
Most Christians seem to believe that the renewing of the mind is an automatic activity of the Holy Spirit, that it somehow goes on without our conscious awareness, much like breathing. Unfortunately, this is not the case. While it's true that only the Holy Spirit can renew our minds, He will not—

*until we first choose to invite Him to,
by a volitional act of our faith.*

PUTTING OFF / PUTTING ON

As we mentioned in chapter 4, a key principle of Christian sanctification is known as “putting on” and “putting off” or renewing our minds. The idea is simple: It means to change from one thing to another, in the same way that you would take off one set of clothing (“putting them off”), and then “putting on” another set of clothing in their place.

The following Scriptures instruct us to “put off...”:

- Romans 13:12—The deeds of darkness.
- Ephesians 4:25-31—Lying, stealing, inappropriate language, bitterness.
- Colossians 3:8-9—Anger, malice, slander, abusive (negative) speech.
- Hebrews 12:1—Sin and negative thoughts and feelings which burden us.
- James 1:21—All wicked, filthy, depraved behavior.
- 1 Peter 2:1—All malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander.

In contrast, the following Scriptures instruct us to “put on...”:

- Romans 13:12—The armor of light.
- Romans 13:14—The Lord Jesus Christ.
- Galatians 3:27—Christ.
- Ephesians 6:11-17—The full armor of God.
- Colossians 3:10—Our new, renewed self.
- Colossians 3:12-14—Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and love.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:8—The breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

Each one of these—whether putting off or putting on—requires an act of your will, your volitional choice, inspired by faith and empowered by the Holy Spirit. And it's clear that each of these passages applies to us, to the beliefs that we hold. But why? After all, we're already Christians. It's because anything that we perceived to be true before we began following Christ, we automatically carried over into our new Christian experience. We already believed that certain things were true—including many which weren't! And now we have to hold each of our beliefs up to the light of the truth of God's Word and reevaluate them.

In fact, this principle is at the core of the passage from Ephesians 4:22-24 that we looked at earlier. We are to put off our old identity, all that we were before we chose to follow Christ, our “former manner of life.”