Take It Off, Put Him On

COLOSSIANS 3:5-11 (BSB) · SMALL-GROUP LESSON · DIGDEEPER.AI

The Big Idea

You're not trying to become a better person by gritting your teeth; you already died and got up new in Christ, so putting sin to death is just taking off clothes that don't belong to you anymore.

Opening Lines

Take off a coat and it comes off in one motion. Paul says that's already happened to you — the old self is off, the new self is on — and everything in these seven verses is about living like you actually got dressed this morning.

Before You Teach

- Goal: Get the room to see that 'put to death' is not self-improvement but stripping off a wardrobe that already belongs to a dead man. They should leave naming one garment — one lie, one cutting word, one craving — they will take off this week.
- If you're short on time, cut: Cut the extended tour of the Stoic vice-lists if time runs short. It's great color, but the room needs the 'you already died' engine more than the historical background.
- Where the moment lives: It lives in verse 9-10 becoming personal — when someone admits a specific 'old self' garment they've been wearing and names taking it off, not in the general nodding at the sin list.
- Your prep: Do the mouth-watching action yourself before you teach — pick one conversation this week and refuse to cut someone down. Come in able to say what that felt like.

Run It In Your Setting

The same lesson, sequenced three ways. Pick the one that fits your group and your clock.

CLASSROOM · ~20 PEOPLE · 45 MINUTES

Use the classroom opening (coat off, 2 min). Read the passage aloud (3 min). Teach the word 'put to death' with the fist/cut image (8 min). Brief Stoic-list contrast (4 min). Questions 1-3 in pairs, then share (18 min). Land on the big idea and out-loud commitments (8 min). Close in prayer (2 min). Transformation lives in question 3 — the paradox cracking open. Cut the Stoic contrast first if you're behind.

SMALL GROUP · ~8 PEOPLE · 60 MINUTES

Use the small-group opening about being tired of the same sins (5 min). Read the passage (3 min). Teach 'put to death' with the physical image (8 min). Work all five discussion

questions, going slow on 4 and 5 (32 min). Out-loud commitments around the circle (8 min). Spontaneous closing prayer over what was named (4 min). Transformation lives in questions 4-5, where a real grievance or a real 'Scythian' gets named. Cut question 2 first if time is tight — it's the most abstract.

COFFEE · 2-3 FRIENDS · 30 MINUTES

Use the coffee opening about your change-instinct (3 min). Read verses 5-11 together (3 min). One-sentence version of the word study — 'put to death' means kill, not manage (4 min). Questions 1 and 3 only (14 min). Each name one garment to take off this week and one take-home action to try (4 min). Pray briefly out loud over each other's named thing (2 min). Transformation lives in the moment each of you names your own old-clothes item. Cut question 1 if the conversation goes straight to identity — let it run there.

One Thing Deeply

Here's a habit for every lesson you'll ever teach — this week we drill it deliberately: teach one thing deeply instead of everything shallowly. This passage hands you a buffet — five sins, then five more, then idolatry, then a new humanity where Scythians and slaves are level. You could touch all of it and land nothing. Don't. At level 3 the rep is harder: pick your ONE thing before you walk in, write it on a card, and cut every other point that doesn't serve it — even the good ones. For this lesson, let your one thing be 'you already died, so take off the clothes.' The vice-list, the wrath of God, the barbarian-Scythian line — make them all feed that single idea or leave them in your notes. If you find yourself explaining covetousness-as-idolatry for four minutes and it isn't driving toward 'take it off,' you've drifted. One nail, hit hard, ten times.

Why This Passage Matters

Most people in your room are quietly exhausted from trying to be good. They've white-knuckled the same anger, the same craving, the same little lies for years, and they've decided they're just wired that way. This passage walks straight up to that exhaustion and says something they've never quite heard: stop trying to reform the old self, because the old self is already dead. The philosophers of Paul's day handed out the same list of sins and told people to master themselves by willpower. Paul does the opposite. He says a death and a resurrection have already happened to you, and now you simply take off what a corpse was wearing and put on what the risen Christ gives you. That changes everything about how a person fights sin. And then the passage does something almost no one expects — it ends the sin-list not with a purified individual but with a torn-down wall, where the people your world ranks and despises are now level in Christ. You get to hand a tired room a completely different engine for change. That is a privilege. Very few things you say to people this year will matter more than this.

Catch the Fire First

Before you teach a word of this, do the mouth exercise from the Apply card yourself, this

week, in one real conversation. When the coworker who annoys you comes up, or the group chat starts tearing someone down, say nothing that cuts them — and then name one true good thing about that person out loud. Notice how hard it was. Notice whether you did it or chickened out. When you stand up to teach, you're not delivering a theory about 'putting off slander,' you're telling a room what it actually cost you to take off one garment on Tuesday. That's the difference between a lecture and fire.

Bring Your Own Story

- A time you tried to white-knuckle a sin by sheer willpower and it didn't hold — set up why Paul's 'you already died' lands differently.
- A moment you said the cutting thing about someone, or held the small lie, and knew immediately it belonged to the old self.
- A person your world ranks low that Christ put right beside you as an equal — your Scythian.
- SAMPLE (polished vs real): Polished — 'I learned that true transformation flows from identity, not effort.' Real — 'I quit smoking six times on willpower and started every time. What finally stuck wasn't trying harder, it was believing I wasn't that guy anymore.'
- Guardrail: keep it one moment, not raw and unresolved — bring a scar, not an open wound.

Three Ways to Open

CLASSROOM: "Take off your coat right now — mimic it, one motion, arms out of the sleeves. That's the word Paul uses for what's already happened to your old self. Not managed, not moderated. Off. Today we ask what you're still walking around wearing that came off a long time ago."

A concrete physical image beats an abstract claim — start with something everyone's body knows.

SMALL GROUP: "Be honest — how many of you are tired of fighting the same one or two sins you've been fighting for years? Keep your hand up. Good. This passage does not tell you to try harder. It tells you that person already died. Let's find out what that means."

Name the shared exhaustion first so the passage arrives as relief, not more homework.

COFFEE: "When you think about changing something in your life you don't like — a habit, a temper, whatever — is your instinct 'I need more discipline'? Paul says that's exactly the wrong engine. Let me show you what he says instead."

One question that exposes the default operating system opens a real conversation faster than a summary.

Teaching the Word

Teach the word 'put to death' — Greek 'nekrōsate,' from 'nekros,' a corpse. This is not

'tone it down' or 'keep it in check.' It's the language of the executioner, not the classroom. Have the room feel the difference: hold up one hand and slowly close it into a fist, squeezing — that's managing a passion, holding it down, and your hand gets tired and eventually opens. Now make a sharp cutting motion — done, cut off, dead. Paul isn't asking you to keep a grip on your sin for the rest of your life. He's telling you it's already a corpse in Christ, and you're just to stop dressing it and taking it out. The reason you can kill it is that a death already happened. You do not put sin to death to become dead to it. You put it to death because you already are. And then hold the room right here: 'Christ is all and is in all.' Let that sit. Say nothing for a slow five count.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul lists ten sins in these verses. Which one, read out loud, made you a little uncomfortable — not in general, but for you?

Coaching note: Don't let people theologize the list in the abstract. If someone goes general ('well, we all struggle with these'), gently redirect: 'Sure — but which one made YOU flinch?' Model it by answering first yourself.

If it stalls: Simpler: of these two — cutting words about people, or wanting stuff you don't have — which one is more you this week?

2. The Stoics also handed out sin-lists and said 'master these by willpower.' Paul says 'put these to death.' What's the actual difference between managing a sin and killing it?

Coaching note: You're chasing the engine here. The good answer lands on identity: you kill it because you already died in Christ. If nobody gets there, use the closed-fist image from the word study to open the door.

If it stalls: More concrete: think of a habit you've 'kept a grip on' for years. Did white-knuckling ever actually make it die, or just get tired?

3. Paul says the old self is already off and the new self is already on — then tells you to put sin to death anyway. Why command something that's already true?

Coaching note: This is the paradox at the heart of the passage: become what you already are. Let it be tension, don't resolve it too fast. The clothing image helps — you ARE dressed in Christ; now stop reaching for the old clothes on the floor.

If it stalls: Easier: if a doctor told you 'you're healthy now, start acting like it,' what would 'acting like it' actually look like the next morning?

4. The list ends with the walls coming down — Greek, Jew, slave, free, even the Scythians everyone despised. Who is the person or kind of person your world quietly ranks below you?

Coaching note: This will get quiet, and it should. Don't rescue the silence. If it gets confessional, protect the person who's honest — no piling on. Some will name a category, some will name a face; both are fine.

If it stalls: Concrete: who do you find yourself walking past or dismissing without thinking — a coworker, a neighbor, a whole group of people?

5. Paul says to put aside anger, rage, malice and slander, and not to lie to one

another (vv. 8-9). Is there a grudge or a running story about someone that you need to put to death? Name it, and let's talk about the first step.

Coaching note: Go slow and go first if you can. This is the heaviest question — hold long silence, and don't let anyone answer for someone else. The goal isn't resolution tonight, it's naming the grievance out loud and one honest first step.

If it stalls: Lower the bar: you don't have to name the person. Just — is there someone whose name still makes your stomach tighten? Yes or no.

Questions You May Hear

"Who were the Scythians, and why does Paul single them out?"

They were the people every civilized Greek despised as savages, the far edge of the human map. Paul names them on purpose — to say even the person your culture ranks lowest is level with you in Christ.

"What does 'greed, which is idolatry' actually mean?"

The wanting itself takes God's place. When you have to have something, that craving is sitting on the throne where God belongs, so Paul calls it what it is — worship of the wrong thing.

"If I've already 'taken off the old self,' why do I still sin so much?"

Because Paul says the new self is 'being renewed' — it's a work in progress, Christ's own work, still ongoing. You already died and rose in him; now you live into what's already true, and he doesn't abandon what he started.

"What is 'the wrath of God' that comes on 'the sons of disobedience'?"

It's God's settled opposition to sin, and Paul reminds the Colossians they 'used to walk in these ways' things themselves. The point isn't to scare believers but to show the seriousness of what they've been rescued out of.

For Experienced Leaders

- When someone confesses a real grievance at question 5, your job is to protect them, not fix them. Say 'thank you for naming that' and let it stand — don't let the room rush in with advice.
- If two people start relitigating whether Christians can still face God's wrath while everyone else glazes over, name it kindly: 'Let's you and I finish that after — I want to get us back to taking off the clothes.' A detour that's alive and on the text, follow it; a hobbyhorse two people are riding, reel it in.
- The clothing image is your spine tonight. When you feel the lesson sprawling across ten sins, come back to your hand: coat off, coat on. It resets the whole room.

Landing the Lesson

Commitments: Go around and have each person finish this out loud: 'This week I'm taking off _____.' One garment — a specific lie, a specific cutting word, a specific craving. Say it in the room so it's real.

Close by praying out loud over the actual garments people just named — the specific lie, the specific grudge, the specific person they walk past. Don't reach for a written prayer; naming their own words back to God is the whole point.

If you run out of time: If the room only gets to question 3 because the identity paradox cracks something open, stay there. That's the engine of the whole passage — don't rush to the forgiveness question just to finish your list.

Midweek follow-up: Midweek, send one text to the group: 'Did the garment come off? Yes or no, no explanation needed.' The accountability of a one-word answer does more than a paragraph.

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/colossians/3-5-11/lesson

Handout

COLOSSIANS 3:5-11 (BSB) · DIGDEEPER.AI

During the lesson:

- Read the ten things Paul lists (v.5, v.8). Which one made you flinch for you personally? Write it here:

- Managing a sin vs. killing it — in your own words, what's the difference?

- 'You have taken off the old self... and have put on the new self.' If that's already true, what's one 'old clothes' item you keep reaching for anyway?

- Who is the 'Scythian' in your life — the person or group your world quietly ranks below you?

- Finish this sentence: 'This week I'm taking off _____.'

Take-home actions:

- Watch your mouth in one specific conversation today. When the annoying coworker comes up at lunch, or the chat starts tearing someone apart, say nothing that cuts them down — and name one true good thing about that person out loud.

- There's likely one small deception you're carrying — an exaggeration on a report, a number rounded in your favor, a 'fine' that wasn't true. Correct one of them today. Send the honest text.

- Before you buy the thing already sitting in your cart, close the app for a full day. If you still want it tomorrow, fine. Prove to your own heart that a purchase isn't your master.

The old lists asked you to improve yourself; the gospel says you already died and rose. Take it off. Put Him on.