



Biblical Change is a Process

As a believer, you may often experience internal conflict as you make choices between good and evil. Practically speaking, you will choose to live either by self-centered feelings and satisfy fleshly desires or live by faith and obey God's Word. Growing in Christ involves prayerfully setting your mind on Jesus Christ and the Scriptures to please God rather than living by self-centered feelings to please yourself.

Romans 7:19-25, For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ²¹ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³ but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

2 Corinthians 5:15, and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Galatians 5:17, For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Philippians 3:12-14, Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:1-2, Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

SPECIFICS OF PUT-OFFS AND PUT-ONS

To change your thoughts, words, and actions, you must learn and obey God's Word. His Word warns you of many transgressions that hinder your growth in Christ. A transgression is any willful sin which crosses the boundary between obeying God's Word and following your natural self-centeredness. You must "put off" self-centered sins and "put on" Christ-like responses to every situation. Key passages emphasizing "put-offs" and "put-ons" are Ephesians 4:22-32 and Colossians 3:5-17 (*printed at the end of this article*). As these passages demonstrate, when Scripture mentions a "put-off," often an appropriate "put-on" is nearby. Using Ephesians chapter 4 as an example, note the following.

Put-off

Falsehood

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Stealing

Ephesians 4:28

He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.

Unwholesome speech

Ephesians 4:29

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Bitterness, wrath, anger
clamor, slander, malice

Ephesians 4:31-32

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Put-on

Speaking the truth

Working and giving to
those in need

Edifying speech, according
to the need of the moment

Kindness, tenderheartedness,
forgiveness

Sometimes, Scripture gives a “put-on” without an associated “put-off.” God provides this instruction so you can know His will for your life in those areas where you may be ignorant or disobedient. For example:

1. Make disciples, baptizing and teaching them (Matthew 28:19-20).
Matthew 28:19-20, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
2. Do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Christ (Colossians 3:17).
Colossians 3:17, Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.
3. Put on the full armor of God and stand firm (Ephesians 6:13-20).
Ephesians 6:13-20, Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵ and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. ¹⁷ And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
4. Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects (Colossians 1:9-10).
Colossians 1:9-10, For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.
5. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Rejoice always; ¹⁷ pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Putting on biblical deeds that you have previously omitted glorifies God.

1 Peter 2:12, Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 4:11, Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER AND ACTION

Prayer is necessary for an obedient Christian life (Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Colossians 4:2, Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*.

1 Thessalonians 5:17, pray without ceasing

Prayer is essential for a believer to experience God's peace (Philippians 4:6-7).

Philippians 4:6-7, Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Prayer . . . and You (<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Prayer%20and%20You%20%28Prayer%20Pt%203%29.pdf>)

Do You REALLY Believe What You Say About Prayer? at <http://wordtruth.org/Do%20You%20Really%20Believe%20What%20You%20Say%20About%20Prayer.pdf>

However, prayer alone will not accomplish the fullness of God’s plan for your life. You also need to act specifically and in obedience to God’s Word.

Matthew 7:24-27 (*spoken by Jesus*), “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.” (*insert added*)

Philippians 2:12-13 (*written by Apostle Paul*), So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure. (*insert added*)

Philippians 4:9, (*written by Apostle Paul*), The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (*insert added*)

James 1:22-25, But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

As stated in Part 5 of this series, your growth in the Christ-life will involve putting off thoughts, words, and actions that dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ and, in their place, putting on new ways of thinking, speaking, and acting that reflect His character and example.

Romans 6:6-7, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

Romans 6:12-13, Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

Romans 6:17-19, But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

Ephesians 4:29, Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Colossians 4:5-6, Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. ⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

FAILURE AND CONFESSION

If you fail, it is possible to honor God again by responding biblically. You do this by acknowledging and repenting of your sins to God, which is part of confession (1 John 1:9).

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

With a view to reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24, Romans 12:18), at a biblically appropriate time, confess your sin to those against whom you have sinned (James 5:16)

Matthew 5:23-24, Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

Romans 12:18, If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

James 5:16, Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

See *Confession – The Ultimate Test of Truthfulness* at

<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Confession%20-%20The%20Ultimate%20Test%20of%20Truthfulness.pdf>

When you confess your sins to God and develop a pattern of recognizing sin and dealing with it in a manner that pleases the Lord, you acknowledge His Lordship.

Psalms 51:1-4, Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.

Luke 6:46, (*spoken by Jesus*) Why do you call Me, “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I say? (*insert added*)

As you live in a truthful, God-honoring manner, you are enabled to have unhindered communication with your Heavenly Father (Psalm 66:18) and to have a fruitful prayer life (1 John 3:22).

Psalm 66:18, If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.

1 John 3:22, and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

Additionally, when you consistently confess your sins to others, you encourage harmonious relationships (Romans 12:18) and demonstrate the difference that Jesus makes in your life (Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 4:32-5:2).

Romans 12:18, If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Matthew 5:16, Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Ephesians 4:32 - 5:2, Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. ^{5:1}Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ²and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma

Reaching the foremost goal in any worthwhile field of endeavor is exhilarating. There is no greater goal than being in the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ forever and ever. By God's grace, that goal is assured for believers in Christ. In the meantime, God has promised that followers of Christ are divinely empowered to become more like Christ in this life, anticipating complete Christ-likeness in the life to come.

Key passages emphasizing "put-offs" and "put-ons" are Ephesians 4:22-32 and Colossians 3:5-17. These passages are printed below for your reference.

Ephesians 4:22-32, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

²⁵Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. ²⁶BE ANGRY, AND *yet* DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need. ²⁹Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. ³⁰Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Colossians 3:5-17, Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— ¹¹a renewal in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

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