

3. Spirit-filled Gratitude

If we are following Jesus' example toward those who may be offensive to us, then we will lead with God's love, not condemnation. And to do that we must see others through God's lens; not just who they are now, but who they might become through God's grace. Ephesians 5:18 tells us what is required for us to do that.

Ephesians 5:18b-20 NLT – 18...Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, 19 singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To be filled with God's Spirit, we need to make space in our hearts. Are there attitudes you've held on to that need to be released to make room for God's Spirit? Is there unforgiveness, pride, or anger? Ask God to reveal any areas that prevent you from being filled with His love, kindness, patience, and gratitude.

WRAP-UP

It is easy to take offense at the opinions or actions of those we disagree with. But we are called to extend God's grace and forgiveness, not judgement. The Bible is clear, we bear one another's faults and forgive those who offend us, because of God's forgiveness. And that should lead us to a heart of eternal gratitude.

MEMORY VERSE.

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.
- Colossians 3:13 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN) Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge – Look for a way to show kindness to someone who you don't disagree with.

“Gratitude is Greater than Offense”

Gratitude is Greater- #2

INTRODUCTION

We know from 1 Thessalonians 5:18 that it is God's will for us to be thankful in all circumstances. But sometimes our circumstances find us confronting people who believe something totally foreign to what we know is God's truth. At those times it is easy to feel “offended for God”. How does this affect our attitude of gratitude? As we search God's Word for direction, we will find that our gratitude is more important to God than our offense.

Ice Breaker

Do you think Christians are known more for their gratitude, or for being offended?

Key Passage

Colossians 3:15-17 NLT - 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. 16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. 17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How We Reveal Truth

In this life we will be surrounded by people who don't think like we do, believe like we do or live like we do. Many in our post-modern world simply haven't heard God's truth. Others may have heard but

rejected it. When we are confronted with competing views of good and evil, or right and wrong we may have a variety of responses.

How do you feel when someone makes a statement that you know is not true such as “All religions are the same, it really doesn’t matter which god you believe in.”? In what situations would you feel compelled to counter that viewpoint?

Colossians 3:16 NLT - 16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

For some, the default response to offending viewpoints would be a verbal confrontation. But if we consider how the message of Christ is seen by those around us, Colossians 3:16 gives us a more effective way to deliver Jesus’ message; by how we live our lives.

What does Colossians 3:16 say about how we are to teach and counsel others? How is that related to our expression of thankfulness to God?

Paul explained to the Colossians how they are to conduct themselves, especially as it applies to anyone who offends us.

Colossians 3:12-13 NLT - 12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

When we know someone else is wrong, it can be very hard to be humble, kind, and merciful. More likely we want to pridefully prove they are wrong, and we are right. But God isn’t interested in our ability to justify what we believe, or even in our defending Him (He is quite capable of defending himself.) God looks on our heart, and our motivation. Are we engaging in this conversation arrogantly to declare ourselves right, or is it our compassion for the person that moves us to point them back to God’s truth and grace?

Read through the characteristics we are to be clothed with in verse 12. The next verse tells us we are to endure the faults of another and forgive them. Why does it say we should we forgive others who

offend us? But Paul doesn’t stop there. In the very next verse, he reminds us that we are to be clothed in love and we are called to live in peace.

Colossians 3:14-15 NLT - 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

The peace that comes when Christ rules our hearts brings harmony and wholeness, not division. How does Paul conclude verse 15? What do these verses give us to be thankful for?

2. Us and Them

It seems our culture is becoming more polarized that ever before. There is a sense of “us versus them” in so many contexts. When this happens, our offense can lead us to destructive behavior. We gather with those who are “like us” and build walls to keep “them” out. We may draw conclusions about “them” that turn out to be false narratives. This is not how Jesus approached “sinners”.

*John 8:10-11 NLT - 10 Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" 11 "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."
*Romans 2:4 NLT - 4 Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?**

Although Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to sin no more, His message was a hopeful one wrapped in love. What does Romans 2:4 say turns us from sin to repentance? Jesus forgave sinners even from the cross. Now if we recognize God’s kind patience towards us when we sin, we will be thankful to Him, and extend the same kindness and patience to those who offend us. Even then, why does 1 Cor 1:18 tell us God’s message may be rejected?

1 Corinthians 1:18 NLT - 18 The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.