. We won't feel isolated because we'll have friends who come alongside to help.

I enjoy watching ultra-runners on YouTube. Some of the races are 100 miles or longer and the runners are amazing athletes, but they cannot do it alone. They have support teams who help them behind the scenes. They have people along the route who supply them with food and drink and dry socks. They even have pacers who run sections of the race with them so they don't feel all alone. Without their friends, they wouldn't finish the race.

Life is similar to a long-distance race and we need a support team of friends in the church to help us cross the finish line. When we do the hard work of cultivating community, we avoid the high cost of isolation.

Paul explains how to build a support team.

HOW TO CULTIVATE COMMUNITY

1. WE CULTIVATE COMMUNITY BY CONNECTING WITH GOD - verse 12a.

(Colossians 12a) As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved ...

Everything a Christian DOES should flow out of everything a Christian IS. And we are God's people. Because he loves us, he has set us apart for himself.

What this means for us is this: He has connected to us and is highly committed to us. The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 2 that we are God's people, God's priesthood, and God's dwelling place on earth.

The energy we need to cultivate community flows from this special connection to God. He supplies us with resources that never run out.

- Picture yourself as a branch in a vine.
- Picture yourself as a plug connected to a live outlet.

God's supernatural presence and power are flowing through you. He's giving you everything you need to be a good friend and to love other people in practical ways.

Be confident: God will supply what you need to be a good friend.

2. WE CULTIVATE COMMUNITY BY CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER - verse 12b.

The passage lists five Christlike character qualities:

(Colossians 3:12b) ... clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

These five qualities have two things in common: 1) This is how Jesus lived; there is story after story in the Gospels about Jesus' compassion and kindness. It's why crowds were attracted to him, and 2) These qualities are about putting other people first. **This is what friends do for friends.**

- Friends put others first.
- Friends listen more than they talk about themselves.
- Friends want to give more than they take.
- Friends try to help more than make demands.

Our Lord Jesus is our role model. He put us first when he carried our sins to the cross. He taught his disciples:

(John 15:13, NIV) Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

(John 15:13) This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. (MSG)

If that sounds impossible, remember this: Our connection to God means we have a constant supply of grace flowing from God into us. The Holy Spirit is forming Christ in us, and giving us the will and the power to put others first.

In romantic comedies, the first part of the story is about all the dating disasters before Mr or Miss Right is revealed. The disasters all have one thing in common: they're selfish. They are mean, or easily offended, or focused on their phones, or they spend the entire date talking about themselves. Don't be that person.

3. WE CULTIVATE COMMUNITY BY CHRISTLIKE CONDUCT - verses 13-14.

Friendship isn't easy. When we put others first, there will be challenges. Let's be honest, people can drive us crazy.

That's why it's important to know that Christlike conduct flows from Christlike character. Character comes first - the humility, compassion, kindness, gentleness, and patience have to be in our hearts before we can follow Paul's instructions here.

Paul wrote that the way to cultivate community is to treat people a certain way; three ways, actually:

- Bear with one another - verse 13.
- Forgive one another - verse 13.
- Love one another - verse 14.

What does that look like in real life. Big picture: think of it as giving people space or leeway. Friends will do and say things that make us want to turn our backs, but don't do that. Instead, give them some space. This is what Jesus did:

- **Friends give friends space to grow (be themselves).** We don't have to confront every sin or correct every quirk. Don't be easily offended. Friends **"bear with each other."**
- **Friends give friends space to fail.** Just as God forgave our sins, so **friends forgive friends**. That means we give the hurt and offense to God. We nail the sin to the cross and let Jesus deal with it.
- **Friends give friends space to be needy.** Christlike **love** meets needs. When we needed a Savior, he came into the world to save us. Love means we help our friends meet their needs, as best we can with God's help.

COMMIT TO COMMUNITY

The nature of my work means that I spend a lot of time alone, praying, studying, writing, thinking, editing, and recording. I don't mind spending time alone; that's how God wired me. BUT even I need community. I need friends in Christ. More importantly, I need TO BE a friend.

I realized this more than ever during last year's COVID isolation. I got a heavy dose of the moody blues. There were weeks when I felt very sad, very down because I couldn't be with extended family and friends.

Someone is thinking: *I felt isolated during COVID, but no one reached out to me.* That makes me feel very sad. I'm sure it was a real challenge for you. BUT ... who did you reach out to? Did you make an effort to be a friend to someone? That's how the church works. To have a friends, we have to be a friend.

One of the best ways to make friends at the Cornerstone is to join a small group or ministry team. Next Sunday, Joey will be back and he would love to help you find a group that is right for you. That will be a great way for you to get into the spiritual practice of cultivating community.

Remember: when we do the hard work of community, we avoid the high cost of isolation.

LET'S PRAY

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the truth you have revealed in the Bible. Holy Spirit, help us to apply today's teaching in our lives. Amen.

Access today's teaching notes = [FamousGod.com//teaching-notes](https://FamousGod.com/teaching-notes)

** I got the idea for this teaching series from David Jeremiah and his book and DVD series called Living with Confidence in a Chaotic World.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday, May 30, 2021

Constructive Relationships
Col. 3:12-17

May 30, 2021

Confident Living

Welcome & Prayer -Eve

Our God

Gabby

Your Love Never Fails

Eve

Bible Reading Rom 9:1-18 -Peter

Pray & Dismiss Kids-Shawn

10,000 Reasons (Bless The Lord)

Eve

A.C.T.S. Prayer -Tami

Teaching -Peter

Great Are You Lord

Gabby

Updates -the Peter

Blessing- Peter

Updates:

We've updated our website with some ways to **contact us**. FamousGod.com.

- Contact - general, questions, etc
- Prayer
- Decision to follow Jesus
- Sign up to volunteer

Don't worry about confidentiality. When you hit submit, it sends me your message by email. I won't share private prayer requests etc.

Prayer - Online prayer opportunities. *Pop-Up* on Tuesdays. *Presence* on Thursdays.