

COLOSSIANS 3:12-14: A New Set of Clothes

Andy Stanley: "We get to choose WHETHER OR NOT we follow Jesus, but we do not get to choose what following Jesus LOOKS LIKE."

→ *There are well-meaning people in the world who distort what it means to follow Jesus, by taking a few things He said out of context and imposing their own interpretations. Discuss.*

→ *What is the difference between being an admirer of Jesus and a disciple?*

→ *What does Colossians 3 tell us about what following Jesus looks like?*

A. WHY DOES WHAT YOU WEAR MATTER?

What can people tell about who you ARE, what you BELIEVE, what you STAND FOR & whom you're FOLLOWING by the metaphorical 'clothing' you wear?

→ *What, if anything, does our choice of physical clothing tell other people about us? Can that be misleading? Should that influence what we wear?*

→ *What, if anything, does our choice of 'spiritual clothing' tell other people about us? Should that idea then inspire us to choose our 'clothing' rather carefully?*

B. WHAT, AS A CHRISTIAN, SHOULD WE BE WEARING?

How should we be RECOGNISED? What should we LOOK like? How should we BEHAVE? What should we be KNOWN FOR?

→ *What qualities / characteristics do you possess that might make people think you are a Christian? What would you like those characteristics to be?*

→ *What are non-Christians' false, negative assumptions about Christians in general and where have they come from? What do Christians sometimes do in error that puts people off?*

a) COMPASSION → The KEY that UNLOCKS the door to the LOVE of God (Rom 5:5).

b) KINDNESS → In an increasingly UNKIND world.

c) HUMILITY → MODESTY, willingness to YIELD, desire to ESTEEM others.

d) GENTLENESS → MILD, NURTURING, CONSIDERATE, MEEK

e) PATIENCE → Are we prepared to offer others the GRACE we long for ourselves?

f) BEAR with each other → Can we help them CARRY their HEAVY LOAD, because like yours, it probably is.

g) FORGIVE one another → So UNDER-RATED, VITAL, central to SPIRITUAL HEALTH.

h) Over all these virtues, put on LOVE → The CULMINATION, CRUX & EPITOME of all the others.

→ *Which of these 8 items of clothing particularly jump out at you? Which one would you most like to grow in / would you most like to be recognised or commended for?*

→ *How many of those do you possess naturally? Any that you've grown significantly in over the years? How did that growth take place? What does God use to grow us in these characteristics (perhaps pick one or two as examples)?*

C. HOW DO WE MAKE SURE WE ARE?

Just as we CHOOSE our WARDROBE in the morning, we choose BEHAVIOURS. But obviously those choices are going to be strongly affected by the INFLUENCES we ALLOW to drive us.

Here are 3 KEY CHOICES we make:

1. Choose what you VALUE

* VALUES drive BEHAVIOURS. So, you have to make a decision in PRIVATE, before the Lord, that this is where the LINE in the SAND is for you.

* Get that SETTLED in your mind, then when you face it in the flesh the CHOICE has ALREADY been made.

→ *What are the values that matter most deeply to you? Why is that the case? As a parent, what values do you (did you / would you) most want your children to catch from you? Why is it so important to settle it in your mind ahead of time? What values did Jesus hold that were clearly 'lines drawn in the sand?'*

2. Choose what INFLUENCES you

* Who are you LISTENING to? Who's LEADING you? What are you SURROUNDING yourself with? What are you FEEDING yourself?

* You can, at least to an extent, choose ENVIRONMENTS, ROLE-MODELS, SOURCES.

* Proverbs 4:20-23, 2 Timothy 2:16, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Proverbs 27:17

→ *What negative influences are there out in the world that are attempting to infiltrate and sabotage your values? Is it true to say that you can choose your environments, role-models & sources? How much are you in control of that? If you're not, how do you take control? If you can't, what strategies can you take to protect your values?*

3. Choose WHERE you DRAW

* Do you routinely draw from the FLESH (OLD nature) or from a deep WELL of love & grace, which is fed by RELATIONSHIP with JESUS?

* The voice of the flesh will shout QUICKEST & LOUDEST, will be PUSHY & DEMANDING. The voice of the spirit is QUIETER & SOFTER, GENTLER & SUBTLER.

→ *How does your flesh tend to try to grab your attention? How do you recognise the influence of that deeper well, the voice of the spirit? Why is it so important which well you draw from?*