

**THE BIG IDEA:** As Christ followers, our fashion should match our passion.

### The Take-Off

I've shared this story before, and even though it's a little bit awkward, I think it's probably good to share it again in order to kind of frame where we'll be going in the next section of Ephesians.

In the summer of 1983, I was a rising high school senior madly in lust with a girl. Life seemed good.

But at a summer camp, I found myself introduced to a Jesus that, although I'd been in church all my life, was different than the one I'd always heard of.

He wasn't a dress-wearing wimp, or that weird dude with the long hair and the halo in the Olan Mills photo.

He wasn't a distant fable that was the center of archaic stories.

He was a real savior who had entered a real world in a real way to save real people.

Suddenly, all of the stories that I'd heard seemed to come alive, and it was because I was coming alive.

As we saw last week in Ephesians 4:23, I was being made new, and when I came home from camp, I knew that my life was going to change.

And that's exactly what I went to my girlfriend's house to tell her.

Unfortunately, as I was trying to tell her how Jesus was changing my life, we found ourselves in the middle of some of the old habits we'd formed, and that's when she looked at me and said the phrase that I've never forgotten: "I thought Christians didn't do this?"

Now, you may not have ever had a moment quite as intense as that, but I bet you've heard or said at sometime from or to somebody something like this: "And you call yourself a Christian!"

Whether we like it or not (and it's ok to not like it), when what people see in us doesn't match what people hear from us, it can be a little confusing, and Paul started addressing that last week when he wrote that Christ followers should take off the old and put on the new (Ephesians 4:22,24).

Today we'll be reading verses that go into greater detail about what we should be taking off and putting on.

To kind of prime the pump, I've brought some pictures of some really bad fashion choices.

God's not into bad fashion, and I'm so glad! He wants us to look our best, for our outside to match the beauty of what he's done on our insides.

So Paul is going to give us some fashion tips, and if we don't remember any of it, let's at least burn the Big Idea into our heads and hearts: **as Christ followers, our fashion should match our passion.**

Here are 5 really good fashion tips for the Christ follower:

#### 1. Take off lies and put on truth

- a. Paul has already made it clear that there isn't any room for falsehood in the body of Christ
- b. In fact, just 2 weeks ago we saw that speaking truth in love is one of the ways that God grows us up
- c. And now, as Paul starts to give some meat to this new body of the redeemed, he starts with taking off lies and putting on the truth
- d. Why is truth such a big deal? Because...
  - James 1:17 - God the Father is truth (no variable, no changing, no shadows)
  - John 14:6 - God the Son is truth
  - John 16:13 - God the Holy Spirit is truth and leads us into truth
  - John 8:44 - Satan is a liar and the father of all lies
- e. This is a BIG deal
- f. We must operate in truth with one another, for sure, but also we need to be marked by truth with others who are not Christ followers
- g. Are you a man or woman of your word? Can what you say be trusted?
- h. If not, there is no weight to your testimony about THE TRUTH.

#### 2. Take off sinful anger and put on reconciliation

- a. It's highly likely that you've heard someone use this verse to justify their anger (or maybe you've used it)
- b. The reasoning typically goes like this: It's not a sin to be angry, especially in this case because I'm just displaying righteous anger

- c. Granted, it is possible to be angry without sinning, but we'll find that Paul mentions anger again later because it just isn't very likely.
- d. Most of us, if we get angry, sin, but not because of the anger, but because of how long we hold onto it.
- e. So Paul puts a time limit on it - by the end of the day, deal with it.
- f. Go to sleep with a closed account on the day so that you don't wake up with a big festering pile of resentment.
- g. Most of us are pretty sure we'd never let a grudge grow to Hatfield and McCoy proportions, but if we aren't dealing quickly with the things (and people) that make us angry, we'll be surprised to find that root of bitterness growing into a full-blown wall of shrubs that keep us separated from the people who can help us.
- h. Need proof? I present Matthew Mundschau. (Share the story)
- i. God's plan to make sure that doesn't happen in his body? Quit spiritualizing our silence and have the hard conversations that are necessary to dig out that root of bitterness BEFORE it grows.
- j. By dealing with things before the sun sets, there isn't time for anything to grow out of proportion.
- k. It also ensures that we don't wake up and miss the mercy that is fresh and new every morning. When we go to sleep bitter, we wake up angry.
- l. But when we go to be forgiving and forgiven, we wake up with peace, and the devil loses his foothold in our lives.

### 3. Take off stealing and put on generosity

- a. Now, of all the wardrobe changes, think about how drastic a change this one is.
- b. Before Christ, this person has been marked as one who takes from others what he never worked for.
- c. Now, after Christ, this person will be known as one who works with his own hands in order to give to others what they never worked for.
- d. A word of clarification: this isn't a Biblical call to socialism as much as a call to generosity.
- e. In socialism, a third party takes from one and gives to another. There is no choice.
- f. But in Christianity, we WILLINGLY give from what we have earned to those in need.
- g. Not in want, or in laziness, but in need.
- h. And just to drive that point home, Paul included these strong words in a letter he wrote to another church: "If a man won't work, he won't eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10)
- i. God's serious about people being responsible.
- j. He's even more serious about his church being known for generosity.
- k. Make no mistake, Christ followers don't wear stinginess well.
- l. So take off the selfish, get what I can for me mindset and put on the clothes of generosity.
- m. You'll find that others will believe your really following Jesus a lot more.

### 4. Take off hurtful words and put on helpful words

- a. Let's just take a minute here to understand why what we say is so important:
  - Matthew 12:36 - We'll be held accountable for even our careless words. Why?
  - Proverbs 18:21 - Because our words are powerful - they are death or life producing
  - Proverbs 12:18 - Rash words are like getting stabbed; wise words heal
- b. What Paul is saying here is simply that a mark of a Christ follower is the ABILITY to discern the RIGHT WORDS for the RIGHT TIME ("only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs")
- c. This is impossible outside of community; that is where we really get to know what each needs

### 5. Take off hostility and put on humility

- a. Paul wraps up this section with a list of negative qualities that we need to rid ourselves of
- b. "Get rid of" literally means to "have nothing to do with"
- c. This is stuff more worthy of the trash can than a believer's life
- d. Just listening to these - bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, malice - allows us to hear the hostility
- e. These do NOT look good on a Christ follower
- f. But kindness, compassion and forgiveness - these are the fruits of humility, of one who knows he has been forgiven
- g. When we put on humility, we are so much quicker to extend to others what Jesus has extended to us

### The Landing

Sometimes, like we said last week, we think that we've got to stop doing the bad things and start doing the good things.

We feel this pressure to try harder, or to stop bad habits.

But this isn't about getting rid of things because they are bad, but rather because they are in the way of the good that God desires for us.

As I was studying this week, I found the following illustration in a message given by Ray Stedman, who was a pastor in California for many years. He was a big deal and known as one of the better preachers of our day.

“Putting off the old man is like squeezing the water out of a half-drowned man's lungs. You do not do that because you want his lungs to be empty, you do it because you want the air to get in so that he can live. What the Scripture reveals to us is that this old egocentric life of ours, this old man, the self, has been choking us, killing us. It has been cutting off the breath which we were designed to breathe. The only air we were designed to breathe is God.”

So much of what the world sees in believers confuses them, because our lives can appear to be bad fashion.

But God has already done everything necessary to provide us with a new wardrobe.

So let's close today like this...

- Let's remember that Ephesians drives home the fact that we are in Christ
- Let's remember the fact that 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that we ARE new creations
- Remembering that allows us to see that this old nature is like an outfit that doesn't fit us anymore
- Taking it off isn't losing anything, because removing the old clothes allows us to let our new nature come through for others to see

It allows our fashion to match our passion, and when that happens, the world around us will be drawn to a Savior who is able to take people like us and make us become people like Him.

And that's worth changing clothes for.