



Colossians chapter 3 talks about taking off the old self and putting on the new self.

"In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away ... you 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."

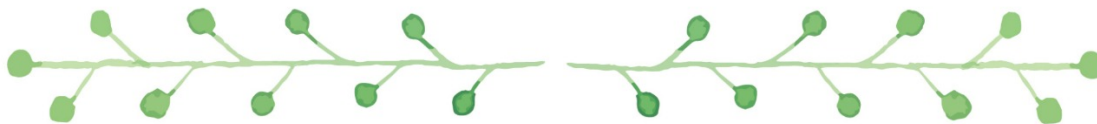
God is already working on this in my life! Through the Holy Spirit's prompting, I see what's holding me back from freedom in Him.

So I'm preaching the gospel of grace and renewal to myself, and replacing

- unforgiveness with peace
- anger with patience
- jealousy with lovingkindness
- worry with faith
- discontentment with joy

I'm excited you're joining me. Let's get started ...

Preach the Gospel to Yourself



The gospel is not just for the moment of salvation. We need the gospel for every moment of our lives.

Paul sums up the gospel message in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

This is the gospel message we preach and believe. It leads to salvation. But it doesn't stop there. The gospel message also leads to sanctification:

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. (1 Timothy 1:15)

Paul doesn't say "I was the foremost," he says "I am the foremost." He continues to sin and so do we. So we must continue to preach the gospel to ourselves.

"To preach the gospel to yourself, then, means that you continually face up to your own sinfulness and then flee to Jesus through faith in His shed blood and righteous life. It means that you appropriate, again by faith, the fact that Jesus fully satisfied the law of God, that He is your propitiation, and that God's holy wrath is no longer directed toward you." – Jerry Bridges in *The Discipline of Grace*

The gospel message is not one of condemnation, but of hope. Those who cannot see themselves as sinners have no need of a Savior. But those who have felt the weight of their own sin and been met there with the grace and forgiveness offered through Christ know true joy. And we remind ourselves we have to remain in Him to continue to find that grace, forgiveness, and joy.

To remember, we preach the gospel to ourselves each day.

We remember and confess our sin:

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. (Psalm 32:5)

We remember and confess our Savior:

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

We remember and confess our strength is only in Him:

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

This is how I preach the gospel to myself each day. I am a great sinner in need of a great Savior. In his suffering Job cried out, "There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both" (9:33) but we have that arbiter. And we can sing with generations of believers, "I need Thee, oh, I need Thee; Every hour I need Thee; Oh, bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee" (lyrics by Annie S. Hawks, 1872).

As I preach the gospel to myself, I'm also mindful of what I put off and put on:

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must **put them all away**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you 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. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." –Colossians 3:1-17 (emphasis mine)

There are five sins I believe moms struggle with the most: unforgiveness, anger, jealousy, worry, and discontentment. Let's look at them more closely in the next days so we can practice putting them off and replacing them with Christ-likeness.

Unforgiveness/Peace



I talked to a friend yesterday about a situation in our family that happened months ago but left deep scars. Because of God's grace and goodness, those scars are healing. What's not healing are the relationships that were damaged because of the situation. I'm still holding on to unforgiveness.

I want to start off by examining our hearts for unforgiveness because I believe when we continue to hold on to it and push it down instead of bringing it to light, we become bitter and even unhealthy.

Forgiving may be the hardest thing you do.

You have been hurt, by someone's words (or lack of words) or actions (or lack of action). They said or did something (or didn't say or didn't do something) that hurt you deeply.

What's at the root of situations like this are my expectations. I expected you to show up and be there for me. I expected you to text and show your support. I expected you to walk with me in grief and suffering. I expected you to be the kind of friend to me that I was to you. I expected you to talk to me about this and not behind my back. And you didn't. My expectations weren't met.

I'm hurt, disappointed, sad, and mad. My unforgiveness is the only weapon I feel I have to fight against all you've done to me. It gives me control over you. I will punish you for disappointing me by withholding love and friendship.

But unforgiveness hurts me more than it hurts the person I'm not forgiving.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
-Ephesians 4:1-3

God calls us to better. He calls us to humility, gentleness, patience, peace, and unity.

Following the example of Christ, He invites us to lay down our unmet expectations. To value relationships over being right. To love better than we have been loved. That love will not only melt your unforgiving spirit, but also melt away everything that stands between you and a right relationship with the person you are struggling to forgive.

Christ invites us to forgive.

In the parable of the unforgiving servant, we see that God takes this seriously. The master showed anger toward the servant who would not forgive a debt after he himself had been forgiven. Matthew 18:35 says, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Why does forgiveness need to be "from the heart" and not just from the mouth, a simple, "Sure, I forgive you. No big deal"? Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." The change in your heart must be evident. From that change you will find healing and restoration.

What it feels like to walk in forgiveness ...

Hebrews 12:1 says we are to lay aside every weight and sin so we can run the race with endurance. Unforgiveness is a weight and sin. It holds us back. When we let go, when we lay it aside, we are free to run the race God has set for us unhindered.

I want that. I don't want anything to hold me back from God's purpose for me. I want peace. So today I will chose to forgive. I will pray for the Holy Spirit to work in my life to make that decision to forgive not just come out of my mouth, but to truly come from my heart. I will work to restore the relationship that was hurt by someone else's words and actions, but hurt more by my unforgiveness.

Anger/Patience



When my boys were really young we moved from North Carolina to Pennsylvania where Lee had gotten a job as the preacher. Soon after the move, we were at a Super Bowl watching party at the church, and they had a big screen set up to watch the game and a projector. David was carrying a plate of food around the people sitting on the floor. He tripped over the cord, which made the game go off for everyone.

I was mad. Super angry. I grabbed his arm and pulled him toward me, whispering angry words in his ear. But why was I angry? Because a three-year-old boy did what was normal for three-year-old boys to do—trip over a cord? No. I was angry because I didn't want to be at the party. I was angry because I was trying to take care of both boys by myself while Lee walked around and talked to everyone. I was angry because I didn't know the church people well and I was very concerned they wouldn't like me. I wanted them to think I was a good mom who had control over her kids.

Anger is the outward expression of a few different emotions. Your words, actions, and thoughts reveal your anger, but what's at the root of it is often resentment, pride, selfishness, or frustration. When we feel ourselves get mad, we need to think about why we're mad. In the example from the church Super Bowl party, I expressed my resentment, embarrassment, and pride as anger toward David.

And let's be honest about something else that has to do with anger—it's easiest to be angry toward those we love most. Or at least it's easiest to take out our anger on those we love most. I may be angry about a comment thread I read on Facebook or Lee could be angry about a situation at work, but we are more likely to take it out on each other than Facebook or the person at his office. Why? Maybe because we know the people we love most put up with the most from us.

But anger is a sin God speaks seriously about in Scripture. In Colossians 3, Paul writes about sins like sexual immorality and evil desire, and then he writes, "In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth" (v. 7 & 8). We need to recognize anger when it takes root in our lives and confess what's causing the anger before we express that anger.

When we study our anger, we may even notice patterns to it. Does it happen when you're hungry? It is a result of hormones? Is it triggered by a certain person or situation? When you're aware of it, you can make changes to stop it before it comes out of your mouth.

When I was younger, I would get angry when anyone would point out a mistake I made or embarrass me. Why? Because I wanted to seem in control, knowledgeable, and independent. When I realized my pride was at the root of that anger, I could preach the gospel to myself—God loves me unconditionally, whether I make a mistake or not. His people will also love me, even when they realize I'm not perfect (maybe especially when they find out I'm not perfect).

When we take off anger, we can replace it with patience. It starts with patience for ourselves and we work to find the root of our anger. It extends to patience with circumstances beyond our control (like David tripping over the cord). And extends out to cover people who we can't control either. Not with our anger, our strong words, or our passive-aggressive smoldering. All these details are under God's control, and if we ask Him to teach us how to love better, we will have less anger.

Jealousy/Lovingkindness



We've all heard of the "Mommy Wars," where moms fight over who is parenting best or who has better children. But in the special-needs world, I find a different mommy war happening. I'm not proud to admit it, but I've experienced it.

Sitting at our autism support group meeting, I listen to the mother of a ten year old go on and on about how her son talks about Star Wars and nothing else. "You poor thing," I think to myself. "Must be so hard on you to have a son who talks so much. I'll just be busy over here trying to get my son to answer a question with yes or no."

Or in an online group of special-needs parents, when one mom says her child struggles with eating issues. "What? Just eating issues? What about the issues I deal with every day? Eating issues, sleeping issues, social issues, speech issues, fine-motor issues, gross-motor issues, and safety issues."

It seems the typical mommy wars are mostly about how much better my kid is than your kid. But the special-needs mommy wars are often about how much harder my child's special needs are than your child's special needs.

At the root of this struggle for me is jealousy. Jerry Bridges writes, "First we tend to envy those with whom we most closely identify with. Second, we tend to envy in them the areas we value most" (Respectable Sins, 149). So I struggle with envy when I hear other special-needs parents talk about their kids, but you likely struggle in ways that apply to your own situation. Maybe it's your sister who has a big family like you always wanted. Maybe it's a co-worker who seems to be the boss's favorite.

Deep down, we don't really want someone else's life. We just want someone to acknowledge our skills and contributions. Someone to see the extra effort we're putting into what's important to us. Someone to say, "You're doing a great job."

In Scripture we meet a woman who just wanted to be seen as well. Hagar had obeyed her mistress Sarai and did what she was supposed to do. She agreed to step in for Sarai (who was unable to have children up to that point) and carry Abram's child. But when she found out Hagar was pregnant, Sarai turned on her. Hagar fled to the wilderness. The angel of the Lord met her there. He told her she would bear a son and name him Ishmael, which means "God hears."

Hagar responded, "So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, 'You are a God of seeing,' for she said, 'Truly here I have seen him who looks after me'" (Genesis 16:13).

She called Him El Roi, the God who sees me. She named her son Ishmael, God hears.

Friends, we don't have to compete with each other for attention, appreciation, or accolades. We have a God who sees. He hears. He knows.

Jealousy isn't a minor issue. It's listed alongside other sins like murder and drunkenness in Romans 1:29 and Galatians 5:21. It's a sin we need to confess and combat.

The strongest weapon we have to combat jealousy is trust in the sovereignty of God. "We must recognize that to be envious or jealous of someone is either eliminating God from the pictures or else accusing Him of being unfair" (Bridges, 153).

After James's autism diagnosis I had to repeat to myself day after day: "God loves me. God loves James. He is for us, not against us." What is happening in my life is because God allowed it to happen. He did so out of love and it is for my good (growth in godliness and sanctification). What is happening in someone else's life is for their good. I can rest in God's love and find peace in my circumstances. If I spend time and energy being jealous, I will miss out on the blessings God has just for me.

Once I understand God loves me and His plan is for my good, I can view others with lovingkindness instead of jealousy. "Lovingkindness" is a term used in the King James Version of the Bible, and I love the depth of meaning. It's kindness motivated by love. It describes my actions and my heart. When you feel jealousy creeping into your thoughts as you scroll through Facebook or look at the stack of Christmas cards from perfect looking families, stop and thank God for the blessings He has giving you. Look at others with love and act in kindness instead.

Worry/Faith



Worry is at the top of every special-needs mom's list of struggles. We can make a list of worries for our children that goes on and on. Worries for today, tomorrow, and after we're gone.

When we're honest, we know worry is a sin. I once read that worry is practical atheism. It's living as if there is no God. I don't want to live that way! But how do I stop?

God does not want me to worry. He tells us over and over again to be strong, to give Him our burdens, to rest in His love and care for us. So how do I turn off my worries and focus on His promises? I open my Bible to Philippians 4 and find the answer. Verses 6-8 tell me what to do and how to do it:

"... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

First, Paul writes we should not be anxious, but release our worries to God through prayer. Second, he promises God's peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ. Third, we are to evaluate our thoughts and worries by asking if they are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, or worthy of praise. If they aren't, we should replace them with thoughts that are.

Here's how this practically works in my life. It's 11:46 at night and I can't stop tossing and turning. James (my son who has autism) had a tough day. I'm worried he will grow more frustrated since he can't communicate what he wants. I worry about how people will treat him when he's a big twenty-year-old-man who can't speak instead of a cute nine-year-old boy. And what if I get sick and can't take care of him when he's twenty and bigger than I am?

When I realize I've reached the worrying stage, I mentally go through this passage from Philippians. I release my worry to God through prayer. I focus on calming my body and mind by focuses on His peace. Then I replace the negative thoughts with ones that are true and worthy of praise.

"God, I'm worried about James's future. You invite me to turn my worry over to You. You will settle my restless mind with Your peace. Instead of worrying, help me to replace my thoughts with what I know is true: You love James (Romans 8:36-39). You have a plan for His future (Jeremiah 29:11). You will supply all our needs (Matthew 6:25-34). Thank you for your care for us! 'In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety' (Psalm 4:8)."

Another way I combat against worry is to remember what He has done in my life. When I look back on times I worried and see how He worked those situations out, I can trust Him with my future. I'm in the middle of a worrisome situation right now. We moved from Pennsylvania to Texas last year and the services James is getting now are not comparable to what he got in Pennsylvania. I'm seeing regressions. But instead of worrying, I remember we didn't get to the level of services we had for James over night. We prayed for doctors and we found them. We needed therapists and He provided. We couldn't afford what we thought James needed, but God used circumstances to work together for our good. When my mind starts down that negative path, I remind myself of the truth and what we've seen God do in the past. Why would I doubt He would work things out for His purpose in the current situation?

I know it isn't easy to stop worrying, but I believe when we understand how offensive it is to God and how much He wants us to live in faith, we can break the pattern of worry. Trust in His providence for your life and the lives of your children. Submit to His will and rest easy.

Discontentment/Joy



It's days after Christmas now and all our kids' new toys seem a little less new. You may have even heard, "Man, I wish I had gotten ..." or "My friend got what I really wanted and I didn't!" It doesn't take long for our appreciation of the gifts we've been given to become discontentment. It happens in my life too. The new shirt I'm excited about today becomes the laundry I'm grumbling about tomorrow.

Different from jealousy, discontentment is often an ongoing issue. You may be discontent about a certain circumstance in your life (a low-paying job, a home that doesn't meet your expectations, extended family members who constantly take from you and never give), or you may be one who struggles with discontentment all the time. No matter who you meet, what they have or the life they lead seems better than yours.

The question have to ask ourselves is this—how is my reaction in this circumstance different from a non-believer's reaction. How does my faith in God make a difference in my life when it comes to discontentment? Does someone know I'm a Christian by my joy?

Near the end of the Old Testament, we meet Habakkuk, a prophet during a time in Israel's history when they had a lot to be discontent about. They were suffering at the hands of wicked nations as a result of their sin. They had heard God did mighty acts on their behalf, but they couldn't see Him in their current circumstances. At the end of chapter 3, Habakkuk shares his frustration and hope:

Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation. (3:17-18).

The last verse is my favorite, "I will take joy." Joy doesn't always come easily. Some days we have to take it. Fight for it. Make it ours.

But how do we do that?

We accept that our circumstances are from God and therefore for our good. It's ok to ask God to change our circumstances, but we also ask Him to use those

circumstances to fulfill His purpose for us and ask for the strength to glorify Him in them.

This isn't just a theory for me. I have to put it into practice every day.

"Bye James! Have a good day at school. I love you."

"Love you. See you morning."

"No, not 'see you in the morning.' It's school time, not bed time."

"James do you want an apple?"

"Want apple?"

"No, say 'yes' or 'no.'"

"Yes or no."

"No James, say 'yes apple' or 'no apple.'"

"Yes or no."

James is nine-years-old and I'm still changing his diapers, still lining up trains, still watching Blue's Clues every evening after dinner. In most ways, he's just like he was when we got his autism diagnosis when he was three.

Some days I grow weary from the same-ness. From teaching the same lessons. From working on the same goals. From hearing the same mistakes. My temptation to grumble and be discontent is strong. When every day feels like the same, I want to cry out like Habakkuk did, "O Lord, how long?" (1:2).

But then God answers me as He answered Habakkuk: look and see, wonder and be astounded. "For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told" (2:5).

LOOK AND SEE.

James is making progress. He loves school right now and isn't anxious to be away from me. He's sleeping through the night. He's trying new foods. We're thankful for each new step, and God thankful God reminds me of them when I'm prone to pout.

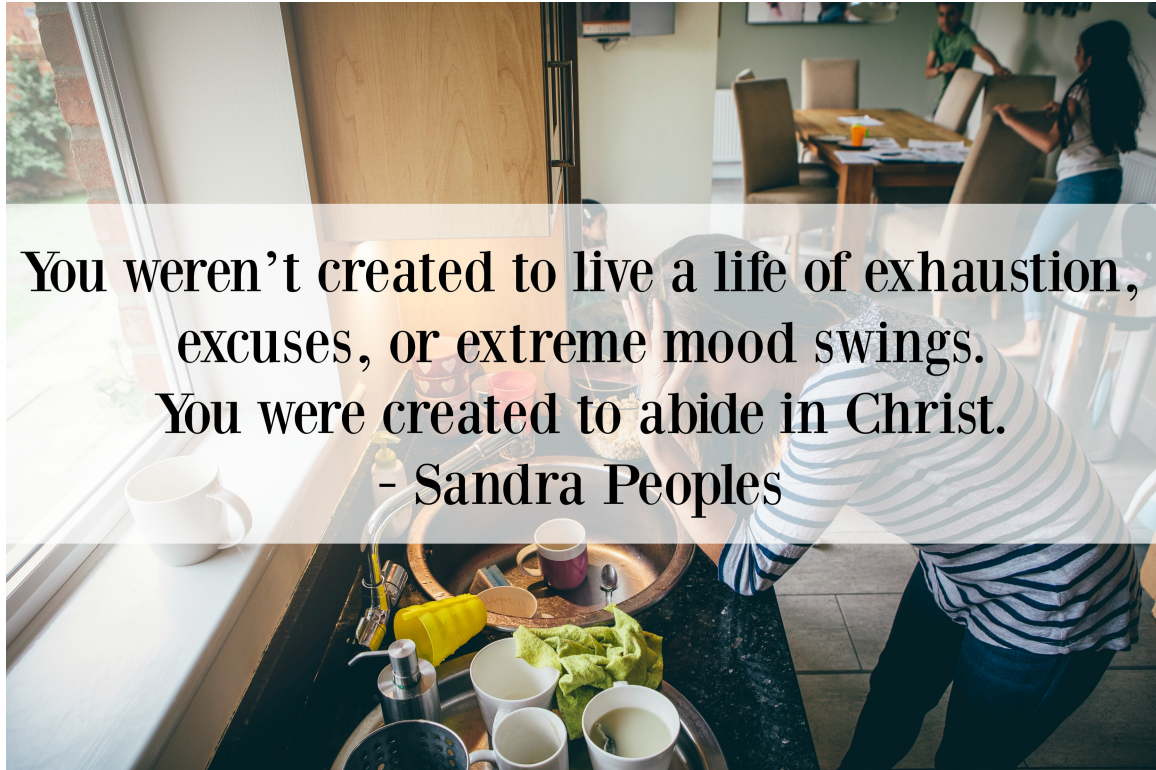
Wonder and be astounded.

Even if James never progresses beyond where he is now, God is still at work. He's at work not only in James's life, but in my life, our family, and my ministry to other special-needs families. I am in awe of how God invites me to live out His purpose for my life through my calling of motherhood. **That isn't same-ness. That is sanctifying.**

So like Habakkuk, let's take joy today. Grab on with me!

Thanks for reading Live Renewed!

I think living renewed is the first step to better self-care. If you're ready to take the next step, learning to abide in Him, check out my new book, [*Abide: Self-Care for the Busy Mom.*](#)



**You weren't created to live a life of exhaustion,
excuses, or extreme mood swings.
You were created to abide in Christ.
- Sandra Peoples**