

FULLY CLOTHED 1 – Clothed with Mercy & Compassion

RECLOTHING (Col 3:5-14)

- * As a believer, there must be a PUTTING OFF of the OLD and PUTTING ON of the NEW.
- * Strong Biblical metaphor: What you WEAR stands for WHO you are ... It's not just FUNCTIONAL, but deeply SYMBOLIC.
- * The challenge for us: Can people tell WHO you REALLY are by your spiritual CLOTHING?
 - *How do you 'take off the old?' and then 'put on the new?'*
 - *What do the clothes people wear say about them? Why do certain roles require uniforms? Is the metaphor as strong today as it was in Old Testament times?*
 - *What spiritual clothes are you wearing? Perhaps your group could help you identify what stands out: a nice way, perhaps, of affirming one another!*

OIKTIRMOS (Col 3:12)

- * A heart of COMPASSION, manifesting PITY, exercising MERCY.
- * A STIRRING, deep in your BOWELS.
- * A deep, heartfelt EMPATHY that MOVES the responsive to ACTION.
 - *Why did Paul imply that 'oiktirmos' came from the 'bowels?'*
 - *Why does the King James pluralise the word 'mercies?'*

MERCY = The ability to show FORGIVENESS & KINDNESS to those who don't DESERVE it or are powerless to REPAY it.

Characterised by:

- a) Quick to FORGIVE
- b) GENEROSITY
- c) PATIENCE

The power of mercy is that it goes FIRST.

The receiving of mercy is LIFE-CHANGING: It has changed OUR lives and, God willing, it will be a TRANSFORMING FORCE in theirs.

- *What does the concept of 'mercy' mean to you? Is it a natural attribute for you? When is mercy hard? What is the power of mercy?*
- *Describe how mercy is characterised, even recognised, by the three listed above?*
- *"The receiving of mercy is life-changing: It has changed our lives and, God willing, it will be a transforming force in theirs. But that's above our pay-grade!" Discuss*

COMPASSION = Deep SYMPATHY for the suffering of others, accompanied by a DESIRE to ALLEVIATE it.

Characterised by:

- a) EMPATHY
- b) ACTION-ORIENTED
- c) SELFLESS

Compassion is the MOVING of the HOLY SPIRIT deep within, jumping up & down on the inside, saying, "Let me MINISTER to that BRUISED & BROKEN heart."

→ *Why is compassion stronger than sympathy? Why is empathy stronger than pity?*

→ *Why are the New Testament writers so keen to point out how often Jesus was 'moved' or motivated by compassion? What does this tell us about Jesus' relationship with the Spirit?*

→ *What does compassion help us to see? What do we tend to see, instead, if we're lacking in compassion or empathy, and why does that sometimes give Christians of a certain sort a bad name?*

COUNTER-DRESSING

The great opportunity: We can offer what people NEED, LONG for, but simply CANNOT FIND in the world.

The power: MERCY leads to the CROSS & COMPASSION points to CHRIST.

→ *What's the great opportunity and why? How could we great leverage that opportunity: personally and/or corporately?*

→ *Why can people not find it in the world? And what do they often find instead?*

If the church were clothed in 'oiktirmos' ... The BENEFITS

1. We'd be an accurate REFLECTION of God's nature (Lam 3:22-23).
2. We'd be more effective in building BRIDGES (2 Cor 5:18-20).
3. We'd be more credible WITNESSES (Mic 6:8).
4. We'd GUARD ourselves against HARDNESS of heart (Luke 6:36-37).

→ *Work through these and explain their importance. Why do we compromise them if we're lacking in 'oiktirmos?'*

How do we clothe ourselves in 'oiktirmos?'

1. Recognise your OWN DEPENDENCE on God's mercy & compassion.
2. Maintain a spirit of FORGIVENESS.
3. Pursue HUMILITY.
4. Commit to ACTION.
5. Cultivate FELLOWSHIP & DEPENDENCE on the Holy Spirit.
 - *How do you score on each of those? Which one are you planning to work on and how?*