

## LIFE TOGETHER SERMON SERIES

### Week 5: A Community Of Deep Relationships In A Culture Of Shallow Connections

#### Colossians 3:12-17

The prevalence of brokenness and un-health in our culture, and its correlation with the weakening fabric of society, cannot be overstated. According to social scientist Arthur Brooks, there are four primary factors that lead to happiness: (1) Family; (2) Friends; (3) Meaningful work; and (4) Philosophy or Ideology, or Religion. The thing to reckon with is that we are living in a generation that is hollowing out these four things.

Besides the fact that as people get older, their circles of friendships shrink, the pandemic has exacerbated social anxiety and isolation. No matter our personality, we all need more than one support group in our lives, but these suffered during Covid-19. Now re-adjusting back, we find ourselves navigating interpersonal health.

But there is power in the gospel of Jesus that calls us to be an “alternate society” amid our always-fracturing world. What if we are uniquely positioned to show a compelling vision as followers of The Way? An oasis, a refuge, haven of real, truthful, honest, restorative people.

A closer look at Colossians 3:12-17 teaches us these truths:

1. Having died with Christ and raised with Christ is the causative factor why our lives and relationships are never the same again (2 Corinthians 5:16-18).
2. Whatever humanly divides us, Jesus has broken those walls. We are now God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, in both position (justification) and process (sanctification) of living into that identity in Christ (Romans 8:13-15).
3. We are not just “saved from” what’s old, but “saved into” what is new. We do not just put off (put to death), but we also put on. The virtues in v12 necessarily express themselves in relationships (Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3).
4. To bear and forgive in v13 are the exercising of those virtues listed, with the ultimate virtue of love (Ephesians 4:1-3). **Shallow connection means I am not committed to you. But in a reciprocal relationship, there is mutual bearing and mutual forgiving.**
5. v16 reminds us there is also teaching and admonishing that happens, where we desire God’s word to truly “dwell”. **Spiritual formation happens in community, when we make room to relate at a deep enough level that counters our impulses to mask or filter, where we can allow who we are to be confronted or celebrated towards Christlikeness.**
6. The commitment to mutually bear burdens over time can be transformed by God into something good (frequency + intensity + consistency), e.g. weight lifting, to the glory of God (Galatians 6:2).

**Q: What simple act of open communication, vulnerability or radical acceptance might you make this week in order to move to deeper relationship in community?**

There is a call to deeper relationships. While much of discipleship happens in life together with our LifeGroup, the truth is we need to experience several spaces, all of which contribute to our overall relational health, e.g. Jesus in his groups: **the public space, the social space (church service), the personal space (LifeGroup), and the intimate space.** Each of these takes intentionality.

## **CORD GROUP**

CORD Group is a group of 3 friends **committing to walking together** (for either a set time period or over a lifetime), to **(1) Encourage obedience to Christ** (His way and His teachings); **(2) Enable deep life-change** (application and accountability); and **(3) Nurture abundant living** (discerning God's will and mediating His grace to flourish in the world).

As friends in such a group, you are calling each other to **Fellowship + Accountability + Mission** through intimate journeying together, in conversations, sharing of meals, and prayers for one another, through four practices that tend to be neglected:

Confession  
Others  
Reading  
Discernment

Note: See CORD Group primer at [www.thecity.sg/resources](http://www.thecity.sg/resources)

Do you want to walk with a couple of sacred friends, in this particular season, with whom you will be vulnerable and deep, for mutual spiritual growth?

If yes: What holds you back or hinders you from this deep friendship?

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Describe your relationships, i.e. the types of connections you have. What is your view of relational health as Christians?
2. What hinders you from feeling close and safe with your LifeGroup community? Conversely, what helps break pseudo closeness into deepening relationships?
3. What does it look like for Colossians 3:12-17 to form us?
4. For your journey in spiritual friendship (CORD), what is one challenge you face? How will you grow through this challenge?
5. Pray about two friends you can be in CORD with. Plan your invitation and when you hope to start meeting.