

WHAT NOT TO WEAR:
Changing Wardrobes
Colossians 3:1-17

Big Idea: It's time to change the wardrobe.

Intro: Good morning! If you have a Bible, turn to Colossians 3. You will also be able to follow along in your notes or on the screen.

Last week, we started talking about ► *What Not to Wear*. *What Not to Wear* is a TV reality show that has these 2 people, Stacy and Clinton offering fashion advice to people nominated by their friends or family as fashion disasters. The basic premise is, based on who you are- your body type, personality, career, etc- you need to stop wearing these clothes. Instead you should start wearing these types or styles of clothes because they better represent who you really are. They clean out their victims closets and help them learn how to shop for new and different clothes than they are used to.

And then I said that Apostle Paul does almost the exact same thing in Colossians 3. I called it *What Not to Wear- Apostle Style*.

In Colossians 3, Paul tells the church, "Hey this is who you are. So, take off these things and put on these things because these new things better represent who you *really* are. Paul is using the changing of clothes as a metaphor for the way we act and think. So, last week, we focused on who we are. ► And we discovered that we are new, we are equal and we are important.

This week, we're going to discover how Paul builds on who we are by saying, "Since you are new and equal and important, its time to take some old things off and put some new things on. In short, it's time to change the wardrobe." ► In fact, that's the big idea of my message this morning, it's time to change the wardrobe. That's what Paul is saying in Colossians 3. It's time to change how we think and act.

Look at Colossians 3:9-10, the Apostle Paul writes, ►

^{NLT} **Colossians 3:9** Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

This morning, we're going to spend a few minutes looking at what Paul says to take off and what to put on. Then we'll talk briefly about why it matters and how to do it.

1. The things Paul doesn't want us wearing anymore are divided into two sections. The first section comes in verse 5. ►

^{NLT} **Colossians 3:5** So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

In this verse, Paul lists 5 things a Christian should not wear. In fact, he stresses the point by saying, these things should be "put to death: kill them, utterly destroy them." These aren't things we keep in the back of the closet in case they someday come back into style or we lose enough weight to fit into them again. These aren't things that culture determines are right or wrong. Paul says, these things exist from our old life, our old nature. It's not who we are anymore so kill these things. Do whatever it takes.

So, what are these 5 things?

- a. The first is ► sexual immorality. Sexual immorality is any sexual activity with a person who is not your spouse. Paul says, "If you are a Christian, have nothing to do with that. Kill it"
- b. Secondly, Paul lists ► impurity. Impurity is a general term for immoral or unwholesome thoughts or actions. Examples might include things like pornography, questionable media or anything else that puts our mind in an unwholesome place. Paul says, "If you are a Christian, kill those things that lead you to impure thoughts or actions."

- c. The third thing Paul mentions is ►lust. We generally think of lust being connected with sex- and it can be- but doesn't have to be. Lust is simply uncontrolled desire. It's a desire for something we can't control. It could be alcohol, drugs, shopping, sex, food, money, power, coffee. Paul says, "If you are a Christian, kill these uncontrolled desires."
- d. Fourthly, Paul mentions ►evil desires. Evil desires are similar to lust, but more general. Since not all desire is bad, Paul describes the desire he means. The desire that leads us to selfishness and sin- that's evil desire. Paul says, "Utterly destroy it."
- e. Finally, Paul mentions ►greed. Greed is a ruthless desire for and seeking after material things. It goes beyond a simple desire to provide and protect your family. Greed is the controlling desire for more. It is always pursuing stuff.

The second section of things Paul tells us to take off come in verse 8.►

^{NLT} **Colossians 3:8** But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.

In this verse, Paul lists five more things he wants us to take off. And while both lists affect us and others, the first list seems to focus on personal things. This list seems to focus on relational things. These things tend to show up in our dealings with other people.

Again, notice Paul's direct, no-apologies language: "get rid of." This phrase in Greek has the idea of taking off and laying aside, like you would an old garment. Paul says, "Hey Christians, get rid of these things that cause relational troubles."

- f. First, Paul mentions ►anger. This word for anger describes a slow settled anger that boil's below the surface. This is the anger we harbor but don't outwardly demonstrate. Paul says, "Hey, stop wearing that."
- g. Then Paul mentions ►rage. Rage is a quick sudden outburst. We might describe this today as a temper. This is the outward, sometimes uncontrollable expression of anger. Paul says, "Hey Christian, get rid of your rage. No more outbursts."
 - i. Christians seem to have a funny relationship with anger. Most Christians get the rage part. They say, "Yea, I probably shouldn't do that", and so we work hard on "controlling" our anger. But what we really do is convert rage into anger- the kind that's settled below the surface because somehow we think that's more acceptable. Paul disagrees! Both need to go.
- h. Thirdly, Paul mentions ►malicious behavior. This is intentional harm to others. Malicious behavior can be emotional or physical or spiritual. This is when we manipulate or harm people to get what we want.
- i. Fourthly, Paul mentions ►slander. Slander is simply defamation of character. It's our attempt to injure the reputation of someone else. Paul says, "Hey Christian, take this off. Don't be seen wearing this behavior."
- j. Finally, Paul mentions ►dirty language. Dirty language is obscene or abusive language. It's using our speech to tear someone down. Paul says, "This doesn't look good on Christians; take it off."

So, there you go. Paul wants us to take off, strip off, kill, throw away and destroy these ten things.

But ►Paul doesn't simply want us to strip. There are laws against that. But frankly, that's what some of us Christians do; we focus on the stripping. We focus all our attention on controlling the old nature. We get discouraged when we fail and we commit to having better self control. But in Paul's metaphor, that thinking and effort just leaves us naked. We try and take everything old off, but we fail to put anything new on. There are some things we need to strip off, but there are also some things we need to put on. In verse 10, Paul calls it the new nature.

- 2. And in verse 12-14, he describes some components of the new nature. These are the things Paul says to put on. Don't run around naked; put on these things. ►

^{NLT} **Colossians 3:12** Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who

offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

- a. Number 1- ►Tenderhearted mercy. Tenderhearted mercy is heartfelt sympathy for those suffering or in need. It's sincere compassion. It's an emotion you feel. Paul says, "Yea! That's what we should be wearing. That's what people should be seeing."
- b. Number 2 is ►kindness. Kindness is a friendly helpful spirit which meets needs through good deeds. It's compassion in practice. It is acting on our emotional connection to someone's suffering. Paul says, "Put that on. Wear that to work this week."
- c. Number 3 is ►humility. Humility is free from pride or self assertion. The word actually means "lowliness of mind." It has the idea that we don't think more of ourselves than we should. ►

^{NLT} **Philippians 2:3** Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

Paul says, "Now there's an outfit that fits who you really are."

- d. Number 4 is ►gentleness; sometimes it's called meekness. In the Greek, the word carries a much greater meaning than gentleness or meekness in English. It has to do with power under control. Like a horse- who has amazing power, but obeys the master guiding his bit. That's gentleness in Colossians. It means just because we have the power or ability or right to do something, doesn't mean we have to do it. Gentleness is limiting our authority or ability or rights. Paul says, "Let your seven see that this week."
- e. Number 5, Paul mentions ►patience. The word for patience Paul uses actually means to bear injury or injustice without revenge or retribution. It is long-suffering. It means sometimes you might suffer for a while and you are able to do that without extracting revenge. In the first century, Christians were persecuted and beaten. Paul says, "Put on the patience; you can endure this."
- f. Lastly, Paul says to put on ►love. The love Paul calls for is agape love. It is an action done for the benefit of someone else. It is selfless and gracious. Paul says, "Hey Christian, above all the others, let the world see you wearing selfless acts for other people."

So, there we have it- *What Not to Wear- Apostle Style*. Ten things we should never wear; eight things we should wear. ►But that raises a question: Why? What difference does this make? Because last week I said that how we dress has nothing to do with weather or not we get into heaven. Did you catch that? Our behavior- good or bad- has nothing to do with weather or not we get into heaven. It has nothing to do with weather or not God loves me. So, if that's true, what difference does it make how I dress? Why the fashion advice from Paul? Why would I even want to work so hard at changing my wardrobe?

3. I think Paul gives us several reasons. But this morning, I only have time to mention two.

- a. First, there is a very practical reason to change clothes. Wearing the old stuff- living out of our old nature- has consequences. There are natural and relational consequences to sex outside of marriage and anger and rage and greed and all the others. And just because we are Christians doesn't mean we escape those consequences. We oftentimes blame God for "punishing" us when we do something wrong. The truth is, sometimes God just lets the natural consequences be our teacher. Haven't you ever done that as a parent; let your child experience natural consequences.
- b. Secondly, there also seems to be another practical reason. We find that reason in verse 17.►
 - i. ^{NLT} **Colossians 3:17** And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.
 - ii. As Christians, we are representatives of Jesus. And Paul wants us to represent Jesus to the best of our abilities. We aren't perfect, we mess up. Some days we wear the wrong clothes out of the house. But if people

know you are a Christian, then you are representing Jesus. So, how we dress- more specifically- how we think and act matters. Oh, be sure it doesn't matter for us. Our spot in heaven is not reserved based on our performance- thank goodness. But might it matter for those watching? Might it matter how we think and act and speak for those hurting and wondering if the church or the Bible of Jesus is someone who can help them?

iii. Now is the time for a wardrobe change.

So finally, we come to the how. ►What if I actually buy this stuff and want to change my wardrobe? What if I really do want to strip off the old and put on the new?

4. For our last few minutes this morning, I'd like to offer some thoughts on how to change your wardrobe.

- a. First and most important, you have to ►believe in Jesus for eternal life. Without Jesus, we don't have anything new to put on. So, before you work on changing clothes, you need to work on changing closets. You need the new spiritual nature that only comes from believing in Jesus for eternal life? Do you believe?
- b. Secondly, you have to ►commit to a wardrobe change. You have to commit to stripping and killing and getting rid of and you have to commit to putting on. Changing your fashion sense doesn't just happen and it isn't easy. You will fail sometimes. You'll get home from work some days and think, "Well, I put on the wrong thing for that meeting." Other times, you'll get to say, "Thanks Lord for using me to show your compassion and kindness." You have to buy in and jump in. A half-hearted effort will leave you pulling for the same closet because it's easier because it's what we know.
- c. If you have believed in Jesus for eternal life and are committed to changing, you need to look in the ►mirror- a lot.
 - i. When we get ready for the day, most of us look in the mirror. Most of us checked the mirror this morning before coming to church. We tend to check a mirror throughout the day. We check our makeup and our hair. We look to see if we spilled lunch on our shirt. We ask our ourselves, "How do I look in this?" Our spiritual wardrobe change is similar.
 - ii. But the mirror is the Bible.►
 - iii. ^{NLT} **2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.
 - iv. We need to check our outfit. What are we wearing today? What does the Bible say about what I am doing or thinking or saying? What action can I take right now to change my clothes? You know, if we were honest, most of us are probably guilty from time to time of wearing most of what Paul says to take off. And none of us are perfect at putting on our new self. But we have the option of checking our outfit as often as we want to.
 - v. And our mirror can't be our culture; it can't be our friends; it can't be our pastors; it can't be our parents. It's the Bible. What does the Bible say about what I think and feel and act?
 - vi. There are lots of ways and places to look in the mirror.
 1. Church on Sunday mornings
 2. Life Groups- where we learn to apply the Bible
 3. *Foundations*- our class for teaching about God and Christianity.
 4. A personal time you read the Bible at home.
- d. Finally, sometimes a wardrobe change requires some ►help. That help can come from friends or pastors or counseling. If you try to change something and you can't seem to do it on your own, ask for help. From the sex stuff and impurity to anger and rage to anything else on Paul's list, we want to help you take off the old and put on the new. There is no shame in saying, I want to change my clothes and can't or I don't know how. I don't know how to stop being angry. I don't know how to show or feel compassion. I don't know how to keep my mind pure. I don't know how to- you fill in the blank. Because we are all in the same boat. We all have the same old nature. We're all trying to take off the same old clothes. And hopefully, we're all trying to put on the same new clothes. That's what we are here for. Now is the time for a wardrobe change.

Will you pray with me?

