PEOPLE THE GOSPEL CREATES · WEEK 6

Putting on the New Self

November 1, 2026 · Colossians 3:12–17 · Pastor Bart Denny

THE BIG IDEA

We put on the new self as Christ's love shapes the way we live with one another.

This guide works two ways. On your own, take one section a day through the week, or use the daily readings near the end. In a group, plan on about an hour: read the passage aloud, talk through the background, then choose the questions that fit your group. Nobody has to answer every one.

Read **Colossians 3:12–17** at least twice, once quietly and once aloud. If you have time, read the whole chapter. Last Sunday we were in Ephesians 4, where Paul tells believers to put off the old self. Colossians 3 covers the same ground from a slightly different angle, and this week we're looking at what Paul tells us to put on.

Where this passage sits

Paul wrote Colossians from prison (4:3, 18) to a church he had never visited. Someone was teaching the Colossian Christians that faith in Jesus wasn't enough. They needed special knowledge, special experiences and a list of rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" (2:21). Paul's answer is blunt. Rules like that "lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence" (2:23). They can make a person look disciplined without changing the heart.

So Paul doesn't answer bad rules with better rules. He starts with who these people are in Christ. They've been raised with Him (3:1). Their life is "hidden with Christ in God" (3:3). Out of that new identity, he tells them to put to death what belongs to the old life (3:5–11) and to put on what belongs to the new (3:12–17).

Notice the order in 3:9–10. Believers *have taken off* the old self and *have put on* the new self, "which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." The change has already begun, and it isn't finished. God is doing the renewing. Our part is to keep getting dressed in what He's given us.

Verse 11 tells us who was sitting in that congregation: Greeks and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, Scythians, slaves and free people. That was a church full of people who would never have chosen one another. Everything Paul says in verses 12–17 is meant for a group like that, and like ours.

A few words worth a closer look

"Chosen, holy and dearly loved" (3:12)

In the Old Testament these were Israel's titles (see Deuteronomy 7:6–8). Paul gives them to a mostly Gentile church. Before he asks anything of them, he tells them what God has already done for them.

"Clothe yourselves" (3:12)

Paul uses the same verb in 3:10 and elsewhere connects it with baptism: "all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Getting dressed is something you do every day, and nobody does it once for life.

"Bear with each other" (3:13)

The word means to put up with someone, to tolerate them patiently. Paul assumed Christians would find each other difficult.

"Forgive" (3:13)

The Greek word is built on the word for *grace*. To forgive is to give someone grace they haven't earned, the way the Lord gave it to us.

"Binds them all together" (3:14)

Love is the *bond*, the same word Paul used in 2:19 for the ligaments that hold a body together. Older translations call love "the bond of perfectness." When John Wesley described Christian perfection, he meant exactly this: love for God and neighbor filling the heart and governing the life.

"Rule" (3:15)

This word comes from athletics. It means to act as umpire, to make the call. In 2:18 Paul used a related word for the false teachers who wanted to "disqualify" the Colossians. Christ's peace, and not anyone's opinion of you, gets to make the call.

"In the name of the Lord Jesus" (3:17)

Acting in someone's name means acting under their authority and in keeping with their character.

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1 Clothe yourselves with the character of Christ

READ Colossians 3:12–14 and John 13:1–17

Every quality on Paul's list in verse 12 (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience) has to do with how we treat other people. You can't practice patience alone in a room. These virtues get tested by people who are slow, careless, critical or unkind, and those are the people Paul has in mind.

Pastor Bart told about an email he sent as a ship's commanding officer, with far too many people copied. He still thinks he was right about the repair. He was wrong about how he treated the people involved. Paul's list leaves room for both. Kindness doesn't require pretending a problem isn't there. It does mean the person in front of us counts for more than winning the argument.

Verse 13 moves from people who annoy us to people who've wronged us. Paul doesn't pretend the grievance is imaginary. He gives a reason to begin moving toward forgiveness: "Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

A few things forgiveness is *not*:

- It isn't saying the wrong didn't happen or didn't hurt.
- It isn't the same as instant trust or full reconciliation. Those may take time, and they depend on the other person too (Romans 12:18).

- It doesn't remove the need for honesty, accountability or wise boundaries.

If you're in a situation where someone is harming you, forgiving them doesn't mean staying in harm's way. Please talk with Pastor Bart or someone you trust.

John 13 shows what this looks like with skin on. Jesus knew "the Father had put all things under his power" (13:3), and with that knowledge He picked up a towel and washed feet, including the feet of Judas, who would betray Him, and Peter, who would deny Him. He was secure enough that He had nothing to prove. Paul begins Colossians 3:12 the same way, with our security in God's love, before he asks us to humble ourselves.

Verse 14 adds a warning we might miss. It's possible to keep your temper and still nurse resentment for years. Love goes over everything else, like an outer garment, because God is after our hearts and not only our behavior. Wesleyans call this sanctification: God's grace reaching into our attitudes and desires, and our responding to His Spirit with repentance and obedience.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Think of a time someone stayed kind to you when you didn't deserve it. What did it do for you?

2. Which of the five qualities in verse 12 comes easiest for you? Which is hardest, and with what kind of person?

3. In the group project example from the sermon, the classmate really had let everyone down. How can you deal honestly with a real problem without trying to humiliate the person who caused it?

4. Why do you think Paul names us "chosen, holy and dearly loved" *before* he tells us what to put on? How does knowing you're loved change the way you handle being criticized or overlooked?

5. Jesus washed the feet of men He knew would fail Him. What does that suggest about how we treat people who have let us down, or might?

6. What's the difference between forgiving someone and pretending nothing happened? Where have you seen those two confused?

2 Let Christ shape our life together

READ Colossians 3:15–16, Colossians 1:19–20 and Acts 16:22–34

The "you" in verses 15 and 16 is plural. Paul is talking to a church, "members of one body." Christ made peace "through his blood, shed on the cross" (1:20), and He has brought together people who wouldn't have picked each other.

When preferences clash, and they will, Paul says Christ's peace makes the call. That doesn't mean ignoring problems. A church sometimes needs to confront sin, admit a mistake or rethink a decision. It does mean we can disagree without treating each other as enemies, because the person across the room belongs to the same Lord.

Verse 16 gives the whole congregation a job. We "teach and admonish one another." Pastors teach, but Paul expects ordinary believers to know the Word well enough to encourage a friend, answer a question and sometimes offer a correction. Two cautions from the sermon: when a friend is hurting, we don't promise outcomes God hasn't promised ("I'm sure it'll all work out"). And nobody gets to use a Bible verse as a club to win a personal argument. Paul says to do this "with all wisdom," and verses 12–14 still apply.

Then Paul ties the Word of Christ to singing. Our songs teach. When Paul and Silas sang in a Philippian jail at midnight, beaten and locked in stocks, "the other prisoners were listening" (Acts 16:25). On any Sunday some people come in celebrating and others can barely get the words out. Sometimes the congregation carries the song for a person who can't sing it that day. So our songs need to be faithful to Scripture. They ought to be worth remembering on a hard Tuesday afternoon.

Look for the thread of gratitude: "be thankful" (v. 15), "with gratitude in your hearts" (v. 16), "giving thanks to God the Father" (v. 17). Paul doesn't ask us to be thankful *for* everything that happens. He keeps bringing us back to the grace we've received.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Paul's church included Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free people. What differences in our congregation make "bearing with each other" a real test?

2. If Christ's peace is the umpire, what usually tries to take that job in a disagreement? Pride? Loyalty to a friend? The need to be right?

3. Has anyone ever encouraged you from Scripture at the right moment? Has anyone ever corrected you in a way you could receive? What made the difference?

4. What's wrong with telling a hurting friend "I'm sure everything will work out"? What could you offer instead?

5. Is there a song that has carried you through a hard time? What did it say that you needed to hear?

6. How is being thankful *in* a hard situation different from being thankful *for* it?

Whatever you do

READ Colossians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 10:31

“Whatever you do” covers what we say when we’re tired, how we answer an irritating message, and what we do when no one is watching. Christians carry the name of Jesus into all of it. Pastor Bart’s email had his own name at the top, and everyone copied could see who wrote it. He also bears the name of Christ, and he wishes he’d asked whether the email honored that name before he hit Send.

The sermon closed with a question worth sitting with: **Can I honestly say the way I’m treating this person honors the name of Jesus?**

Don’t rush to answer it. Most of us can justify ourselves quickly when we’ve been wronged. Give the Lord room to show you what He wants to change: a harsh word you owe an apology for, a conversation you’ve postponed, a grudge you’ve kept alive long after the disagreement ended. Remember how the passage began. You’re chosen, holy and dearly loved, and God isn’t finished with you.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Think of one person you find difficult right now. Without naming them, how have you been speaking *to* them, and *about* them?

2. If you’re keeping your distance from someone, is that a wise boundary or a way of avoiding the relationship? How can you tell the difference?

3. What’s one step of obedience God may be asking of you this week?

Through the week

☐	**Monday**	Colossians 3:1–11. What has God already done for you, according to these verses? What does Paul tell you to put off?
☐	**Tuesday**	Colossians 3:12–14 and John 13:1–17. Pray through the five qualities in verse 12, one at a time, and ask where you need each one this week.
☐	**Wednesday**	Matthew 18:21–35. Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving servant. How does remembering what you’ve been forgiven change the way you see someone who owes you?
☐	**Thursday**	Colossians 3:15–16, Ephesians 5:18–20 and Acts 16:22–34. Read or sing a hymn or worship song slowly and notice what it teaches.
☐	**Friday**	Colossians 3:17, 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Philippians 2:1–11. Before you send a message or have a hard conversation, ask the question from the sermon.

Try this

Before you answer a frustrating email, text or comment this week, stop and ask: *Does the way I'm about to treat this person honor the name of Jesus?* Then pray for that person by name. If you owe someone an apology, make it.

Close in prayer

Father, thank You for choosing us, making us Your own and loving us. Forgive us for the times our pride, impatience or resentment has decided how we treat people. Clothe us with the compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience of Jesus. Let His peace make the call among us, let His Word live richly in our church, and teach us to forgive as You have forgiven us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Notes

Watch the sermon online

Scan the code or visit **pathwaywes.com/sermons/putting-on-the-new-self** for the video, this guide and Pastor Bart's blog post on this week's message.

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