



- Read Eph 4:15-16 and Prov 27:17. Share a practical example of how another Christian graciously challenged you about an inappropriate act or attitude or way you communicated to another person. How did they help you grow more like Christ?
- In Col 3:9, Paul commands: “Do not lie to one another”. Why is it important that both ‘truth’ and ‘love’ are evident and practised in communication? What happens when one of these is missing?

In Col 3:10-11, Paul paints a picture of humanity, as God’s creation, being made anew, “renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator.” God planned for us to be conformed to the image of the Son. (Rom 8:29) Humanity is fractured by racial, socio-economic and religious divisions. In Christ, these divisions are overcome; we can embrace God’s perspective that we are “God’s holy people, chosen and dearly loved.”

- Read Gal 5:22-23 and Col 3:12-14. Make a list of the fruit of the Spirit and the things that Paul tells us to ‘clothe ourselves’ with. What things are included in both passages? What are the extras?
- Read John 14:34-35 and Col 3:13. These verses teach us to love and forgive each other as Christ has loved us and forgiven us. How does this standard ‘lift the bar’ about how we love and forgive?
- Read 1 John 3:16, 18. What do we learn about the nature of love in these verses?

Life would be a lot easier if we didn’t have to deal with differences between people. Cultural differences can lead to annoyance, even aggravation. However, even personal habits can cause aggravation between siblings, housemates and couples. Strong opinions and preferences can lead to conflict. In Col 3:13, Paul highlights that forgiveness is essential for dealing with conflicts and differences. The word used here is translated in different versions as ‘quarrel’, ‘grievances’, ‘complaint’ or ‘anyone who offends you’.

- Think of a past situation or ongoing issue in your household that cause(d)/(s) grief. How do you deal with this situation? How do other people respond when they get frustrated with you? How can you practice forgiveness in each of these situations? How can you practice love in these situations? To what extent is adjusting our behaviour (to stop annoying another person), an act of love?

Unforgiveness can have many unintended outcomes. It impacts how we speak to and about each other. It can present in the form of demeaning sarcasm, cynicism and a pattern of constantly criticising others.<sup>2</sup> However, bitterness and resentment can even lead to domestic violence and murder.

- Read Rom 3:13-18 and Eph 4:29-5:2. List the speech, actions and attitudes from these verses.

Unacceptable Speech, Actions & Attitudes	Acceptable Speech, Actions & Attitudes

We believe that God is triune: Father, Son and Spirit, three persons, with different roles in perfect unity. Part of us reflecting the image of God, is how we reflect relational unity in the midst of diversity. God is relational – and did everything possible to restore our relationship with him. Consider the following quote:

“diversity is only real and only good when it is a group of unique people ... who are different, yet also in loving relationship together. Difference without relationship robs us of unity. Relationship without difference robs us of diversity. In neither case do we have community. Like God, our personhood exists in and through relationships, not outside of them. What we think of as our individuality is actually the culmination of our interpersonal relationships and the relationships of others.”<sup>3</sup>

- What you think of this comment? Are you committed to forgiveness and reconciliation?

**REFLECT, SHARE & PRAY:** In Col 3: 14, Paul wrote “clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Think back over this study. What are the attitudes, behaviours and ways of speech do you need to “put off” and what do you need to “put on”? Do you need to ask another person for their forgiveness?

<sup>2</sup> Joyner, C.M. (June 21, 2018). “The Most Damaging Attitude in Our Churches. Why subtle cynicism doesn't look like Jesus.” Relevant Magazine. <https://relevantmagazine.com/god/church/most-damaging-attitude-our-churches>

<sup>3</sup> Dancause, S. (April 26, 2018) “What We’ve Failed to See About Being Created in God’s Image” Missio Alliance. <https://www.missioalliance.org/what-weve-failed-to-see-about-being-created-in-gods-image/>