

Hope City

Discussion Guide

September 13, 2026

Stop Trying to Change Them

Don't Be A Bear: Week 1

Pastor Daniel & Jackie Groves with Pastor JJ & Liz Vasquez

Main Idea

Relationships have a way of revealing what is really happening inside of us. It is easy to be patient, kind, humble, and forgiving when no one is frustrating us, disappointing us, or hurting us. But Colossians 3 tells us that followers of Jesus are called to intentionally “put on” compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, and thankfulness. The question is not simply, “How do I get the other person to change?” The better prayer is, “God, what do You need to change in me?”

Anchor Verse: “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,” (Colossians 3:12, ESV).

Read: Colossians 3:12-15

1. YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE TO “PUT IT ON”

The hardest part of the list may actually be the first two words: “Put on.” Jesus gives us access to these qualities through the Holy Spirit, but He does not force us to live them out. Growth requires intentional participation.

Discussion: Which quality in Colossians 3:12–15 is easiest for you to “put on,” and which one becomes most difficult when you are under pressure? What practices help you prepare spiritually before you enter difficult conversations, relationships, or situations?

2. STOP TRYING TO CHANGE PEOPLE—LET GOD CHANGE YOU

Trying to control another person is exhausting because we do not have the ability to change someone else's heart, personality, decisions, or behavior. We can influence people, encourage people, pray for people, and establish healthy boundaries—but we cannot control them. Instead of asking, “**How do I fix them?**” we should ask, “**What is God trying to change in me?**”

Discussion: Where have you been spending more energy trying to change someone else than allowing God to work on you? How can you tell the difference between a relationship that requires perseverance and one that requires healthier boundaries?

3. BE A PEACEMAKER, NOT JUST A PEACEKEEPER

Sometimes **you have to be willing to make a mess in order to make peace**. Avoiding difficult conversations may preserve temporary comfort, but it does not necessarily produce healthy relationships.

Scripture: Romans 12:9

Discussion: Are you more naturally a peacekeeper who avoids conflict or a peacemaker who is willing to address difficult issues? Why? Is there a conversation you have been avoiding that could actually move a relationship toward greater honesty, healing, or reconciliation?

“I think the hardest thing on that list is putting it on.” - Pastor JJ

SUMMARY

Healthy relationships begin with allowing God to change us first. We cannot control other people, but we can choose to represent Jesus by putting on compassion, humility, patience, forgiveness, and peace. Instead of asking, “**What do they need to change?**” ask, “**Lord, what do I need to put on today?**”

CALL TO ACTION

Put It On: Read **Colossians 3:12–15** each morning this week and ask, “Jesus, what do I need to put on today?”

Change Me First: Identify one relationship where you have been focusing primarily on what the other person needs to change. Ask God to reveal your attitude, words, expectations, reactions, or boundaries that may need to change.

Make Peace: Identify one unresolved relationship or conversation. Then take one initial step this week to make peace.

GROUP LEADER RESOURCE

What Are You Wearing

Give everyone a piece of paper or simply go around the group verbally.

Ask everyone: **“What is one item of clothing you absolutely refuse to leave the house without?”**

It could be:

- a favorite hat,
- watch,
- certain shoes,
- earrings,
- jacket,
- makeup,
- sunglasses,
- or anything else.

Transition: We all have certain things we make sure we put on before leaving the house. But Colossians 3 says there are some things followers of Jesus should never leave home without either.