

SESSION 10

Christ's wardrobe



SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Colossians 3:12–17

BUILDUP THEME



INTERNALIZE GODLINESS

God expects believers to put on Christlike qualities.

MEASURABLE RESPONSE

The learners will study Scripture as a means of developing Christlike virtues in their lives.

MEMORY VERSE

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Colossians 3:14, 15).

Teacher Preparation

- ☐ When, if ever, have you gone with a brand-new look, including a change of wardrobe? What prompted your change, and how was it received?
- ☐ Read Colossians 3:12–17. Becoming a believer demands a new wardrobe. Something must replace the sinful thoughts, attitudes, and actions Paul commanded believers to put off. So Paul gave a new lineup of clothes for the believer in Christ to wear every day. What do you notice about the “articles of clothing” Paul listed? Have you been putting them on?
- ☐ Make it clear that Paul didn’t present his descriptions of the believer’s new clothes as if he were creating an ad for the new summer lineup at Kohl’s. The clothes are more like a believer’s uniform issued by Christ, the believer’s commander. Christ expects us to be properly dressed and ready to serve Him every day.

Session Summary

Paul exhorted the believers at Colosse to put on Christlike qualities, to let God’s peace rule their hearts, to be thankful, to embrace and share “the word of Christ,” and to use words and actions that honor Christ.

Session Starters

Option 1—Fashion Awareness

Steps

1. Read the following options before reading them again and having students raise their hands to indicate which one is true of them.
 - I'm oblivious to any changes in fashion trends, as you can tell.
 - I recognize fashion trends but don't care about them.
 - I make a mild effort to stay up with fashion trends.
 - I shop specifically for new fashion trends.
 - I replace my entire wardrobe as soon as a fashion trend begins to change.
2. Discuss your students' awareness of fashion trends.

ASK: How has your attention to fashion changed over the course of your life? (Q1)

ASK: When, if ever, were you most aware of fashion changes? (Q2)

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Salvation marks a significant change in a believer's wardrobe. Paul listed specific "trends" (characteristics) a believer should put on. This session covers those characteristics.

Option 2—Fashion Quiz

Gather

- Resource 63-R10.

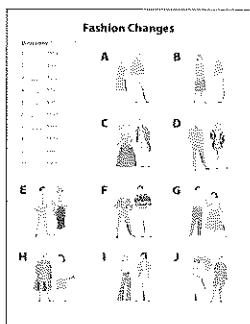
Steps

1. Each student completes a copy of the quiz on resource 63-R10. The quiz asks the students to match fashion trends with the century or decade in which the trends were popular.
2. Check students' answers. The correct answers are as follows: (1) C; (2) J; (3) B; (4) E; (5) H; (6) G; (7) A; (8) I; (9) D; (10) F.
3. Discuss the fashions represented on the page.

ASK: Which of the styles do you remember wearing? Which style was your favorite?

ASK: Which style do you wish would come back?

ASK: Which style do you hope will never come back?



63-R10

4. Transition to the Bible study.

Paul stuck with his clothing analogy in presenting the believer's new clothes. Today's session examines some of the Christlike qualities that ought to characterize believers.

Bible Study

In our previous session we learned that we should discard the "old clothes" associated with the lives we led before we trusted in Christ as Savior. Now we need to think about putting on the "new clothes" associated with our life in Christ.

I. The Believer's New Line (Col. 3:12–14)

Christ is the Designer for the believer's new line of clothes. He desires for us to wear His line exclusively.

A. The Designer's purpose (3:12)

The "clothes" that identify believers as God's people never go out of style. They are always beautiful, appropriate, and suitable for every season. Paul appealed to the Colossian believers, as God's elect, holy, and beloved people, to put on those clothes.

READ: Colossians 3:12; Ephesians 1:3, 4. **ASK:** Why did God elect (choose) us? (Q3) *That we should be holy and blameless in His sight.*

ASK: How should the reasons for our election affect our lives? (Q4) *We should strive to be like Christ.*

We are the objects of God's everlasting love. Think about that. If we are beloved of God, then every command He gives us is motivated by His love for us—including His command for us to "put on" Christlike characteristics (Col. 3:12). We should not look at God's will for us as something we have to do but rather as something we are privileged to do.

B. The product descriptions (3:12, 13)

The list of attitudes and actions in Colossians 3:12–17 represents what Christ is like. Each characteristic represents the believer's new life in Christ and stand for an article of clothing in Christ's line.

READ: Colossians 3:12.

The Greeks identified our affection as coming from our gut, so the Greek word for tender mercies can be translated as "bowels" of mercy. The idea is to be people of compassion or tenderheartedness. This quality wears well when believers minister to the brokenhearted, the sick, the homeless, and the helpless. In an impersonal world, the compassionate believer can touch lives in Jesus' name.

Jesus showed compassion when He fed the hungry, cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, wept at Lazarus's tomb, gave sight to the blind, strengthened the lame, wept over Jerusalem, and died on the cross.

READ: Matthew 9:36; 20:30–34; Mark 1:40, 41. **ASK:** Does the fact that you can't heal people mean your compassion can't be as effective as Jesus' compassion? Explain. (Q5) *The compassion flowing out of Christ is the same compassion flowing through us. It all has the same source. God makes our compassion highly impactful.*

Compassion is a feeling of concern and care. Some believers are compassionate without much effort. Others can observe someone who is struggling with a problem and not feel any compassion for that person.

ASK: What would you say to believers who excuse themselves from being compassionate by claiming that they aren't sensitive or emotional people? (Q6) *God wouldn't command us to do something that He wouldn't also enable us to do.*

Those who struggle to feel compassionate must decide to be compassionate. The feelings of compassion will then follow as God changes our hearts and loves people through us.

"Kindness" flows from a heart of compassion (Col. 3:12). It refers to having a gracious spirit—even toward those who don't warrant kindness. One Bible commentator identifies "kindness" as a "sweet disposition."

READ: Luke 6:35. **ASK:** How is God kind to the unthankful and evil? (Q7) *He provides for their daily needs and provides a way of salvation (Eph. 2:4, 5). He gives them time to turn to Him in faith.*

Kindness often opens a door to a heart previously closed to the gospel. Sometimes a smile is more effective than a sermon. A shared meal or an errand run for a shut-in can often prepare the recipient of kindness for a friendly conversation about Christ.

TESTIMONY: Share a time when your relationship with someone deepened because of an act of kindness. (Q8)

Humility doesn't go out of style, but it seems that this quality is seldom worn in these me-first times (Col. 3:12). The apostle Paul correctly saw himself as the chief of sinners and the object of divine grace (1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Tim. 1:15). He did not glory in himself or in his achievements; he wrote that those who glory should glory in the Lord (2 Cor. 10:17).

READ: Philippians 2:5–8. **ASK:** To what extent was Jesus humble? (Q9) *To the extent of dying on the cross.*

Humility, unlike self-promotion, always leads to exaltation. This was true of Christ (Phil. 2:9–11), and it is true of every humble believer (1 Pet. 5:5, 6).

Closely matching humility, “meekness” belongs in the believer’s new wardrobe (Col. 3:12). Meekness is the attitude of glad and willing submissiveness to God’s will. Self-will, self-advancement, and self-interest characterize many lives today, but Christians should emulate Jesus instead of the world. He commanded believers to take His yoke and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart (Matt. 11:29). Meekly Jesus complied with the Father’s will, enduring even the cross to finish the work the Father had given Him to do. Like Jesus, we should pray for God’s will, not our own, to be done (Luke 22:42).

ASK: Does being meek mean we let people walk all over us? Explain. (Q10) *No. It means we deal with them in a way that focuses on resolving the problem in a Christlike way rather than on protecting or demanding our rights.*

Longsuffering or patience is another quality we should put on (Col. 3:12). We are to suffer long with those who offend us. We aren’t to hold grudges against them. We are to hold out hope for renewal and restoration in others. We commit our hurt feelings to the Lord and trust Him for strength to respond properly to each stressful situation.

ASK: Think about Jesus’ relationships with His disciples. With which ones do you think He had to be the most longsuffering? (Q11) *Peter and Judas.*

ASK: What was the result of showing longsuffering to His disciples? (Q12) *Peter turned into a mighty man of God that never again cowered from standing for the Lord. Judas eventually betrayed the Lord, but not before he was given every possible opportunity to turn from his wicked ways.*

READ: Colossian 3:13.

Those who forbear, or bear with others, will not retaliate. They will bear up under criticism and even persecution. They see relationships, particularly those within a church, as too valuable to mar with mean-spirited retaliation. Forbearance was particularly hard for the believers in the first century and beyond who faced persecution for their faith. But their forbearance was often their greatest testimony to the love of God.

Paul stated that Christ is the model of forgiveness (3:13). Christ forgave even though it cost Him a lot. He didn’t base His forgiveness on what He stood to gain but on what others stood to gain. Forgiveness for the sake of others is a radical concept in a world obsessed with defending one’s own rights.

The Greek word *makrothumian* translates as longsuffering or patient.

It is listed as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. James 5:7 uses forms of this word in exhorting Christians to “be patient” and to have “long patience.” James 5:11 mentions Job as an example of patience.

The phrase “forgiving one another” suggests that every believer will need to both grant and seek forgiveness. In essence, when there is a rift between two believers, they ought to meet each other on their way to reconcile with each other. The offender should come seeking forgiveness, and the offended should come offering forgiveness.

ASK: What is the difference between saying, “I’m sorry” and saying, “I was wrong. Will you forgive me”? (Q13) *Saying, “I’m sorry” is to admit feeling bad over the wrongdoing. Being sorry doesn’t restore a relationship. Saying, “I was wrong. Will you forgive me?” opens the door for reconciliation. Two people won’t be reconciled until the offender admits guilt and asks for forgiveness and the offended grants forgiveness.*

C. The perfect decoration (3:14)

READ: Colossians 3:14.

Love keeps the previously mentioned qualities in place. Figuratively, Paul perceived love as a wide belt or sash worn over the other “garments” and holding them together. He called love the bond of perfectness. It is the perfect decoration to the believer’s new wardrobe.

READ: 1 Corinthians 13:2, 3. **ASK:** Why did Paul say his acts of kindness and sacrifice would be worthless to him if not done in love? (Q14) *Because otherwise they would have been done out of pride.*

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, Paul said that the greatest virtue is love—greater than faith and hope. Faith and hope will one day no longer be necessary, for all believers will see Christ face-to-face and will realize all His promises. But love will never cease. We will express our love for one another and for God forever and ever.

II. The Believer’s New Focus (Col. 3:15–17)

If believers put on the qualities listed in verses 12–14, they will have a new focus in life. Paul described that focus in the remaining three verses in this section.

A. The peace of Christ (3:15)

READ: Colossians 3:15. **ASK:** What comes to mind when you read the command to let God’s peace rule in your heart? (Q15) *Perhaps an umpire who is calling the shots.*

Paul exhorted the Colossians to let God’s peace “rule” in their hearts. The word “rule” was used by the Greeks to identify the role of an arbitrator. The arbitrator’s decision in a contest was binding upon the contestants. If we were to express the meaning of Paul’s command in modern terms, we might say, “Let God’s peace umpire in your hearts.”

Members of a local church do not have God's peace in their hearts if they quarrel with one another. But if they relate to one another with forbearance and forgiveness, God's peace will abide in their hearts.

Being thankful is a key to letting God's peace rule in our hearts. An unthankful spirit disrupts a harmonious relationship with God, for it communicates to God that we aren't happy with the circumstances and people He has brought into our lives. When we thank Him no matter what comes our way, we express our trust in Him and our desire to submit to His will and control. Such an expression preserves peace.

READ: Philippians 4:6, 7. **TESTIMONY:** Describe a time when you paused to thank God for something troubling and thereby experienced peace. (Q16)

B. The word of Christ (3:16)

The normal Christian life isn't stagnant; it is abundant. It abounds as it is nurtured by the Scriptures.

READ: Colossians 3:16. **ASK:** How can believers let God's Word dwell in their hearts "richly"? (Q17) *By studying Bible passages that instruct on what God wants that believer to do in dealing with problems. By getting pertinent passages into their hearts through memorization and meditation. By going into spiritual battles with a quiver full of truth from God's Word.*

When we welcome the Scriptures into our lives, they make us wise. We learn what God wants us to believe and how He wants us to behave. We apply that knowledge by adhering to His Word, by avoiding error, and by doing His will daily. Enriched by the Word of Christ, we teach and admonish one another (3:16).

Furthermore, God's Word would form the basis for the Colossians' singing. In this way, their singing was a means of instruction and admonition. Congregational singing can be enjoyable, but the words we sing must agree with God's Word. If our hymns and other songs merely give us a warm, fuzzy feeling, they are inadequate. If they contradict sound doctrine, they are inappropriate. If they affirm Biblical truth, they are good and useful for teaching and admonishing one another.

C. The name of Christ (3:17)

The putting on of the spiritual qualities listed in Colossians 3:12–14 produces a lifestyle in which our words and deeds honor Christ.

READ: Colossians 3:17.

We do not view life as partly secular and partly sacred. We see all of life as sacred; therefore, we guard our lips, knowing that what we say

reflects upon our Lord. We also conduct ourselves wisely, knowing that those who observe us will build their perceptions of Christ on what they see us do. Through Jesus Christ, our Intercessor in Heaven, we give thanks to God for every occasion to honor Him.

Believers should be kind, loving representatives of Jesus Christ. Clothed in the Christlike “garments” mentioned in Colossians 3:10, we can minister to one another, honor the Lord, and witness effectively to unbelievers.

Session Application

Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

Steps

1. Have an artistic volunteer sketch a well-dressed believer on the whiteboard. Without consulting their Bibles, the learners should tell the artistic learner how to label the wardrobe.
2. When all the Christlike qualities are listed, have each learner select two qualities that he or she hasn’t worn much lately. (Q18)
3. Encourage your learners to use the verses listed under question 19 in their student books as a starting point in putting on the qualities they haven’t worn lately.

ASK: What can you do to get God’s Word out of the Bible and into your heart? (Q20)