

Clothed in Compassion

What Not To Wear

“You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” – Colossians 3:7-8

I got in an argument with my husband while putting our kids to bed tonight. After leaving their room feeling very disrespected, I threw two loads of clean laundry on the bed and started rage folding. It crossed my mind to leave his clothes in the hamper and just fold everyone else's. But I remembered I'm not a child and don't need to act like one.

As I was nearing the end of the piles, I noticed a hole in the armpit seam of one of his T-shirts. The Scripture I studied with CVM a couple of years ago from Romans 12:20-21 came to mind, *“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* Basically, if your enemy's shirt needs mending, mend it... So, I got out my sewing kit.

The first time I turned the shirt right side out to check how my work looked, I noticed my suturing skills were super rusty and instead of a simple continuous pattern I should probably switch to like an everting mattress pattern to hide my mismatched thread, so I did. When I turned it back over the next time, I saw that there were two holes in the other armpit! At that point I realized that this must be just a work shirt for him now and he probably didn't care a bit about the holes, nor would he be blessed by my fixing them, so I might as well stop. But I didn't, because you know who was blessed by my fixing them? Me.

It's really hard to be kind to someone, or pray for them, and stay angry with them.

Sometimes clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, as we'll see God calling us to do in verse 12 soon, means clothing our enemies with shirts that don't have holes in them. Or better yet, maybe realizing our husbands aren't our enemies.

One thing I like about verses 7 and 8 is that we are called to action. The Fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:21-22 *“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,”* are characteristics I sometimes long for, but feel that all I can do is plead with the Holy Spirit to give them to me. However, in this chapter, Paul, who wrote both Galatians and Colossians, tells us to intentionally rid ourselves of *anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language* and instead put on *compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience*.

I can't say that I fully comprehend how to achieve the Fruit of the Spirit, but if we're walking with the Lord, I think it may mean we need to actively die to ourselves and get out of the Spirit's way. As long as I allow myself to be consumed with anger, or rage cleaning, I can't very easily put on these characteristics of Jesus.

Or what if we choose to put on compassion first... Instead of ridding ourselves of anger *then* clothing ourselves with compassion, wouldn't having compassion on someone help diffuse our

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frustration with them? Truly empathizing with their experience would shift our malice into kindness. When we learn what that client has going on at home, our patience grows. When we understand how a co-worker feels unseen or mistreated, gentleness comes easier. Even with our patients, when we know they're in pain, our tolerance for their snapping at us increases naturally.

For many, anger stems from fear. Two other causes seem to be at the root of my own anger, which embarrassingly still sometimes leads to rage, malice, slander, and every once in a while, filthy language. I think for me at the heart of my anger is a feeling of not receiving the respect I "deserve." Relinquishing my pride and putting on the humility Jesus modeled so beautifully (see *Philippians 2*) would serve me well in regulating my emotions. After all, Jesus was the only one who actually did "deserve" to be respected, and even he took on the very nature of a servant and was obedient to the point of death on the cross.

The other root cause of my anger is not fully trusting God's plan. Isn't that the underlying reason for pretty much all of our sin; believing that we know better than the Creator of the Universe? If I trusted that the Lord's timing for my life is ultimately the best then I would reframe interruptions as divine appointments, I would look at irritations as opportunities, I would not be frustrated when my plans go sideways.

"I used to walk in these ways in the life I once lived," but now *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ in me,"* – Galatians 2:20. Let's rid ourselves of anger and clothe ourselves instead in the beautiful life and ways of Jesus.

- 1) **Compare and contrast this passage in Colossians 3 to Galatians 5 and the Fruit of the Spirit.**
- 2) **What comes to mind as the underlying cause of your anger, rage, malice, slander, or filthy language?**
- 3) **What are some ways you rid yourself of those and regulate your emotions in different situations with classmates, difficult clients, and family?**
- 4) **What attitudes of Christ would you like to put on?**



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