

Hope City

Discussion Guide

September 20, 2026

Don't Be A Bear

Bear With One Another

Pastors Daniel & Jackie Groves with Dr. Andy Yarborough

Main Idea

Following Jesus changes the way we show up in every relationship. We cannot control another person's thoughts, emotions, choices, or spiritual maturity, but through the Holy Spirit, we can learn to lead ourselves well. Instead of allowing fear, frustration, anger, insecurity, or pain to determine how we respond, we can acknowledge what is happening inside of us and intentionally align our thoughts, actions, and attitudes with God's Word. Spiritual maturity means learning to bear with others without becoming a "bear" ourselves.

Anchor Verse: *"Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."*

Colossians 3:14 ESV

Series Anchor Verse: *Colossians 3:12–15*

1. LEAD YOURSELF BEFORE YOUR INTERNAL WORLD LEADS THE ROOM

Paul tells believers to "put on" compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and love. That language reminds us that following Jesus requires our participation. We do not work for our salvation, but as God works in us, we learn to work out what He is producing within us. What is happening internally—our thoughts, emotions, behaviors, fears, and frustrations—will eventually affect the way we interact with the people around us. As Dr. Andy explained, our nervous system can enter a room before our theology does, so healthy relationships require us to pay attention to what is happening inside us before it begins controlling what happens around us.

Scripture: Colossians 3:12–13

Discussion: When you are frustrated, anxious, disappointed, or hurt, how does your internal world usually affect the people around you?

When you are “being a bear,” are you more likely to become aggressive, defensive, controlling, withdrawn, avoidant, or something else?

What would biblical self-leadership look like in one relationship that is currently difficult for you?

2. YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL IT TO FOSTER IT

Compassion, patience, humility, forgiveness, and love are not simply emotions we wait to experience; they are attitudes and actions we can intentionally cultivate. We can honestly acknowledge anger, fear, disappointment, anxiety, or hurt without allowing those feelings to govern our behavior. Confession means bringing what is actually happening inside of us before God rather than pretending it is not there. We can then ask, “God, what do You say about what I am experiencing?” and intentionally align our thoughts, behaviors, and actions with His truth. Over time, the Holy Spirit uses this process to transform how we respond to God, ourselves, and others.

Scripture: Philippians 2:12–13; Colossians 3:14–15

Discussion: Why is it important to acknowledge what you are honestly feeling instead of pretending that emotion does not exist?

What is the difference between acknowledging an emotion and allowing that emotion to control you?

Dr. Andy said, “**I don't have to feel it to foster it.**” Where might God be asking you to practice a Christlike response before your emotions have caught up?

How could becoming healthier internally change the way you are present with the people around you?

3. BEAR WITH PEOPLE WITHOUT TRYING TO BECOME THEIR SAVIOR

Romans 15 teaches believers to bear with those who are weak. That does not mean carrying someone else's responsibility or trying to fix everything they are experiencing. We can suffer **with** people, encourage them, pray for them, remind them of truth, and help them move toward Jesus, but we cannot suffer **for** them or do their spiritual work for them. Healthy Christian community allows people to strengthen one another while everyone continues taking responsibility for their own growth.

Bearing with others also requires healthy boundaries and accountability. Boundaries are not weapons we use to punish people; they are tools that help us steward our spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical health so that we can continue loving people well. Whenever possible, we should use the least restrictive boundary necessary rather than automatically cutting someone out of our lives. We also need people who love us enough to tell us the truth, hold us accountable to what we say we believe, and continue showing up

Scripture: *Romans 15:1–2; Proverbs 27:17*

Discussion: What is the difference between suffering with someone and trying to suffer for them?

Have you ever taken responsibility for something in another person's life that belonged to them or to God?

Where might you need a healthy boundary so that you can continue loving someone without becoming unhealthy yourself?

Who in your life has permission to tell you the truth and hold you accountable when the way you are living does not match what you say you believe?

SUMMARY

God often uses relationships as one of the primary places where He develops our character and exposes areas that still need His transforming work. That means difficult relationships are not always interruptions to our sanctification; sometimes they are part of it. As we learn to lead ourselves through the Holy Spirit, we become increasingly capable of showing up with compassion, patience, humility, forgiveness, truth, and love.

That also requires us to honestly evaluate the stories we tell ourselves about relational pain. There is a difference between genuine trauma and ordinary relational offense, and not every painful experience should be treated as the same thing. We may have been offended, but we must also remember that every one of us has offended others. Recognizing that we have needed grace ourselves helps us extend grace, pursue forgiveness, apologize when necessary, repair what can be repaired, establish healthy boundaries, and continue becoming a healthier reflection of Jesus.

CALL TO ACTION

Identify one relationship where God may be asking you to practice greater biblical self-leadership this week.

Ask yourself:

What am I honestly thinking and feeling?

Do not deny it. Bring it honestly before God.

What part of this situation belongs to me?

Before concentrating on what the other person needs to change, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your responsibility.

What does God's Word say about how I should respond?

Choose truth over simply reacting to the moment.

Do I need compassion, a conversation, an apology, forgiveness, accountability, or a healthy boundary?

Take one specific step this week.

You cannot control another person's response, but you can faithfully steward how you show up.

GROUP LEADER RESOURCE

BEAR, BEAR WITH, BOUNDARY, OR REPAIR?

Choose four areas of the room and assign each one:

BEAR – An unhealthy response driven by the flesh.

BEAR WITH – Walking alongside someone with compassion, truth, and patience.

BOUNDARY – A healthy limit that allows someone to continue loving another person without taking responsibility for what does not belong to them.

REPAIR – Taking responsibility, apologizing, forgiving, or making amends after relational hurt.

The leader reads each scenario aloud. Group members physically move to the area of the room representing what they believe is the healthiest response. After everyone chooses, allow several people to explain their reasoning.

Scenario 1

A coworker says something that offends you. Instead of talking with them, you avoid them for several weeks and tell other coworkers what happened.

Best discussion: What would moving from **BEAR** toward **REPAIR** look like?

Scenario 2

Your friend is discouraged and struggling with their faith. You cannot fix their problem, but you listen, pray with them, remind them of truth, and continue checking on them.

Best discussion: How is this an example of **BEARING WITH** someone instead of carrying their problem for them?

Scenario 3

A family member repeatedly brings you into the same unhealthy conflict. You decide that you will continue loving them, but you will no longer participate in conversations about that particular issue.

Best discussion: How can a **BOUNDARY** allow you to continue loving someone?

Scenario 4

Someone you trust tells you that your behavior has been hurting people. Your first instinct is to defend yourself, but you stop, listen, and ask the Holy Spirit to show you whether there is truth in what they said.

Best discussion: How can accountability move us toward **REPAIR**?

Scenario 5

Someone hurts you deeply, and you begin thinking only about what they did wrong. During prayer, God reminds you that you have also hurt others and needed forgiveness.

Best discussion: How does remembering that we are both offended and offenders change the way we approach forgiveness?

Scenario 6

You are dating someone whose values and spiritual direction consistently pull you away from your relationship with Jesus. You keep telling yourself that staying with them is an example of being patient and long-suffering.

Best discussion: Is this **BEARING WITH**, or could a **BOUNDARY** or ending the relationship be necessary? Why?

Final Question

Which category is hardest for you personally: bearing with people, establishing boundaries, receiving accountability, or repairing relationships after conflict? Why?