



PUTTING OFF THE OLD SELF

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 4:25 – 5:20

Christians should imitate Christ in all they do.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Put off your old self. Paul tells the Ephesians to put off their old self (their sin) and to put on their new self. Each person who has been re-created by God has been recreated to be like Him in true righteousness and holiness. The power of sin has been broken, so we should strive to say “no” to sin and “yes” to righteousness. As Christians, we are called to live for Christ and not for ourselves or the unbelieving world around us.

Paul lists the “put off”s and “put on”s. Paul doesn’t leave any room for confusion for the Ephesians. After telling them to put off the old self and put on the new, Paul lists a number of areas so that they understand just what he is talking about. They need to put off falsehood and speak truth, and put off stealing and put on work. Paul is aware of the dangers of legalism, which is trying to earn favor with God, so he reminds them that their motivation is Christ. Each time Paul mentions Christ, he is reminding them and us of the cross and our salvation in Christ.

Not even a hint. After repeating the gospel clearly in Ephesians 5:1, Paul goes after our remaining sin with a vengeance. There must not even be a hint of sin! Paul is aware of the way that sin works. It begins with a little compromise, then a little more, until the whole person is given over.

Paul tells us we should live as children of light. Again and again Paul reminds the Ephesians of the gospel as the foundation for good works that follow.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Even though Paul challenged the Ephesians to live holy lives, putting off the old self, he never forgot the gospel of grace. Paul continually reminds the Ephesians that they are following Christ's obedience, not striking out on their own path. Notice that Christ willingly gave up His life for us. The men who crucified Jesus did not force death upon Him. Jesus could have called down angels in his defense.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

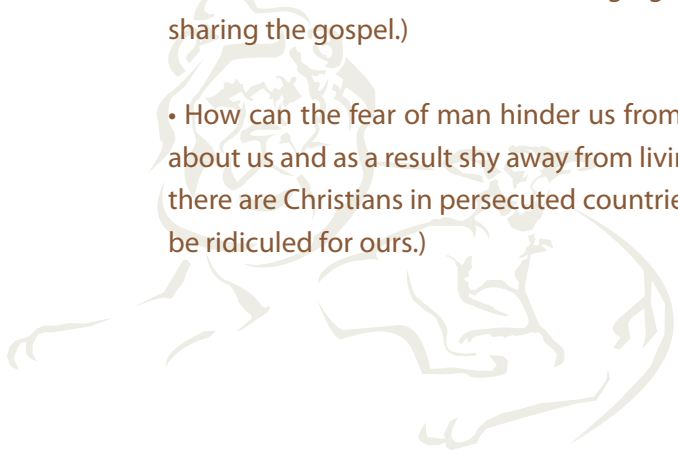
Bible Passage: Psalm 44:22

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Paul quoted this passage in Psalms in Romans 8:36 to describe the persecution that comes to Christians as a result of following Christ. Jesus said, "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20). Our persecution will be like His. Jesus was the sheep that was led to the slaughter (see Acts 8:32-34). Jesus was like a lamb that went silently without objection. Ephesians 5:1 tells us that Jesus went to the cross willingly out of love for us.

Questions for reflection:

- Do all Christians face death? (No, many Christians live in countries where there is no serious persecution. Even so, we all face ridicule for living righteous lives and saying no to sin. We will all face ridicule for sharing the gospel.)
- How can the fear of man hinder us from following Christ? (We can be afraid of what people will say about us and as a result shy away from living for God or sharing the message of salvation with others. If there are Christians in persecuted countries willing to die for their faith, we should at least be willing to be ridiculed for ours.)



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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Use this exercise to help the children understand that when we choose to do the right thing, we are following Christ. It is as though Christ has cut a path through the jungle of sin and we are walking on that righteous path. We do not need to cut a path of our own. We could never get through the jungle ourselves.

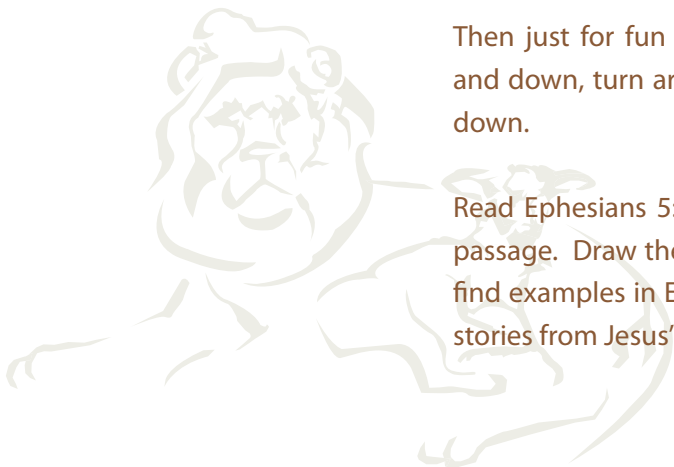
Place all the children in a line, one person behind the other. Tell them that they are to watch the person in front of them and do just as they do. Then assign one of your helpers to do the following:

March around the room to where you are and shake your hand. (Each child after your helper should then shake your hand.)

Turn to the person behind them and encourage them with a short encouragement.

Then just for fun have your teacher do several funny movements like jump up and down, turn around, wave, shake back and forth, etc. Then have everyone sit down.

Read Ephesians 5:1 and ask the class to explain how your exercise was like this passage. Draw them out as to what it means to follow God. Ask them if they can find examples in Ephesians 4 of how Jesus lived. Ask them if they can remember stories from Jesus' life where He lived these things out.



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PUTTING OFF THE OLD SELF, PUTTING ON THE NEW SELF

Supplies:

Two heavy winter coats one should be very bulky, old, tattered and torn, the other brand new. (You can get a cheap winter coat at a thrift store and even tear it and stain it to make it look really bad.)

The object of this lesson is to help the children see that our growth in holiness involves both taking off sin and putting on righteousness.

Wear your ugly coat into class. Place your nice coat off to the side on a chair. Explain to the class that our sin is like a coat that is buttoned up and cannot be taken off because we don't know how to unbutton it, nor do we want to. When we become Christians, we are given the understanding to unbutton it and we are given the ability to live differently, "put on a new coat." Show them your new coat. Tell them the new coat is called righteous living.

Explain to them that before we can put on the new coat we have to do something. Then ask them to guess what we have to do before we can put our new coat on. The answer of course is that we must first take the old coat off.

Ask for three volunteers to demonstrate. First ask them to try to put your new coat over the old one. (This will be very difficult if you picked a real bulky one.) Then take your old coat off and have them help you put your new coat on.

Read through Ephesians 4 and then talk about "put ons" and "put offs."

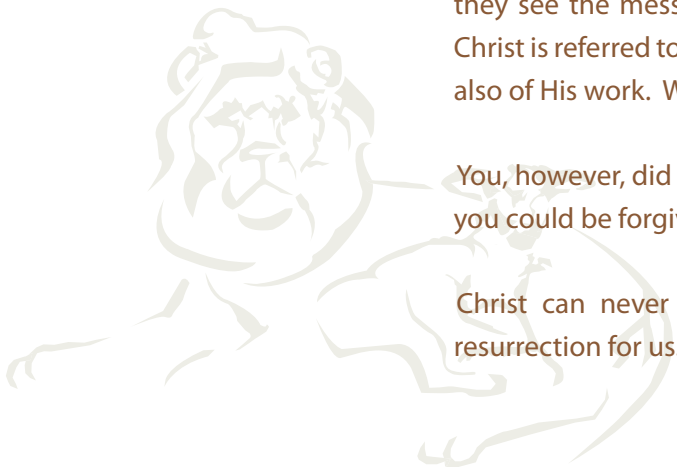
These are merely opposites. If we want to put on truth we must first put off lying. If we want to put on kindness we must first put off being mean. Some are a bit more involved. If we want to put on meditating on God's Word we might need to put off (turn off) our television or computer games.

WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Ask the children to read through the passage we are studying and tell you where they see the message of salvation. Make sure they understand that every time Christ is referred to in the passage we are to be reminded not only of His person but also of His work. We should understand Ephesians 4:20 this way when we read it:

You, however, did not come to know Christ, [who died on the cross for you so that you could be forgiven], that way.

Christ can never be separated from the gospel which is His life, death and resurrection for us.



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a put on/ put off scene – Have the children divide their paper in half and draw two scenes. They could draw one person sitting down and another working, one person angry and another person happy, etc.

FOR THE OLDER GRADES



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DON'T CROSS THE LINE

Supplies

- masking tape
- table
- a bag of small pretzels

Use this activity as an opener to talk about the way we might toy with sin.

Draw a line on the floor in front of the table and place a candy on it. Put the table about a foot away from the line. Ask for three girl and three guy volunteers. The men form a team and the ladies form a team.

Tell them that you are going to move the table farther and farther from the line to see which team can get to the pretzels without touching the line or the table on the other side. At first it will be easy but later it will get more difficult.

Place five pretzels on the table each time. If they so much as touch the table they don't get any pretzels. If they get the pretzels off the table, give one pretzel to all the boys or girls depending on which team succeeded.

Use this illustration as a way to introduce how Christians try to live in righteousness but want to go right up to the line and reach over into sin. Paul tells us that there should not even be a hint of sin (see Ephesians 5:3). He goes on to say that we should not even talk about other people's sin (see Ephesians 5:12).

We make a lot of little compromises. Here are a few:

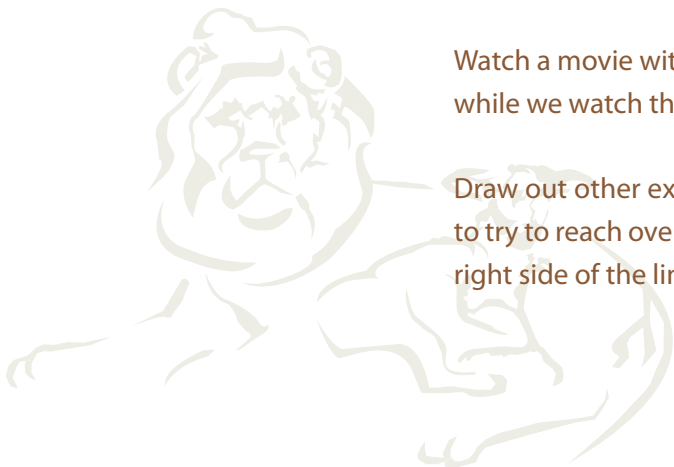
Withhold the truth to protect ourselves from punishment.

Use something without permission but justifying it because we are going to give it back.

Say something mean, but then tell a person we were only joking or that we didn't mean it.

Watch a movie with immorality or impurity but fast forward through the bad parts while we watch the fast forward.

Draw out other examples from the students and help them to see that we are not to try to reach over into sin and grab what we can as long as we are standing on the right side of the line. Paul tells us to avoid the line altogether.



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Light vs. darkness. Light and darkness are used in the Bible to describe righteousness and sin. The apostle John tells us that "...God is light and in Him that there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). Peter tells us that when we become Christians, we are called out of darkness into God's light (see 1 Peter 2:9). Paul is telling us to live as children of the light, avoiding sinful deeds of darkness. Jesus said, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness" (John 12:46). Jesus also said that He is the light of the world and that anyone who follows Him will have the light of life (see John 8:12).

