

## Living for Christ: Putting on New Spiritual Clothes

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### What's the Big Idea?

We experience the life of Christ as we put aside the old self and put on the new self.

### What's the Problem?

We let ourselves be mired in sin, even though it doesn't have ultimate power in our lives if we're God's children. And we fail to realize and appropriate the resources for Christian living that God has made available to us.

### What's our Response?

Put to death the things that belong to our life prior to Christ and put on the spiritual clothing God has provided us through our union with Jesus Christ.

### Memorize

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Colossians 3:12

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### What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

This passage is a latter part of a larger section that starts in 2:6. It shows from a positive perspective how to anchor our lives in Jesus Christ. After calling his readers to focus on heavenly realities because their lives are wrapped up in Christ (3:1-4), Paul uses a clothing metaphor to help his readers see the things they need to strip off and the things they need to put on as they seek to live for Christ. Help your group members see that God has given us the power to strip off the things in their lives that dishonor him. Also lead them to realize that God in Christ has given us a new and beautiful set of spiritual clothes that we experience by faith in Christ as we draw on the power of his Spirit living within us.

#### **Take Off the "Old Clothes"-Colossians 3:5-9**

Paul commands his readers in verses 5 and 8-9 to "put to death" and "put aside" the things that about them that are expressions of their sinful nature. Paul focuses on sexually-related sins in verse 5; verses 8-9 emphasize sins that start in the heart (like anger and malice) and express themselves in our words. He wants his readers to understand that as Christ's followers these things don't need to dominate our lives anymore. Through his power, we have the choice to say "no" to them.

Verse 6 emphasizes the seriousness of these sins. They're grave enough that they will bring God's wrath upon those who haven't fled to Christ for refuge. So we shouldn't treat them casually. Even though they used to be a part of our lives, that should now be a thing of the past (verse 7).

Think about the nasty, old, smelly "clothing" of your sinful nature that you need to strip off your body and throw in the trash. Help your group do the same as you consider these verses.

#### **Put on the "New Clothes"-Colossians 3:10-17**

It's not enough to take off the old, smelly, nasty "clothing" of our sinful nature. We need to replace it with something. That's what Paul focuses on in this section. He wants his readers to know that they can put on a "new self" that is growing in knowledge of God and conformity to the image of Christ. This new identity is the most fundamentally important thing about us, more important than any of the distinctions Paul mentions in verse 11 or any of the things that distinguish people in our culture today.

Paul begins verse 12 by focusing his readers on God's view toward them. He has chosen us to be in a relationship with him through faith in Jesus. He sees us as holy and dearly loved, as holy and loved as Christ himself, because we are united with Christ. Lead your group in marveling that God would love us like this before considering the specific pieces of clothing he's given us to wear.

In verses 12b-14, Paul shows his readers the new wardrobe they get to wear because of their faith in Christ. It's important to realize that these aren't merely virtues to develop in our own efforts. They're parts of our heritage in Christ. As we yield our lives moment-by-moment to the power of Christ's Spirit living within us, he expresses these things through us. Make sure your group understands the difference between seeking these things as virtues in their own strength and trusting Christ to reproduce them in their lives in the power of his Spirit.

Although Paul drops the clothing metaphor beginning in verse 15, he continues to address things that are part of our "wardrobe" in Christ. The peace of Christ is part of our wardrobe. Because Christ created and is in control of all things (see 1:15-20), that means he's also in control of our lives and relationships. So that should yield peace in our lives.

The word of Christ richly dwelling within us is another part of the wardrobe God wants us to wear as Christ-followers (verse 16). His word should be a focal point of our conversations, relationships, worship, and community. Note the connection between this verse and Ephesians 5:18-20, which emphasizes the work of God's Spirit. Help your group to see that the Spirit-filled life and the Word-filled life go together like a hand in a glove.

Paul sums up this section with the call to live our total lives in the name of the Lord Jesus. That means we trust in God's power to live consistently with Jesus' character and purposes. How does that happen? By taking off the old clothes and putting on the new. So we've come full circle.

One other thing: note the emphasis on thankfulness in this passage (three references in the last three verses). Our new life in Christ should abound with gratitude to God for giving us his Son, delivering us from our old way of life, and giving us a beautiful new set of clothes to wear.

## What Are the Questions?

### Launch

What is the thing you most want to see God transform in your character?

### Explore

#### Read Colossians 3:5-9

1. What should our disposition be toward the things mentioned in verses 5 and 8-9?
2. What is the point of verse 6?
3. What do you think Paul is saying in verse 7?
4. What rationale does verse 9 give for not lying to each other?

#### Read Colossians 3:10-17

5. What does Paul say about the new self in verses 10-11?
6. What is significant about the way Paul describes his readers in verse 12?
7. How is Paul saying we should "put on" the things listed in verses 12-14 different from saying we should be more moral with regard to these character qualities?
8. What do you think it means to have the peace of Christ rule in our hearts (verse 15)?
9. What does it mean for the word of Christ to dwell richly within us (verse 16)?
10. What light does the rest of verse 16 shed on what it means for the word of Christ to dwell richly within us?
11. What does it mean that we do everything in word or deed in the name of the Lord Jesus (verse 17)?

### Apply

12. What are some of the "old spiritual clothes" you need to take off?
13. Why is it not enough just to take off the "old spiritual clothes" without putting on the new clothes God has provided us in Christ?

14. How does God seeing us as chosen, holy, and beloved motivate you to take off the “old spiritual clothes” and put on the new clothes God has provided us in Christ?
15. In what situation or relationship do you most need to put on the new clothing mentioned in verses 12-14?
16. What are you facing right now that most urgently calls for the peace of Christ to rule in your heart?
17. What steps do you sense God calling you to take in his power that would result in the word of Christ dwelling more richly in your life?
18. In what area do you most need to trust God to “do whatever you do in word or deed in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father”?

### What Are the Answers?

1. We shouldn't let these things have dominance in our lives. We shouldn't let them control us or have a place in our hearts or behavior.
2. It shows that the things listed in verse 5 are serious offenses to God and things we should passionately avoid.
3. He's saying these things used to be a part of his readers' lives. The implication is that now they shouldn't be.
4. God's people have laid aside the old self—their previous way of life before coming to Christ. Lying is a part of this old self and therefore doesn't have a place in the life of a Christ-follower.
5. It's something we should “put on,” like a new set of clothes. This new self is growing in knowledge of God and is becoming more like him. It's the most fundamentally important thing about us.
6. It shows God's positive disposition toward us. He loves us, and we're the apple of his eye because we're united to Christ by faith. He sees us the same way he sees his Son.
7. “Putting on” these things suggests they already a part of who we are—a part of our “new self”—because of our connection to Christ. The focus is on the power of God's Spirit in our lives. Being more moral with regard to these character qualities suggests that we just need to try harder in our own efforts to be a different person.
8. It means his peace (as opposed to worry and anxiety) dominates our hearts and informs our relationships.
9. God's word saturates our lives and is the grid we use to approach relationships and circumstances.
10. It involves centering our relationships on the truth of God's word. It involves worship and thanksgiving to God.
11. God calls us to live and speak in a way that's consistent with Christ's character and priorities.
12. Allow the group to discuss.
13. Just taking off the “old spiritual clothes” creates a spiritual vacuum that is filled with more old clothes unless something else and something better replaces it.
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15. Allow the group to discuss.
16. Allow the group to discuss.
17. Allow the group to discuss.
18. Allow the group to discuss.