

“Put On” A Pattern of “The New Man.”
(Be clothed with new ways of living in Christ.)

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Because *“all things have become new”* for Christ followers, we are to seek out those biblical instructions the Holy Spirit has given us for how we should walk through our new lives in Christ. The Apostle Paul has given us ample instructions. For this study, I have chosen a set of ten elements of a pattern of life from Colossians, Chapter 3. We are to emulate each of them in our walk with God. It’s important to note that Colossians, Chapter 3 is not like a buffet from which we pick and choose. It has interconnected parts of a divinely designed pattern of wholeness.

Colossians 3:12-17 (NKJV)

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; {13} bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. {14} But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. {15} And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. {16} Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. {17} And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Our study will unpack the ten words that make up the pattern Paul listed in the verses above. He makes it clear that we’re to wear them as visible signs of our followership of Christ. We are to *“put*

on” each of them. Let’s look into them:

“Tender mercies” and “kindness” (Verse 12)

This expression does not allow for a separation between these two ideas. The original Greek word for “tender mercies” is one that may be translated “bowels of compassion.” This expression is best understood as “an inward heart of compassion.” “Kindness” may be understood as a feeling or an expression of moral goodness and integrity that manifests as a kind act.¹

The idea of “*tender mercies*” goes beyond pity. It’s to be clothed with compassion and kindness that comes with a tenderness of heart for those who need our help and understanding. Can you see the difference between doing something for someone just because you think it’s right, or doing something for someone out of a heart that identifies with their circumstances and sees them as God’s special creation? Paul instructs us to “*put on*” comfort and peace where there has been none. It’s to behave toward someone in a way that provides the security of knowing you really care and are willing to go out of your way to make a difference. It’s to treat someone with the same kind of tenderness with which a loving mother or father hold a newborn baby.

The Prophet Micah asked a question that’s intended to drill down into our hearts, when he spoke of this kind of mercy (tender) as a requirement from God. We’re to express it with humility and God’s special kind of love. God never intended “*tender mercies*” and “*kindness*” to be optional. They’re to be a timeless and universal expression on display from all of God’s people.

Micah 6:8 (NKJV)

*“He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?”*

¹ Strong’s Concordance: G4698 and G3628. (My paraphrase of Strong’s definitions).

“Humility,” “meekness” and “longsuffering” (Verse 12)

I have combined these remaining three elements of Verse 12. They work together as parts of the pattern. They combine to express an attitude that pleases God and is worth exploring. Let’s look at the original Greek meanings of the three words:

“Humility” and “meekness”

“As it was used here it’s actually two thoughts. It’s a compound of “humbleness of mind” and “a deep sense of modesty or lowliness.”² It paints a picture of a person who is gentle, quiet and slow to react. It’s a picture of someone who has control over pride and arrogance. This person has submitted to the Lordship of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“Longsuffering”³

The Apostle Paul’s intentions for this word reflected his own walk as a “*new man*” in Christ. Even a casual reader of the Book of Acts and Paul’s epistles can readily see the things Paul patiently suffered in the service of the Lord. Paul intentionally grouped “*longsuffering*” with “*humility*” and “*meekness*.” These formed a trio of strength with which Paul faced the world. It’s the same principle today as it was then. We have a three-fold cord of power, seen in a humble, meek, and patient attitude, with which we can also face the world. They’re not intended by God to be separate. They mutually support each other... and when added to “*tender mercies*” and “*kindness*,” they complete the thought in Verse 12.

Colossians 3:12 (Paraphrased)

You are chosen by God to be His precious child; and therefore, you are holy and deeply loved by Him. Because of this (and what an incredible honor it is), exchange the old ways you used to live with His new ways. Let them be the hallmarks of your life. I’m speaking of having a quiet, gentle spirit and being under control. Let tenderness and mercy work together in you. They should be the rule of

² Strong’s Numbers G5012 (“humility”) and G4236 (“meekness”).

³ Strong’s Number G3115. (Longsuffering)

thumb for how you react to every situation. In all things, be kind, maintaining a deep sense of modesty and lowliness, especially when your pride wants you to behave otherwise. Walk out this new life in Christ, and with all this operating for your good, exercise patience. For that's where the power of God resides in you and will show itself for you.

Let's turn now to Verse 13 and unpack the key words.

Colossians 3:13 (NKJV)

"...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."

Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."

*"...bearing with one another and forgiving one another,"*⁴

Merriam Webster defines "bearing" or "forbearing" as "to control oneself when provoked: [to] be patient." The authors of the New Living Translation (NLT) offer us perhaps the best understanding of this expression. They said it is allowances for each other's faults. This is an attitude and the resulting action that seems to be clearly in line of God's will for our lives. Forgiveness is the compassionate response Christ modeled for us. He did this in the most difficult situation anyone could ever experience - His crucifixion. Yet, Luke 23:34 records Jesus praying through His deep suffering and pain, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Why would God expect that we bear with one another and do so with an attitude of loving forgiveness? We don't have to ask Him

⁴ Strong's Numbers G430 (To bear, endure, to hold one's self firm) and G240 (to freely forgive, to grant as a favor).

this question. We're not ignorant of why God commands us to forgive; nor are we ignorant of why Satan uses unforgiveness as a weapon for our destruction. God knows (and so should we) that unforgiveness is poison and needs to be released. You and I have "*the mind of Christ.*" (1 Corinthians 2:16) This means we can understand what His will is for us. We can make choices that align with the guidelines the Holy Spirit has given us through His Word and His inward witness.

Colossians 3:13 (Paraphrased)

Never expect any of us to be perfect. Make allowances for each other's faults because they are no worse than your. When you are offended, don't complain. Don't hold it against the person who has offended you, whether it was deliberate or they just didn't realize it. Forgive them and release yourself from the poison of unforgiveness that wants to infect your heart. Never forget that God in Christ has forgiven you and fully expects, and in fact, demands that you forgive others.

Now that we've unpacked Verses 12 and 13, let's move ahead to Verses 14 and 15. You'll see that Paul closely connected the two previous verses with the next two by adding the most important element of Christian living - God's love. I'll quote the New King James Version first; and then The Passion Translation (TPT). It's so clearly expressive of God's heart that it gives us a deeper understanding for how important these two verses are to the Lord (and therefore, to us).

Colossians 3:14-15 (NKJV)

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. {15} And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

Colossians 3:14-15 (TPT)

“For love is supreme and must flow through each of these virtues. Love becomes the mark of true maturity. {15} Let your heart be always guided by the peace of the Anointed One, who called you to peace as part of his one body. And always be thankful.”

“...above all these things put on love which is the bond of perfection.”

As a priority beyond everything that’s already been shown to be part of the pattern of living as “*the new man*,” we’re to “*put on*” and demonstrate one God-revealing character trait or “*virtue*” about all the others. It’s “*love*,” and in particular, God’s distinct kind of unselfish, other-centered, sacrificial love (“*agape*”).⁵ To “*put on*” means to wear “*agape*,” and to display it. It’s to allow His kind of love to be seen as the foremost sign of who we are in Christ. This is the “*virtue*” that must permeate or fill each of the previously mentioned parts of the pattern. All the other parts of the pattern will be tested, defined and held together by it. God’s kind of love is the mark of a believer’s maturity in Christ (a sign of our transformation from who we were to who we are today).

Verse 15 begins with a conjunction (a word that connects the previous thought to the next). It can be unexpressed, or in this case, expressed as the word “*and*.”

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts,”

We’re to understand that love toward others is connected to peace within ourselves. It’s also apparent that peace within us is to have rulership or authority over our hearts. Peace is the deciding factor. If you need to decide how to treat someone, ask the Holy Spirit what happens when you give God’s kind of love to him or her. The Holy Spirit will answer with an abundance of peace in your heart. His peace will be the signal that your choice was correct. Nothing could be more confirming! It affirms that you are a healthy, functioning part of the body of Christ.

⁵ Strong’s Number G26 (“*agape*” = love, also translated charity).

“...called in one body; and be thankful.”

You are no longer alone, but are part of something big and wonderful, for which you ought not help but be thankful. This is one of the blessings of being a Christ-follower. It's a peace that's unavailable in anything else.

Colossians 3:14-15 (Paraphrased)

Let God's love for others become ingrained in your heart and shown through how you live your life. God desires it to be your greatest, highest, and obvious priority. It's the missing link between those virtues I've already mentioned. They're to work together, cemented by love, to bring a mature sense of peace to those with whom you share your Christianity.

We have now come to the final two verses in our study, Verses 16 and 17. They finish this section of Colossians, Chapter 3, in which Paul has given the Colossians (and us) instructions about God's desire that we *“put on” the new man.* If you backtrack to Colossians 3:2 and read it, you'll see that the four verses (12-15) have concisely explained the meaning of *“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”* The final two verses (16 and 17) end the pattern with a word of encouragement. This pattern of Christian living is one of many in the epistles. They're guideposts for success. Below are the New King James Version and then the New Living Translation of these two verses.

Colossians 3:16-17 (NKJV)

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.⁶ {17} And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

⁶ Strong's Number G1774 (to inhabit or abide permanently and continually).

Colossians 3:16-17 (NLT)

“Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. {17} And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.”

Paul has now turned to the Gospel. He said to let it fill the lives of his readers, so it can be taught and lived through succeeding generations. He reiterated that we’re to do this with the knowledge that we represent Christ. As Paul so often did, he encouraged the Colossians (and us) to do so with thanks to the Father.

Colossians 3:16-17 (Paraphrased)

I encourage you to let Christ’s words live permanently fixed in your heart, always thanking God that you can walk in His wisdom, making a difference for others. Sing spiritual songs of thanksgiving to God the Father, for He’s given you His grace and it’s right there, abiding in your hearts. Make a difference for others, always thankful that God made a difference for you!

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The Complete Paraphrase of Colossians 3:12-17

You are chosen by God to be His precious child; and therefore, you are holy and deeply loved by Him. Because of this (and what an incredible honor it is), exchange the old ways you used to live with His new ways. Let them be the hallmarks of your life. I’m speaking of having a quiet, gentle spirit and being under control. Let tenderness and mercy work together in you. They should be the rule of thumb for how you react to every situation. In all things, be kind, maintaining a deep sense of modesty and lowliness, especially when your pride wants you to behave otherwise.

Walk out this new life in Christ, and with all this operating for your good, exercise patience. For that's where the power of God resides in you and will show itself for you.

{13} Never expect any of us to be perfect. Make allowances for each other's faults because they are no worse than your. When you are offended, don't complain. Don't hold it against the person who has offended you, whether it was deliberate or they just didn't realize it. Forgive them and release yourself from the poison of unforgiveness that wants to infect your heart. Never forget that God in Christ has forgiven you and fully expects, and in fact, demands that you forgive others.

{14-15} Let God's love for others become ingrained in your heart and shown through how you live your life. God desires it to be your greatest, highest, and obvious priority. It's the missing link between those virtues I've already mentioned. They're to work together, cemented by love, to bring a mature sense of peace to those with whom you share your Christianity.

{16-17} I encourage you to let Christ's words live permanently fixed in your heart, always thanking God that you can walk in His wisdom, making a difference for others. Sing spiritual songs of thanksgiving to God the Father, for He's given you His grace and it's right there, abiding in your hearts. Make a difference for others, always thankful that God made a difference for you!

Please take this paraphrase of Colossians 3:12-17 into your quiet times of prayer and ask God to speak to you from within it. He has done this for me and I know He will do it for you. He's forever faithful and loving. Bless His name forever.

Dr. Bob Abramson