

**March 4, 2018**

**(Walk This Way Series): Ephesians 4, 5**

**“Putting on Your Church Clothes”, Ephesians 4:29-5:4**

Make no mistake, you're different! When you became a Christian, believing all the claims of Christ – that He is God's Son, who died and rose again, and who forgave your sins – you became different, with a new identity in Christ. It's from that new identity, Paul tells us should result in new attitudes and behaviors we are to “clothe” ourselves with “taking off” anything else.

Last week we put on honesty, resolution, and generosity. This week we add encouragement, forgiveness, and thanksgiving. These aren't just nice ideas, but the only way we can be “imitators of God.” So, get ready for some Spring cleaning, so that we are fully dressed in the Christ-like characteristics He desires for our good...because He loves us!

### **Three Additional Pieces of Clothing for the New Self in Christ**

**I. Encouragement:** God bless the encouragers...in our families, our jobs, and in this church! Don't speak words that tear down or cause damage. These are the type of words that are “rotten” by nature, good for nothing. Do speak words that are beneficial, constructive, and good for something. Even difficult words--given lovingly--can encourage and edify another. Harmful words grieve the Holy Spirit causing him to withdraw--an effect we never want to lose.

**II. Forgiveness:** When we are mistreated, or in conflict, Paul says to respond like Christ, giving out better treatment than we get from others. Any other response may begin with a general attitude of bitterness, but by nature, escalate to a flash of rage, a vengeful anger, a shouting brawl or cussing out! Better to stop before any response tempts you to further escalation. This means to seek grace instead of justice, to release instead of keeping score. For when we forgive, that is when we are most like God.

**III. Thanksgiving:** Give thanks for the gift of sex! Sex was given to us by a loving, generous, faithful Creator who has our best interest at heart. As Christians, we are not to abuse it, not even to joke about such matters, but we are to be thankful. (More on why next week!)

Think about it, God's provision is for our good. All these things: honesty, resolution, generosity, encouragement, forgiveness, and sex within marriage are all God's gift to us! Christians are called to walk in these ways—displaying the gospel to all by our actions according to our identity in Christ.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How are words rotten like a “squeaker” fish – good for nothing? Name a time when certain words moved you to a positive thought or action. Or, vice versa.
2. God was first to encourage and forgive by loving us through his son Jesus. How does this loving act motivate your responses?
3. Which of these three traits (or garments) are easier to “put on” or “take off” for you? Explain.
4. Share an example when your identity in Christ stopped an “escalation” in your response to a conflict. In what way did you sense the Holy Spirit moving?
5. If we feel we have grieved the Holy Spirit, what should be our first response? Why is this act so important?

6. Discuss how we “put on” these traits and “take off” the old. What does that process look like in your life right now? How can we as small group members help each other in this process?
7. (Yes, our pastor discussed sex in church!) What culture may consider outdated, is not as God says in his living Word. Explore how God’s provisions are intended to give us life.