

# 9

## New Clothes

### *Colossians 3:1-17*

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It didn't take her long to realize that she was terribly underdressed. This was her first time at one of her new acquaintance's garden parties and she had gravely misjudged the dress code. Never before had she noticed just how ragged her favorite jeans were. Or how obvious that stain on her blouse was. And why did she opt for the flip-flops—today of all days? As the other attendees began glancing skeptically in her direction, she wished she could vanish and reenter the party wearing the proper attire. In this study we'll get a “fashion lesson” from the apostle Paul, who instructs us what not to wear in the presence of the risen Lord and offers us a much better wardrobe instead.

**Group Discussion.** Describe a time when you were either embarrassed by what you were wearing or felt that your clothing gave a wrong impression of you. Did this experience change the way you dressed in the future?

**personal reflection.** How do your actions function as “clothing” in the way they reveal to others something about who you are or what you value?

The Colossian believers were struggling to understand how to live as Christians. Some were even turning back to various human tradi-

tions and philosophies (2:8) or rules and observances (2:16) for guidance. So Paul explains the unique nature of the Christian life to them in terms of what it means for believers to be included in the risen and exalted life of Christ. Then he invites them to strip off their old clothes and put on some new ones. *Read Colossians 3:1-17.*

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**1.** In what ways do you share the Colossians' struggle with knowing how to live as a Christian in a not-so-Christian world?

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**2.** How do verses 1-4 challenge and reorient the way you understand who you are as a Christian?

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**3.** What are the "things above" that we are instructed to set our hearts and minds on (vv. 1-2)?

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**4.** What will happen to us when Christ "appears" (v. 4)?

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**5.** What are some of the earthly things that we are instructed to "put to death" or "rid ourselves of" (vv. 5-9)?

**6.** Why must we strip off these earthly things?

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**7.** What earthly things do you most struggle to get rid of in your life?

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**8.** What are some of the wide-reaching, society-altering benefits of being clothed with the new self (vv. 10-11)?

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**9.** How is our new clothing characterized (vv. 12-14)?

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**10.** Why do we often have a difficult time wearing some of these new items?

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**11.** How does Paul encourage us to draw on Christ's own resources as we clothe ourselves (see particularly vv. 13, 15, 16)?

**12.** How would your life look different if every “word” and “deed” were done in the name of the risen Lord and with gratitude to God (v. 17)?

*Give thanks to the Lord for the great riches that are yours in the risen Christ. Express your desire to be finished with the tattered sin-stained clothing of your old self and be fully adorned with the beautiful garments of the new self, reflecting the glory of Christ in all things.*

**Now or Later**

The image of putting off the old self and “clothing” ourselves with something new is a common image in the New Testament. Take some time to read and reflect on Ephesians 4:22-25, 1 Peter 5:5-6 and Revelation 3:17-18. What specifically do each of these passages ask us to put aside? What new clothing do they encourage us to put on? How do the characteristics of the new clothing reflect the character of Christ himself?

