

Some of you guys out there may find that I am an odd individual. But I am a guy who actually enjoys getting new cloths. I like going to the Mall and getting a new pair of pants. I also enjoy going online and finding a nice shirt to purchase. I hate to admit this part out loud in front of everyone, but if you were to go to my closet and count the number of shoes that I have, they outnumber my wife... by a lot. And when I get a new shirt, or anything new, I'm not waiting a week to wear it. Typically, I don't even wait 24 hours. The tags come off immediately and I'm wearing it the first opportunity I get.

That's definitely where I differ from some of you. I am sure that some of you have items hanging in your closet that you bought 6 months ago and they still have the tags on them. I don't have a problem putting the new clothes on. I struggle on the end of getting rid of the old ones. I've got t-shirts in my dresser from when I was in High School; and I probably haven't worn them since High School.

I've got some clothes that I could get rid of because I've got new clothes that they've been replaced by. The reason that we're talking about my wardrobe is because I believe it illustrates this morning's passage really well. We talked last week how the Christ-Centered Life Kills Sin; there's a part of our life that we are putting off and getting rid of on a daily basis. But there also needs to be a replacement where we are putting on something new.

Look at what Colossians 3:9 tells us. When you came to Christ, you put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self that is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of your creator. You have put off the old; you have put on the new self. As we talked about last week, there must be a fight that we step into each day where we battle against our sin; and where our old self will seek to raise its ugly head and we daily put it to death. You are no longer enslaved and shackled to sin, so you actively put it off and put on something completely new.

The qualities that we are going to talk about today are to be actively pursued by God's people. It's not enough to just put off the old self. You must put on the new.

COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

Put on, literally means "to put on clothes," or "envelope in." **The Jesus-Centered Life Puts On the New Life.** (*Mind blowing, I know*). Just as putting to death our sinfulness that clings to us is an intentional action that we commit ourselves to; putting on the new life and living in harmony with what God has called us to is in an intentional choice that we must go after.

New clothes don't show up in your closet without you going to the store, or you putting your information in on a website. In the same way, for you to grow in compassion, kindness, humility, thankfulness, forgiveness... In Colossians 3 it is packed with new characteristics that the people of God must commit to putting on. This is going to take effort on your part. You are going to have to learn to depend on

the Holy Spirit as He leads you through life, as He teaches you His Word, and as He brings transformation to the way that you think and to the way that you live.

This morning we are going to break our message into two parts. The first part covers **The Characteristics of God's People** and that's in verse 12-14. Then the second portion covers **The Priorities of God's People**.

Let's begin breaking down that first portion as it gives seven characteristics in these three verses. We won't go into detail on all of them, but I do want to at least describe each of them. I would say that all of these characteristics, that before it is an outward action that is carried out, it is a transformation that is taking place within the individual. You may recall that I said last week, *we do what we do because we want what we want*. In order to effectively change the doing part on a consistent basis, we must change the wanting part.

So the first character that is mentioned that God's people should be putting on is:

First, compassionate hearts. The heart is always referenced throughout the New Testament in a figurative way as the center of our emotions. Then it also adds in there the word, compassionate. This carries with it the idea of "pity," "mercy," and "sympathy."

If anyone demonstrated a compassionate heart, wasn't it Jesus? He didn't turn a cold shoulder away from those who were in need. He sacrificially served them because loved them.

³⁵And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

As God's people, we are to model the example that was put forward by Christ. The first characteristic of that is compassion and the second is similar to the first.

Second, kindness and it's closely related to compassion. Kindness is a grace that permeates our whole person, softening all that might be harsh. And you think about it, why would you ever be continually kind towards the people around you if you don't have a compassionate heart. Kindness flows out of a heart that is just as concerned about his neighbor's good as he is about his own. That's why you see it linked here as well in Ephesian 4 where we're commanded to, **"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted."** Or as the NIV puts it, **"Be kind and compassionate to one another."** These two move hand in hand and you won't be genuinely kind if you're not also compassionate.

That leads us to our **Third** characteristic, which **is humility**. When Paul wrote this letter to the Colossian church, humility was an idea that brought negative connotations. And actually among the Greeks, they didn't even have a word for "humility." They didn't believe in it and despise the thought of it. But then here came Christianity and Paul's telling them to "put on humility." He's pointing back to Jesus who taught and exemplified humility the entire time on this earth.

Humility is the only remedy to self-centeredness. And self-centeredness destroys all relationships. Your life is to be characterized by an unending love for God and for people. But being self-centered and prideful is destructive towards that goal. When you love yourself and you are self-seeking in your job, in your family, in your marriage or in your community you will poison the relationships that you have with other people. Humility is crucial as you count everyone else as more significant than yourself. And I would say that wherever you find a large conflict in relationships, what you will also find is a lack of humility.

So, strap on humility and follow the advice of James,

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Trust the Lord. Humble yourself and let Him do the exalting.

That takes us to our **Fourth** characteristic, **meekness**. I went to a thesaurus and looked up meekness, do you know what one of the words that came up as a synonym for meekness? Humility. They're so closely related. *Meekness is a willingness to suffer harm instead of inflicting it.* It's the mentality that "if someone is going to get hurt in this situation, let it be me." "If somebody has to lose, let it fall on me." Can you see how humility and meekness are so closely related?

The meek individual, or as some translations say, the gentle individual is a person who knows he or she is a sinner living among other sinners and is willing to suffer the burdens that another person's sin imposes on him or her. The Holy Spirit can only produce this type of meekness, and it is one of the fruits of the Spirit that we're told about in Galatians 5. But meekness should mark the Christians' behavior at all times, no matter what the circumstance.

So we're putting on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility and meekness.

Fifth, we're told to put on **patience**. Patience is a word that expresses long-suffering. The patient person doesn't get angry with other people. William Barclay writes,

"This is the spirit which never loses its patience with its fellow-men. Their foolishness and their unteachability never drive it to cynicism or despair; their insults and their ill-treatment never drive it to bitterness or wrath."

Patience is the opposite of resentment, annoyance, and even revenge. But did you know God is patient? Did you know that if were not for God's patience, no one would ever be saved? A clear examination of your life would testify to God's patience with you, although you didn't deserve it.

Look at God's patience with people throughout the entire Bible: ¹Start at the very beginning in the Garden of Eden with Adam. Adam was given one rule, don't from this tree, but he did. ²Think of King David, the greatest king Israel ever had. He committed adultery and murdered a guy. ³Fast forward to the New Testament, Peter, the disciple of Jesus, denied even knowing Jesus after having spent 3 years with Him in a face-to-face relationship. ⁴ And the author of this book, Colossians. The Apostle Paul, before meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, he ran around killing Christians.

God is patient. God is longsuffering. No wonder we're told to be patient as well. We are told to put on these characteristics that reflect our good God. But Paul doesn't stop there and tells us in the next verse that we are to bearing with one another and forgiving each other as well.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:13

The **Sixth** characteristic is that we are to be **bearing with one another**. This means we are "endure, to hold out in spite of persecution, threats, carelessness or complaints." We're not to retaliate or seek revenge. Too often we carry "the Fight or Flight" mentality in the midst of conflict. Where we either want to step up and argue with those who have wronged us or we take the opposite approach and just run! There must be another way. And there is, you bear with one another, you endure. You even take it a step further and...

Seventh, you **forgive each other**. Just like Jesus who hung on the cross and cried out, "Father, forgive them." That ought to be a defining characteristic of the Christian and that must be a defining characteristic of our church. I am under no illusion that this church is filled with perfect people. We don't gather here on a Sunday morning as a club for "good" people. We are a bunch of misfits who recognize our own sin and our own shortcomings and our own inadequacies before a Holy and Righteous God. We gather together to worship God because we recognize that He has forgiveness of a debt that we could NEVER EVER pay.

Because Christ has forgiven us, we **MUST** forgive others. Let Cornerstone Bible Church be a church that is marked by forgiveness. Let this church be a body of believers that is patient, that is meek, that carries a spirit of humility. May we, as the body of Christ, be kind to one another, be individuals that are compassionate in our interaction with others. And all of this is possible because of Jesus Christ; He is the model for all of these characteristics as well as the One who enables us to put these virtues on.

That leads us to our final characteristic.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:14

Seventh characteristic, we are told to put on **Love**. You think about putting all these characteristics on like articles of clothing, love is the belt that pulls all of these things together. Love is the most important moral quality in the believer's life. You will not have compassion for people if you don't love them. You will not be kind toward people if you don't love them. You will never even understand the idea of humility and meekness unless you learn to love.

A way to summarize all the characteristics that are given in verses 12 and 13 is simply to say, "Love one another." Paul said the same thing in Romans 13 when he said, "**love is the fulfilling of the law**" (Romans 13:10). To attempt to *put on* the characteristics or the virtues of verses 12 and 13 apart from love is worthless. They must flow from love. Nothing is acceptable to God if it is not motivated by love. Study 1 Corinthians 13 sometime, the love chapter. Love is the remarkable virtue of the believer, destroying the ugly sins of the flesh that crushes unity within our relationships.

That's what all of these characteristics are lived out in. They're acted upon in our relationships with each other and everyone we get to interact with. So put on love, which pulls everything together in perfect harmony. Those are The Characteristics that All of God's People should be putting on. And that carries us into the second section where we will take a look at **The Priorities of God's People**.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:15-17

Paul finishes talking about the characteristics that should mark the new lifestyle of God's People by giving three priorities. He talks about the peace of Christ, the Word of Christ, and the name of Christ.

The Peace of Christ. In verse 15, we're told to "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." Through our faith in Jesus Christ, believers have peace with God. When we were born into this world, we were enemies of God and rebellious at heart. But at salvation, the war between God and us ended. The blood on the cross brought about the treaty where we are no longer on different sides of the battlefield. We are now united.

This peace is not referencing an inner attitude or feeling. It's focusing in on the peace that we have with Christ. And that peace that we have with Jesus Christ guides us in making decisions. When faced with a choice of doing what's right or what's wrong, we've got ask ourselves is the choice I'm making going to sustain the peace that I have with Christ or is going to kick against that peace? Sin offend does offend Jesus, with whom I am at peace, and I don't want to make a choice that would dishonor the One who bought my freedom.

And maintain a peaceful heart one has to be thankful. Thankfulness to God comes as a natural outflow as you look at all that God has done for the believer. Peace and thankfulness are closely tied together.

We have as our priority the Peace of Christ, but also:

The Word of Christ. Verse 16 tells us to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” This is talking about Scripture, your Bible. All of the things that we have talked about so far, overflow from a mind controlled by Scripture. It says, “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Your mind, your life must let God’s Word move in with you. It must (*not should be*, but must) abide in you richly, abundantly, and extravagantly. When you’re cut, you must bleed Scripture.

A parallel passage to this is Ephesians 5. What it tells us over in Ephesians 5 is that the result of being filled with Holy Spirit is the same as the result of letting the Word dwell in you richly. These two go hand in hand. To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by His Word. To have the Word dwelling richly in you is to be controlled by the Spirit of God.

And there are a couple of results of the believer who has the Word of Christ dwelling in them richly. First, they will be able to communicate truth by teaching it to others and admonishing those who stray from the truth. And second, the Word of Christ produces in us not only information, but also emotion. It brings about psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

One who has the Word of Christ dwelling in them cannot help but sing out their thankfulness for God’s grace. We sing here on a Sunday morning together on purpose as it creates an avenue for the mouth to voice what God is doing within us.

And everything that we do is set on the priority of **The Name of Christ**. Memorize this verse,

READ COLOSSIANS 3:17

Make that your one aim, you will be living the life that God has called you to live. To put on the new life is to put on Christ. Romans 13:14 says,

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The goal of the Christian life is Christlikeness. Believer, you should so clothe yourself with Jesus Christ that when people look at you, they see Christ.