

Dressing The Part
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Ephesians 4:17-5:4 NIV

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

20 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

5 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Our Rancho Santa Marta mission trip was last week, and in a few minutes we are going to hear from some of our participants. I got to lead the fireside devotionals and decided that, since we were taking a deep dive into Ephesians, I would base the devotions on some of the images that Paul uses in this letter to get his ideas across.

For Wednesday evening we looked at the image of clothing. Properly Clothed, Everyone Can Do Good and Resist Evil

Eph 4:22–24 NRSV

22 You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

It seems especially appropriate that Paul would use the image of clothing when talking about ethical matters. By doing so, he reinforces the idea that how we live is a matter of choice. The Holy Spirit empowers us to make God-honoring choices, but we still must make them. We are now able to be renewed in our thinking and reoriented in our acting. As we continue to follow Jesus we will surely find that the work of taking off all the old life and putting on the new one is ongoing.

Think of your own closet. Do you have “nice” clothes that you save for special occasions and “comfortable” clothes that you wear all the time around the house? If someone asked you which is your favorite – the nice garment or the comfortable one – what would you say? There are old patterns of living that are like comfortable clothes to us. We know we don’t look presentable in them, but we also don’t want to let them go. Get rid of them, Paul says. That look doesn’t suit you anymore—actually it never did, if you are honest.

Testimonies from Karen Clark, Sue Wiley and John Hom

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