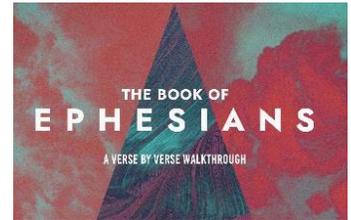


Title: Ephesians, Week 9, Put off and Put on!

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Ephesians 4.17-28

Big idea: To grow in Christ requires that you *put off* and *put on* five contrasting attitudes and actions.



Everyday all of us have certain daily **routines**, like brushing our teeth when we get up, making up our bed, taking a shower, or drinking a cup of coffee. My daily routine includes stretches, shaving my whiskers off, having a devotional time with the Lord, cleaning up email, and some others.

We all do certain routine behaviors.

Well, as we continue our series in the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul gives some very practical insight on how to consistently live the Christian life by using a metaphor, a word picture that describes one of these daily routines we all do.

Every day we take off and put on certain articles of clothing, right. Every morning I go into my closet and pick out the shirt I'm going to wear that day. I'm probably not going to wear yesterday's shirt because it is dirty. It went into the dirty clothes hamper.

Now, I might wear blue jeans longer than one day. I think my record for wearing jeans without washing them was a month. You are probably thinking, really? Yep. This was before I was married understand.

When I was in university, in 1977 I spent 6 weeks on a cultural exchange program in communist Europe and the then Soviet Union in the summer. I wore the same jeans 4 straight weeks without washing them. I just never got around to it. The benefit from not washing them that was that after a couple of weeks I could stand those jeans up and they'd stay up all by themselves. No hanger necessary. Sherryl would never let me do that.

In the passage today as we continue our study of Ephesians, Paul uses this put off and put on idea when he gives several attitudes and actions we should put off and others that we should put on to fully follow Jesus.

So, this morning I'm using these two visuals, a dirty clothes' hamper and a coat rack with a shirt on it. The hamper represents putting off some attitudes and actions unbecoming for a follower of Jesus (sinful stuff) and putting on another set of attitudes and actions that are becoming for a follower of Jesus (good and righteous things).



Here's today big idea.

BIG IDEA

To grow in Christ requires that you **put off** and **put on** five contrasting attitudes and actions.

Big idea: To grow in Christ requires that you *put off* and *put on* five contrasting attitudes and actions.

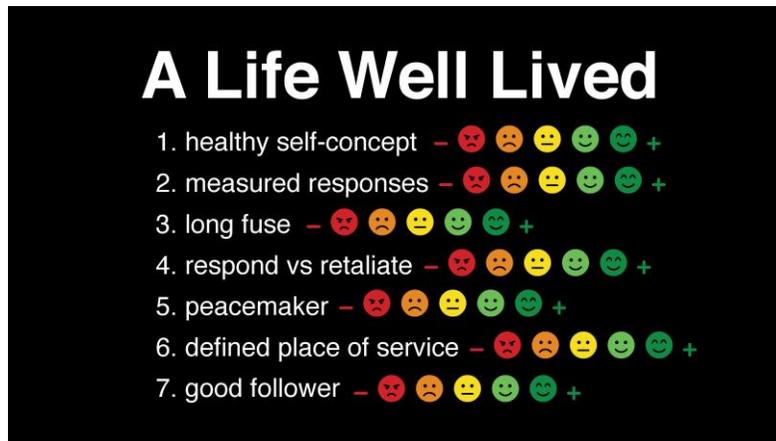
So we'll see from today's passage these 10 qualities, in contrasting groups of 2 using this metaphor.

But let's first review last week first. You'll recall that the first three chapters explain the doctrine or theology of being a follower of Jesus. The next three chapters explain what we do that indicates we truly are followers of Jesus.

The [Big idea from Eph 4.1-16](#): The Apostle Paul gives us 7 qualities that indicate a life well lived.

The last three chapters of Ephesians, 4-6, are the practical applications and implications of the first 3, the theological, the doctrine behind what it means to be a Christian.

And I asked you to evaluate yourself in these 7 areas using little emoji images.



So today the passage is [Ephesians 4.17-32](#)

Ephesians 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. ²⁰ You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹ Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. ²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

When you come to faith, you see things differently. Your thinking process gets profoundly shaped by God's Spirit who lives in you. What we think and believe is crucial for living the Christian life.

¹⁸ ... darkened ... hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ ... lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

He's again describing, as he has before in Ephesian, the spiritual condition of a person who is not a follower of Jesus (darkened thinking, hardened heart, lost sensitivity) and by that very fact they oppose God's ways. That doesn't mean that a person who is not a Christian can't be a kind, caring, friend or neighbor or family member. But, without Christ, Paul says that our hearts are hardened to God, our spirits are dead to Him, our thinking is darkened to God's ways.

And any person, including a believer, can lose sensitivity to what is right and wrong as we become more and more spiritually calloused and increasingly can give ourselves over to conduct and character that contradict God's ways.

We can see this clearly in our culture today. 20 or 30 years ago Canadian and American culture as a whole generally agreed on the basics of a Judeo-Christian viewpoint on marriage, sexual morals, the value of human life, those kinds of things. It is dramatically different today.

It's the proverbial **slippery slope**,

- small compromises in attitude and action lead
- lead to large compromises
- which lead to being neutral about what we used to believe was right and wrong
- which leads to openly practicing those things we considered wrong with no sense of guilt
- which leads to celebrating those beliefs and behaviors that we once knew and believed clearly contradicted God's ways.
- And to hold to biblical beliefs, not in a prideful or a dismissive way, may get you punished today. The term used for punishing someone who does not embrace the current cultural views on morality is called cancelling, removal from social media, being accused of being a bigot, and even losing your job. This is the new world we live in. But we have a big God who will sustain in such a world.

Growing in Christ is a day-by-day process of putting off old patterns of thinking and acting and putting on new ones, like putting off and putting on clothes.

²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Every day we put off and put on and put on different kinds of clothes. For some, it's a

- business suit
- others boots, jeans and t-shirt
- others a nurse's uniform
- others a police uniform and so on.

What we put on projects a certain identity. We put on clothes that give an image/reflect an identity in the work world or when we are in other public places.

Likewise, the attitudes and actions that we clothe ourselves with portrays an identity. Paul is saying that we must put off that which is contrary to our new identity in Christ as a new person and to put on that which aligns with that new identity in Christ.

Our attitudes and actions that we clothe ourselves with reflect the identity we are living out. This process is on-going, off-on, off-on, off-on. As we do this with the Holy Spirit's power these godly and honorable attitudes and actions become more and more consistent in our lives.

Now in one sense when a person becomes a Christian, there is an instantaneous change that occurs in their heart. We've seen this earlier in Ephesians. Our hearts were dead to God and now after salvation we are alive to Christ. We become a new person from the inside out. But some of those old patterns of behavior and belief, conduct and character are still built into our brains and thinking pathways and they take time to change. This change process is called **sanctification** which is what the Holy Spirit does in us as he transforms us as we co-operate with him by putting off and putting on.

But this is not a passive process. This change, this renewal, this transformation requires our desire to change and our diligent co-operation with his Spirit. Paul says put off the old self (the old patters of thinking and behaving), which something we do and put on these new patterns of thinking and behaving, something we do in co-operation with His spirit.

The next few verses give us 5 specific areas in which we are to put off something and put on something and the motivation—the why. This is not an exhaustive list, but important enough for Paul to call our attention to them in this book.

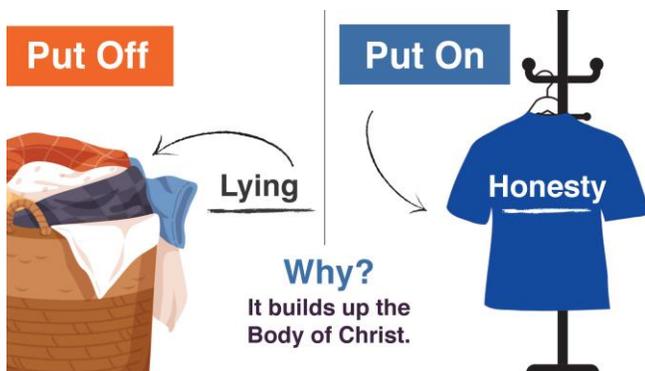
25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Put off lying. In the Greek culture, lying was actually encouraged. Some of the Greek sayings were: A lie is better than a hurtful truth. When telling a lie if it will be profitable, let it be told. This was the culture the Ephesians grew up under. They needed to hear this.

Researchers have found that 60 percent of people lie at least once during the span of a 10-minute conversation. Men and women lie differently. "Women were more likely to lie to make the person they were talking to feel good, while men lied most often to make themselves look better,"

What is lying? It includes

- an outright lie,
- deception,
- leaving out the truth,
- leaving an impression of something that is not true,
- and what we would call a little white lie.



So, put off lying and put on... [honesty](#).

In other words, always tell the truth. It does not mean we tell the brutal truth with no regard for the person's feelings. We are to speak truth in love.

[Why? It builds up the body of Christ.](#)

Paul wrote in 25 after he said to not lie and speak truth, it is because, "we are all members of one body." When we tell truth and don't lie, we build trust and depth and authenticity and in doing so we build up the body of Christ, the church.

So, put off lying and put on honesty.

26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

Put off anger.

A qualifier here: all anger is not sin. Jesus never sinned yet He got angry several times.

- when people got ripped off in the Temple when they purchased sacrifices
- when the disciples were acting like children
- when the Pharisees rigid orthodoxy caused unnecessary suffering for the afflicted.

Justifiable righteous anger can motivate us to solutions. Mothers against drunk driving are angry when people drink, drive and kill people. People who get righteously angry have a great incentive to do something positive.

But anger can be sin and unresolved anger can lead to sin--justify revenge, bitterness, or a license to sin.

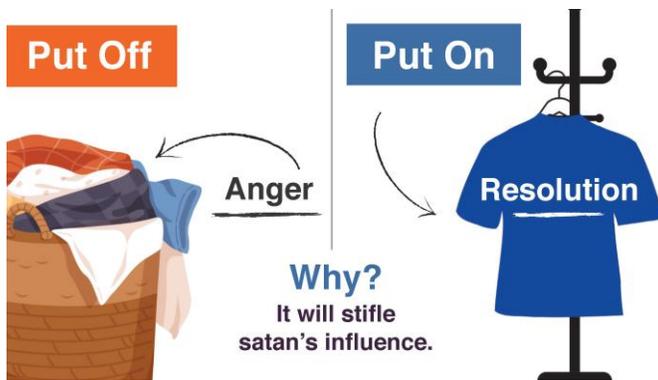
Put on [resolution](#) (of that anger).

When Paul wrote don't let the sun go down while you are angry, he was telling us to resolve your anger soon. Don't let it fester and simmer. Unresolved anger is like a poisonous stew to the soul.

When I was a boy scout and we went camping, we'd often make stew. We put in chunks of beef, carrots, potatoes, and onions. Every one of those had a flavor that influenced the entire stew. In a similar way, when we don't resolve our anger, it permeates our entire soul and can lead us to bitterness, a desire for revenge, passive aggressiveness, and even harm to our body as keep in this anger.

WHY: it will stifle satan's influence

Paul wrote in this context to not *give satan a foothold*.



Satan is not just an enemy that works in extraordinary, outwardly blatant evil ways, but he's a schemer, a deceiver, a conniver, the father of lies. He tries to put us in positions where we don't resolve our anger, anger rises to a ten, and then one more thing comes at us and we pop our tops in many ways...we fly off the handle, we say things we shouldn't say and hurt others, we drive it inward and become rageful.

Unresolved anger can become a foothold for satan because it lowers our threshold to tolerate stresses of life, making us more susceptible to popping our tops.

So put off anger and put on resolution.

28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

Put off theft.

This refers to all forms of stealing and dishonesty, from outright stealing as we see on the news when gangs run into a store and smash and grab as much as they can and run out as well as more subtle forms of stealing like not putting in a full day's work for a full day's pay, cheating on your taxes, or employers not paying their employees what they are due.



Put on **diligence**

Apparently, some of the new believers in this early church came from a lifestyle where they didn't work and stole stuff instead. Paul is saying work for a living. Work hard and be diligent.

Why? So You can become more generous to those in need.

Paul wrote, *may have something to share with those in need*.

One of the reasons God blesses us financially in our work is so that we can have more resources not just for us, but to share with others, those in need, ministry needs, what God is up to. As God blesses you financially, there should be a commensurate increase in your generosity.

So, put off theft and put on diligence.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God

Put off hurtful words

Unwholesome talk is a colorful word used for rotten fruit and vegetables. Have you ever smelled rotten potatoes? It's bad. Paul is saying just like the smell, sight, and taste of rotten food repulses us, so should filthy language, slander, gossip, cussing, and critical talk repulse us to the point we put it off, we don't use it. Filthy, damaging, slanderous words are incompatible with a new life in Christ.

Put on helpful words



Paul wrote that we should use words that *benefit those who listen*.

The word benefit is the word grace. We have the power with righteous and edifying and encouraging words to help others experience a taste of God's grace. When we use our words for good, we confer on others a kind of blessing.

My wife does that so well. I have seen her encouraging spirit and words bring life to people with her words. When we do this, we confer favor, a kind of grace on them

Why: to avoid grieving God

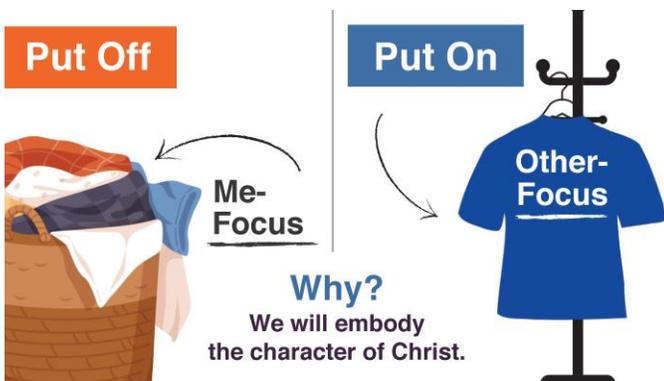
Paul wrote in the same context of using our words wisely that we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Paul ties grieving the heart of God to misusing our words. Words are powerful. When a Christian uses filthy language, curses, slanders or gossips that it hurts the heart of God. It breaks his heart. His holiness is offended, and his love wounded.

So, put off verbal filth and put on helpful words.

He next puts several ideas together in one verse.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Put off: [Me-focus](#)



All these words in v 31 describe reactions of someone that doesn't get their way. The first word is bitterness which is like corrosive acid to your soul. He ends this list with the word malice which describes a person who wants to injure someone else because they didn't get their way.

Put on: [other-focus](#)

Then in verse 32 he uses words like kindness, compassion, and forgiveness that describe a disposition that is other focused. Such people want to help others who are hurting.

Why: [we will embody the character of Christ](#)—live out this new nature

He wrote that we should do these things because Jesus did that for us as he exercised His character and showed us compassion and kindness. We become other-focused to embody the character of Jesus.

So, put off a me-focus and put on an other-focused life.

So, let's put them all up together.

 Put Off	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lying• Anger• Theft• Hurtful Words• Me-Focus		Put On 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Honesty• Resolution• Diligence• Helpful Words• Other-Focus
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So, this week, what do you need to put off?

What do you need to put on?

Putting off and putting on is not gutting it out, having enough willpower to do it. Rather, it is a choice we must make. And if we really want to put off certain attitudes and actions and put on other attitudes and actions, the Holy Spirit who lives in you, will empower you to make those choices and put off and put on.

But we have to take the first step though. We must decide to change.

So, think about what you need to put off and put on this week.