

THE TRIUMPHANT SOLUTION TO PEOPLE PROBLEMS

By Andy Manning

Colossians 3:12-15

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Relationships are hard.

i. In my study I came across this phrase, “the triumphant solution to the problem of living together (William Barclay).”

ii. That statement points out the fact that relationships are hard.

People have a hard time getting along with each other.

1. Married couples have a hard time getting along. Two people who have publicly committed to God and to one another undying loyalty and devotion. Fifty percent divorce rate.

2. Parents and children, especially teenagers, have a hard time getting along.

3. Siblings – even grown siblings – struggle to get along.

4. Coworkers have a hard time getting along.

5. Neighbors have a hard time getting along.

6. Church members have a hard time getting along. Church splits are very normal.

7. Church staff have a hard time getting along.

8. Roommates have a hard time getting along.

9. In-laws have a hard time getting along. Hence all the mother-in-law jokes.

iii. **Someone** said, “Relationships are like a walk in the park. Jurassic Park.”

iv. Why is it so hard to get along?

1. People are difficult.

a. **Romans 3:23** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

b. Some people are more difficult than others. Terms have been invented to describe difficult people:

i. EGR: Extra-grace required.

ii. EBH: Emotional black hole.

iii. VDP: Very draining person.

- iv. Cray-Crays. If you don't know who the cray-cray is in your church or at your job, it's probably you!
- c. ScienceOfPeople.com identifies the four types of difficult people:
 - i. *Downers* are also known as Negative Nancys or Debbie Downers. They always have something bad to say. They complain, critique and judge. They are almost impossible to please.
 - ii. *Better Thans* also are known as Know It Alls, One Uppers or Show-Offs. They like to try impressing you, name-dropping and comparing.
 - iii. *Passives* also are known as Push-Overs, Yes Men and Weaklings. They don't contribute much to conversations or people around them and let others do the hard work.
 - iv. *Tanks* also are known as being explosive, a handful, or bossy. They want their way and will do anything to get it.
- d. One man decided to place outlet stickers on walls and posts all around the airport just to laugh at people. Evil!
- e. People are sinful. They are messy. They are mean. People are difficult.
- 2. People are dumb.
 - a. **James 3:2 (ERV)** "We all make many mistakes."
 - b. A few weeks ago in a press conference President Trump mentioned the possible benefits of chloroquine. So, one couple in Arizona noticed that chloroquine phosphate is what they used to clean their fish tanks, so they decided to ingest some to prevent themselves from getting the virus. The man died, and the wife was in critical condition in the hospital. Dumb.

- c. This is why they have to put such dumb warning labels on consumer products. Listen to some of these:
 - i. On a chainsaw: “Do not hold the wrong end of the chainsaw.” That would be messy.
 - ii. On a jet ski or ATV: “Never use a lit match or open flame to check the fuel level.” This proves that natural selection is a myth. If evolution were true, the dumb people would have gone extinct a long time ago.
 - iii. On a hair dryer: “Do not use while sleeping.” I could actually see this one, because it takes my wife a long time to dry her hair.
 - iv. On a blow torch gas bottle: “Contents may catch fire.” I don’t have any words.
 - v. On a sunshield for your car windshield: “Do not drive with sunshield in place.” I wonder how far they made it with the sunshield in place.
 - vi. On an egg carton: “This product may contain eggs.” Let’s hope so.
 - vii. On an iPod: “Do not eat.”
 - d. People are dumb.
 - i. One person said, “I don’t have anger issues, I have stupid people issues.”
 - ii. One person said, “I wish I was a unicorn; then I could stab stupid people with my head.”
 - v. Relationships are hard because people are difficult, and people are dumb.
2. Relationships are essential.
- i. At the same time, relationships are essential.
 - ii. **Genesis 2:18** “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.”
 - iii. We were formed for fellowship.
 - iv. **Hebrews 10:24-25** “And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together,

- as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.”
- v. Consider the “one anothers.” There are 59 “one another” scriptures in the New Testament. These are written to the church. “Bear one another’s burdens.” “Encourage one another.” “Be at peace with one another.” “Love one another.” “Serve one another.” Why does it have so many “one another” commands for us? Obviously it means that we need to be connected. We need to be in community with one another.
 - vi. We cannot become hermits. We need relationships for our mental and spiritual health.
3. We need to be good at relationships.
 - i. You need to be good at relationships to have a healthy marriage.
 - ii. You need to be good at relationships to be a good parent.
 - iii. You need to be good at relationships to have a healthy, unified church.
 - iv. You need to be good at relationships to be successful in business.
 4. So now we have a problem.
 - i. Relationships are hard.
 - ii. Relationships are essential.
 - iii. We need to be good at relationships.
 5. This passage teaches the triumphant solution to the problem of living together.

II. TEXT

1. **Colossians 3:12-15** “12 Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. 14 Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful.”
2. This is a list of ten Christian graces, or virtues: Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, and thankfulness.
3. This is a command to put on the character of Christ like putting on clothing.
4. BIG IDEA: To get along with people, put on the character of Christ.

5. The point is not to become Christlike so that God will accept us and allow us into heaven. We are forgiven and accepted by God through faith in the atonement of Christ.
6. The point is to become Christlike because we are saved, not to be saved.
7. Christlike character is the fruit of salvation, not the root of salvation. It is the result of salvation, not the means of salvation.

III. NINE COMMANDMENTS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

1. Be compassionate.

- i. Compassion is feeling sorry for someone and reaching out to help.
- ii. It is not just feeling sorry; it is actually getting involved.
- iii. It is “active Pity”; “a heart of pity” (William Barclay).
- iv. It is sensitivity to people in need (Complete Biblical Library).
- v. The opposite of compassion is callousness. Being apathetic and emotionally unaffected by the sufferings of others.
- vi. **William Barclay** “If there was one thing the ancient world needed it was mercy. The sufferings of animals were nothing to it. The maimed and the sickly went to the wall. There was no provision for the aged. The treatment of the idiot and the simple-minded was unfeeling. Christianity brought mercy into this world. It is not too much to say that everything that has been done for the aged, the sick, the weak in body and in mind, the animal, the child, the woman has been done under the inspiration of Christianity.”
- vii. The story of the Good Samaritan is the perfect example of compassion. A Jewish man was beaten up, robbed, and left for dead on the side of the road. A Jewish priest walked by and did nothing. A Levite did the same thing. Then a Samaritan came along. Remember that Jews and Samaritans hated each other.
- viii. **Luke 10:33-35** “But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion. He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him. When I come back I’ll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.’”
- ix. When you see someone who is hurting, feel sorry for them and take action. You may not be able to solve their problem, but you can do something in the name of Jesus.

2. Be kind.

- i. Kindness is seeking to be helpful and beneficial to others.
- ii. Think of kindness as sharing happiness. God has been abundantly kind to us, making us happy in Him. Now we have the opportunity and privilege to share happiness by being helpful and beneficial to everyone we encounter.
- iii. **William Barclay** “The ancient writers defined kindness (Greek, *chrestotes*) as the virtue of the man whose neighbor’s good is as dear to him as his own.”
- iv. **One person** said, “I shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”
- v. The opposite of kindness is self-centeredness; being consumed with your own wants, needs, and desires.
- vi. A great example of kindness is the story of Ruth and Naomi. Naomi was living in a foreign land when her husband and her two sons died. All she had was her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. Orpah left and went back to her family. But listen to the words of Ruth to her mother-in-law.
- vii. **Ruth 1:16-17** “Don’t plead with me to abandon you or to return and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me, and do so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”
- viii. Ruth accompanied Naomi to Bethlehem, remarried, and cared for Naomi the rest of her life.
- ix. What do you call this kind of behavior? It is kindness. Ruth was seeking to be helpful and beneficial to Naomi.
- x. From now on, wherever you go, whoever you are with, be kind. Try to be helpful and beneficial.

3. Be humble.

- i. Humility is seeing yourself the way God sees you.
- ii. **Complete Biblical Library** “A proper estimate of one’s self.”
- iii. The opposite of humility is pride – seeking yourself to highly; thinking too highly of yourself. Pride is thinking that you are

better, smarter, stronger, more talented, and more deserving than everyone else.

- iv. How does God see you? You are priceless, but without God you are hopeless. You are important, but no more important than anyone else. You are very talented, but your talents are a gift from God and must be used in His service. You have many strengths, but you are very weak without Christ's power working within you, and without the support of a church family. You have an amazing mind, but you are foolish without the wisdom of God's word. You may be the boss at home or at work, but God wants you to submit to His authority. You may be a leader, but God put you in charge to serve those you lead. You can accomplish much, but apart from Christ you can do nothing. You may be very beautiful, or very strong, but true beauty and strength are measured by one's character. You may be very rich, but God wants you to be rich in good deeds. You may be rich in good deeds, but apart from God's grace through the cross of Christ you are a sinner deserving of hell.
- v. God is serious about humility. How serious? God allowed one of His most loyal servants, the apostle Paul, to suffer in order to protect him from the sin of pride. Paul wrote about it. **2 Corinthians 12:7** "Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself." What exactly was this thorn in the flesh? Nobody knows for sure. But we do know that it was painful. Paul prayed three times for God to take it away, but God refused. He said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness" (**2 Cor 12:9**). God knew that Paul would be at his best if he realized his weakness and utter dependence upon God.

4. Be gentle.

- i. Gentleness is staying calm and kind, even when you are angry.
- ii. People are going to make you angry. They are sinful and dumb. But God wants you to say calm and kind, even when you are angry.

- iii. Think about how God acts. Even though He is angry with us for our sins, He never loses His temper. He never does anything mean. No matter what we do, God remains calm and kind.
- iv. Gentleness can be summed up with two actions:
 - 1. Avoid harsh speech. **Proverbs 15:1** “A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.”
 - 2. Do not harm or destroy. The word “gentleness” is often used to describe a soft wind, or the way that you should hold a newborn baby (Acts 27:13; 1 Thess 2:7).

5. Be patient.

- i. Patience is being slow to anger.
- ii. Patience is controlling your emotions rather than allowing your emotions to control you. It is emotional strength. Patience is controlling your temper so that your temper doesn't blow up everything around you. Patience is getting angry slowly. It is being even-tempered; slow-tempered. Patience is restraining your anger. It is holding your anger in check. It is turning anger away when it knocks on the door of your emotions. Another word for patience is “longsuffering.” Patience is the ability to suffer long without getting angry. A patient person is not easily angered.
- iii. There's a story in the Bible about the danger of losing your temper. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. When they were camping in the wilderness of Zin, they ran out of water and blamed Moses. Moses prayed about it, and God told him to speak to the rock, and water would come out. But Moses lost his temper. He struck the rock twice with his staff and said, “Listen, you rebels! Must we bring water out of this rock for you?” The water came out, but God punished Moses. Because of his impatience on that one occasion God did not allow Moses to enter the Promised Land.

6. Be forgiving.

- i. **Colossians 3:13** “bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.”
- ii. Forgiveness is showing love and kindness to those who hurt you.

- iii. I just told a story about Moses's failure. Now I will tell you a story about his virtue. As Moses was leading the Israelites through the wilderness, his brother and sister, Miriam and Aaron, rebelled against him. They were tired of taking orders; they wanted to be in charge. They criticized Moses for marrying a foreign woman. This angered the Lord, and so God struck Miriam with leprosy. Then Aaron cried out, "Moses, forgive us!" So Moses prayed for Miriam's healing, and God healed her. Not only did Moses avoid revenge, but he showed love and kindness to those who had hurt him.

7. Be loving.

- i. **Colossians 3:14** "Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."
- ii. Loving is doing what is best for people, not what makes them feel good. It is meeting people's needs, not their wants.
- iii. Three Tips For Loving Others:
 - 1. Imitation: **Ephesians 5:1** "Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children."
 - 2. The Great Commandment: **Matthew 22:39** "Love your neighbor as yourself."
 - 3. The Golden Rule: **Luke 6:31** "Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them."

8. Be peaceful.

- i. **Colossians 3:15** "And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts."
- ii. Let peace be in charge of your relationships.
- iii. Peacefulness is working hard to get along with others.
- iv. **Romans 12:18** "If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."
- v. You can't always be at peace with others, but you can always be peaceful.
- vi. King David is a great example of peacefulness. Before he was king, King Saul tried to kill him for no reason. But no matter how cruel Saul was to David, David never took revenge. He refused to fight. He refused to get even. David was committed to peacefulness.
- vii. Three Tips for Peacefulness:

1. When someone sins against you, you must go to them and point out the offense. **Matthew 18:15** “If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother.”
2. If someone has something against you, you must go and make peace. **Matthew 5:23-24** “So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”
3. Avoid behaviors that disturb the peace.
 - a. Offensive behavior (Pr 17:19).
 - b. Arguing and bickering (Pr 26:21).
 - c. Mocking. (Pr 22:10)

9. Be thankful.

- i. In this context thankfulness probably means being thankful to others. The next two verses exhort us to be thankful to God.
- ii. Thankfulness is gratitude for blessings.
- iii. When you fail to give thanks, it is offensive.
- iv. You might think it is petty for someone to be offended when you fail to say thank you, but even God is offended by ingratitude. In Luke 17, Jesus healed ten men with leprosy, but only one of the ten returned to say thank you.
- v. **Luke 17:17-18** Then Jesus said, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Didn’t any return to give glory to God except this foreigner?”
- vi. On the one hand, Jesus clearly expected thankfulness. It is morally imperative to give thanks, and morally wrong to neglect it.
- vii. On the other hand, Jesus was clearly disappointed by their neglect. It is disappointing and offensive when you neglect to say thank you.
- viii. Train yourself to notice anytime people are kind or beneficial to you, and say thank you. Start with your spouse, your children, your siblings, and then move out from there.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. Relationships are not easy. But they are essential. We must learn to be good at relationships.
2. The solution to the problem of living together is to put on the character of Christ.
3. Character is like engine oil. When an engine is running, you have many metal parts rubbing against each other. Without oil, the parts would eventually destroy each other and the engine would break down. Christlike character is the oil in your relationships. It allows people to live together in close proximity without destroying each other.
4. Make a commitment to cultivate and practice the Christian graces in your relationships, and ask God to help you.