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# Putting Off And Putting On

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## Read Ephesians 4:17-32

1. Do you love the church, the safe place where God has put you in this world? (See Ephesians 4:1-16, the context of 4:17-32)
2. How do you deal with the fact that you are, at the same time, a member of the beautiful body of Christ, and also a struggling sinner who must live in a fallen world? (v17-19)
  - a) Are you fighting against your own fallen desire to be think that what the world considers impressive, is actually impressive (music, money, cars, houses, education, clothes, fancy restaurants, physical beauty, etc)? (See 1 John 2:15-17)
  - b) Is your heart sensitive when you sin against God, or doesn't it really bother you?
  - c) Do you have sins in your life that you struggle with so much that you don't believe you will ever break free from them?
3. When you struggle against your own sin, and the sins of others in this world, are you in the habit of constantly reminding yourself of your noble calling in Christ? (v20-21)
  - a) Do you understand that God commands you to progressively put off your old sinful habits and ways? (v22)
  - b) Do you understand that God commands you to progressively put on new godly habits? (v24)
  - c) Do you understand that God commands you to cultivate a new attitude toward growing in personal holiness? (v23)
  - d) Look at the examples of putting off and putting on that Paul gives us (v25-32):
    - **Illustration:** A tsotsie who lurks and robs people. Is he still a tsotsie while he is not actually attacking someone? Yes. Until he changes completely.
    - (V17) **Put off** falsehood (deceiving with speech), **put on** truthful speech
    - (V26-27) **Put off** stewing anger, **put on** rejection of anger immediately (self-control, gentleness, love)
    - (V28) **Put off** stealing, **put on** working and giving
    - (V29) **Put off** unwholesome (destructive) speech, **put on** constructive, encouraging speech
    - (V31-32) **Put off** bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.
    - **Put on** kindness and compassion toward one another, forgiving each other,

just as in Christ God forgave you.

- e) Is this the way you have tried to change in the past? If not, can you see how this text insists that you go about changing?
- f) Have you ever realised that if you are not deliberately changing in this way, you are grieving the Holy Spirit? (V30)

4. Aren't you grateful God has given you the ability to form habits?

- a) Imagine brushing teeth, putting on shoes/tying laces, walking, sport, music, cooking, driving, accounting, reading/writing etc. if you had to do them as if for the first time, every time!
- b) Aren't you grateful that God gave you this habit capacity so that you can develop godly habits?
- c) Does it grieve you that instead of using your habit capacity for cultivating godly habits, you have used it to develop sinful, selfish habits that you now find very hard to break?
  - Try to list some of your sinful habit patterns that you need to break.
  - Try to list some godly habits that you need to develop in their place.

5. Have you ever struggled to develop a godly habit pattern, and then given up, because you don't believe you can do it?

- a) Is it clear to you that you have been wrong in this conclusion. You **can** develop a godly habit because you have already developed **all kinds of habits** (see question 4a).
- b) Have you realised that there are two main reasons you fail to develop godly habits?
  - You don't feel like it (Eph 4:19).
  - You have given up too soon (obvious in the fact that you have not changed).

6. Can you see that **all habits** are cultivated by starting with a very small first step, and then they grow into a powerful habit that sticks for years—like a baby learning to walk with a first step, growing into a world-record sprinter.

- a) If all habits are formed like this, do you understand why it grieves the Holy Spirit if you are not willing to take even the very first little step toward developing a godly habit? (See 1 Tim 4:7)

**b)** However, do you realise that **as** you take the first step, all of the power of God is behind you developing that new godly habit?