



In Galatians 3, Paul writes, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." According to Paul, the unity and equality of all people under Christ is one of the hallmarks of the Gospel. He uses this same emphasis in Ephesians 4 to stress the importance of maintaining that unity in our interactions with one another.

*From a prison cell, Paul urges the church at Ephesus to "live a life worthy of [their] calling." How do Paul's circumstances help us understand what it means to live a "worthy life"?*

*Paul implores us to "be completely humble" and "keep . . . the bond of peace." How does your sense of humility help or hinder you in seeking to live "at peace" with others? How might "maintaining peace" lead you into living a more humble life?*

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**Romans 12:9-18**

Writing during his third missionary journey, Paul's letter to the Romans can be subdivided into two main parts. The first 11 chapters present a picture of Paul's understanding of the Gospel. In chapter 12, Paul begins to paint a picture of the Gospel as it is lived out in real people who have surrendered their lives to Christ.

*These 10 verses contain several direct instructions. Take a moment to review each of these prescriptions. Is there a particular direction you struggle to live out in your relationships? If so, what might that be? Why do you think it remains a struggle for you?*

*In verse 18, Paul encourages us to live at peace with everyone "as far as it depends on you." How do you think God expects us to handle relationships when peace seems beyond our grasp despite our best efforts?*

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We continue our journey this week through a section of the New Testament referred to as the Epistles which includes the letters exchanged between the early apostles and the first communities of believers formed in the first century. Each of these young churches represented the first "experiments" in Christian community and faced many challenges which were addressed by their leaders in their correspondence.

*In verse 12, Paul refers to the recipients as "holy and dearly loved." How does an appropriate understanding of our identity enable compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience to grow in our lives? Do you think of yourself as someone who is "holy and dearly loved"? Why or why not?*

*To the list of virtues that Paul shares in verse 12, he instructs us to "put on love." Which of these virtues flows most naturally for you? In which area do you need to grow?*

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**Hebrews 10:23-25**

Hebrews is often used to illustrate the connection between the religious practices of Old Testament Judaism and the new "High Priest" known to us as Jesus the Christ. At the conclusion of the fourth chapter, the writer encourages us to "approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

*Our text for today instructs us to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds." What encouragement do you find in your relationships? Who in your life "spurs you on" in your growth in love and service to the world?*

*Today, consider the people who God has placed in your life. Who are you responsible for encouraging? In whom are you investing your life in right now? In the weeks and months ahead, how might you increase your investment in others?*

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