

Week Eighteen: “Experiencing Life Together”

Day One: “Experiencing Life Together: Authenticity”

Read: Colossians 3:12-17 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, p. 1378)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 138-140 (just before the section on mutuality)

Reflect: This section of *Purpose Driven Life* defines what real fellowship is. When was the last time you experienced *real* fellowship with another believer? In what context did that happen—in care group, after church, in a prayer time, over coffee....?

Dig: How many times does the phrase ‘each other’ or ‘one another’ occur in Col. 3:12-17 (NIV)?

Make a list of the various attributes and activities (I found at least 15) that Paul instructs us to exhibit. Now, circle those that cannot be done in isolation—those that require the involvement of at least one other person.

We are expected to be in community! Evaluate your community or ‘fellowship’ (perhaps with a care group, accountability partner, men’s or women’s ministry, spouse...) according to the guidelines Paul presents in Colossians 3. (For example, is compassion expressed? Are you admonishing one another?)

Is your fellowship *authentic* as defined in *Purpose-Driven Life*?

Apply: In those areas that you found your fellowship to be lacking, ask God for wisdom and motivation to take steps to correct this. Praise God for those areas that you found your fellowship to be authentic.

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Day Two: “Experiencing Life Together: Mutuality”

Read: Romans 1:12; 14:19 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, pp. 1279, 1298)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pages 140-141 (section on mutuality)

Reflect: Mutuality means that relationships are reciprocal. Evaluate one of the relationships in which you experience true fellowship—how much have you given to that relationship within the past two weeks? How much have you received? What’s easier for you—to give or to receive?

Dig: Often we think of Paul as leading, admonishing, directing, and encouraging others. In light of this, reflect on the significance of Romans 1:11-12.

Check out some other examples of Paul’s reliance on his brothers and sisters in Christ:

2 Corinthians 1:8-11 (p. 1328)

Philippians 4:14-17 (p. 1371)

Read Romans 12:10a (p. 1295). Is this happening in your life?

Apply: Romans 12:10 (NIV) says “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.” Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you how you can specifically take the effort today to both *express* and *receive* God’s love and peace within the body of Christ.

Week Eighteen: “**Experiencing Life Together**”
Day Three: “**Experiencing Life Together: Sympathy**”

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, p. 1328)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 141-142 (section on sympathy)

Reflect: Think back to the last time you shared your pain or suffering with someone close to you. What response did you need most to receive from them? Did you receive it?

Dig: According to this text who is the ultimate source of compassion and comfort? (verse 3)

What should be the source of the compassion and comfort we express to others? (verse 4)

Related to this, under what circumstances are we most able to express compassion and comfort to others?

What are the sufferings of Christ? See Philippians 2:10 (p. 1367) for another reference. Why does suffering produce such strong fellowship?

Apply: Who do you know who is suffering right now? Do whatever you can—perhaps a visit or a phone call or a note of encouragement—to walk with that person today.

Week Eighteen: “**Experiencing Life Together**”
Day Four: “**Experiencing Life Together: Mercy**”

Read: Colossians 3:13; Galatians 6:2 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, pp. 1378, 1352)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pages 142-143 (section on mercy)

Reflect: Do you have sensitive wounds from a time you were hurt by someone within the body of Christ? Have you forgiven that person?

Dig: What instructions does Colossians 3:13 give regarding *how* we are to forgive? Check out Romans 5:8 (p. 1284) to expand on this.

If you’re wondering how justice/accountability factors into this see 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (p. 1310); Matthew 18:15-20 (p. 1102); and 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 (p. 1328).

Let’s talk about forgiveness concretely.

How has your sin wounded others—your friends, fellow believers, those you lead, your spouse, your children? Have you received grace and mercy from them? From God?

How have others wounded you?

Are you forgiving *as Christ* forgave you?

Apply: Spend some time confessing your sins, then claim the words of Isaiah 1:18: “Though your sins are like scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

Now, who do you need to forgive as Christ forgave you?

For guidance and intentionality in this, see pages 1514-1515 of the *Freedom in Christ Bible*.

Week Eighteen: **“Experiencing Life Together”**
Day Five: **Lectio Divina**

Using the **“Lectio Divina”** method of Bible study (see page 3 of this booklet), **meditate on this scripture:**

“Each one of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were chosen to live together in peace.” Colossians 3:15 (CEV)

Lectio divina (a Latin expression which means Sacred reading) is done in three stages:

- reading: you read the passage slowly and reverentially, allowing the words to sink into your consciousness; after you have memorized the text, write down one word which strikes you and draws your attention and note why you chose that word.
- meditation: you allow the passage to stir up memories within you, so that you recognize in it your own experience or that of people who have touched your life; write down memories of events or conversations or other scripture passages.
- prayer: you allow the meditation to lead you to prayer – thanksgiving, humility and petition. Write out a prayer based on the passage.