

Examples of Putting Off the Old Man and Putting On the New Man

Ephesians 4:25-31

Ephesians 4:25-32: “Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another. “Be angry, and do not sin”. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Background Notes

One of the most helpful illustrations for understanding the concepts of the “old man” and the “new man” - and what it means to “put off the old man” and “put on the new man” - is the illustration of getting a new car. You’ve probably heard me share this illustration before, because it’s a good one!

A couple of years ago we bought a brand new car, a Subaru Outback. When we bought that Outback, we owned an old Buick station wagon. (Some of you remember that old brown station wagon!) At first I tried to fix up the old station wagon. I did a little bodywork and took it to a mechanic for a tune-up – it looked a little better, but it was still the old station wagon. Then we tried the trade-in option but we couldn’t get a good price for the old Buick, so we got the brand new Subaru Outback, but we kept the old brown Buick. Of course we drove the new Outback! We left the old Buick parked beside the garage. It was relegated to the “don’t drive it” category, and it gradually “died.”

Do you follow the illustration? The old Buick represents the *old man* that we discussed in our last lesson. The new Outback represents the *new man*. It’s brand new. It’s not a fixed-up, overhauled, refurbished old Buick. In the same way, the *new man* is the new person that we are in Christ. The new man is not a fixed-up, overhauled *old man*. The *old man* is done, as far as God is concerned - and it should be done as far as we are concerned, too. God has relegated the *old man* (what characterized us before salvation) to the place of death - to that “don’t drive it” position. And we should leave it there.

To continue the illustration: let’s say that instead of driving the new Subaru, I decided for old time’s sake to take the old Buick out for a drive – put in some gas, get it going, and take it out on the road. That illustrates choosing to live like the *old man*. It illustrates what happens when we *don’t* “put off the old man.” In terms of the illustration, we should never “take the old car out for a spin.” We should put gas only into the new

car, and we should only drive the new car. Driving the new car is like putting on the *new man!* The premium gas we should put in the new car is the Word of God, prayer, worship, and fellowship.

Don't drive the old car! Don't even take it out for a little spin once in a while, because you're very likely to end up in a bad accident. Don't even start it up. Leave it in the "don't drive it" category. Consider it dead.

Doctrinal Point

Believers should have a changed lifestyle.

Here we have examples of what it means to "put off the old man and put on the new man" - a change in lifestyle. Believers should be characterized by a changed lifestyle! In these verses, we have five examples of what it means to "put off the old man and put on the new man." Think of these five examples as a checklist to see how you're doing. We should ask ourselves - "Am I different? Do I have a changed lifestyle?"

a. **Believers should tell the truth and not lie** (v25). *"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another."* As you know, we live in an age where lying is being re-defined. Standards of truth are being lowered, even by official vote in Congress!

Do we lie? What about "fudging" on our income tax returns? What about falsifying an employment application or resume? What about padding an expense account? What about calling in sick when you're not really sick? Believers should tell the truth!

b. **Believers should be angry and not sin** (v26-27). *"Be angry, and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."* Righteous anger, or righteous indignation, is not sin. Remember, our Lord was angry with the money changers (John 2), and He was angry at the hard hearts of the Pharisees (Mark 3). Well, we too, should be angry when we see blatant sin, but we need to be careful that our righteous anger does not become sin. It can become sin if it results in bitterness, or hatred, or revenge.

Anger gives Satan a chance to get a foot in the door - *"nor give opportunity to the devil."* (v27), so we need to control our righteous anger. We need to keep it under control before righteous indignation becomes sin, and before righteous anger becomes hatred. That's what verse 26 means: *"do not let the sun go down on your wrath."* We can't let righteous indignation go on and on, because it will eventually work out into bitterness, or revenge, or hatred, or something else. Righteous anger can go bad and become sin. Believers should be angry and not sin.

c. **Believers should share and not steal** (v28). *"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may*

have something to give him who has need.” The *old man* steals; the *new man* shares! Do you steal? Do you take home a few tools or office materials from the job? Do you steal other people’s ideas by plagiarism? Do you steal time from your employer? These are all forms of stealing.

Notice that believers should do more than just earn an honest living. We are to work so that we can share with those who are in need. Is that part of your motive for putting in a hard day’s work? How are we doing on our check list?

d. Believers should speak helpful words and not hurtful words (v29).

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” In Matthew 12, our Lord Jesus said that every word that comes out of our mouths will be tested. Do you think off-color jokes or stories will pass the test? Do you think ethnic jokes will pass the test? You may be thinking, “Well, I guess I shouldn’t say anything since I’m so prone to putting my foot in my mouth!” But that’s not the answer, because Ephesians 4 says we **are** to speak. So it’s wrong to speak unwholesome or hurtful words, but it’s also wrong to not speak at all. We are to speak good and helpful words, words that will edify others. Here’s a good rule of thumb: ask yourself, “What can I say in this situation to promote health and growth?”

Notice in verse 30: hurtful or unwholesome talk grieves the Holy Spirit. Remember, He is the **Holy** Spirit. There is good news and bad news in this verse. The good news is that the Holy Spirit does not ever leave the believer. Grieve - yes; leave - never. We are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit until the Day of Redemption. The Day of Redemption refers to the time when we will receive our resurrected bodies. Then there will be no more hurtful talk.

The bad news here is that we can be involved in hurtful talk, and that grieves the Holy Spirit. Only a person who loves us can be “grieved” by our behavior. The Person of God the Holy Spirit is grieved when we don’t speak with grace, and when our talk is not helpful. Let me ask you - would you get the award in your church as the brother or sister who speaks the most helpful words - or the most hurtful words?

e. Believers should practice supernatural virtues and not natural vices (v31-32). *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”* We could discuss each one of these vices and virtues separately, but I have lumped them all together here for the sake of time and outline.

Notice that we must take definite action to put away the natural vices. It’s not automatic. *We don’t drift into godliness.* Have you taken definite action to forgive that brother or sister who wronged you? You may think, “That person don’t deserve to be forgiven!” Listen! We have to be willing to forgive, just as Christ forgave us. How dare we set limits on forgiveness?

Once a Christian brother openly slandered me. Later he apologized and asked for forgiveness. I had to forgive him - even though I didn't want to. I had to "put on the *new man*"! We must all practice putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Believers should have a changed lifestyle.

Practical Application

Is your life a Bible or a libel?

A libel is a statement that misrepresents and even shows contempt for another person. Unfortunately, some Christians live lives that bring shame on our Lord Jesus. Their lives are a libel! A non-believer might say, "If that's what it means to be a Christian, forget it! I don't want any part of it."

How much better it would be if people saw our lives as a Bible - reflecting the person of Jesus Christ, and demonstrating the values, the attitudes, and the commands of Scripture by our lifestyle! Is your life a Bible or a libel?