

Hope City

Discussion Guide

September 27, 2026

Relationship Questions You're Afraid To Ask

Don't Be A Bear: Week 3

Pastor Daniel & Jackie Groves

Main Idea

Relationships can be some of the greatest blessings in our lives—and some of the most challenging. This week's message answered real questions about family, marriage, dating, forgiveness, boundaries, finances, and trust, all through the lens of Colossians 3 and what it looks like to "put on" the character of Christ in every relationship.

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. How can I improve, handle, and continue my relationship with a parent(s) who have significantly hurt (or disappointed) me?

Honoring your parents does not mean pretending they were perfect or allowing them unlimited access to your life. You can honor them by choosing kindness, speaking well of them, and doing good when you have the opportunity, while still establishing healthy boundaries. Sometimes loving someone well means loving them from a distance. Most importantly, don't allow past hurt to control your future relationships. Bring the pain to God and allow Him to heal what was wounded so you don't carry that hurt into every new season.

Scripture: Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:2-3

Discussion: What is one boundary or act of grace you may need to practice in a difficult family relationship right now?

2. How do we lovingly honor our parents (as grandparents), while making sure our marriage and children remain our first responsibility, and set boundaries when those changes are not well received?

Marriage changes the priority of your relationships. Genesis teaches that a husband and wife leave their parents and become one, so honoring your parents does not mean allowing them to lead your marriage or family. Healthy boundaries can actually be an expression of love. Communicate with kindness and honor, but don't surrender the responsibility God has given you to protect the unity and health of your home. For parents and grandparents, sometimes the wisest thing you can do is ask questions rather than offer advice that hasn't been requested.

Scripture: Genesis 2:24

Discussion: Where do you need to become clearer about priorities so that your marriage or household stays healthy?

3. Should I stay in an unmarried relationship, with a lot of issues, if we have kids together?

Children are a gift from God, but having children together does not automatically mean you should enter into a lifelong covenant with that person. Marriage is about covenant and commitment, so the question becomes: **Is this the person you believe God is calling you to build your life with?** Don't marry simply because you feel trapped by previous decisions. God can redeem circumstances that happened out of order. Seek Him before making a covenant that will affect both you and your children.

Scripture: Matthew 19:6, Proverbs 18:22

Discussion: When life gets complicated, how do you keep past decisions from pressuring you into making another decision out of fear, guilt, or obligation?

4. How do you handle disagreements with financial struggles, when dealing with more bills than money and overspending?

Remember that your spouse is not the enemy—the financial problem is the problem. Instead of attacking each other, get on the same team. Be honest about your income, spending, debt, and priorities, and create a budget together. Recognize that one spouse may naturally be a saver while the other is a spender, and use those differences as strengths rather than weapons. Decide together where every dollar is going before you spend it and work toward the same financial goals.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4:9

Discussion: What is one financial habit or conversation that could reduce tension and help create more unity in your home?

5. How can you find personal resolution when a relationship ends with no closure?

Closure does not require the other person's participation. You may still need to process the conversation, emotions, disappointment, or grief, but the other person does not have to be present for you to heal. Whether they refuse to talk, are no longer in your life, or have passed away, you can still do the work necessary to move forward. Give yourself a healthy place to process what happened and allow God to bring healing without making your freedom dependent upon someone else.

Discussion: What are you still waiting for someone else to say or do before you feel free to move forward, and what would it look like to release that to God?

6. Is sexual immorality, while engaged, against God's will?

Yes. Engagement is preparation for covenant; it is not permission to begin enjoying the privileges of marriage before the covenant has been made. Scripture calls believers to flee sexual immorality because God's boundaries are designed to protect us, not deprive us. Sex is God's gift within marriage. Like a fire that brings warmth and beauty when contained in a fireplace but becomes destructive outside of it, something good can become harmful when taken outside the boundaries God established for it.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Discussion: In what area of your life are you most tempted to move ahead of God because waiting feels inconvenient or unnecessary?

7. I want to marry my partner, but we already live together and have a child? Does it even matter to God if we are married or not at this point?

Yes, because marriage is more than a piece of paper—it is a covenant established by God. Living together, sharing expenses, or having children together does not create the same covenant as marriage. If you know this is the person God is calling you to build your life with, then honor Him by entering into covenant. If you are unwilling to make that commitment, then you need to honestly evaluate the relationship. One of the greatest things you can model for your children is what it looks like to submit every area of your life to Jesus.

Scripture: Genesis 2:18, Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12

Discussion: Is there any area of your life where you know God is asking for obedience, but you have been settling for what feels easier or more practical?

8. How can you rebuild trust after infidelity? Can the marriage be restored?

Yes, restoration is possible, but forgiveness and trust are not the same thing. Forgiveness can be a decision, while trust must be rebuilt over time. The person who broke the trust must demonstrate honesty, humility, transparency, and accountability, while the person who was hurt needs the freedom

and time to heal without being rushed. The goal should not simply be returning to the marriage you had before, but—with God's grace, wise counsel, and hard work—building something healthier and more honest than what existed before.

Discussion: When trust has been damaged in any relationship, what consistent actions help you believe change is genuine?

9. Dating Apps: do or don't?

Dating apps are simply a resource; what matters is how and why you use them. If your desire is to pursue a healthy, God-honoring relationship that could lead toward marriage, there is nothing inherently wrong with using an app. Approach it with wisdom, discernment, and accountability. Invite trusted people into the process and pay attention to character rather than simply chemistry or a profile. The issue isn't where you meet someone—it's who you are becoming and what kind of relationship you are pursuing.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:14

Discussion: What standards, accountability, or boundaries do you need in place to make wise decisions in dating instead of simply following chemistry or convenience?

10. How do you navigate your marriage as first-time parents when the tendency is to give most of our attention and time to our new baby. How do we put our marriage first?

Parenting adds an important role to your marriage, but it should not replace the marriage. Investing time and energy in your relationship is not taking something away from your children; it actually gives them something valuable—a stable home and a healthy picture of love and commitment. Your children are learning what relationships look like by watching how you communicate, resolve disagreements, serve one another, and prioritize your marriage. One of the best gifts you can give your children is a healthy relationship between their parents.

Scripture: Genesis 2:24

Discussion: What is one intentional way you can invest in your closest relationship this week instead of giving it only whatever time and energy are left over?

11. How do you move forward in forgiveness and grace in relationships when you feel someone is holding your past over you?

If you have genuinely repented, apologized, changed your behavior, and done what you can to repair the damage, there comes a point when their healing is no longer work you can do for them. At the same time, you cannot demand that someone heal according to your timetable. If you caused the hurt, respect the fact that rebuilding trust may take time. Continue living consistently, demonstrating

the change that has taken place in you, and give them the space to work through their own healing without becoming defensive or dismissive.

Discussion: How can you stay faithful to the person you are becoming when someone continues to define you by who you used to be?

“If you want to stay clothed in these things that Paul was talking about, quit filling your space in all the spaces of your life with more.”

SUMMARY

Healthy relationships require more than good intentions. They require us to make space for God, take responsibility for our part, and choose to live out compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, love, and peace. We may not be able to control the people around us, but we can choose how faithfully we represent Jesus in every relationship.

CALL TO ACTION

Create Space for God: Set aside 10–15 minutes each day this week with no phone, music, or distractions. Pray, **“Speak, Lord, I’m listening,”** and ask Him what you need to “put on” before you step into your relationships that day.

Take Responsibility for Your Part: Identify one strained or difficult relationship and stop focusing first on what the other person needs to change. Ask, **“What is mine to own, change, forgive, or address?”** Then take one concrete step.

Practice One Relationship Habit Intentionally: Choose one quality from Colossians 3:12–15—compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, or thankfulness—and deliberately practice it in one relationship every day this week.

GROUP LEADER RESOURCE

What Brings Out Your Bear?

Go around the group and have everyone answer:

“What is one small thing people do that instantly tests your patience?”

Examples might be:

- driving too slowly in the left lane
- leaving dishes in the sink
- interrupting
- being late
- chewing loudly
- not replying to a text
- putting the toilet paper roll on “wrong”

Keep it light and let people laugh.

TRANSITION:

“Most of us don’t struggle to be patient, kind, or gracious when everything is going our way. Relationships reveal what we’re really wearing. Tonight, we’re going to talk about what it looks like to ‘put on’ the character of Christ when people actually test us.”