



For the week of **February 23-28**

Bottom line: **treat everybody like they are somebody**

DAY ONE: Patience Read Colossians 3:12-14

As we bump into difficult people day in and day out, it can be tough to exhibit consistent patience. Paul is aware of this as he writes, encouraging the believers to *bear with* each other. Remember, this is the Jesus community we're talking about. We tend to show grace to our friends or an annoying family member, but when it comes to church, we can be pretty quick to write someone off.

At the heart of *bearing with* someone is forgiveness. And the model for how we forgive is Jesus. The Apostle Paul would submit that since we have experienced the forgiveness of Christ for our sins, we should forgive one another with the same level of love and grace. It's out of this kind of forgiveness we can then hold fast to, not turning against, each other.

As you enter your day, you may be thinking of that one person who drives you crazy. First, think upon the grace you've experienced in Jesus. Then, choose to forgive that person with the same mercy and grace you've received. Prepare your heart and mind to engage that person, asking God to give you grace and forgiveness. And remember, the grace saving you is the same grace rescuing them.

DAY TWO: Kindness Read Titus 3:3-7

The Apostle Paul reminds us that God's kindness drastically redirected our path. When we were enemies of God and destined to life apart from him, he saved us. He gave us new life, a new way of living, and a drastically different destination (Titus 3:7).

Kindness has the power to redirect the path of our lives. Demonstrated most powerfully in God's salvation redirecting our lives from death to life, this principle is true for all of us. As we show kindness to others, we have the power to help redirect their lives as well.

One simple way to express kindness is through our words. Our speech has incredible potential to build up and tear down. Remember, kindness is showing goodwill to someone, even when they don't deserve it. It is **treating everybody like they are somebody**. It's easy to speak nice words to someone who is kind to you. But kindness in the face of conflict reflects the incredible kindness God showed to us when we didn't deserve it.

Today, listen to the song *Words* by Hawk Nelson. Maybe a friend who's discouraged, or a parent who is under stress, needs to hear your kind words with the power to redirect their lives. Be open and willing to be speak God's kindness into whoever needs it today.

### DAY THREE: Gentleness Read Ephesians 4:1-6

As followers of Jesus we're called to live in unity with others. While this is true in our families, this passage in Ephesians speaks to our lives together with others in the church. The Apostle Paul says we're to *make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:3). It's our responsibility to keep the unity God produced through the death of Jesus, a responsibility that means we do all we can. We're to expend every effort.

A significant part of maintaining unity involves gentleness, a Spirit-empowered effort we'll have to demonstrate time after time as we "bump into each other" in the church. Simply stated, there's no way we can have nearly 300 people attend North Park Baptist Church and nearly 40 students attend Breakaway without frustrations, misunderstood motives, and inappropriate comments occasionally bubbling to the surface. It's going to happen. When it does, we can choose to fracture the "unity of the Spirit," or we can choose to rely on this same Spirit's power to respond with humility and gentleness.

As you welcome God into your day, begin to memorize Ephesians 4:2. You can do it—it's only 13 words. But these 13 words will make all the difference the next time unity is at stake.

### DAY FOUR: Walk With God Read Colossians 3:12

Paul is giving us the starting place on how to treat others—with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Those are the starting points to bridging the difference gap.

Think about someone you know who's different than you—someone you may even be tempted to keep your distance from. It could be a person from a certain clique or economic class. It could be someone from a different racial background or different culture than you. What would it look like for YOU to treat THEM with compassion or kindness? When you think about a group you're tempted to judge or dislike, what would it mean for you to be more humble? What would you do differently if you decided to be gentler toward them in what you do and say about them? When it comes to people who get on your nerves, how would you act differently if you had more patience with them?

That's really what all of these ideas boil down to in the end: it's deciding everybody matters and then acting like it.

Refuse to act like people are invisible.

Refuse to talk about people like they're less than you.

Refuse to look down on people.

This won't come naturally. It won't just happen. You will always have a natural pull to like people who are like you and dislike people who aren't like you. But you aren't required to do what comes naturally. That's the beauty of this road trip of following Jesus. Take a moment to ask Him to help you to be more like Him, and He will offer His grace to help you!