



Community Group Discussion Guide

Putting on the New Self

October 22, 2023 | Colossians 3:5-11

MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

- ⇒ **What is a bad habit you've recently "put off"? What made you want to put off this bad habit?**

DISCUSS

Paul continued his exhortation to the Colossians by using a metaphor of putting off and putting on clothing as a means to teach them more about living the Christian life. His instruction in this letter has progressed from reminding the believers of their new position in Christ (2:9-15) to reminding them of the new perspective they should have because of this position (2:16-3:4). In Colossians 3:5-11, Paul began to remind them of the practical ways their lives should change as a result of their new position and perspective. He did this by writing two lists of vices (3:5-11) and one list of virtues (3:12-17), each with a group of five specific behaviors.

Paul reminded believers of what their sinful habits looked like and then called them to leave these behind as a result of Christ's work on the cross.

- ⇒ **Read Colossians 2:9-15. Why is our new identity in Christ foundational for obeying Paul's practical commands in this passage?**
- ⇒ **Read Colossians 3:1-4. Why is this new perspective (setting our minds on the things above) also important for obeying Paul's practical commands in this passage?**

Colossians 3:5-7 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.

With the word "therefore" in the opening words of this passage, Paul connects what he is about to say to his preceding instructions. Paul reminded the Colossians it is because of what Christ has done and how this reshapes our perspectives that leads to putting away our sinful desires and habits.

The language Paul used of "putting to death" emphasized the seriousness of what he was about to call the believers to flee from. Putting to death sinful desires and passions means believers must take serious measures to conquer sin. 1 Corinthians 10:12 reminds us that "anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."

We must be on guard against the sinful desires of our former selves. 1 Corinthians 10:13 goes on to remind us of the power of Christ working in and through us. We are reminded that "no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." Because we have been given new life in Christ, He will give us the ability to overcome sinful desires in our lives.

Paul moved to his first list of vices. This list is comprised primarily of sexual sins, with the first four being explicit, and the last being the root cause. The first four Paul makes mention of in this list encompass general sexual sin ("sexual immorality" and "impurity"), lust, and thoughts related to sexual sin ("passion" and "evil desire"). The last mention in this list, "covetousness, which is idolatry," gets to the root of the previous four sins. Paul's focus on sins of this nature reveals the

importance of ensuring believers submit this area of their lives to the authority and lordship of Jesus.

- ⇒ **Why is sexual sin such a destructive area of sin to fall into?**
- ⇒ **How is covetousness or idolatry at the root of the sexual sins Paul lists in this passage?**

After finishing this first list of vices, Paul reminded the Colossians that “the wrath of God is coming” because of the brokenness and sin in the world. This reminder has both a present and future reality. God will judge these evil behaviors in the present, but there is also coming a day in the future in which God will fully and finally punish evil and hold all human beings accountable for their sin. However, believers are not without hope, knowing the promise we have from Christ in that He “delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Knowing that the wrath of God is coming should lead the believer to flee from sin, but also to fall and worship at the feet of Jesus who has already rescued us from this coming wrath.

- ⇒ **How is the reality of God’s judgment an invitation to repentance and obedience?**
- ⇒ **Discuss the following quote, “God...acquits the guilty, and only the person who understands something of the greatness of His wrath will be mastered by the greatness of His mercy.”**

Colossians 3:8-10 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Paul moved to his second list of vices and the instruction for the Colossians to “put them all away.” This parallels the instruction in verse 7 to “put to death.” The idea Paul is drawing out here is one of taking off and putting on clothing. Because of their new identification in Christ, believers should align their thoughts and actions with this new identity. This is the process of believers being progressively sanctified as a result of our justification.

This list of vices again includes five specific sins, this time related primarily to social or relational sins. The sins Paul lists here encompass evil actions or intentions toward others (“anger,” “wrath,” and “malice”) as well as the verbal attacks associated with these evil actions or intentions (“slander” and “obscene talk”). Paul follows up this list of five vices with a related reminder to “not lie to one another.” This reminder recalls the false teachers Paul has been warning them against. Paul’s desire is for believers to speak and act truthfully, knowing that lying destroys trust and is “an abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 12:22).

- ⇒ **Why are social or relational sins such a destructive area of sin to fall into?**

Paul followed up these instructions by reminding believers of why they should flee from these behaviors. The reason Paul gives for this is that they “have put off the old self...and have put on the new self.” Again, this reiterates the clothing metaphor of taking off old clothes and putting on new clothes. By putting off the old self—life before trusting in Christ, and putting on the new self, the believer’s thoughts and actions should begin to increasingly match their faith in Christ.

- ⇒ **Why is it important to be reminded that we have a “new self” in Christ as we seek to flee from these destructive sins?**

While the believer’s positional standing in Christ is certain, the practical behaviors are a work in progress. This is what Paul is referring to when he says that they are “being renewed in knowledge after the image of [their] creator.” The passive language Paul used here by saying that believers are “being renewed” shows the active role of God in the believer’s progressive sanctification. It also shows that this is an ongoing process. Believers’ behaviors being aligned with that of Christ is a progressive process that will only be complete when Christ returns.

- ⇒ **How is it encouraging to know that we are “being renewed” by God and not renewing ourselves?**
- ⇒ **How have you seen God working in your life to become more like Christ?**

Colossians 3:11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Paul closed out this passage with an emphasis on unity among believers because of the work Christ accomplished on their behalf. Paul made several comparisons between groups or categories of people to symbolize that the gospel is available to everyone. In making the comparisons between “Greek and Jew” and “circumcised and uncircumcised,” Paul appealed to two groups of people that were in constant conflict with one another. He included other categories such as barbarians and Scythians, known for cruel and uncivilized behavior, and slave and free, two class distinctions present at the time. In all of this, Paul encouraged the believers to set aside their sinful pride and to remember that there are no status distinctions among the people of God.

After listing out these broad groups of people, Paul closed with a short statement on the supremacy of Christ in all things. This statement is a summary of the longer narrative Paul gave on the supremacy of Christ in Colossians 1:15-23. Because Jesus is above all and in all things, there is no room for disunity or barriers in the Church, or the evil practices mentioned in the preceding verses. Believers are made new by the death and Resurrection of Christ, and therefore we are all “one in Christ Jesus...heirs according to his promise” (Galatians 3:28-29).

- ⇒ **How does our union with Christ bring unity with others in the church?**
- ⇒ **How might this passage address racial and social tensions in our society today?**
- ⇒ **Discuss the following quote, “The beauty of the body of Christ is found in its cohesive unity with its blended diversity.”**
 - ***How is this a picture of the Gospel?***

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: In Colossians 3:1-4, Paul calls us to set our minds on things that are above, and not on things that are on earth. As a result of this change in perspective, Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:5-11 that we must now “put to death” these sinful practices of our former selves. Specifically, he calls us to flee from sexual, social and relational sin, and disunity, because Christ is above all. We have a new self as a result of Christ, and we are called to clothe ourselves as such, “being renewed in knowledge after the image of [our] creator.”

- ⇒ ***One of our church’s values is “Life-Giving Hope,” which means that we reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ with delight by building relationships and environments infused with grace and joy.***
 - ***How do Paul’s instructions in these verses point us to the importance of this value?***
 - ***What is one way that you can seek to build relationships that look like this?***
- ⇒ ***Another of our church’s values is “Compelling Love,” which means that we demonstrate the love of Jesus by respecting the dignity of every person, sacrificing for our neighbors, and cultivating unity with our faith family.***
 - ***How do Paul’s instructions in these verses point us to the importance of this value?***
 - ***What is one way that you can cultivate this type of unity?***

2. Pray: Thank God for sending us His Son, who “is all, and in all.” Ask God to continue to conform you more into the image of Jesus each day, pursuing holiness and unity. Ask Him to help you flee from the desires of your former self, including sexual immorality, evil thoughts and actions toward others, and disunity. Thank Him that we are not called to do this on our own, but that He is doing this work in us.

Pray for those who do not yet know Christ, that they would see their sin for what it is and the wrath that is coming if they do not put their trust in Him. Pray that they would trust in Him today!

STUDY: Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *ESV Study Bible*, page 2298.
- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pages 174 – 175; 296; 1422 – 1423; 1482 – 1483.
- *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Colossians and Philemon*, pages 84 – 93.
- *NIV Life Application Study Bible*, pages 2012 – 2013.