

Clothe Yourself in a Way That Goes with the New You

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. Excellent. Well, if you have a Bible, would you turn to Ephesians chapter 4? If you don't have a Bible, there's Bibles scattered in the pews around us.
- It's imperative if we're going to hear God's voice this morning that we have His words open in front of us. So why don't you turn to Ephesians chapter 4? And let's pause just before we begin and let's pray together.
- Let's pray. Father, we thank you for our time together this morning. And we thank you now for your words.
- And we come to it expectantly that we would hear from you. And we would echo the words that we've sung just a few minutes ago that our hearts would be changed and renewed.
- And we pray this in Jesus' name and for His glory. Amen. Amen. So here is Thomas McIntyre.
- [1 : 0 4] In 2013, he was named Slimming World's Man of the Year. He went from, get your head around this one, okay? He went from 31 stone to 13 stone.
- And it gets better than that. He went from an extra, extra, extra, extra, extra, extra, extra, extra. That's eight large to a medium.
- It's pretty impressive stuff, isn't it? But picture this. After the service this morning, you decide to go for a stroll around the meadows just outside.
- And in the distance in your vision, you see Thomas. There he is. And you think, this is the guy who's the Slimming World Man of the Year 2013. I need to meet this guy. But as Thomas gets closer to you, actually something strikes you as being a bit odd about him.
- Because he's wearing the same clothes that he used to wear. So he's wearing a ridiculously baggy shirt. He's wearing trousers that he's got the belt right to the end.
- [2 : 1 5] And he's tucking it in. He's holding them up with his hands. What would you say to Thomas? Would you say, Thomas, great to see you.
- Well done on that award. You're looking great. No, of course you wouldn't say that. You would say, Tommy boy, you look ridiculous. You are not that person anymore.
- Why are you dressing like the old you? Dress and clothe yourself in a way that goes with the new you.
- And you see, that is the Apostle Paul's big point this morning. Clothe yourselves in a way that goes with the new you.
- First three chapters of this letter, Paul's been unpacking these glorious truths about what God has done for us in the gospel.

- [3 : 18] And now he turns to say that this is what your worshipful response to what God has done should be. And our verses this morning, they're a passionate plea from Paul for these Christians in Ephesus to understand, to grasp, to get their heads around the reality of what God has done for them in the gospel.
- And to see how that compels them to live such a different life, a completely different life of radical righteousness to the glory of God and to the praise of his grace.
- Clothe yourself in a way that goes with the new you. And if you've got a Bible there in front of you, you'll see that this passage, it splits up nicely into two.
- And we're just going to look at it in two sections this morning, really simply. The new you and the new lifestyle. The new life, the new lifestyle. So let's read together verses 17 to 24, the first section there.
- This is the new life. Paul writes this. So I tell you this and insist on it in the Lord.
- [4 : 37] That you must no longer live as the Gentiles. You can read that as people who don't follow Jesus. Live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking.
- They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of their ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity.
- And they are full of greed. And we'll pause there for just a second. Because you see, before Paul goes on to talk about the new life, he wants these Ephesians to see the old life.
- And this is the condition and the reality of what is going on in the lives of the people who are round about them who don't follow Jesus. Now look at the words that Paul uses there in that section.
- And I think he's put it together deliberately in a fashion to convey a downward movement. Look with me. It begins with hardness, doesn't it? Hard hearts.
- [5 : 47] Then it moves to darkness. Then it moves to darkness. And then it moves to recklessness. Now isn't that a most chilling description of what a life is that doesn't know God?
- Of a people who are just going with the default inclination of their sinful hearts and wanting nothing to do with the God who created them and choosing to go away from him.
- It speaks of a people lost. And it speaks of a people heading away from God. Now the famous author C.S. Lewis, amongst his other works, he wrote a book called Surprised by Joy.
- Maybe you've read it. Can I thoroughly recommend it to you? It's basically his autobiography. And in it, he tells the story of when he first traveled to Oxford to go to university.
- And he got off the train in Oxford and he started walking. And as he walks along, he writes this. He notices that the buildings are getting smaller.
- [6 : 53] He notices that the parks are getting less pretty. He notices that the roads are getting narrower. He notices that the streetlights are getting fewer. And he notices that it's getting darker.
- And he thinks to himself, is this the world famous Oxford I've heard so much about? Is this the world famous Oxford that I've worked so hard to get to?
- And then he stops. And he turns around. And in the distance, he sees the city skylight. The spires.

The beautiful buildings. The city lights. That's Oxford. And it suddenly dawns on him that from the minute that he left the train station, he's been walking in the completely wrong direction.

And it's really interesting what he writes next. He writes this. I did not see it at the time, but this whole episode was an allegory of my life.

[7 : 54] He was walking further and further away from the truth. Now, if that's you this morning, then see the reality of your spiritual condition as outlined in these verses in Ephesians.

You need to do what Lewis did. You need to turn around. The Bible would use the word repent. You need to say sorry. You need to turn around. And you need to start walking towards the truth.

Now, what is the truth? Well, Paul tells us, isn't he, in verse 20. The truth that is in Jesus. You need to put your faith in Jesus.

Now, faith, I think, is one of those words, isn't it? I wonder if you'll agree with me that a culture is kind of hijacked. People come up to me all the time and say, Graham, I wish you had your faith. And I say, well, it's simple to have my faith.

You just put your faith in Jesus. Oh, no, I don't know if I want to have your faith. Isn't that true? The culture has hijacked that word, that it's a kind of cross your fingers and hope for the best expectation that things are going to work out okay.

[8 : 54] The thing about faith is, it isn't how strong your faith is. It's where your faith is. Who is your faith in? Now, a really simple definition of faith, if you want it this morning, this is something you may have heard from Sunday school, I don't know, but I only heard it last week, so I'm going with it.

Faith is forsaking all I trust him. Okay, put your palm in front of you there, let's do it together, okay? Forsaking all I trust him.

Will you put your trust in what Jesus has done for you on the cross? That God loves you outrageously, but the thing is, you are at odds with him because of your sin.

Jesus took the punishment. God sent his one and only son to take the punishment that you and I deserved, because we are rebels walking in a manner like the first three verses outlined there.

And if you haven't heard this before, Jesus took your punishment. He died your death. And you go free. The great substitution.

[10 : 02] You need to put your faith and your trust in Jesus. Forsaking all I trust him. But Paul writes these verses to help these Ephesian Christians see that this is what they used to be like.

This is the old you. This is the former way of your life. And the thing to see, says Paul, is that this is not who you are anymore.

Let's finish that little section, verses 20 to 24. Come with me. Let's read it together. Paul writes this. That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Do you see what he's saying? He's saying to these Christians that God has done a total transformation job on their lives. That they were running away from him. Your hearts wanted nothing to do with him.

[11 : 25] Your minds knew nothing of him. But God. Do you remember we saw that in chapter 2 a few weeks ago? It was maybe a few months ago. I can't remember. But God. But God.

But God, in his grace, he opened your eyes to the truth of his son and he put his spirit in you and restored you to a relationship with him like it was always meant to be and he gave you new life.

And God united you to Jesus and your life is hidden in him and what's his is yours. Paul's point is that they need to understand and they need to embrace the reality of what God has done for them in Christ.

Now Sinclair Ferguson, a well-known Bible teacher, good Scott as well, he says this. He says that the gospel is a message of cosmic proportions. The gospel is a message of cosmic proportions.

It's no small thing to be a Christian. It's a big deal. It's a big deal. Now do you know what saddens me? That sometimes, don't we, we speak of our conversion?

[12 : 42] That we speak of how Jesus opened our eyes? It's no big deal. Don't we? We know how it goes when you're telling your testimony, when sometimes you're hearing someone's testimony, it goes something like this, doesn't it?

That I was brought up in a Christian family. That I prayed a prayer with a friend at camp when I was seven. And I've been living my life for Jesus, following him ever since. And we frame it, don't we, as if it's not a big deal.

That it was almost a formality. That it was almost inevitable. And we put it together like we're embarrassed. Don't we? Now listen, little Chloe, I hope she grows up to have the most boring testimony in the world.

Isn't that true? And then we hear the story of someone who has a dramatic testimony and we somehow think that's a bigger deal than what's happened to us. Now I wonder if you're here this morning and maybe you need to grasp afresh again what a joy it is to be a Christian.

The miracle of what God has done in your life. It's a big deal and it's a costly deal because it cost God his one and only son to make it possible.

[13 : 53] And notice as well that from these verses that this is something these Ephesians clearly already knew. Verse 20 and 21. They knew this stuff. They'd heard it before.

They'd been taught it. They learned it. But they needed reminded of it. We need to understand the reality of what God has done in our lives.

If you're a Christian here this morning, you're not the old self. You're not the old self. You're the new self. Isn't that amazing?

And Paul says two things in response to that. Firstly, like we sang in the song earlier, he says, be transformed by the renewing of your minds. So what does he want them to do?

He wants them to think differently. He wants them to orientate their whole lives towards God. Now how do we renew our minds? That's a good question, isn't it?

[14 : 52] How do we do that? Well, we read God's word. We hear God's voice. We bask ourselves in the Bible.

We saturate ourselves in Scripture. We invest ourselves wholly in this book because as we read it, we hear God's voice.

Friends, are we devoting ourselves to God's word? Every day, daily, are we doing this? Are we letting God's word speak into our lives? Because we know it's true, don't we?

That either culture outside is going to be telling us how to interpret the world, how to understand ourselves. It's either going to be culture that's telling us that or it's going to be God's words.

God is telling us that. And we need to read our Bibles expectantly every time we come to them and pray that God would transform our minds by his spirit.

[15 : 52] You know, it was St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, who famously prayed these words, Christ beside me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me.

And then he goes on to write, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down. Do you see what he's praying? He's praying that, God, would you dominate my life?

Would you saturate my life? Would I just be overcome by an amazing sense of who you are? So there we are. Firstly, Paul, be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Secondly, well, this is where Paul turns into a fashion consultant. If you're a certain generation, I don't know who that is, Ralph Lauren? Or if you're this generation, is it Gokwan? I'm not sure. But he turns into a fashion advisor.

And he effectively goes into the wardrobes of these Ephesian Christians and he sits there and he goes, well, that's got to go. And that's got to go. And that is definitely got to go.

[16 : 57] You know, I bought a mustard top. You may have seen it a few weeks ago. Alex hates it. That's got to go. But this is what he's saying. He's saying that you need a new wardrobe that goes with the new you.

And he starts using dressing language. He starts using clothing language. Now, of course, he's not talking about physical clothes. He's talking about how these Christians are to behave.

This is how a follower of the Lord Jesus is to clothe himself. Clothe yourself in a way that goes with the new you. Put off the old self.

Put on the new self. Now, what is that going to look like? Well, do you notice how he doesn't leave them to kind of speculate or to try and figure it out for themselves? He tells them exactly what it's going to look like in their life.

So let's turn to the second part this morning, the new lifestyle. Verses 25 to 32. Come with me. Let's read it together. Paul writes this.

[17 : 58] Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor for we are all members of one body.

In your anger, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must no longer steal but must work doing something useful with their own hands that they may have something to share with those in need.

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.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander along with every form of malice.

Be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other just as Christ God forgave you. So this is the truth that what God has done in them should have such a profound effect on the way that they live their lives and I think in particular in this section how they behave with one another within this Christian community.

[19 : 26] So this is effectively how they operate as a church. And I think the easiest way to understand this is that he talks about three body parts. He talks about their mouths.

He talks about their hands. And he talks about their hearts. So let's just walk through those three things. Okay? Firstly, their mouths. In light of the new new, put off falsehoods.

Put off lying, slander, gossiping, vile language, rumor spreading, exaggeration, unwholesome talk. Now the word unwholesome there, it quite literally means rottenness.

Do you see what he's saying? Get rid of rotten talk. Talk that has as its aim to tear someone down. Talk that has as its aim to delight in the misfortune of others.

It's just a complete lack of integrity by the way in which you use your mouths. Now do you know who it's been a bad week for? FIFA.

[20 : 31] Isn't it? Bad week for FIFA. Chris Bryant, the Shadow Culture Media and Sports Secretary. That's a great title, isn't it? Shadow Culture Media and Sports Secretary.

He said this. He said, Yesterday, the whole world saw that beneath the mask, the beautiful game has a very ugly face. Can anyone be in doubt at all that FIFA is rotten to the core and needs swift and wholesome reform?

Question mark. Isn't it? There's an organization this week that's been accused of many things, but essentially what it boils down to, dishonesty, lying, isn't it?

Falsehood. FIFA have been accused of. But the trap that we mustn't fall into as we read about that kind of stuff in the news is to think that falsehood is out there somewhere.

We know it. Don't we have to be a lot closer to home? I mean, just think about the places that you work. I walked in an office environment for four years. You know what it's like?

[21 : 35] Think about the offices where you work. Think about the sports teams or the clubs that you're a member of. And dare I say it, think about your wider family. Do we not know it to be true that our culture and our own lives at times, are they not rife with falsehoods?

And what Paul is saying to these Christians is that the church, the community of grace, the family of God that you have been grafted into, there's to be none of that.

You are to be so radically different by the way that you use your mouth in the world that you live in. Now it's said of St. Augustine, he's one of the fathers of early Christianity in the West, it's said of him that he had a sign above his dinner table and it said, a man who speaks evil of an absent man or woman is not welcome at this table.

Put off falsehoods. In light of the new you, put on truth and grace. speak truthfully to one another. Speak lovingly to one another.

Speak gracious words. Speak patient words. Speak kind words. Speak beneficial words. Words that are going to build somebody up, not tear them down.

[22 : 58] And you see, I think the big idea that we need to understand from what he's saying here to these Christians is that their conversation is to be a demonstration of and a vehicle for the grace of God.

Grace has to pour off their lips. You know, I think if you think back over your week, what have your words been like? What have our words been like?

We know it to be true, don't we, the destructive impact that our words can have. Now we need to watch in here, we need to watch how we're speaking to one another.

We need to start thinking about how we're speaking of one another. And we need to act in accordance with what Paul is telling these Ephesian Christians here.

That is how the mouth of the new you speaks. Second body parts, the hands. In light of the new you, put off stealing. Now I'd imagine as Paul wrote this, he's presumably addressing people that he's heard about who are being lazy, who aren't working, and who are making a living dishonestly.

[24 : 15] And what he's saying is that kind of lifestyle has got no place in the kingdom of God. Now if you want to contextualize that into our speak, he's effectively saying don't be a people who diddle your tax returns.

Don't be a people who steal off his stationery. Don't be a people that when your employer is employing you to do a job, that you go and do something else. Do you see what he's saying?

He's saying put off stealing, put off dishonest living. And in light of the new you, put on generosity. So what he's saying is use your hands in a way that glorifies God and benefits others.

Use your hands to contribute to the work of the church. Use your hands to build others up. Use your hands to bless your brothers and sisters in Christ whose hands may well be failing.

And it leads us to ask, doesn't it, how are we using our hands here this morning? Are we using them generously? Are we using our abilities that God has given us to bless our brothers and sisters to serve this church family?

[25 : 29] And are we using our possessions? Are we using our money? Are we using that kind of stuff to build up the church? That's how the hands of the new you work.

Your mouths, your hands, thirdly, let's look at the heart. Paul writes this, in light of the new you, put off anger. Now I think in this passage, isn't it, we can read it as almost as talking about righteous anger.

Now there are things as Christians that we need to be angry about. We need to be angry about social injustice in our community and in the world. We need to be angry about our own sin and how it offends God.

But I'm not convinced that's what Paul's big idea is here. What he's saying is that when we find ourselves angry, we need to be very, very, very, very careful.

And we need to be very, very, very careful because your anger is not to get the better of you. Don't let it master you. That's his big point. Now how do I know if anger has mastered me?

[26 : 39] Well I was thinking about it this week. The irony is, by the way, when you're studying anger you realize how angry you are. When something annoys you, does it dominate your mind? Can you not shrug it off?

Do you go to bed at night thinking about it and wake up in the morning and think about it? Does it cause you to get bitter and angry against another person when you replay it over and over and over again in your mind?

Are you the one that's always right? That's how we know it's mastered us. What does he say? He says, put off anger. Put off anger and in the light of the new you, the new self, put on forgiveness and put on self-control.

And I think the big idea here for us to understand is that the day of your anger is to be the day that you deal with it. Don't allow unsettled matters to fester because when they fester they spread and before you know it you're not dealing with a little scratch in your arm, you're dealing with a gangrene, you're dealing with a limb that needs to be cut off.

It spreads and it festers and we must commit ourselves as a community to not allow the devil to have any opportunity to put a bridge separation between us.

[27 : 56] If you're not right with somebody in this room then the uncomfortable truth here is that you need to go and deal with it. You need to go and deal with it.

Don't hope that you're going to bump into the person over there in the coffee queue and if it doesn't happen you think I'll just do it next week. Okay? You've got to go and do it. You've got to get right with one another because remember this isn't just a moralism exercise this is us representing the holiness of God this different community that lives for Jesus and how are people going to recognize it if they look in and we're bickering with one another?

Put off anger put on forgiveness and self-control. That's how the heart of the new you beats. Put off the old self put on the new self be a holy community be a community that lives and breathes and beats for Jesus Christ in this world of darkness.

Clothe yourselves in a way that goes with the new you. So let me ask you this morning how are you doing with some of these things?

And let me make two comments just as we close. Firstly this is a battle and because it's a battle it's hard but it's a battle that you and I we need to commit ourselves to fighting.

[29 : 20] We need to be killing sin. We need to be spotting it in our lives and putting it to death because the truth is if we're not putting it to death it will be putting us to death.

If we're not killing it it will be killing us. Now do you remember when I think it was swine flu I think was doing the rounds a few years ago?

Do you remember that? Got one nod. We'll go with it. One nod. And the government didn't they? They produced this little slogan to try and help us as the public to deal with it. Do you remember that slogan?

Catch it bin it kill it. Did anybody do it? I think I did it twice. I actually went through it and did it. Catch it bin it kill it. Same applies to our sin. Got to be fighting it.

Every time you see the old self making a fleeting appearance and it happens so often if you stop and think about how often it happens it happens all the time when you see the old self making an appearance catch it bin it kill it.

[30 : 21] Maybe there's some conversations that you need to have right after the service to make that a reality. Let's be making every effort to put off the old self and to put on the new self.

Second comment maybe all this talk maybe actually it just makes you feel despondent because you sit here and you're listening to me and you say Graham I'm trying really hard I'm trying really hard but see that old guy see that old self I just can't control him.

He keeps making an appearance I keep struggling in my Christian life I've tried so hard but it just seems futile. Well can I just encourage you just as we close can you see the massive encouragement that's in these verses verse 30 God has given us his Holy Spirit the third person of the Godhead that God has placed in our hearts is a seal that we are his and the spirit's role in our life is to point us to Christ is to exalt the work of Christ in our lives to cause our eyes and our minds and our hearts to focus on him to illuminate his finished work on the cross because you see this isn't about us being perfect you do not need to feel weighed down by the guilt that you are not so often the new self because Jesus paid for your sin on the cross and the spirit will illuminate that and he'll draw you to it

Scottish pastor from the past Robert Murray McShane he said for every one look at my sin I take ten looks at the cross and the spirit by God's grace his agenda for us is not to leave us as we are it's to make us more like Jesus now think about it this way if the old self is over here and the new self is over here if the world is over here if Jesus is over here the spirit in us is helping us to go that way isn't that an amazing truth that God hasn't left us on our own to figure this one out that God hasn't left us just to rally on without any help he's chosen to give us his holy spirit and I think just really simply from these verses when we choose to go with the old self instead of the new self we grieve the spirit that's what he's talking about and so the question for us as we close is are we walking in step with the spirit what an amazing promise from God now just as we close something really practical to help us this week

Friday I came to 4 o'clock and I had no energy left so I thought I would do something useful these little stickers on it it just says the new self and an idea for you this week there's a ton of them in that corner there you can draw your own you can do what you want but let's this week why don't we put this above our wardrobes yeah and every time you get changed every time you put on something let's remind ourselves to put on the new self now poor Alex Chloe's thrown up all over at the minute she's getting changed a lot but every time you do it go to the wardrobe put it above your wardrobe let's strive to put on put off the old self and put on the new self just remember Tommy walking around the meadows your clothes look ridiculous on you let's put off the old self let's put on the new self let's clothe ourselves in a way that goes with the new you let's pray Father God we thank you so much this morning for your precious words

[34 : 09] Father thank you that you haven't left us to our own devices to figure you out but you've revealed yourself to us and thank you that your word is like a mirror that as we look into it like we have this morning our hearts are exposed and we see the changes that we need to make and I pray for all of us now as we think through what we've read that we would do what we need to do in response to that in the silence now would you be speaking to us and I pray for this church Lord that you would help us to be a community of radical righteousness help us by your precious Holy Spirit to live in the light of our new identity in Christ and this is our prayer through his worthy and precious name Amen God bless you and out will you give us an app and give us a

■■■■im ■■■ God bless you turn to others and we'll be just of course for our future and this is our prayer challenge and we'll find out in this opportunity of the paradise that we've got there of Jesus and we'll emperor know and we'll see that and we'll see in this■■■ so Rachel what