

WHAT NOT TO WEAR:
Learning Who I Am
Colossians 3:10-17

Big Idea: Remember who you are.

Announcements:

1. Children's Musical Signups TODAY- more info in worship guide
2. Treasure Box- more info in lobby.
3. Salsa- Signups continue; begin thinking of who to invite.

Introduction:

Who here has seen the show *What Not to Wear*? *What Not to Wear* is a reality show that teaches people how to dress. People are "nominated" by their friends or family because- well their friends or family think they are a fashion nightmare. Here are some instructions from the nomination application.

1. Include name, age, size, height, occupation, marital status, children, location.
2. Describe personality, style, why you feel they are a fashion disaster.
3. Include 2 pictures that illustrate bad fashion sense (this is a must!)

So these victims- mostly women from what I can tell- endure the critique, criticism and advice of these 2 folks:

► Stacy and Clinton. They are the fashion "experts" sent in to rescue people from their wardrobes. And each show generally has three primary components. First, they try and help people discover who they really are by evaluating their body type, personality, career, etc. They want their project to have a good accurate understanding of who they really are.

Secondly, the hosts emphasize what to stop wearing. Based on body type, and self image and career, the hosts ridicule and make fun of what people wear and how they shop. They say things like, "'You look like Archie Bunker in drag.'" Or "You look insane." Frankly, I think they are mean sometimes.

The third component is teaching these folks what they should be wearing based on who they are. The hosts challenge the victim's image of themselves and show them how to dress in a way that accurately represents who they really are.

So, people learn who they are, what to stop wearing and what to start wearing. And by now you might be asking yourself, "What does this have to do with the Bible?" Nothing; it's just a good show and I wanted to show my sensitive side while 80+ of our men are away at the Men's Summit.

Not really. The reason I mention the show is because the Apostle Paul does almost exactly the same thing in Colossians 3.

Look with me if you will at Colossians 3, verse 9. ►

^{NLT} **Colossians 3:9** . . . you have stripped off your old sinful nature . . . ¹⁰ Put on your new nature,

Paul says, "Stop wearing these things and start wearing these things." Now, Paul is obviously not talking about our clothing. Instead he uses clothing as a metaphor for how we act. Just like we strip off our old, dirty tattered clothes and put on new clean clothes, so should we strip off things we did before believing in Jesus and replace

those things with new things, new things that better represent who we really are. In fact, Colossians 3:1-17 has three basic components: Number 1: this is who you are. Number 2: Stop wearing certain things that don't represent who you really are. Number 3: start wearing these things that do accurately represent who you really are. It's *What Not to Wear*- Apostle Style. So this week and next, we are going to discover three things: who we are, what to stop doing and what to start wearing. This morning we are going to spend a few minutes learning who we are. And just like the basis for what we wear should be who we are, so the basis for what we do should also be who we are.

And that might sound a little fluffy: Know who you are, have confidence on yourself, live up to your potential. And some of you are saying "Amen- that's right" and others of you are like, "Give me a break." But the Apostle Paul seemed to think that who we are was important. In fact, Paul bases his wardrobe advice on his readers understanding who they were.

Sometimes our circumstances or our culture or our own self talk or our past experiences tells us things that aren't true. In the show, there are often tears at the times the hosts probe why people are dressing they way they are. Why they hide behind their clothes- their lack of value as a person, their ugly, their fat, their lazy, their embarrassed. In one episode, tears well up in a lady when the hosts ask her, "When was the last time you felt pretty." And she articulated the teasing she took as a kid. She'd been beat down so long, it was difficult to see herself any other way.

So a major component of the show is the hosts trying to counteract the messages these people believe about themselves, so they can look at things differently. And Paul does a very similar thing for the Colossian Christians.

There are some things that are true about us this morning. There are some principles that stress who we are as a person. And it's the basis for what we should behave like. And just like the show helps people focus on who they are so they can dress better and look better, Paul helps us focus on who we are so we can "dress" or act better. Admittedly up front, I recognize this is a talk today has more to do with how we think than what we do. The "what we do" will come next week. ►So, let me give you Paul's BIG IDEA right up front here. Here is what Paul is teaching us: Remember who you are. In our world, just like in Paul's, living life can take its toll. People, relationships, culture, circumstances, illness- sometimes these things can overwhelm us and so Paul says, remember who you are. So, who are we? And the more important practical question is, "Who am I?"

1. I AM NEW

Let's start at verse 10. Paul writes,►

^{NLT} **Colossians 3:10** Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

Number 1: ►I AM NEW. That's what Paul is saying. And he actually says it several times in several different ways in Colossians. But the "I am new" comes with an important understanding. Actually all of these "I ams" apply to those who have believed in Jesus for eternal life. You see, you can only say, "I am new" if you have been made new. And that happens when we believe in Jesus for eternal life.►

^{NLT} **Colossians 2:12b** And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. ¹³ You were dead because of your sins . . . Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

Paul says the same thing in his letter to the church in Rome, but words it slightly different. ►

^{NLT} **Romans 3:22** We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

When Paul tells the Colossians the things they should and shouldn't do, it's not because he was drawing up a list of do's and don'ts. He was saying, "Hey, because you believe in Jesus, you are new." You are different. You can start over. You can be renewed. You are right with God. Your sins are gone and forgiven. You don't have to continue doing what you've been doing. The things you've been doing that make you feel guilty?- now you have something new inside you that can teach you to do different things- new things.

But many times we forget we are new. We still struggle with some sin from our past and we wonder if this Jesus thing really took. We don't feel new because our circumstances haven't changed in a while and we wonder if things will ever go our way. We haven't really thought about God in a while so we wonder if God hasn't left us to move on to someone more interested in him.

But there is something interesting about our newness. Look again at Colossians 2:13. ►

^{NLT} **Colossians 2:13b** Then *God* made you alive with Christ, for *he* forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ *He* canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

We are new because of what Jesus did, not because of what we do. And we don't always act new, and we may not even remember we are new, but that doesn't change its reality.

We aren't new because we change and act differently; we change and act differently because God has made us new. And that's important.

We have the ability to think new things and do new things. We don't do it because we want to earn God's favor and have him like us. We already have his favor; he already likes; that's why he made us new.

And the more we learn about Jesus and try to be like him, the more renewed we become. Everyday is a chance to be new, to live out a new nature, to learn something new about God. Part of being new is getting to know our Creator. And that can be new everyday.

I AM NEW; remember who you are.

2. I AM EQUAL

Let's move on to verse 11. ►

^{NLT} **Colossians 3:11** In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

Based on this verse, I'd like us to remember ► **I AM EQUAL**. Again, Paul is stressing that we should stop doing some things and start doing some other things based on who we are. And here he dismantles 4 common distinctions people use to make value judgments about themselves and other people.

"Jew or Gentile" was a common racial or national distinction. Paul says it doesn't matter.

Circumcised and uncircumcised was a common religious distinction. Those following the God of Israel had to be circumcised. Paul says outward religious distinctions don't matter any more.

Barbaric and uncivilized was a common cultural distinction. A barbarian was the Greeks term for someone who didn't speak Greek. An uncivilized person was a lesser Barbarian; they were tribe's people described as "a little better than beasts." They were made fun of in Greek comedy because of their uncultured ways and speech. Paul says our cultural distinctions don't matter anymore.

Slave or free was a common social or class distinction in the first century. Paul says, it does not matter.

Paul's emphasis here doesn't mean that classes of people will not exist. They do. There are racial, religious, cultural and social differences in north Phoenix and in our church. It's the nature of the world we live in. Paul's emphasis though is on what matters- Jesus. These divisions we have created- both in culture and the church- don't matter; Jesus is what matters. The emphasis is on how we view ourselves and other people in relation to God. In this "new" life, there is no room for these distinctions that divide us. Do we remember that in God's eyes, we are all equally important to His family?

It seems to me you could view this "I AM EQUAL" from two different sides.

Sometimes our culture and even our churches place value on distinctions that should not exist. There are subgroups of people who are viewed as less important or marginalized or weird because of the way they look or think or smell or act.

Distinctions like Democrat or Republican; it doesn't matter.

Distinctions like country club or trailer park; it doesn't matter.

Distinctions like blue collar or white collar; it doesn't matter.

Distinctions like Mexican or American; it doesn't matter.

Married or single, long hair or short hair, married or divorced; it doesn't matter. Certainly all these things exist, but none is better than the other. None has more value than the other. None is more important to God than the other. And when these types of distinctions rear their ugly head, it devalues the importance of Christ as being the only thing that matters.

But for some of us here this morning, we have accepted our role as inferior. We sit on the sidelines of this Christian thing because we do not see ourselves as equals. We think that somehow our past or current circumstances or sins have somehow made us less than someone else. You do not see yourselves as equals. And you should.

I AM EQUAL; remember who you are.

But for others of us this morning, we have accepted our role as somehow superior. We look down on people and see ourselves as better than others. We have levels of badness; ways of judging people's bad somehow worse than our own bad. We quietly make fun and downplay the importance of those beneath us. And we shouldn't.

I AM EQUAL; remember who you are.

3. I AM IMPORTANT

Let's move on to verse 12. ►

^{NLT} **Colossians 3:12** Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves,...

NUMBER 3 is ► I AM IMPORTANT.

Have you ever thought of yourself as a saint? Probably not. Most of us have probably said at some point in our life, "Well, I'm not a saint." But the truth is you are. That's what it means to be God's holy people.

This sainthood is not something we attain. We can't earn it. God gave it to us. You and I can't be a saint. But when we believe in Jesus for eternal life, he makes us holy- a saint.

And God chose me for that. And if you have believed in Jesus for eternal life, he has chosen you for that too. Think about that, God chose me! And in addition to that, he loves me. I am so important to God that he chose to make me a saint. God chose to love me. ►

^{NLT} **Romans 5:8** But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

I don't know about you, but it is so difficult for me to remember that I am important to God. That he unconditionally loves me. That even when I am doing the exact opposite of what he wants, I never stop being loved or important.

I AM IMPORTANT; remember who you are.

► Well, this chapter says other thing about who we are- things like we are forgiven, we have God's peace and wisdom. But what should we do with this?

1. First, I hope you are encouraged to learn or be reminded that in God's view you are new, equal and important. Our current culture doesn't exactly reinforce these truths about people, but it doesn't make them less true. I know sometimes it is uncomfortable internalizing positive things about yourself- like its wrong or prideful or something. But we are new, equal and important- to God's credit, not our own. That's why it's not based on our behavior.

2. Secondly, these things are true in spite of our behavior. If you find it difficult to remember these things, I'd encourage you to write them down. Read Colossians 3. Ask God to remind you of who you are. If you believe in Jesus for eternal life, then you are new, equal and important. And if you made decisions in life and relationships from that perspective, you might think and act differently- more like Jesus. I hope that's our goal.

▶ 3. Lastly, we are going to have COMMUNION this morning: Communion is a church word for remembering what Jesus did on the cross. Everything we are- new, equal and important- is because God loved us and sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. God accepted that sacrifice of Jesus as payment for all of our sin. And he simply asks us to trust him for it.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul writes this:

^{NLT} **1 Corinthians 11:23** For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread ²⁴ and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me." ²⁵ In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people - an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this to remember me as often as you drink it." ²⁶ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

This morning, as we remember what Jesus did for us, let's also remember who we are because of it- I am new, I am equal, I am important.

After I pray, you can go to any of the communion tables and help yourself. You don't have to be a member of MVBC; all we ask is that you are a believer in Jesus for eternal life.