



[Colossians 3:8-16](#)

(8) But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. (9) Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices (10) and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (11) Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. (12) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (13) Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (14) And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (15) Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. (16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

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This is the practical application of "seek[ing] those things which are above" ([Colossians 3:1](#)). In effect, Paul is saying that, if we are seeking heavenly things, the resources to overcome these things will be available. They will be part of us because [God](#) responds to those who are truly seeking Him.

We must be patient. Our [relationship with God](#) is not magic. It takes work. Those of us who have had any of these problems understand that one must hold a tight rein on oneself to keep from doing the things that Paul says to "put off." They are so deeply ingrained within us that they want to break out all by themselves.

This is why Paul writes in [Romans 7:15-23](#), "The things that I do not want to do, I do. The things I do want to do, I do not do." He concludes that two conflicting laws were working within him. There was the law of his mind, which loved God, understood a great deal about Him, and wanted to submit to Him, to sacrifice for His sake and in His name,

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and to discipline himself. But the law of his flesh—[sin](#) that dwelt within him—everyonce in a while reared its ugly head and broke out.

Thus, we must discipline ourselves. We know that we are to "put off" those things that do not reflect the [image of God](#) and to "put on" the characteristics that do. "Putting on" and "taking off" are not always easy. Sometimes, we can readily apply or overcome certain things; they seem to come easily to us. But other character flaws are thorns in the flesh, their barbs stuck deep within us, and they embarrass us from time to time and make us feel guilty. They make us wonder whether we will be acceptable before God. Seeing this, we realize that overcoming them will take a great deal of work—and work requires discipline.

One of the final things that Paul mentions in this passage is [love \(Colossians 3:14\)](#). Love is the crown; it tops off, as it were, all of the other virtues, tying them all together. A true love for God and love for others—not to mention a proper love for ourselves—will motivate us to transform into Christ's image.

The diligent "putting on" and the "taking off" will be the proof of our [seeking God](#) and the things which are above. When we understand this, we realize that even the ability to "put on" and to "take off" is a gift from God, as the resources to do this come from Him. God responds to those who make Him the focus of their lives, and this is who we exhibit. The evidence begins to show in the way we live our lives.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Covenants, Grace, and Law \(Part 23\)](#)



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