



COLOSSIANS STUDY GUIDE
WEEK #7

PUT OFF AND PUT ON

COLOSSIANS 3:5-17

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

[Colossians 3:9-10, ESV]

INTRODUCTION

One of the most shocking and difficult demands that God gives his people is, “Be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16). The biblical idea of God’s holiness is that he is separated from sin and devoted completely to what is right and good. So the call for us to be holy is no easy task.

Sadly, many Christians are content to focus on just one half of holiness: avoiding sin. They think that by simply not doing bad things, they are living in holiness. Sure, avoiding sin is part of holiness—but it’s only part of the picture!

The other part of holiness is being righteous. This means that holy people will do good, be loving, bear the fruit of the Spirit, and bless others. This passage helps us see that Christ-Centered people are not only to stop doing bad things but are to start replacing those bad things with good.

Interestingly, however, Paul says that this new ability to live obediently is rooted in our identity. He doesn’t just say that we are to put off bad habits and put on good ones, but he says we are to put off the old self and put on the new self. In other words, our ability to live as obedient, righteous followers of Jesus is rooted in our identity as his people. To the degree we realize that we are new people in Christ we will experience this transforming power in our lives.

Do you want holiness in your life? Do you want to not only stop doing the sinful things that weigh you down but also begin living a fruitful life of righteous obedience to Christ? May God open your mind and heart to the truths of this text, and allow you to apply them in life-giving ways.

INVESTIGATION

Read Colossians 3:5-17.

1. What things does Paul say should be “put to death” or “put off”? What reasons does he give?
2. What things does Paul say should be “put on”? What reasons does he give?
3. Why does Paul say we should forgive each other? (Note: see Matthew 18:21-35 for a similar concept)

4. What does it mean to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”?

IMPLICATION

1. Rather than saying that we should change our lives in order to be acceptable before God, Paul says that we should change our lives because we’ve already been declared to be accepted by God. Why is this a significant difference?

2. Christians often think about stopping bad habits (like those listed in verses 5-9), but sometimes forget about the need to begin godly habits (like those listed in verses 12-17). Why is it important to put off bad things AND put on godly things?

3. Is there anybody that you are struggling to forgive? What will you do about it?

4. The word “richly” (3:16) means “abundantly.” Thus, we should not just consider God’s word once in a while, but enough to make it an abundant part of our hearts and lives. How can you let the word of Christ dwell in you richly this week, and still maintain all the other responsibilities that God has given you?

OTHER ISSUES

Colossians 3:6 says that the wrath of God is coming as a result of our sin. Why does God have to be wrathful? Can't we just have a loving God?

It may surprise us to find how frequently the Bible talks about the wrath of God. Yet if God loves all that is right and good, and all that conforms to his moral character, then it should not be surprising that he would hate everything that is opposed to his moral character. God's wrath directed against sin is therefore closely related to God's holiness and justice. God's wrath may be defined as follows: God's wrath means that he intensely hates all sin.

As with the other attributes of God, this is an attribute for which we should thank and praise God. It may not immediately appear to us how this can be done, since wrath seems to be such a negative concept. Viewed alone, it would arouse only fear and dread. Yet it is helpful for us to ask what God would be like if he were a God that did not hate sin. He would then be a God who either delighted in sin or at least was not troubled by it. Such a God would not be worthy of our worship, for sin is hateful and it is worthy of being hated. Sin ought not to be. It is in fact a virtue to hate evil and sin (cf. Heb. 1:9; Zech. 8:17; et al.), and we rightly imitate this attribute of God when we feel hatred against great evil, injustice, and sin.

Furthermore, we should feel no fear of God's wrath as Christians, for although "we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph. 2:3), we now have trusted in Jesus, "who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10; cf. Rom. 5:10). When we meditate on the wrath of God, we will be amazed to think that our Lord Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God that was due to our sin, in order that we might be saved (Rom. 3:25-26).

Moreover, in thinking about God's wrath we must also bear in mind his patience. Both patience and wrath are mentioned together in Psalm 103: "The Lord is...slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger for ever" (Ps. 103:8-9). In fact, the delay of the execution of God's wrath upon evil is for the purpose of leading people to repentance (see Rom. 2:4).

Thus, when we think of God's wrath to come, we should simultaneously be thankful for his patience in waiting to execute that wrath in order that yet more people may be saved (2 Peter 3:9-10). God's wrath should motivate us to evangelism and should also cause us to be thankful that God finally will punish all wrongdoing and will reign over new heavens and a new earth in which there will be no unrighteousness.¹

¹ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994). 205.