

WHAT NOT TO WEAR

The Learning Channel has turned several familiar phrases into a cultural and programming phenomenon. Our friends and neighbors are familiar with the TLC versions, but for the last few weeks we've been learning about God's perspective ...

The Clean Sweep (February 2)

We learned what to do about the emotional clutter that we accumulate during our lives – some memories are worth keeping, but other hurts from our past we must discard if we want to live in freedom.

Extreme Makeover (February 9)

We learned that the reason people put so much emphasis on their appearance is that we are powerless to fix the emptiness in the inner man ... and we heard some powerful testimonies of how God still changes lives from the inside out.

While You Were Out (February 16)

We learned that even when we walk away from God He will welcome us back in His mercy, restore us to a relationship with Himself, and help us stay committed to our most important human relationships.

Tonight, our subject is “**What Not To Wear.**” The Learning Channel is constantly looking for people to appear on this show; in fact, you can fill out an application online for any of your friends who may be fashion-challenged. Here is the blurb from their website ...

Do you have a relative that's constantly dressing in colors which make him/her look like the American flag? Do you know someone who squeezes into clothes that are two sizes too small? Does your mom hide her figure under dresses shaped like a two-person tent? Do you cringe every morning when your co-worker walks in with her latest XXXL bedazzled sweatshirt and white stretch leggings? Has your best friend's wardrobe been frozen in time since he or she graduated high school in 1981? Now you can nominate someone in your life to undergo a full fashion makeover! “What Not To Wear” wants to transform the ugly ducklings of fashion into stylish swans.

The #1 rule of the show is that you can't tell your friend you are nominating them, because the producers want to film the candidate secretly, and then surprise them with their kind offer of transformation.

Pentecostal Fashion Faux Pas (“a socially awkward act”): hairdos with Kleenex, “rats,” toilet paper rolls, cereal boxes; Swedish Knit suits; green tea hair coloring; the scotch tape facelift ... what were we thinking?!?

The Bible teaches us that what we wear is very important to God, because in a very literal sense “we are what we wear.” What we wear immediately reveals what we want the world to believe or admire about us – that's why people wear expensive clothes, stylish clothes, tight clothes, revealing clothes, etc. And it's why Christians wear modest clothes – because we want God to be pleased, not the world.

Preachers say, “Jesus loves you just as you are.” That's true, but it's not complete! Jesus loves you just as you are, but He loves you too much to leave you that way! The Bible teaches us these principles about clothing:

- Clothing for modesty's sake was instituted by God Himself
- Nakedness is a mark of shame
- Clothing is used in Scripture to indicate a negative spiritual state (i.e. mourning, cursing, shame, confusion, desolation)
- The wearing of modest clothing is commanded by God
- Improper clothing displeases the Lord greatly (i.e. abomination)
- KINGS: a change of clothing was required to be in royal presence, clothing was used to indicate the blessing of a king, and a king's glory was evidenced by the clothing of His servants
- Clothing is used in Scripture to indicate personal purity, a repentant attitude, and spirituality
 - **Job 29:14** I put on righteousness, and it clothed me.
 - **Psalms 132:9** Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.
 - **Isaiah 61:10** I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh [himself] with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth [herself] with her jewels.
- Clothing is the identifiable mark of the redeemed in eternity!
 - **Revelation 4:4** “clothed in white raiment”
 - **Revelation 7:9** “clothed with white robes”
 - **Revelation 19:14** “clothed in fine linen, white and clean”
 - **Revelation 19:8** “arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”

So, what we wear is important to God, to ourselves, and to others!

However, the Bible declares that there is something many people wear that is far more detrimental to their spirituality and relationships than any clothing they could ever put on. This garment is several sizes too small, so it severely restricts our happiness. This garment is out of style with God's Word, so it destroys our usefulness in God's Kingdom. This garment is downright ugly sometimes, so it distances us from those we want to be in relationship with. This out-of-date garment is far more common than you might imagine ... it is our **ATTITUDE**.

WHAT IS AN ATTITUDE? (JOHN MAXWELL)

It is the "advance man" of our true selves.
Its roots are inward but its fruit is outward.
It is our best friend or our worst enemy.
It is more honest and more consistent than our words.
It is an outward look based on past experiences.
It is a thing which draws people to us or repels them.
It is never content until it is expressed.
It is the librarian of our past.
It is the speaker of our present.
It is the prophet of our future.

The dictionary defines an attitude as "a feeling or emotion toward a fact." In other words, the fact doesn't change, but our attitude toward that reality can make or break us. Another definition of attitude is "an inward feeling expressed by an outward behavior." In other words, attitudes do not lie and they cannot be kept silent. WE "WEAR" OUR ATTITUDES!

Our clothing can hold people at arm's length (that's why you don't go near skinheads in a dark alley) – **so can our attitude!** Our clothing can associate us with certain subcultures (like the Amish) – **so can our attitude!** Did you know there are subcultures within a local church?

Some people say, "I want to have an Acts 2 church, where we preach the message of the Apostles!" Somehow they think that is the ultimate, and they can live any old way after that. But we also want to have ...

An Acts 3 church where miracles happen at prayer meeting
An Acts 4 church where our services are literally shaken by God's power
An Acts 5 church where we have church from house to house
An Acts 6 church where saints take on ministry so pastors can seek God
An Acts 7 church where ordinary Christians are used powerfully by God
An Acts 8 church where we reach people of influence for God's kingdom
An Acts 9 church where we see religious people powerfully converted
An Acts 10 church where we are willing to reach people who not like us
An Acts 11 church where even persecution spreads the gospel
An Acts 12 church where God gives miraculous answers to prayer
An Acts 13 church where we send out people to do missionary work

Most churches are big on RELIGION and small on RELATIONSHIPS. That's why we can preach sermons and believe doctrines with harsh attitudes that care little for how we are impacting our communities. That's why even Christians have to guard against unscriptural attitudes that can damage our marriages, families, friendships and churches.

Lock this statement away in your heart: **LIFE IS RELATIONSHIPS; THE REST IS JUST DETAILS**. In other words, everything in life that truly matters can be boiled down to relationships. Basically everything we do touches relationships in some way (we even interact with people when we are sleeping!) If you fail in relationships, you fail in life.

It is our **ATTITUDE** that most often keeps us from enjoying our relationships. Here's what the Bible has to say about the subject ...

Colossians 1:21 (GW) Once you were separated from God. The evil things you did showed your hostile attitude.

Proverbs 16:18 (NCV) Pride will destroy a person; a proud attitude leads to ruin.

Proverbs 14:30 (LB) A relaxed attitude lengthens a man's life; jealousy rots it away.

Titus 3:2 (TEV) Tell them not to speak evil of anyone, but to be peaceful and friendly, and always to show a gentle attitude toward everyone.

Romans 15:5 (LB) May God who gives patience, steadiness, and encouragement help you to live in complete harmony with each other--each with the attitude of Christ toward the other.

Matthew 20:28 (LB) Your attitude must be like my own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many.

Philippians 2:3-5 (GW) Don't act out of selfish ambition or be conceited. Instead, humbly think of others as being better than yourselves. Don't be concerned only about your own interests, but also be concerned about the interests of others. Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus summarizes His teaching on attitude with the "Golden Rule" – the **ULTIMATE RULE OF RELATIONSHIPS** ...

Matthew 7:12 (KJV) Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Matthew 7:12 (MES) Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. Add up God's Law and Prophets and this is what you get.

This “rule” was cited in negative form in the writings of rabbinic Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other religions (i.e. “don’t do to others what you don’t want them to do to you”), but Jesus was the first teacher to state it in a positive form. His commandment is certainly more difficult to obey ... but it has the greatest impact on our relationships!

How did we get so messed up in our relationships anyway? To answer that question, you have to go all the way back to the opening chapters of the Bible and the Garden of Eden. It was God who initiated human relationships – “It is not good that the man should be alone.” (Gen. 2:18)

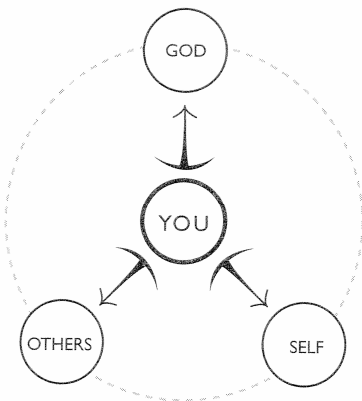
Life was literally paradise for Adam and Eve before sin entered the world. They were at peace with God, with themselves, and with each other. But then, they made a CHOICE to disobey God, and they refused to take RESPONSIBILITY for their actions (they blamed someone else). This shattered the three principles of relationships in one fell swoop:

1. You are made to need three relationships (others, self, God).
2. You are made with the capacity to choose.
3. You are made to take responsibility for yourself.

Here’s what happened Scripturally on that fateful day of decision:

Romans 8:5-7 (GW) Those who live by the corrupt nature have the corrupt nature's attitude. But those who live by the spiritual nature have the spiritual nature's attitude. The corrupt nature's attitude leads to death. But the spiritual nature's attitude leads to life and peace. This is so because the corrupt nature has a hostile attitude toward God. It refuses to place itself under the authority of God's standards because it can't.

WE MUST BRING OUR ATTITUDES IN LINE WITH SCRIPTURE!



The problem you have with another person is often a problem you have in your relationship with God or in your relationship with yourself! If these relationships get out of balance, everything gets out of balance.

Each one of these relationships has a “lens” that we look through, but two of these lenses can easily get distorted – the lens of others and the lens of self. You have to look at yourself through God’s lens if you want a healthy view of yourself and your relationships!

GOD’S DESIGN

You are who you are for a reason
 You’re part of an intricate plan
 You’re precious, a perfect unique design
 Called God’s special woman or man.

You look like you look for a reason
 Our God made no mistake
 He knit you together within the womb
 You’re just what He wanted to make.

The parents you had are the ones He chose
 No matter how you may feel
 You are custom designed with that plan in mind
 Your life bears the Master’s seal.

The trauma you faced wasn’t easy
 God wept that it hurt you so
 But it was allowed to shape your heart
 So that into His likeness you’d grow.

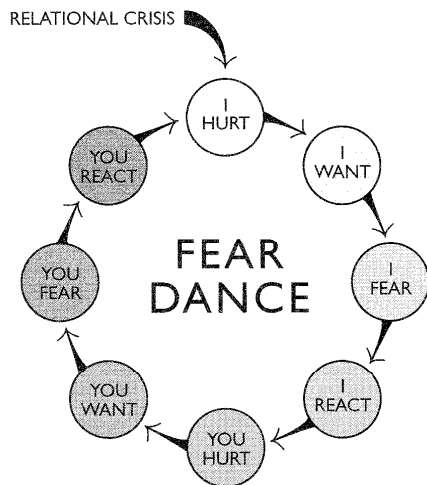
You are who you are for a reason
 You’ve been formed by the Master’s rod
 You are who you are, beloved
 Because there is a God.

Mark 12:29-31 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

The biggest lie in relationships is “I have no choice.” You can’t always choose your relationships, but you can choose how you will ACT in those relationships. GOD GAVE YOU THE POWER TO CHOOSE!

But CHOICE EQUALS CHANGE, and that’s why many people hide behind their feelings. “I can’t change the way I feel!” No, but you can change the way you REACT to those feelings! Why? Because you were created to take responsibility for yourself.

In relationships, the problem is usually not the problem! The moment Adam and Eve sinned, fear took over and started the human race on a destructive cycle that never seems to end.



James 4:1-3 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

What is the problem in this cycle?
MISPLACED EXPECTATIONS.
 We expect another human being to give us what only God can give! So what is the solution? God's love!

Porcia Nelson's "Autobiography in Five Short Chapters"

Chapter 1 – I walk down the street. There's a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I'm lost, I'm helpless, it isn't my fault. It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2 – I walk down the same street. There's a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I'm in the same place, but it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter 3 – I walk down the same street. There's a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see that it is there. I still fall in. It's become a habit. My eyes are open, I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

Chapter 4 – I walk down the same street. There's a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

Chapter 5 – I walk down another street.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The church is a family, and it is just like your family – some are mature, some are immature, some are strong, some are weak, some are healthy, some are sick, some are old, some are young ... but we love them all! And as we mature, we no longer expect the church, the pastor, the saints, or our spouse to meet all our needs ... GOD does that!

It is time to stop wearing those ill-fitting, uncomfortable attitudes that have been binding us, hindering revival, and damaging our relationships!

LIFE IS RELATIONSHIPS; THE REST IS JUST DETAILS. But you have to make a different CHOICE! Albert Einstein said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result." Your thoughts control your feelings, your actions, and your reactions. It is your responsibility to THINK DIFFERENTLY!

Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

Isaiah 61:3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

TRADE IN YOUR OLD GARMENTS!