

# Pursue Christ: Put on the New

*March 30, 2025*

## Lesson Summary

### **Main Passages**

Colossians 3:12-17

### **Session Outline**

1. Put on the New (Colossians 3:12-14)
2. The Peace of Christ (Colossians 3:15-16)
3. In His Name (Colossians 3:17)

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### **Theological Theme**

Everything we do should point back to Jesus.

### **Call to Action**

The way believers interact with each other should provide evidence of a Spirit empowered life. Our actions should reveal that we have “put on” the new life in Christ. What is one area of your life where you have yet to truly “put on” the new life in Christ?



## Leader Guide

# Pursue Christ: Put on the New

### Introduction

The biblical account of King David's life paints a picture of hardship and conflict. After being anointed to become king, he had to wait years for this to come to fruition, and many of those years he was running for his life. He did not always get it right, but he presents us with a great example of showing kindness in the way he treated Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth was the crippled son of David's childhood best friend Jonathan. After Jonathan and King Saul died and David ascended the throne, David sought out someone from Saul's line so he could show them "the kindness of God" (2 Samuel 9:3). He did this by bringing Mephibosheth to court and providing for him. Mephibosheth was from the line of David's enemy, but was treated like a member of his family!

Paul wrote about this type of kindness in his letter to the Colossians. God's kindness is extended to people even when it doesn't make sense.

- ❓ What other examples of unusual kindness do you know from the Bible?
- ❓ How has God shown us kindness? How does He continue to do so?

### Session Summary

Last week, our text focused on Paul's instruction of things to eliminate from the life of the believer, and today's text focuses on the things we should "put on" (v. 12) in our lives. Paul's writing includes instructions for believers to be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, to bear with one another, forgive, and love.

Paul wrote that we should let Jesus's peace rule our lives and God's Word should dwell with us. In everything we say and do, we should seek to honor and glorify Jesus.

## 1. Put on the New (Colossians 3:12-14)

- ❓ How would you define the character traits Paul listed in these verses?
- ❓ What does it mean for us to put on these things, and why would this be important?

In our text last week, Paul instructed his readers to put to death sinful things that belong to our earthly nature. These desires of the flesh pull us away from the Lord, create discord, and disrupt unity in the church. Focusing on earthly things is problematic for any believers, but especially so for the Colossians as they sought to guard against false teaching.

Paul opened this section of his letter by commenting on our status as believers. “God’s chosen ones” (v. 12): Just as God chose Abraham’s family to bless and to be His chosen people, God chose believers today (Ephesians 1:4).<sup>2</sup> This is a gift of grace from God and not anything we have done to earn His favor; earning salvation through good works is never possible.

“Holy and dearly loved” (v. 12): “Holy” here means to be set apart.<sup>3</sup> God’s desire for His people to be set apart has been evident since Old Testament times. Many Old Testament laws were put in place for exactly this reason: so God’s people would be set apart from the pagan and unfaithful nations around them. This did, and still does, offer protection from the trap of slavery to sin that comes with an unfaithful lifestyle. For the Colossian congregation, this meant looking and living differently than the pagans and false teachers around them. Paul would go on to describe some of the ways we should look different by offering positive traits we are to “put on.”

As believers, we are “dearly loved” (v. 12) by the Lord. God’s love for us is great and sacrificial. The New Testament has a lot to say on this idea (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). As deeply loved children of the Father, we should want to follow His commands and His will for our lives.<sup>4</sup>

Next, Paul called out characteristics believers should “put on” (v. 12) as believers. These stand in sharp contrast to the negative characteristics of this world; the “earthly things” (v. 2) Paul noted in verse 5:

Compassion (v. 12): When we are compassionate, we are empathetic and sensitive to the needs and suffering of others. Compassionate believers take pity on their enemies who have fallen on difficult times and helps them, like the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37.

### Put on Love

This section completes Paul’s exhortation to the Colossians to maintain a holy lifestyle. Paul admonished them “put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (3:12). Over all these they should “put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (v. 14).

Kindness (v. 12): When we are kind, we are thoughtful, treating others well, as the Lord has treated us well (Ephesians 2:7).

Humility (v. 12): The pagan world the Colossian believers lived in valued pride and superiority, not humility,<sup>5</sup> but God set us apart to live differently. When we are humble, we don't think of ourselves as better than those around us. (Romans 12:3 also speaks to this idea.) A Christian living in humility naturally thinks of others first (Philippians 2:3).


Gentleness (v. 12): Gentle believers have self-control. They aren't arrogant or harsh, and they consider others in the way they behave.

Patience (v. 12): Have you ever observed a kindergarten teacher shepherding his or her flock of five-year-olds? They kindly and calmly field mountains of questions, know how to handle students who can't sit still, and don't show frustration when tackling issues. Their patience is superhuman. Patient believers react similarly. They are restrained and long-suffering and do not retaliate when others provoke them.


“Bearing with one another” (v. 13): This literally means to hold back. We hold back with one another, acting with patience and kindness.


“Forgiving one another” (v. 13): In this instruction, Paul notes that we are to forgive because we were first forgiven. The forgiveness we enjoy from the Lord is greater than any forgiveness we could extend to others! Our debt was more than we could ever hope to repay, but thanks to Jesus's redemptive work on the cross, our debt is fully, freely, and forever forgiven.

Love (v. 14): What an important end to Paul's list. Jesus commanded that we love one another in John 13:34-35. When we truly love one another, we put others first, like Jesus did. We act with compassion; we behave kindly; we are humble; we show gentleness to others; we have the superhuman patience of a kindergarten teacher; we hold back; and we forgive. Love unifies, and unity is vital to the church (Ephesians 4:3).<sup>6</sup>

 Application: Consider the list of characteristics Paul laid out in this section of text. How can we actively cultivate these virtues in our everyday lives?

## 2. The Peace of Christ (Colossians 3:15-16)

 What does it look like to have “the peace of Christ” (v. 15)?

 What does it mean for “the word of Christ to dwell richly among” believers (v. 16)?

In verses 15-17, Paul gives four commands that show us how we should live. Let's look at the first three.

“Let the peace of Christ . . . rule your hearts” (v. 15): Peace, a gift from the Lord, is an important concept in the Bible. It is cultivated in all believers thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). In John 16:33, Jesus taught that we could have peace in Him despite any suffering.

In the book of Romans, Paul wrote that we should live at peace with others as much as we're able (Romans 12:18), and peace was a hallmark of Jesus's earthly ministry. Jesus is “The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). The Hebrew word used in this passage in Isaiah for “peace” is “shalom.” Biblical peace, shalom, doesn't just mean the absence of conflict, it carries the connotation of something that was once broken being fixed. Shalom is completeness—restored to wholeness. When the Bible speaks of shalom between people groups following a conflict, it doesn't just mean that war is over, it means that they are now cooperating and working together.<sup>7</sup>

The word Paul chose for “rule” here (the Greek word *brabeuō*) is often used in an athletic context. Peace should rule our hearts like an umpire presides over a baseball game, deciding calls, keeping the rules, and ejecting players and coaches when needed.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the peace of Christ should be the voice of reason in your head, the deciding factor as you determine where to walk.

“And be thankful” (v. 15): Paul made thankfulness a habit, and he called for his fellow believers to do the same. We have much to be thankful for. God deserves our thanks, and we should give it.

“Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you” (v. 16): Think about what it means to dwell with someone. Most of us have had the experience of living with someone else: a spouse, a child, a parent, a roommate, or a friend. When you dwell with someone, you are around them constantly. You spend time interacting with them. You know things about them.

When God's Word dwells with us as believers, we are around it, reading it, praying over it, and spending time in it. We know things about it. We interact with it (Hebrews 4:12). We become close with it. God's Word should permeate all areas of our lives and drive our decisions.

Paul went on to draw a connection to worship. When the word of Christ dwells richly among believers, they naturally worship to glorify the Lord and grow closer to Him.

- Application: Examine your current quiet time. How could you further seek letting God's Word dwell richly in your life?

### 3. In His Name (Colossians 3:17)

- What does "in word or in deed" mean (v. 17)? How does that apply to our lives broadly?
- How do we give thanks like Paul described in verse 17?

Verse 17 brings the final imperative of our text: "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" (v. 17). Paul gave a similar instruction in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God." Everything we do should be with Jesus in mind. When we make decisions, we should consider Him—what He has called us to do, how He is speaking to us, what will glorify Him.

With our words, we should honor Him. We can stand apart in our conversations, not gossiping and using careful language. We can bring Jesus into conversations even when it feels uncomfortable to us. Everything we say should point back to Him.

Likewise, everything we do should honor Him. Our actions will look different than those of the world. It honors God when we help people and act generously. It honors God when we show kindness and compassion instead of hate. It honors God when we don't participate in the sinful behaviors that characterize the world. Living for Jesus means doing the right thing, even when it's hard. As we seek to give glory back to God, we should continue to give "thanks to God the Father through him."

- Application: What are some ways we could intentionally seek to live more for Jesus in our words and deeds over the next month?

### Conclusion

In our text today, Paul listed characteristics we should "put on" as believers God has chosen to love and bless. We are called to be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, bear with one another (holding back with self-control), forgive as God has forgiven us, and love. When we love one another, these other virtues fall into place and bring unity to the body of Christ.

Paul wrote that the peace of Christ should rule the hearts of believers. When Jesus's peace rules, we make our decisions based on Him. We seek and work to live at peace with those around us. We have so much to be grateful for as children of the Lord, and Paul advised us to be thankful.

Perhaps some of the most important instructions Paul gave followed: “let the word of Christ dwell richly among you” (v. 16). As believers, God’s Word should be primary in our lives. We should know it, turn to it, and study it continuously. God uses His Word to speak to us and it is a tool He uses to grow us spiritually. When God’s Word dwells with us, a natural response is praise.

Paul capped our text today with a final important instruction: “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (v. 17). Everything we say and do should point to and honor Jesus. When we seek to do this, the other instructions Paul gave become more natural.

- ❓ In today’s text, Paul instructed us to bear with one another. What does “holding back” in a Godly way look like for us today?
- ❓ How did Jesus embody these good traits in His earthly ministry? How can we imitate Him? How can we encourage and support one another in this as a group?
- ❓ How does living as Paul taught in today’s passage give us opportunities to tell others about Jesus?

## Prayer of Response

*Thank God for showing us how to live through His Word. Praise Him for the grace and forgiveness He extends to us, even though we don’t deserve it. Ask for His help as you pursue the virtues Paul mentioned in our text today. Ask for His help as you seek to let Jesus’s peace rule and to let His Word dwell richly in your lives.*

## Memory Verse

*And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*  
—Colossians 3:17

## Additional Resources

- *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* by Douglas Moo
- *Be Complete* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Colossians and Philemon* by G. K. Beale

## Disciples Multiplying Disciples





# Historical Context of Colossians

## Purpose

Paul wrote to counter the “Colossian heresy” that he considered an affront to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The false teaching is identified as a “philosophy” (2:8), presumably drawn from some Hellenistic traditions as indicated by the references to “his fullness” (1:19); the “elements of the world” (Gk *stoicheia*, 2:8, 20); “wisdom” (2:3, 23); and “self-made religion” (2:23). In addition, the false teaching contained Jewish elements such as circumcision (2:11; 3:11); “human tradition” (2:8); Sabbath observance, food regulations, festival participation (2:16); the “worship of angels” together with “access to a visionary realm” (2:18); and harsh human regulations (2:21–23). Paul addressed this syncretistic philosophy by setting forth a proper understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and by noting appropriate implications for Christian conduct.

## Author

The Apostle Paul is identified as the author of Colossians (1:1; 4:18). The church fathers unreservedly endorsed Pauline authorship (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 3.14.1; Tertullian, *De Praescr. Haer.*, 7; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, 1.1; cp. Justin, *Dialogue*, 85.2; 138.2). A close reading of Colossians reveals a considerable number of lexical, grammatical, and theological similarities with the other Pauline writings (1:9, 26; 2:11–14, 16, 20–21; 3:1, 3, 5–17). Also favoring the authenticity of Colossians as a letter of Paul is its close connection with Philemon, an epistle widely regarded as Pauline.

## Setting

During his ministry in Ephesus (Ac 19:10), Paul sent Epaphras to spread the gospel in the Lycus Valley. Epaphras subsequently established the church at Colossae (1:7; 4:12–13). The city’s population consisted mostly of Phrygians and Greeks, but it also included a significant number of Jews. The church, likewise, was mostly composed of Gentiles (1:21, 27; 2:13), but it also had Jewish members (2:11, 16, 18, 21; 3:11). When Epaphras (Phm 23) informed Paul of certain heretical teachings that had spread there, Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians as a theological antidote.

## Special Features

Paul’s letter to the church at Colossae is one of the prison letters (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). Paul’s desire with this letter was to correct the false teachings that were cropping up in the church. In doing so, Paul presented a clear picture of Jesus Christ as supreme Lord of the universe, head of the church, and the only one through whom forgiveness is possible.

## Extended Commentary

### Colossians 3:12-17

3:12 After commanding believers to “put away” worldly behaviors, Paul offered a series of positive commands to put on or to “clothe yourselves” (Rm 13:14) with behavior fitted for God’s people. The adjectives chosen (Is 43:20; 65:9; Rm 8:33; 2Tm 2:10; Ti 1:1; 1Pt 1:1; 2:4, 6, 9), holy (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34; Jn 6:69; 1Pt 2:9), and loved (Mt 3:17; Eph 1:6; 1Th 1:4; 2Th 2:13) were all applied to Israel, Jesus, and the church. The five virtues are just the opposite of the vices listed in vv. 5 and 8.

3:13 The words bearing with (cp. Rm 15:7; Eph 4:2) and forgiving (cp. Eph 4:32) express the habitual manner in which believers exhibit the stated virtues. Both verbs pertain to interpersonal relationships in the body of Christ. Just as the Lord has forgiven echoes Jesus’s injunction to forgive because believers are forgiven (Mt 6:12, 14–15; 18:23–35; Lk 7:42).

3:14 The imagery here suggests that the final and most important new article of clothing for God’s people is love, the perfect bond of unity that binds believers together in complete oneness (Eph 4:3).

3:15 The peace brought by Christ should control believers’ hearts (Rm 8:6; 15:13; 2Co 13:11; Gl 5:22; Eph 2:14; Php 4:7; 2Th 3:16). Be thankful harks back to 1:3, 12; 2:7 (cp. 3:17; 4:2).

3:16 The words teaching and admonishing express the means of how the gospel is to dwell among believers. Singing and gratitude characterize the manner of this teaching and admonishing.

3:17 This verse is similar to 1Co 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” Doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus means doing it in obedience to him.<sup>9</sup>

## References

1. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Complete: Become the Whole Person God Intends You to Be* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 129.
2. Wiersbe, 128.
3. Wiersbe, 128.
4. Wiersbe, 128.
5. Wiersbe, 129.
6. Wiersbe, 129-131; David Guzik, “Colossians 3 — Put Off, Put On,” *Enduring Word*, accessed January 29, 2025, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/colossians-3/>; Thomas Constable, “Notes on Colossians, 2025 Edition,” *Soniclight.com*, accessed January 29, 2025, <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/html/colossians/colossians.htm>.
7. “Shalom/Peace,” created by The Bible Project, posted November 30, 2017, 3:49, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/shalom-peace/>.
8. Blue Letter Bible, “Strong’s G1018 – brabeuō,” accessed January 29, 2025, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1018/csb/mgnt/0-1/>; Wiersbe, 131.
9. Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Colossians,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1897–1898.