

Saved: God's Plan of Salvation, Teacher's Guide

Week 9: Walking in Newness of Life: Faithful Christian Living

Colossians 3:1–17

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson turns from how a person is saved to how a saved person lives, and the doctrine at stake is sanctification: the new, holy life that necessarily follows from salvation. Paul grounds everything in the indicative before he reaches the imperative. Because “you have been raised with Christ” (a direct echo of the baptism of Week 6) and your life “is hidden with Christ in God,” therefore seek the things above, put off the old, and put on the new. Help students see that holiness is not a frantic self-improvement project nor a way of earning a salvation already received by grace; it is the working out of a new identity, the becoming of what we already are in Christ. This guards against two errors at once: the legalism that reduces the Christian life to rule-keeping, and the cheap grace that imagines salvation makes no claim on how we live.

Notice that this passage assumes and reinforces several convictions the study has built. Christ is “seated at the right hand of God” (v. 1), reigning now; the believer’s hope and home are with the exalted, presently-reigning Lord, not in a future earthly kingdom. The new life is corporate, not merely private: the peace of Christ rules in the one body to which we were called, the word of Christ dwells among us as we teach and admonish one another, and we sing together in worship (v. 16). And the whole of life, “whatever you do, in word or deed,” comes under the lordship of Jesus (v. 17). Faithful Christian living is the lifelong fruit that the plan of salvation is meant to produce, and it sets up the final week on persevering to the end.

Aim this lesson squarely at transformation, which is the heart of our ministry. Resist letting it become a mere catalog of vices and virtues. The goal is that students would, by grace and the Spirit, actually take off something this week and put on something else, in real relationships and real habits. Keep the indicative and imperative together at every turn: we do not put off and put on in order to be accepted; we put off and put on because we have been raised with Christ and are being remade in His image. Lead with identity, follow with obedience, and keep the risen Christ at the center.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul begins, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (v. 1). How does our union with the risen Christ become the foundation for the entire call to holy living that follows, and what does it mean that our life is now “hidden with Christ in God” (v. 3)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Establish the foundation Paul lays in verses 1–4. The entire ethical section rests on a completed fact: “you have been raised with Christ.” This points back to baptism (Colossians 2:12; Week 6), where we were buried and raised with Him. Holy living is not how we get into Christ; it is how those already in Christ live.

Unfold “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” Our orientation has changed because our location has changed; we belong now to the realm where Christ reigns. Note the present reign of Christ at God’s right hand, consistent with the study’s teaching that He rules now, not in a deferred earthly kingdom.

Explain “your life is hidden with Christ in God” (v. 3). Our truest identity and security are bound up with Christ, safe and unseen, awaiting full display when He appears (v. 4). This gives the believer both stability and hope: who we are does not rest on circumstances but on union with Christ.

Draw the pastoral payoff. Because change flows from identity, the Christian pursues holiness from acceptance, not for it. We are not climbing toward God’s favor; we are living out the new self we have already been given. This is the engine of all that follows.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The new life grounded in being raised with Christ (vv. 1–4; Colossians 2:12; Week 6)
- Orientation changed because location changed: we belong where Christ reigns
- Christ “seated at the right hand of God”: His present reign, not a future earthly one
- Life “hidden with Christ in God”: identity and security in union with Him
- Pursuing holiness from acceptance, not for it

Discussion Prompts

- How does being raised with Christ become the basis for holy living?
- What does it mean that your life is “hidden with Christ in God”?
- Why does pursuing holiness from acceptance differ from pursuing it for acceptance?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul commands us to set our minds “on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (v. 2). What “earthly” things most easily capture your thoughts and your attention, and what is one practical way you could begin setting your mind on things above this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses verse 2: “set your minds on things that are above.” Transformation begins in the mind and its habitual attention. Where the mind dwells, the heart follows, and the life follows the heart (Romans 12:2).

Help students audit their attention honestly. Our free moments reveal our true loves: what we reach for, scroll through, daydream about, worry over. These earthly preoccupations are not always sinful, but they can crowd out the things above.

Offer concrete practices of setting the mind above: a rhythm of Scripture and prayer, gratitude, choosing what we feed our attention, filling idle moments with truth rather than noise. Aim for one practical change this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Transformation beginning in the mind’s habitual attention (v. 2; Romans 12:2)
- Free moments as a revealer of our true loves
- Earthly preoccupations crowding out the things above
- Concrete practices for setting the mind above

Discussion Prompts

- Where does your mind drift when it is free to wander?
- What does that reveal about where your heart is most set?
- What is one practical way to set your mind above this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you,” and lists sins like sexual immorality, impurity, evil desire, and covetousness, which he calls idolatry (v. 5). What does it mean to “put to death” these things rather than merely manage them, and why does Paul treat covetousness as a form of idolatry?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open the strong verb of verse 5: “put to death.” Paul does not say manage, moderate, or balance these sins; he says kill them. The Christian wages active war on indwelling sin (mortification), refusing to negotiate a truce with what God has condemned.

Walk the list: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness. These are not minor; Paul says “on account of these the wrath of God is coming.” The new life takes sin seriously precisely because grace is serious.

Explain why covetousness “is idolatry.” Greed enthrones a created thing in the place of God, trusting and craving it for the security and satisfaction only God can give. All sin, at root, is a

form of misplaced worship, which is why putting it to death is ultimately about who reigns in the heart.

Clarify the means. We put sin to death not by mere willpower but by the Spirit (Romans 8:13) and by drawing on our union with the risen Christ. Mortification is empowered war, not white-knuckled suppression, and it is daily work, not a one-time victory.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “Put to death”: active war on sin (mortification), not management
- The seriousness of the vices and the wrath of God (v. 6)
- Covetousness as idolatry: sin as misplaced worship
- Mortification by the Spirit and union with Christ, not mere willpower (Romans 8:13)
- Killing sin as daily work, not a single victory

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between putting a sin to death and merely managing it?
- Why does Paul call covetousness idolatry?
- How do we put sin to death by the Spirit rather than by willpower alone?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul’s lists are specific on purpose. Reading slowly through verses 5 through 9, which particular sin do you sense the Spirit pressing on your heart right now, and what would genuinely “putting it to death” look like in your life this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question invites the Spirit’s specific conviction. Read verses 5–9 slowly in class and let the lists do their searching work; almost everyone will feel one item pressing on the conscience.

Encourage specificity and honesty. The goal is not a general resolve to be better but the naming of one real sin, perhaps a hidden one, that needs to be put to death. Hidden sins are hardest, and confession to a trusted believer often breaks their power.

Pair conviction with hope and means. Putting a sin to death this week may mean removing a temptation’s access, establishing accountability, replacing a pattern, and praying specifically. Remind students they fight from victory, not for it, as people already raised with Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Welcoming the Spirit’s specific conviction from the text

- Naming one real sin rather than a general resolve
- Confession and accountability breaking the power of hidden sin
- Practical means of mortification, fighting from victory not for it

Discussion Prompts

- Which specific sin in these verses is the Spirit pressing on you?
- What would genuinely putting it to death look like this week?
- Who could you invite into that fight for prayer and accountability?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul says we “have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (vv. 9–10). What is the relationship between the new self we have already put on and the ongoing renewal Paul describes, and how does this shape a right understanding of Christian growth?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open the put-off and put-on language of verses 9–10. Paul speaks of the old self as already “put off” and the new self as already “put on,” yet also “being renewed.” Both are true: a decisive change has happened, and an ongoing renewal is underway.

Explain the already and the not yet. At conversion we genuinely became new (2 Corinthians 5:17); the old self’s reign was broken (Week 6). Yet the new self is “being renewed,” a present, continuous process of growing into the image of our Creator. Christian growth is the progressive realizing of what is already definitively true.

Apply this to expectations. It saves students from two discouragements: the perfectionism that expects instant completeness, and the despair that doubts any real change has occurred. We are truly new and still being renewed; growth is real but not yet finished.

Note the goal: renewal “after the image of its creator.” Sanctification is being remade into the likeness of Christ, the restoration of the image of God marred by sin (Week 1). The destination is Christlikeness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The already and not yet: new self put on, yet “being renewed” (vv. 9–10)
- Decisive change at conversion and ongoing growth together (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Guarding against both perfectionism and despair about change
- The goal of renewal: the image of the Creator, that is, Christlikeness

Discussion Prompts

- How can the new self be both already put on and still being renewed?
- How does this protect us from both perfectionism and despair?
- What does it mean that we are being renewed “after the image” of our Creator?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul tells us to “put on” compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and above all love (vv. 12–14). Which of these garments do you most need to put on right now, and in which specific relationship is Christ calling you to actually wear it this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question turns to the virtues of verses 12–14. Paul frames them as garments to “put on,” deliberate choices, not feelings to wait for. We can put on kindness or patience by God’s grace even before we feel kind or patient.

Note the relational nature of the list: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving. These are not private virtues but ways of treating people, especially within the body. Christlikeness is tested in relationships.

Highlight love as the outer garment that “binds everything together in perfect harmony” (v. 14). Love is not one virtue among many but the coat that holds the whole wardrobe together. Aim students at one virtue, in one specific relationship, this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The virtues as garments to put on, chosen by grace, not awaited as feelings (vv. 12–14)
- The relational nature of the new self’s virtues
- Love as the binding garment over all (v. 14)
- One virtue, one relationship, one week

Discussion Prompts

- Which of these garments do you most need to put on right now?
- In which specific relationship is Christ calling you to wear it?
- Why does love hold all the other virtues together?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul describes a rich communal life: letting “the peace of Christ rule” in our hearts, letting “the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” teaching and admonishing one another, and singing to God

(vv. 15–16). What do these verses teach us about how faithful Christian living is meant to be lived out together in the body of Christ rather than alone?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open the corporate vision of verses 15–16. Faithful Christian living is not a solo pursuit. The peace of Christ rules “in one body,” to which we “were called.” The word of Christ dwells among us “richly” as we teach and admonish “one another.” We grow together or not at all.

Teach the place of the word and worship. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” roots the community in Scripture; the singing of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” is congregational worship that teaches and admonishes even as it praises. This reflects the apostolic pattern of word-centered, participatory worship.

Apply the high view of the church the study has maintained. The new life is meant to be lived in the fellowship of the local congregation, where we are taught, corrected, encouraged, and held accountable. The individualism that says “I can follow Christ on my own” is foreign to this text.

Connect peace and gratitude. The ruling peace of Christ and a thankful heart (v. 15) are the atmosphere of healthy body life. A grateful, peaceful people bear with one another; a grumbling, anxious people fracture.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithful living as corporate, lived in the one body (vv. 15–16)
- The word of Christ dwelling richly as the community’s foundation
- Participatory, word-centered worship in song that teaches and admonishes
- A high view of the local congregation against modern individualism
- The ruling peace of Christ and gratitude as the atmosphere of body life

Discussion Prompts

- Why is faithful Christian living meant to be lived together rather than alone?
- How does letting the word of Christ dwell among us richly shape the church?
- How do the peace of Christ and a thankful heart hold a congregation together?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul places forgiving one another, “as the Lord has forgiven you,” at the heart of the new life (v. 13). Is there someone you are still struggling to forgive? How does remembering the way Christ forgave you change the way you think about extending that same forgiveness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question lands on forgiveness (v. 13). Paul makes the measure explicit: forgive “as the Lord has forgiven you.” The vertical grace we have received becomes the pattern and power of the horizontal grace we extend.

Help students name the specific person and grievance honestly. Unforgiveness usually has a name and a story. Acknowledge that some wounds are deep and forgiveness is hard; this is not minimizing the hurt but releasing the debt.

Reframe with the gospel. We forgive not because the wrong was small but because we have been forgiven so much (Matthew 18:21–35). Remembering the cross, where our own enormous debt was canceled, melts the hardness that withholds forgiveness. Encourage one concrete step this week, whether prayer for the person, a released grudge, or a move toward reconciliation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Forgiving “as the Lord has forgiven you” (v. 13)
- Vertical grace as the pattern and power of horizontal grace
- Naming the specific person and grievance honestly
- The cross melting unforgiveness (Matthew 18:21–35)

Discussion Prompts

- Is there someone you are still struggling to forgive?
- How does remembering Christ’s forgiveness of you change how you see that?
- What is one concrete step toward forgiveness you could take this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul gathers the whole new life into one sweeping command: “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (v. 17). How does this verse show that faithful Christian living is the necessary fruit of salvation rather than an optional extra, and how does it hold together the truth that we are saved by grace with the truth that grace produces a transformed, obedient life under the lordship of the risen Christ who reigns now at God’s right hand?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block, gathering the lesson into verse 17: “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Begin by showing the comprehensiveness. Nothing is left out, no word, no deed, no corner of life that is not brought under the lordship of Jesus. This is the lordship of Week 5 worked out across the whole of daily living.

Establish that this faithful living is the necessary fruit of salvation, not an optional add-on. Paul does not say “if you feel like it” or “for the especially devoted.” The new life is the expected, normal outworking of having been raised with Christ. A salvation that produced no transformed living would be a contradiction in terms; we are God’s workmanship, created for good works (Week 8, Ephesians 2:10).

Now hold grace and transformation together, as in every week. We are not made new by our holy living; we live holy because we have been made new by grace. Yet grace is not opposed to a transformed life; it produces one. Titus 2:11–12 says the grace that saves also “trains us to renounce ungodliness” and to live godly lives. So sanctification is neither a way of earning salvation (works-righteousness) nor an optional extra that grace makes unnecessary (cheap grace). It is grace bearing its intended fruit.

Reinforce the present reign of Christ. We do all “in the name of the Lord Jesus” because He is Lord now, reigning at the right hand of God (v. 1). Faithful living is glad submission to a King who already reigns, not preparation for a kingdom that has not yet come. Christ’s lordship is a present reality that lays claim on the present moment.

Close by connecting to perseverance. This whole-life faithfulness is not a sprint but the long obedience that the final week will take up: the saved are called to keep walking in the new life to the end. Verse 17 is the daily shape of a life that means to be faithful unto death. Let students feel that ordinary, thankful, Christ-centered living, word and deed offered up to Jesus, is exactly what salvation was for.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The comprehensiveness of verse 17: every word and deed under Christ’s lordship
- Faithful living as the necessary fruit of salvation, not an optional extra (Ephesians 2:10)
- Grace and transformation held together: grace produces godliness (Titus 2:11–12)
- Rejecting both works-righteousness and cheap grace
- The present reign of Christ as the ground of whole-life submission (v. 1)
- Whole-life faithfulness as the daily shape of persevering to the end

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to do “everything” in the name of the Lord Jesus?
- How is a transformed life the fruit of grace rather than the earning of salvation?
- How does the present reign of Christ lay claim on your ordinary daily life?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over this whole picture of the new life, the mind set above, the old self put off, the new self put on, every word and deed offered to the Lord. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you

through this passage. What is the one garment He is asking you to take off, and the one He is asking you to put on, this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone asks for one concrete put-off and one concrete put-on. Gather the whole passage: mind set above, old self off, new self on, every word and deed to the Lord. Press past good intentions to a specific garment.

Help students choose realistically. One sin to put to death and one virtue to put on, in a named relationship or habit, is far more transforming than a vague resolve to be holier. Encourage them to write it down and share it with someone.

End with identity and the Spirit. Remind the class they do this as people already raised with Christ, empowered by the Spirit, becoming who they already are. The aim is real formation this week, not merely admiration of a beautiful passage.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Naming one concrete put-off and one concrete put-on
- Choosing realistically, in a specific relationship or habit
- Writing it down and sharing it for accountability
- Acting from identity and in the Spirit's power

Discussion Prompts

- What one garment is Christ asking you to take off this week?
- What one garment is He asking you to put on, and where?
- Who could you tell, so they can encourage you in it?