In the Loom of Heaven

“‘Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered’” (Rom. 4:7, NIV).
Clothing! What is the point of it anyway? It costs money, plus we spend so much time shopping for it and keeping it clean. Well, for starters, we wear clothing for modesty. Clothing also protects us from the elements. Certain fabrics keep us cool when it’s hot and warm when it’s cold. Other fabrics help us to stay dry when it rains or snows. Clothing also makes a statement about who we are. If you are casual by nature, you will dress casually. If you enjoy what some people refer to as the “finer things of life,” your wardrobe will reflect your refinement. Clothes can also represent our standing in society. Joseph’s coat is a good example of that (Gen. 37:3); and what happened to Joseph and his family because of that garment is a great illustration of just how important clothing really can be!

What happens to us as a result of wearing Christ’s robe of righteousness?

Have you ever thought about how clothes are made? Thousands of tiny fibers (either animal, plant, or synthetic) are spun to make threads that are then woven together to make cloth, which in turn becomes clothing to perform the functions mentioned above.

This process is similar to our relationship with Christ. While we often yearn to have big, emotional experiences with Him, we must remember that these can occur only if we are wearing His robe of righteousness (Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 15:11-31). The threads of this robe were spun from the blood, sweat, and tears He shed on our behalf as He taught us both how to live and the meaning of redemption through His grace. He Himself protects us from the elements of sin, and shows others that we are His. And what happens to us as a result of wearing Christ’s robe of righteousness? The wonderful possibilities are endless and not always apparent until after they occur. But we do know ultimately this robe will lead us to eternal life with its Designer.

As you study this week’s lesson about this wonderful robe, consider making it a permanent part of your “wardrobe.” Just remember that you can’t buy it. And desire to wear it always.

Isa. 61:10

A Gift From the Master Tailor

Ted Greene, New York City, U.S.A.
Look Me in the Eye and Tell Me What You See (1 Sam. 16:7)

When was the last time you looked someone in the eye? Did you notice the person’s eye color first or the outfit he or she was wearing? Was the outfit a name brand? Was it something you would love to wear? Or maybe even something you would never wear in a million years? Perhaps it was barely an outfit at all. Did you barely look at the person due to the lack of attention you wanted to give her because she was a homeless person? Maybe the person was someone you were trying to avoid. Maybe it was someone you really wanted to talk with but couldn’t get past the clothes. Nowadays we tend to look only on the surface of the individuals around us. Do we define them only by what they wear?

The Spring Garden Line (Gen. 3:7–11, 21, 22)

The very first outfit that was acknowledged as clothing was designed hurriedly. It was designed in shame and with the mind-set of “anything is better than what we have now” (Gen. 3:6–11). How would you feel if fig leaves were the first outfit you ever had to pick out? After Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, His presence and covering of light that had always shielded them was withdrawn (Gen. 3:10, 11). In their nakedness, they hunted for something, anything, to cover their bodies. Augustine is quoted as saying, “Remember this. When people choose to withdraw far from a fire, the fire continues to give warmth, but they grow cold. When people choose to withdraw far from light, the light continues to be bright in itself, but they are in darkness. This is also the case when people withdraw from God.”

Adam and Eve never felt any sort of shame or nakedness until they sinned. The very first time that clothing ever mattered was when the wearers found themselves in a state of humiliation and shame. Luckily, the Ultimate Designer fixed their lame attempts at clothes and made a new set for them to cover their naked bodies (Gen. 3:21, 22). God provided Adam and Eve with everything they needed, even after they had let Him down.

Clothing Labels Label You (Matt. 23:28)

Members of many societies, schools, and clubs can easily be spot-
ted by their attire, colors, or robes. If you have made it into an honors program in a university or other school, then perhaps you get an extra cord to drape around your neck at graduation. If you are an athlete playing for a certain team, you wear a uniform that declares that you are part of that group. If you are from a certain culture or country, you may have a certain article of clothing worn during special occasions. All of these different articles of clothing declare to whom and to what you belong. What is the significance of what we wear? Why do we take so much pride in our attire? How do our clothes label and define who we are?

**The Perfect Fit (Matt. 6:25–34)**

What is it about a good pair of pants that fit just right? There is a comfort in wearing something that looks good and is reasonably priced. The stress of wearing the right thing at the right time is rampant throughout today's society. The right kind of clothes means a lot. Perhaps not with the depth of meaning as in biblical times, but keeping up with the right style and what is appropriate to wear at any given time is, for many people, an overwhelming quest. However, Jesus asks us, “‘Why do you worry about clothes?’” (Matt. 6:28, NIV). He goes on to talk about how He clothes the fields with grass and flowers. We can also say that He clothes the sky with stars, birds, and clouds. What is the significance of that compared or contrasted with how Jesus clothes us?

**Self-Consciousness Throughout Scripture (1 Sam. 17:38–40; Esther 4:1–4)**

The Bible is jam-packed with clothing symbols. There is David wearing King Saul’s armor for protection against a giant. Then there is David realizing that armor wasn’t what he needed at the time, because God is more powerful than physical armor (1 Sam. 17:38–40). See Mordecai ripping his clothes off in anguish, then putting on sackcloth and ashes and running into the city weeping and wailing (Esther 4:1–4). As we turn the pages, the stories and significance of garments throughout biblical history shine. Though perhaps clothing in our society now has lost some of its significance, think of how you feel when you know you look good or you know you look unfashionable.

**REACT**

1. What is the significance of clothing in the Bible?
2. How do biblical stories that involve clothing relate to everyday life?
3. List additional biblical examples of clothing that has spiritual significance.
4. With what has God clothed you lately?


Sara-May J. Colón, Burtonsville, Maryland, U.S.A.
Referring to Isaiah’s message, Ellen White emphasizes our need for something much more effective toward our redemption than we can contribute: “We cannot provide a robe of righteousness for ourselves, for the prophet says, ‘All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.’ Isa. 64:6. There is nothing in us from which we can clothe the soul so that its nakedness shall not appear. We are to receive the robe of righteousness woven in the loom of heaven, even the spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness.”1

“It would be a terrible thing to stand before God clothed in sinful garments, with His eye reading every secret of our lives. But through the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice we may stand before God pure and spotless, our sins atoned for and pardoned. . . . The redeemed sinner, clothed in the robes of Christ’s righteousness, may stand in the presence of a sin-hating God, made perfect by the merits of the Saviour.”2

Ellen White warns believers not to presume upon God’s grace while cherishing sin: “Christ has paid the price of your redemption. There is only one thing that you can do, and that is to take the gift of God. You can come in all your need, and plead the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour; but you cannot come expecting that Christ will cover . . . your daily indulgence in sin, with his robe of righteousness.”3

She also warns us that Satan will point “scornfully at the mistakes of those who claim to be doing God’s service. They have been deceived by him, and he begs for permission to destroy them.”4 However, she also writes of God’s people that “because they have not trusted in their own merits and excused their sins, because they have asked for forgiveness through the merits of Christ, the Lord receives them, and rebukes Satan. Because they have humbled themselves, confessing their sins, He refuses to listen to the enemy’s accusations. He has abundantly pardoned the penitent ones, and will carry forward in them His work of redeeming love if they will continue to believe in Him and to trust Him.”5

1. Our High Calling, p. 350.
4. This Day With God, p. 226.
5. Ibid.

Gayle Hill, Medford, Oregon, U.S.A.
Garments in Bible times indicated the status, position, and wealth of those who wore them. Likewise, our spiritual “clothes” indicate our spiritual status. The purity laws surrounding the sanctuary taught that a person can approach a Holy God only if that person is spiritually pure (Matt. 22:2-13). We must be wearing the m’eil of righteousness (Isa. 61:10). The m’eil or “robe,” was worn by people of high rank. The m’eil with which Jesus clothes us changes our spiritual state and elevates our status in God’s kingdom. What a gift! Especially since our natural spiritual clothes are unacceptable to God. Isaiah even compares our own righteous works to be as unclean as the garment women used to wear during their time of ritual impurity (Isa. 64:6).*

Imagine! Jesus gives us the clothing that changes our status with God!

We can do nothing to become pure before God. How, then, do we receive the m’eil of righteousness? By simply trusting Him. See, for example, Romans 3:21-24; 4:3-6. However, this does not exclude works. Israel was God’s chosen people. Yet time and again, they rebelled against Him, incurring His wrath (Isa. 63:9, 10). To be restored to His favor, they needed to start trusting in Him again. Their trust became evident in the godly lives they lived. They “remembered” Him by serving (obeying) only Him (Deut. 8:10-20). But didn’t we just say that our righteous works are unacceptable?

Once we trust God and submit to Him, the m’eil of His righteousness is placed over us, enabling us to stand before Him as though we had never sinned. When we submit to God, we become dead to sin, Jesus lives in us, and we live by faith in Him (Gal. 2:20). Then the righteous deeds we do, are those that Jesus does in and through us. They are His deeds, not ours, and therefore, are acceptable before our Holy God. Imagine! Jesus gives us the clothing that changes our status with God! Our part is to simply rest in Him.

**REACT**

Most of us live in a society where people focus on their own efforts to get ahead. How easy is it for you to rest in Jesus when the pressures of life appear to demand your action?

* The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 327.

Sherry Manison, Smithsburg, Maryland, U.S.A.
As we traverse through life, we are relentlessly confronted with confusing and often unnecessary stimuli. These concepts and ideas that are brought forth from the world and into the minds of nearly all of us can often poison our religious experiences. God’s opposition wants nothing more than to make the path to salvation as bewildering and frustrating as possible. With endless rules and regulations that are placed in front of the believer in order to achieve eternal life, it is surprising that even more have not fallen from the path of righteousness. Fortunately, God has provided us with a simple and powerful solution—a robe of salvation that is merely one decision away from being placed on our shoulders. How do we gain salvation? Here are a few steps to act as a guide.

Accept God as your personal Savior. The decision necessary to gain eternal life is the most important one you will ever make. This simple, yet spectacular, fact is abundant throughout the Bible. “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:5, NIV). The God of the Christian is one of infinite mercy, forgiveness, understanding, and compassion. Once Christ has placed His robe of righteousness upon us, salvation is ours to keep unless we reject it. Our daily walk, our trials and transgressions, now become a measuring stick not for our entrance into heaven but for our quality of life.

Share your newly discovered robe with others. Once you have been adorned with the spiritual robe of salvation, the next task is sharing God’s mercy and power with others. Pray for guidance on how to reveal the Word of God to others. It is important not to be judgmental or condescending. The best way to gain the attention of those you are trying to reach is by actions, not lectures. Be open-minded and expect to be taught a few lessons along the way. Countless times throughout the Bible, God has used those who are weak in faith the most effectively.

**REACT**

1. What types of excessive restrictions have you placed on the gates of heaven?
2. What does God require of us to be saved?
3. How can we share the grace of God without being judgmental?

Tyson Qualls, Martinez, California, U.S.A.
A student remarked at the unfairness of a grade she had received on her transcript. Because the teacher had given her a poor grade on a report, her GPA was too low to put her at the level of a scholarship award she wanted. As I listened to this student go on and on about the unfairness of the teacher, the class requirement, the scholarship requirements, and life at this moment, I had to stop myself from asking, “What is really fair?” What does the word fair mean in the context of my life? Was it fair that I had to listen to this student when my desk was piled high with work? Was it fair that my car had a crack in the windshield? Was it fair that my favorite snack gives me heartburn? When it’s obvious that so little in life is considered fair, why is it we seem to always be asking for fairness?

So, here’s the answer to the question, What is fair? Nothing! Life isn’t fair, and thank You, Lord, for that. The memory text for this week says it all, “‘Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered’” (Rom. 4:7, NIV). Without that forgiveness we would have to suffer what is fair and just. Without that robe of righteousness that surrounds us when we seek forgiveness, we would be subjected to the consequences of sin. We are truly blessed that life is not fair. In Revelation 7, John describes a scene consisting of a multitude of people, all wearing white robes and standing in front of the Lamb. They are those who have been through the great Tribulation and have had their robes washed white with the Lamb’s blood. What a glorious sight! If you haven’t read this chapter in Revelation recently, read it now. You can visualize all those who have been forgiven covered with their beautiful white robes. And for the cherry on top: you can claim the promise at the end—not only will He lead us to the springs of living water, but He will wipe away every tear.

**REACT**

1. We are all sinners and undeserving of salvation. Yet God offers it freely to all who accept His gift. Is this fair? Explain.
2. How have God’s promises helped you through particularly tough days?
3. How do you imagine Christ’s robe of righteousness?
SO MUCH OF LIFE REVOLVES AROUND SYMBOLS. YOUR COUNTRY’S FLAG SYMBOLIZES THE VALUES FOR WHICH YOUR COUNTRY STANDS. THE SIGN FOR PROHIBITING CERTAIN TRAFFIC PRACTICES CONSISTS OF A CIRCLE WITH A BACKSLASH DRAWN FROM THE TOP LEFT TO THE BOTTOM RIGHT ACROSS THE CIRCLE. WHAT OTHER SYMBOLS CAN YOU THINK OF THAT HELP YOU TO NAVIGATE THROUGH LIFE?

CLOTHING SYMBOLS IN THE BIBLE HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF GOD’S SALVATION. FIRST AND FOREMOST OF THESE SYMBOLS IS CHRIST’S ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. IT IS THIS GARMENT IN PARTICULAR THAT HELPS US NAVIGATE THROUGH THE QUAGMIRE THAT IS SIN—THAT KEEPS US FROM THE HARM SATAN WOULD INFlict UPON US.

CONSIDER

- Reading an article on the Internet about looms and how cloth is woven. Afterward, meditate on how God and Christ “wove” our robes of righteousness. What was their “loom”? What “fabric” did they use? What price was paid for this work?
- Setting Isaiah 61:10 to music.
- Thinking about designer labels and what they stand for. Design a label for the robe of righteousness Christ has given you.
- Outlining the various processes in the cultivation of grapes and comparing these steps to the symbiotic nature of your relationship to Christ (see John 15:1–17 and Galatians 5:13–26).
- Walking with a friend through a beautiful part of nature or finding beautiful pictures of nature on the Internet.
- Doing two cost analyses—one for accepting God’s robe of righteousness and one for refusing it. In the long run, which option will be most beneficial, and why?
- Researching what is required to be a fashion designer. Contrast your findings with what “designing” the robe of righteousness cost God and Christ.

CONNECT


_Eunice Simmons, Houghton, Michigan, U.S.A._
From Exalted to
Cast Down

“You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you” (Ezek. 28:15, NKJV).
The verses for today tell us that Lucifer was not some hideous monster with a tail and pitchfork. In fact, he was brilliant like the sun and the “coolest” angel among the heavenly host. He was created to be a leader, role model, and friend of God.

Lucifer’s story is more than a story about falling from grace. We do not know how long he was harboring those jealous desires of taking the place of the Most High. He carefully hid his real intentions, all the while exhibiting all the “right” behaviors. Even as he bowed down in adoration to God, he was full of pride. He carefully hid his resentment behind a cloak of false worship. Nobody could tell. Nobody, that is, except God.

We have seen other role models fall from grace. Whether they were sports celebrities, politicians who won by landslides, or popular religious leaders, the squeaky-clean image they wore turned out to be a covering for a sinful nature and sinful acts. Like Lucifer, they hid their secret lives under a cloak of lies.

In a way, all of us are guilty of such secrecy. We put up an image that we think the world wants to see. We “wear clothes” that hint to others of our status by talking and acting in appropriate ways. Thus we maintain the image we wish to project. We wear a bright grin and greet each other warmly in church, but we hide our struggles from everyone. At the root of all this is the belief that we can fool all of the people all of the time, including God.

Do you hide your true feelings while harboring evil thoughts? How honest are you with your feelings? Do you do the right things for the wrong reasons? Are you always trying to convince yourself that attending church is what you really want to do? As you bow down to God, are you convinced of His power to transform you into all that He means for you to be?

God made everything perfect. He will make it so again. As you study this week’s lesson, prepare your heart to be honest and free from iniquity. Examine your heart, and invite God to dwell in it. Bow down in awe before the Cross and the plans Jesus has for you.
From the very beginning, the book of Ezekiel unfolds like a science-fiction novel, full of strange creatures and dazzling visions that would bring the prophet to his knees. Why was there a need for all of these visions and symbols? Israel was breaking God’s laws and had turned a deaf ear to His pleas for repentance. Thus, Babylon invaded and took many of the Israelites captive. Even Tyre rejoiced at the Israelites’ downfall (Ezek. 26:2). Perhaps with all the chaos and uncertainty, something extraordinary was needed to catch the people’s attention. God’s messages through Ezekiel were delivered with hard-hitting imagery and symbols to do just that.

After prophesying against the Israelites in the first 24 chapters, Ezekiel turned to other nations that committed atrocities toward Israel. Tyre gained wealth from trading on the sea routes of the Mediterranean. Its goal could be summarized in one word: profit—even if it meant profiting from Israel. In many ways, Tyre resembles the world in which we live. Profit drives companies forward, while we define success by the possessions we have. Sometimes we’re so comfortable in God’s blessings that we begin to think that our success is strictly a result of our own efforts.

By referencing the fate of Tyre’s king, Ezekiel 28:11–19 depicts the glory of Lucifer in the beginning to his dismal downfall. Just as the king of Tyre believed himself to be a god, so did Lucifer. “‘You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you’” (Ezek. 28:15, NKJV). The NIV version of this text translates perfect as blameless and iniquity as wickedness. We generally think that being made perfect means that no mistakes can be made. So how could perfection give way to wickedness? When God created humans and other beings perfect, He gave them the freedom to choose, even though He knew that some would not choose wisely. Therefore, although Lucifer was made perfect, he chose not to follow God. So “wickedness” was found in him.

Ezekiel reminds us that God loves us enough to allow us to make our own choices, even if those choices are sinful and cause ourselves and others great harm. Just as the Israelites were facing a grim future because of their poor choices, the later chapters in Ezekiel reveal God’s plan to live with those who choose to follow Him. Examine the choices you are thinking of making. Where will they lead you?

Clarence Cheong, Singapore, Republic of Singapore
It Really Is All God’s! (John 1:1–3; Col. 1:15–17)

In John 1:1–3 and Colossians 1:15–17, we learn that through the Son, all things were created. The Bible does not say that only some things were created by Him, but that all things were created by Him, and that all was perfect. The Bible even goes so far as to say that “apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created” (John 1:3, HCSB). Yet as we look at the world around us, we see imperfection from the time we wake up and we stare at ourselves in the mirror until the time we lie down again to sleep. Imperfection blares from every form of media. How can this be if, indeed, Christ, God’s Son, created a perfect world? To find the answer, we need to go back to the very beginning.

Imperfection Within Perfection Makes It Perfect (Isa. 14:12–14; Ezek. 28:12–19)

Lucifer was unique. The Bible refers to him as the “morning star” and the “son of the dawn” (Isa. 14:12, NIV). The word perfection denotes flawlessness. The description of Lucifer seems to fit that description quite well. Aside from naming Lucifer the “Shining One” and “son of the dawn,” the Bible also describes Him as full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, and compares him to the beauty and perfection of the Garden of Eden (Ezek. 28:12–19). He “stood in the light of the presence of God. He was the highest of all created beings, and foremost in revealing God’s purposes to the universe.”

We should, however, ask that if Lucifer was perfect in all ways, how could sin have found its way to his heart? Was there a flaw that was overlooked in the process of creating this perfect creature? Or is perfection in our eyes different from that of God’s perception? Ezekiel 28:15 gives us a clue of what perfection is in God’s eyes: “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created” (NKJV). Here, the word perfect in the Hebrew (tamim) does not mean “sinless perfection.” Rather, it means “complete,” “right,” and “sound.” The Greek word for perfect, telēios, means “complete,” “full grown,” and “mature.” We also need to consider the concept of free will. God did not create humans and apparently the
angels, including Lucifer, to be robots. He gave them (and us) the freedom to choose between right and wrong. Therefore, what Ezekiel 28:15 shows is that, in God’s universe, the concept of “perfect” includes the ability to choose between right and wrong. Without this choice, humans and the angels are not morally free.

In his perfection Lucifer allowed his pride to overtake his love for his Creator. Lucifer wanted to be like Him. He wanted to take His place. This pride became an addiction that could not be satiated by his own status, beauty, talent, or authority. Lucifer wanted more than what God had so generously given to him. This desire led to the beginning of sin.

The word sin in Hebrew, chatta’th, and in Greek, harmartia, both mean “to miss (a mark)” or “to fall short.”4 Lucifer missed the mark when it came to living within God’s plan for him. He missed the mark when it came to rightfully filling the position in which God had placed him. Because Lucifer chose to walk outside of God’s plan for him, he put in motion what we now know as sin. Because he sinned, he tempted Adam and Eve. And because Adam and Eve sinned, we also sin.

**Bridging the Divide (Deut. 8:1–18; John 3:16, 17)**

Because of His grace, God put into action the plan of salvation. Despite the fact that we are imperfect and separated from Him because of sin, the blood of Jesus covers those who accept His death on their behalf. Thus, humans can once again be perfect in God’s sight. Thus, believers can be where God wants them to be—in His presence, covered by His grace.

The Bible chronicles the plan of salvation—God’s plan to bridge the divide sin created and to reach us where we are on the other side of that divide. John 3:16 and 17 tell us that because of His great love for us, God sent His Son to redeem us. Ecclesiastes 12:13 tells us that to “fear God and keep his commandments” is our duty. Deuteronomy 8 verses 1–18 remind us that loving God and choosing to be obedient to His commands will bring us life—a better life on earth, but more important, life eternal.

**REACT**

1. Lucifer wanted more. When is wanting more a sin and when is it not?
2. Lucifer’s pride was his downfall. Yet we innocently talk about taking pride in our work. When does such pride become a sin?
3. Based on today’s lesson, how would you describe the “clothes” of pride? Of what “material” are such clothes made?

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1. The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 676.
2. The SDA Bible Dictionary, s.v. “perfect.”
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., s.v. “sin.”

Nathaniel Tan, Singapore, Republic of Singapore
“Pride in his own glory nourished the desire for supremacy. The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as the gift of God and called forth no gratitude to the Creator. He gloriéd in his brightness and exaltation, and aspired to be equal with God. He was beloved and revered by the heavenly host. Angels delighted to execute his commands, and he was clothed with wisdom and glory above them all. Yet the Son of God was the acknowledged Sovereign of heaven, one in power and authority with the Father. In all the councils of God, Christ was a participant, while Lucifer was not permitted thus to enter into the divine purposes. ‘Why,’ questioned this mighty angel, ‘should Christ have the supremacy? Why is He thus honored above Lucifer?’ ”1

“Angels that were loyal and true sought to reconcile this mighty, rebellious angel to the will of his Creator. They justified the act of God in conferring honor upon Christ, and with forcible reasoning sought to convince Lucifer that no less honor was his now than before the Father had proclaimed the honor which He had conferred upon His Son. They clearly set forth that Christ was the Son of God, existing with Him before the angels were created; and that He had ever stood at the right hand of God, and His mild, loving authority had not heretofore been questioned; and that He had given no commands but what it was joy for the heavenly host to execute. They urged that Christ’s receiving special honor from the Father, in the presence of the angels, did not detract from the honor that Lucifer had heretofore received. . . . Lucifer refused to listen.”2

“Then there was war in heaven. The Son of God, the Prince of heaven, and His loyal angels engaged in conflict with the archrebel and those who united with him. The Son of God and true, loyal angels prevailed; and Satan and his sympathizers were expelled from heaven.”3

**REACT**

What would have happened had God allowed Lucifer to stay in heaven?

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Christon Choo, Singapore, Republic of Singapore
In our pursuit of being perfect Christians, we get caught up in doing rather than in being. Instead of depending on God, we attempt to do good using our own strength and our own ideas. This makes us proud of our so-called accomplishments and causes us to forget the One we are to represent. In this, we are like Lucifer. He was proud of his standing before God and the other angels. Because of this pride, he wanted heaven to be run the way he thought it should be run. Because of this pride, he brought about sin. He not only wanted to be like God, he wanted to be God.

Sometimes pride can blind us to the motives that fuel our actions.

So how can we, in our quest to be perfect Christians, balance our efforts and stay focused on God while not allowing pride to distract us?

Recognize your imperfections. Remember that we “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23, NKJV). Remember also that there is hope for us, because God’s grace is sufficient for us, and His power is made perfect in our weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9). As we learn to recognize our limitations, we also will learn to depend more on God rather than on our own energies, efforts, or talents.

Remember God. When all is well in our lives, we tend to take God for granted. That is why Deuteronomy 8:18 reminds us that remembering Him helps us to put things into perspective. It also helps us to recognize how small and inadequate we really are and that only God can satisfy our deepest longings.

Use the right tools. Our tools are important in protecting us from the advances of Satan. God has given us the Bible. We need to ground ourselves in His Word (Ps. 119:11) by reading it carefully and by meditating on the great truths it teaches. We also need to pray to Him throughout our day (Matt. 26:41). Helping others to help themselves is another good way to stay close to God. When we help others who are less fortunate than we are, we become more mindful of God’s blessings to us.

Be willing to seek and to receive good counsel. Sometimes pride can blind us to the motives that fuel our actions. During such times, it is good to pay attention to the advice and loving counsel of brothers or sisters in Christ with whom you are close (Ps. 37:30).
The opposite of pride is humility. Yet true humility is not about considering ourselves to be useless pieces of rubbish. It is not purging ourselves of our sense of self-worth. Instead, it is an honest recognition of our own worth—our worth as God sees us.

In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul says, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” (NIV).

Pride is easy to spot. In 1 Corinthians 4:6, 7, Paul said that the Corinthians were “puffed up” or prideful because they were comparing themselves to one another even in spiritual things. “I’ve got more spiritual gifts than you do. Paul baptized me; you were baptized only by Apollos. So I am better than you!”

Pride is arrogance based on having qualities or possessions that one perceives to be better than someone else’s. Pride fools us into thinking we are above others, and often above God Himself. Pride lies when it tells us that we can thrive independently of God.

One of Lucifer’s primary characteristics is pride (Isa. 14:12–14). When we act from pride, we are acting like Satan. Whenever we act like Satan, he gains authority and power in our lives!

Satan uses a false version of humility as another trap. When he convinces us that we are worthless, we reject the value God placed upon us when He created us in His image and when He sent His Son to die for us.

Christ died for you, a human being, because He loves you. Christ paid for your life with His own life, and that makes you priceless!

True humility is recognizing the good in us and then acknowledging that it comes from God. Our lives are valuable and meaningful because our talents, gifts, blessings, and purposes are from Him. For everything we have and are, we give credit to God.

To see ourselves as God sees us—that is our goal.

**REACT**

Read Ephesians 4:7 and reflect on what it means to you.
CONCLUDE

Lucifer has always used outward appearances to accomplish his goals. As leader of all the angels, he is portrayed as the most exquisite creature in heaven. But in Revelation 12 his mask is torn away to reveal the deceiver he truly is.

On earth he clothed himself as a beautiful, winged serpent to entrance and disarm Eve. Since that success, Satan has continued to show himself in various guises throughout history in his efforts to tempt and deceive (2 Cor. 11:3, 14).

Never underestimate Satan’s ability to camouflage his true character. Just remember, whatever mask he wears, in the end he is still a loser!

CONSIDER

• Discussing with friends whether or not we should always be completely honest. Are there times when the whole truth is not the best choice? How did/does Satan use truth to deceive people?
• Creating a portrait that reflects the character of Lucifer both before and after his downfall.
• Researching examples in the Bible where Satan was obviously involved. What character mask did he use in each case?
• Taking a photograph using film. Enlarge both the picture and its negative and mount them side by side. How do these contrasting exposures illustrate Satan’s deceptions?
• Viewing an art exhibit. Think about what makes a piece of art beautiful. What are the base components (rock, metal, paper, etc.)?
• Creating a unique icon for use on your phone or computer that reflects your victory, through Christ, over Satan.
• Singing or playing the hymn “A Mighty Fortress.” Meditate carefully on the words.

CONNECT

A Garment of Innocence

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them”

(Gen. 1:27, NRSV).
The design team filtered into the boardroom, helping themselves to water before sitting around the large, mahogany table. They opened up notebooks and spread out their sketches. Fabric swatches drifted across the table in the warm breeze—like petals across a meadow.

All eyes turned toward the Client in loving wonder.

“The Perfect Solution”
Gen. 2:20–25

Karen Holford, Auchtermuchty, Fife, Scotland
Nakedness Covered in Innocence (Gen. 2:20–25)

The new world was bursting with glorious life and color. The air was melodious with birdsong. The animals had come in pairs—similar, but subtly different from each other—to be named by the man. However, there was no partner for him. For a while he tasted the ache of aloneness. Then God put him into a deep sleep, took a rib from his body, and created a woman for him to love. All was pure when they awoke to discover each other, naked and beautiful. They were perfectly at ease with their bodies, and they were covered in innocence. Nothing needed to be hidden nor interfered with their sense of wonder and oneness.

This is not just a lesson in clothing design.

The One Law of Innocence (Gen. 2:15–17)

God longed for Adam and Eve to remain in their innocent state forever. He could have made sin impossible, but the universe needed to witness His fairness. So there was only one commandment in the Garden of Eden. It was a commandment that should have been easy to keep. In His generous fairness, God created hundreds of trees that provided an abundance of delicious fruit, and He planted only one that could destroy their garment of innocence.

Innocence Lost (Gen. 3:6–11)

Once Adam and Eve had eaten from the forbidden tree, they did indeed know “everything.” The first thing they noticed was that they were no longer clothed in innocence. They were embarrassed to be seen by each other, and even more embarrassed to be seen by God. In desperation they picked the largest fig leaves they could find and threaded them together—the world’s first clothes. Then they hid in the bushes, afraid of God.

God Plays Hide and Seek (Gen. 3:8–19)

God came looking for Adam and Eve. Even though He knew where they were, He still asked, “Where are you?” Then He invited them to tell Him their story. His questions and responses can be read as more sad than angry. He tells them what will happen to them and to the world, because their innocence had been lost.

The Garment of Sacrifice (Gen. 3:21)

Perhaps Adam and Eve realize the inadequacy of their leaf clothes as
the leaves tear on the bushes and wither against their bodies. God certainly sees the problem. And in a deeply painful moment, He Himself takes one of the animals, perhaps one that Adam knew and loved, and kills it. Stripping the skin from the still-warm animal, God makes them clothes that are warmer against the chill that has blown through the Garden. This is not just the generous act of a heartbroken, caring God, but a powerful symbol. The clothes that Adam and Eve made were inadequate. We know that it is impossible for us to do anything to make ourselves right with God. Our sinfulness requires the death of an innocent Christ, foreshadowed through the bloodied deaths of innocent animals. This is not just a lesson in clothing design. It is a lesson about God’s plan of salvation. It is a glimmer of hope in the darkness of the first day of sin.

**Innocence Restored (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16; 5:21)**

That first glimmer of hope continues to shine for us. When we repent of our sins and accept Christ as our Savior, “we . . . become the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]” (2 Cor. 5:21, NKJV). This transaction is beautifully illustrated in Zechariah 3:4, “ ‘See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes’ ” (NKJV). But there is more! Once we have accepted Christ as our Savior, our inner nature “is to be renewed daily” (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16). This occurs through the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit as He enables us to grow the fruit of the Spirit, which, in essence, constitutes Christ’s character (John 15:5; Gal. 5:22, 23).

We also grow by watching so that we are not deceived by Satan’s lies (1 Pet. 5:8). We are to pray constantly so that we don’t wander toward temptations (1 Thess. 5:17). And we are to show God’s love to those in need (Matt. 25:31–40). Studying the Bible and meditating on its words also help us to grow (Ps. 119:15, 23, 48, 78; 2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). God’s Word guides us toward His truth and away from Satan’s lies. The Bible also shows us what to believe, how to live well, and how to accept the innocent clothes of salvation through Jesus. Trusting in God’s Word as truth and obeying His instructions prevents us from drifting toward the forbidden fruits.

Because Adam and Eve had not been watchful, they wandered away from the safety of God. They had forgotten to remain in constant communication with Him so He could remind them of His protective rules. They had stopped looking out for each other, and they had mistrusted the simple safety instructions that had been given to them. But Christ lovingly provided the sacrifice to cover their nakedness and ours.

**REACT**

1. What other ways are there of maintaining the robe of righteousness given to us by Christ?

2. What do you think went through God’s mind, and Adam’s and Eve’s thoughts, as God made them outfits from animal skins? What went through your mind when you first accepted Christ?
“A fig-leaf apron will never cover our nakedness. Sin must be taken away, and the garment of Christ’s righteousness must cover the transgressor of God’s law. Then when the Lord looks upon the believing sinner, He sees, not the fig leaves covering him, but Christ’s own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. Man has hidden his nakedness, not under a covering of fig leaves, but under the robe of Christ’s righteousness.

“Christ has made a sacrifice to satisfy the demands of justice. What a price for Heaven to pay to ransom the transgressor of the law of Jehovah. Yet that holy law could not be maintained with any smaller price. In the place of the law being abolished to meet sinful man in his fallen condition, it has been maintained in all its sacred dignity. In His Son, God gave Himself to save from eternal ruin all who would believe in Him.

“Sin is disloyalty to God, and [is] deserving of punishment. Fig leaves sewed together have been employed since the days of Adam, yet the nakedness of the soul of the sinner is not covered. All the arguments pieced together by all who have interested themselves in this flimsy robe will come to nought. Sin is the transgression of the law. Christ was manifest in our world to take away transgression and sin, and to substitute for the covering of fig leaves the pure robes of His righteousness. The law of God stands vindicated by the suffering and death of the only begotten Son of the infinite God.

“The transgression of God’s law in a single instance, in the smallest particular, is sin. And the nonexecution of the penalty of that sin would be a crime in the divine administration. God is a judge, the Avenger of justice, which is the habitation and the foundation of His throne. He cannot dispense with His law; He cannot do away with its smallest item in order to meet and pardon sin. The rectitude, justice, and moral excellence of the law must be maintained and vindicated before the heavenly universe and the worlds unfallen.”*  

*The Upward Look, p. 378.

Travis Wichman, Harrison, Tennessee, U.S.A.
Imagine a world that has never heard of a sex scandal. No pornography. No prostitution. No infidelity. This world is perfect. God Himself said it was very good (Gen. 1:31). Genesis 2 tells how He created man and woman and the institution of marriage. And as odd as it might seem now, the man and the woman were naked and not ashamed (Gen. 2:25). What does this “nakedness” mean? “Adam and Eve had no need of material clothing, for about them the Creator had placed a robe of light, a robe symbolic of His own righteous character, which was reflected perfectly in them.”

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they were no longer qualified to wear their symbolic robes, for they no longer reflected the image of their Creator’s righteous character. Suddenly they became naked and ashamed; and they tried to remedy their situation themselves by fashioning new garments out of fig leaves. Later, as God walked through the Garden calling out to Adam, both Adam and Eve hid in fear. Weren’t they naked before? Why hide from God now? Something had happened that wasn’t directly related to clothes. Now, for the first time in history, humans had something to hide. Adam doesn’t tell God he has sinned, but he recognizes that now he has something to hide. Adam’s response is startling: “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Gen. 3:10, NKJV). The garments Adam and Eve fashioned for themselves “were a pitiful substitute for the radiant garments of innocence they had forfeited. Conscience was at work. That this feeling of shame had its root not in sensuality but in the consciousness of guilt before God is evident from the fact they hid themselves from Him.”

Before Adam and Eve left the Garden, God made them coats of skins (Gen. 3:21). These clothes would protect them from the severe weather changes that would occur as a result of their sin. Also, they would be more suitable for the hard physical labor that lay before them. But more important, “the skins were a constant reminder of their lost innocence, of death as the wages of sin, and of the promised Lamb of God, who would by His own vicarious death take away the sins of the world.”

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2. Ibid., p. 231.
3. Ibid., p. 235.

Morris-Andrew Thompson, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, U.S.A.
Adam and Eve messed up when they disobeyed God’s command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, after they realized they were naked, they erred again when they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. Instead of accepting responsibility for their actions and admitting their sin to God, they compounded it by trying to hide their nakedness.

Our “fig leaves” will not fool anyone for long.

I remember doing a similar fig-leaf trick at university. I didn’t want my teachers to think that I was not well prepared for their classes. So instead of admitting that I was unclear about a theory, I would try to sound like I really did understand it. However, in hiding my weaknesses from my teachers, I was missing out on many opportunities to learn. So how can we be more authentic?

Bare your soul to someone you trust. We’re all naked, metaphorically, and our “fig leaves” will not fool anyone for long. How can we be honest with a perfect God if we can’t admit our faults to the humans we love? “Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective” (James 5:13–16, NRSV). If you struggle with the same sort of sin every day, ask a responsible person you trust to be an accountability partner. This person can support you through prayer as well as companionship.

Lose the fig leaves, and let God clothe you. There is nothing we can do of our own strength and will to regain our innocence. We need to accept with all our heart the grace that Jesus’ sacrifice has won for us.

REACT
1. What do we find so attractive about our “fig leaves”? 
2. In what ways are you currently “hiding your nakedness”? 
3. What could your church do to help its members be more authentic?

Bethany Craggs, St. Andrews, Scotland
All was well in the Garden of Eden. Then suddenly, Adam and Eve fail their test of obedience. Now, instead of their children (all of humanity) inheriting eternal life and a perfect relationship with God, there is a problem. We have lost our innocence, our righteousness, and our inheritance as God’s children. And death has entered the world.

This is not make-believe! It is reality.

However, through a series of covenants, God can bring us back into His family. He clothed Himself in our humanity, so that we might clothe ourselves in His righteousness.

We “are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:26, 27, NRSV).

I used to like dressing up when I was younger. But it wasn’t the clothes that made it interesting; it was the characters of the people I took on when I put on their clothes, like a doctor or a train engineer. In baptism, we clothe ourselves with Christ. We are clothed in His righteousness, yes, but not just to cover up the stains of our sins. We are clothed in His character. We act as He acts. We love as He loves. We live as He lives so that His righteousness becomes our righteousness. This is not make-believe! It is reality.

So what about our actual physical clothing? Does it matter what we wear as long as we are “clothed with Christ”? For me the answer is Yes, to some extent. Our outward appearance should reflect our inner clothing of humility, love of neighbor, and respect for those around us. This can mean different things in the different situations and cultures in which we find ourselves. However, our focus must not be on the physicality of our clothing but on the spiritual reality that is represented through the way we present ourselves. The apostle Peter tells us our beauty should not come from outward adornment, but rather from our inner selves (1 Pet. 3:3, 4). So perhaps the next time we’re in church, rather than worrying about how smart we look to everybody else, we should think about the state of our inner clothing, the garment that God sees.

**REACT**

1. When you get dressed, are you more concerned about your outward appearance or your inner purity? Why?

2. Having been clothed with Christ in baptism, what could you do this week to portray more of His character in the way you dress and act?
CONCLUDE

God doesn’t do anything randomly. He doesn’t waste words or actions. When Adam and Eve sinned, He spoke to them about the far-reaching consequences of their terrible choice. Then He got busy and, with His own hands, made deeply symbolic clothing to cover and protect them. In time, His followers would come to see how much God would give of Himself to spiritually cover them and save them from harm.

CONSIDER

• Writing a story or painting a picture of the moment God made garments of skin for Adam and Eve. How would you portray Adam as the seriousness of the situation began to dawn on him?
• Gathering some large green leaves. Write good things on each leaf that people try to rely on instead of Christ’s righteousness. Glue or pin the leaves to a piece of paper and watch them dry up and crumble over time.
• Writing a letter to the Lord, thanking Him for the freedom to rest in Christ's righteousness.
• Making a list of various religions on a board and discussing with your class ways each religion encourages people to rely on “fig leaves” to make up for our unrighteousness. How is the message of the Bible different?
• Dressing differently every day for a week. One day could be casual, one day professional, one day sloppy, one day a uniform, and so on. Notice how your clothes influence the way you hold yourself, walk, and talk; notice even how they make you feel about yourself. Think about how we become what we wear. What can you learn from this exercise about God’s gift of clothing us with Christ’s righteousness?

CONNECT

Zechariah 3:1–5; Romans; Galatians 3:26, 27.

The Desire of Ages, chaps. 3 and 4.


Arthur G. Daniells, Christ Our Righteousness (Takoma Park, Md.: Review and Herald®, 1941).
“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours” (Gen. 37:3, KJV).
Kaleb: “Wow! Just look at that ride!”
Josh: “Yeah, man. Someone must have won the lottery.”
Kaleb: “Who’s in it?”
Josh: “I’m not sure, but it looks like one of the twins—Taylor or Tyler.”
Kaleb: “Unbelievable! It’s Tyler!”
Josh: “Tyler?”
Kaleb: “Tyler, what are you doing with this car?”
Tyler: “No, my brother! You’re mistaken. This is not just a car. You are looking at the latest, magnificent, smashing, top-of-the-line, supercalifragilisticexpialidocious Mercedes-Benz.”
Kaleb: “Where did you steal this?”
Tyler: “Ha-ha! This is a gift from my father.”
Josh: “This is a really expensive car. Why did he do such a thing?”
Tyler: “I’m not sure. He just got up this morning and took Taylor and me to the dealership and told us to pick out a ride. After hours of searching, he bought this for me and an Audi TT for Taylor.”
Kaleb: “I don’t believe this. You guys are so lucky.”
Tyler: “What are you waiting for? Jump in; let’s go for a spin.”

“What are you waiting for? Jump in; let’s go for a spin.”

Gift giving is a familiar international practice. People are given presents for special occasions such as birthdays, graduations, and anniversaries. Holidays such as Valentine’s Day, Father’s Day, and Christmas also are observed with gift giving.

The Bible also outlines a number of instances when gifts were offered. Three wise men visited the Child Jesus with gifts. God has given us the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23); and “every good and perfect gift” comes from Him (James 1:17, NIV).

This week’s lesson focuses on a special gift that Jacob gave to one of his sons. Unlike the cars in the account above, this garment was the source of great familial conflict, as it was regarded as a sign of Jacob’s partiality toward Joseph. The famous “coat of many colors” reveals how one mistake can lead to another and another, with consequences far beyond our control. As we study the symbolism of Joseph’s garment, let us ask ourselves if there are any acts we are indulging in that may have a coat-of-many-colors effect. Wouldn’t it be best if we nip those in the bud before they destroy us and those we love?

Carvel Daniel, Cave Hill, Grenada
Kethoneth passim. If you say this phrase to English-speaking friends, they will probably ask you what language you are speaking.1 If you repeat the phrase in English, coat of many colors, most people will identify it with Jacob giving such a coat to his son Joseph. Instantly we visualize a long flowing coat with colors in rows like those in a rainbow. This imagery is directly influenced by the phrase Kethoneth passim. It suggests that the coat had wide long sleeves and was of many different colors.2 This same phrase describes a garment worn by Tamar, King David’s daughter (2 Sam. 13:18, 19). Such coats were usually worn by persons of distinction as a symbol of status. Whereas Tamar’s coat was one given to princesses as symbols of their royalty and chastity, Joseph’s coat, designed out of his father’s partiality, distinguished him above his brothers.

Ellen G. White suggests that Jacob’s actions may have fueled a suspicion that he was going to give the birthright to Joseph, bypassing all ten of his elder brothers.3 This suspicion had some merit. It wasn’t the first time Jacob was in the middle of a situation involving a reversed blessing. He himself had selfishly deceived his father and cheated his elder brother out of the blessing that was Esau’s as the elder son (Genesis 27).

Situations like this occur frequently today. Parents sometimes treat one child better than another because of their special love for that child. Thankfully, we have a heavenly Father who knows each one of us individually, understands each one of us uniquely, and bestows on each of us the same measure of love and favor. God, our Father, has a plan for each one of us. Each purpose is important and cannot be fulfilled by anyone but ourselves. Hence, we never have to worry about favoritism with God. He wants the best for each of us and will grant us blessings if we, like Joseph, remain faithful to Him. Our futures should not depend on what our earthly parents think, but rather on what God desires and develops us to be.

2. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, p. 1890.
Jacob’s Dilemma (Gen. 29:21–30:24)

Jacob’s dilemma started when he deceived his father and took the birthright that had been his brother Esau’s (Gen. 27:1–40). From that moment on, the results of deception became Jacob’s thorn. Even after his revival at Bethel (Gen. 28:10–22), he journeyed to Paddan Aram, where he undermined the cultural practice of the day. Laban had two daughters—Leah, the elder, and Rachel, the younger. Jacob knew it was not culturally acceptable for the younger daughter to marry first. However, he still pursued Rachel for his bride. He agreed to work for Laban for seven years without wages to get Rachel. At the end of those years, Jacob was deceived. “When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?’ ” (Gen. 29:25, NIV).

Isn’t it interesting how quickly Jacob forgot his own deceptive spirit when he found himself on the receiving end! The maxim “What goes around, comes around” is so applicable here! As Christians, we must be careful of deception. What we sow, we shall reap! Additionally, we should respect cultural practices. Jacob did not. Note, however, that where culture or compromise conflicts with God’s law, we should declare as did Peter and Paul that we will “‘obey God rather than men’ ” (Acts 5:29, NIV).

Jacob’s dilemma continued through his marriage to the two sisters. If Jacob had followed the principle of one husband to one wife, the crisis within his home would not have arisen. It is important that Christians obey and uphold this Edenic principle as the ideal laid down by God Himself!

“When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, ‘It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now’ ” (Gen. 29:31, 32, NIV). The Lord is sympathetic to the brokenhearted. Even when Jacob did not love her, Leah was blessed! The Lord blessed her with children. This made Rachel envious, so she further aggravated an already frustrating situation by offering her handmaid to Jacob (Gen. 30:1–3). How unfortunate that Jacob’s spiritual sight was blurred by his physical desires so that he could not discern what a grave mistake he was about to commit. How important a lesson for us to always
keep our minds focused on spiritual things (Phil. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:8).

**What Is Your Name? (Gen. 29:21–30:24)**

What does your name mean? The name Jacob means “he supplants” or “he takes by the heel.” Each of the sons of Jacob also had a name with a special meaning.

At our spiritual rebirth we are given a name—Christian. Do we live up to what this name means? Do we keep God’s Ten Commandments, tell others of Him, and serve others through acts of loving service? When the name Jacob is mentioned, people quite often think of Isaac’s younger son, who deceived his father and stole his brother’s birthright. Though he is later revered for wrestling with the Angel, his earlier transgression was never erased. Consequently, we need to ensure that our lifestyles are such that wherever our names are heard, people will say that we are children of God!

**Friends With the Heathen (Genesis 34; 1 Cor. 9:24–26)**

Jacob’s daughter went to see the daughters of the land (Gen. 34:1). It is important as Christians to be careful whom we choose to be our friends. That friend we hang out with or add to our Facebook list may not be the right influence we need in our lives. We must ever be mindful that “he who seeks pleasure among those that fear not God is placing himself on Satan’s ground and inviting his temptations.”

**Joseph—A Symbol of Christ (Genesis 37; 42:13)**

Joseph’s father gave him a coat of many colors. This gift was given from partiality and thus caused jealousy, resentfulness, and pain. As Christians, we should love everyone equally with Christlike love. Read Matthew 22:35–40.

Joseph went in search of his brothers. When he found them, they tore his colorful coat off of him, threw him into an empty cistern, and finally sold him into slavery. Similarly, Jesus came searching for sinners, who abused Him and stripped Him. Just as the later purity of Joseph’s character showed up the faults of his brothers, so, too, the Pharisees felt intimidated by Jesus’ selflessness. Just as Joseph later became his brothers’ savior during a time of famine, so Jesus becomes our Savior when we find ourselves in the “famine” caused by sin.

Despite the challenges faced by Joseph, he always had faith in God. Likewise, when we are abused, rejected, and despised, we should hold fast to Jesus, the solid Rock. When it seems that our enemies have defeated us, remember that God did not forsake Jacob. Neither will He forsake you!

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1. The SDA Bible Dictionary, p. 544.
2. Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 204.

Onell Hall, Jamaica, West Indies
Jacob’s former transgression influenced the bitter and rebellious character of his sons, thereby causing him great pain. However, “[t]here was one, however, of a widely different character—the elder son of Rachel, Joseph, whose rare personal beauty seemed but to reflect an inward beauty of mind and heart. . . . He listened to his father’s instructions, and loved to obey God. . . . His mother being dead, his affections clung the more closely to the father, and Jacob’s heart was bound up in this child of his old age. He ‘loved Joseph more than all his children.’ But . . . Jacob unwisely manifested his preference for Joseph, and this excited the jealousy of his other sons.”

“Joseph was alarmed at their angry looks.”

Red. Indigo. Green. Yellow. Orange. Violet. Just imagine Joseph’s coat. In an era when clothing was rather mundane, this gift surely must have stood out. Little did Jacob know, however, that it would cause his deepest grief. “Joseph, unsuspicious of what was to befall him, approached his brethren with gladness of heart to greet them after his long, wearisome journey. His brothers rudely repulsed him. . . . Joseph was alarmed at their angry looks. . . . As they gave utterance to their envious feelings, Satan controlled their minds, and they had no sense of pity, and no feelings of love for their brother. They stripped him of his coat of many colors that he wore, which was a token of his father’s love, and which had excited their envious feelings. . . .

“And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father.”

However, what Joseph’s brothers meant for evil, the Lord turned to good (Gen. 50:20). The “Lord controlled events, and caused the cruel course of Joseph’s brethren to bring about the fulfillment of the dreams which they were laboring to frustrate. . . .

“God designed that he should obtain an experience by temptations, adversity, and hardships, to prepare him to fill an exalted position.”

Be not afraid when human schemes plunge you into a valley of gloom and despair. God is faithful to exalt you to a position of honor so that He may receive the glory!

3. Ibid., pp. 131–133.
God created a kaleidoscope within nature and designed us so we could appreciate its array of colors. Even He acknowledged the significance of color when the rainbow appeared to Noah after the Flood (Gen. 9:12–16). Today, political parties, gangs, and sports teams often are represented by particular colors. The colors we wear determine who we are aligned with and what we stand for. Even our actual characters are often described as our “true colors.”

The thought of loving our enemies is frightening.

Joseph’s coat of many colors did not simply show that his father was a man of great means. It also symbolized a token of that father’s love. It was not simply a beautiful piece of clothing but a reminder of Jacob’s favoritism and a trigger for jealousy and hatred.¹

Once we understand the significance of colors, how then can we wear the right colors?

Put on God’s colors. Read Ephesians 6:10–17. The colors of this armor are a beautiful display of someone who stands strong in the Lord. When wearing this armor, the world understands that you belong to God!

Follow God’s perfect plan. Read Matthew 5:43–48. The term perfection here describes “‘one who has reached the goal’” ² of the commands outlined in verses 43–47. The thought of loving our enemies is frightening and seems impossible. However, we are to press forward with the help of the Holy Spirit. Our prayer should not be one of defeat but rather one of perseverance.

Nip sin in the bud. Sin must not be cherished and allowed to fester until it has the best of us. This was Jacob’s error. He cultivated the sins of deception and favoritism, and it eventually caused him much grief. You need to curb the negative behavior that so easily besets you. Turn away from that situation you know will lead you down a road you do not wish to travel. God will provide an escape.

Be accountable. Even if we don’t realize it, people are watching us. Embrace the responsibility we have to be the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13). Remember then that we are known by our fruit.

¹ Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 209.
² The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 341.
Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, had some things in common with Jacob. Just like Jacob, one of his sons was destined to be great. In addition, his other sons also misunderstood their special Brother and thus did not support His mission.*

Words spoken against the church are words spoken against the bride of Christ.

What about us? How would we assess ourselves as members of God’s remnant church? Are we truly supportive of the church’s mission? Or do we sometimes find ourselves feeling like the brothers of Jesus and Joseph—jealous, critical, and wanting to destroy what we perceive to be the cause of such feelings?

We should remember that words spoken against the church are words spoken against the bride of Christ, for Jesus views the church as His bride for whom He will return. Therefore, we would do well to be careful of what we say about God’s church. One would be hard pressed to find someone who tolerates evil words spoken against his wife, mother, or sister. Why would God be any different?

We may not think that we are as vicious as Joseph’s brothers were in their treatment of him after he received the coat of many colors; but when we find ourselves gossiping about the pastor or slandering a conference or union worker, we are basically attacking the bride of Christ. This doesn’t make us much different from Joseph’s brothers.

As we move closer and closer to Christ’s second coming, we should, with the help of the Holy Spirit, strive toward sharing the gospel in every corner of the globe. Acting like jealous, unsupportive church members only hinders our mission. If you aren’t part of the solution, you’re part of the problem.

REACT

1. What can we do in our churches to complain less and contribute more?

2. How can we deal with problems that arise in the church in a loving way in order to avoid throwing it into a pit the way Joseph’s brothers threw him into a pit?

*The Desire of Ages, pp. 86–90.

Sherwin Richard Scott, St. Lucia, West Indies
CONCLUDE

Jacob demonstrated his love and showed how much he favored Joseph above his brothers by giving him a coat of many colors—a gift that had unforeseen consequences. It created jealousy and envy among Joseph’s siblings, opening the door to evil in their lives. They sold Joseph as a slave and brought great sorrow to their father. However, God directed Joseph’s experiences to prepare him to save both Egypt and his family. As Christians we can make mistakes, but God never shows favoritism. He loves each one of His children the same and has a plan for each of our lives.

CONSIDER

- Going for a walk and taking some time to observe the wide variety of colors God has used in nature. He did not need to use color, but He did. What does this tell you about how God feels about you?
- Using a paint box and brush, experimenting to see how many different colors you can create. Which colors reflect how you feel about God? (Remember that all colors are a combination of red, blue, and yellow.)
- Thinking about how Jacob’s favoritism caused far-reaching problems. Discrimination is the opposite of favoritism. How can you help an individual who is disadvantaged or who has experienced discrimination?
- Asking five people what colors represent hope and despair. Share with them a favorite Bible promise.
- Imagining that you are Joseph. Write how you may have felt when you received your coat of many colors. Contrast this with how you may have felt when you were sold as a slave and when you became ruler in Egypt.
- Creating a collage of many colors to express how God has led in your life.

CONNECT

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 19–21.
Terri L. Fivash, Joseph (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald®, 2002).
The Priestly Garments of Grace

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”

(1 Pet. 2:9, NKJV).
The lights dim, the length of the runway seems to never end. The music begins to play in an R&B (rhythm and blues) beat. Dressed in their finest, the audience awaits the parade of this season’s fashions. Anxious women shift in their seats, arms gently folded. Suddenly the lights start to flash, and models with a fierce stride dominate the runway. Flickering lights create a dramatic effect. As each model stops at the end of the runway, her gaze dares the audience to yearn for and purchase the piece she is wearing. The new season’s fashions are all before me, all for my visual gratification, all within my reach at the swipe of a credit card. All of the clothing seems to come with an angelic glow and a heavenly ring of bells. As I bask in the interpretation of the designer’s opinion of style, my mind drifts in the world of “me.” I am in awe at the thought of the upgrade my wardrobe will have. How stylish and popular I would be wearing these clothes.

Suddenly the music stops. The lights darken. Everyone in the room seems to fade away. My heart is all I hear—the rhythmic lub-dub. Then a spotlight shines on me. I feel eyes piercing my soul, but I am all alone. When I look down at myself, I see that I am dressed in rags—filthy rags. A chill runs through my body. Despite the rags, I feel naked. A voice thunders as it speaks to me, “But we are all like an unclean thing, / And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; / We all fade as a leaf, / And our iniquities, like the wind, / Have taken us away” (Isa. 64:6, NKJV).

I bow my head in shame and begin to sob. Then a gentle Voice blankets my feeling of nakedness and shame saying, “‘My grace is sufficient for you’ ” (2 Cor. 12:9, NKJV).

What is your priority? Are you dressed in the wardrobe of Christ? Or has the world’s standard of fashion and how things should be distracted you from the fact that you could be part of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood? Have you forgotten how far God’s grace can bring you? What do you have in your closet of life? This week we will explore the symbolism of the priestly garments of grace.

Manouchka Bien-Aime, Nassau, New Providence, The Bahamas
The Little Details (Exodus 28)

In Exodus 28, God spells out how each priest should dress for his work. Does God care about the details? Yes! Because God cared about the details of the priestly garments, do you believe that He cares for you?

God has a plan for your life—a detailed plan. It’s too bad more people don’t take time to ask God about His plans for them.

Everybody’s Doing It (Exodus 28; 32:1–6; Lev. 21:7–24; 22:1–8; 2 Cor. 5:17)

There’s a common saying “When the cat’s away, the mice come out to play.” That is exactly what happened to the children of Israel. Moses left camp to meet with God, and when he was gone for a long time, the people began to complain and urge Aaron to make them another god. What did Aaron do? Perhaps he wanted to be accepted by the people. Perhaps he didn’t want to be different. In any case, he made them a golden calf. Then he proclaimed that the next day would be a feast day to the Lord. He mixed the religion of Egypt with God’s true religion and put a “God of heaven” label on the outcome.

Whose uniform are you going to wear?

Many of us have the same cry, “Give us a religion like everyone else’s.” We mix pagan and sacred things together and label the outcome as Christian, then pronounce it “good.” We think people will like us better that way. We believe we will fit in better that way. But by whose standards?

Imagine that you’ve just been hired as a starter for a wildly popular sports team. It’s the opportunity of a lifetime! Whose uniform are you going to wear? You could wear the uniform of another team, but since you signed a contract with a specific team, that team expects you to dress like them. Many of the texts for this part of the Logos give specifics on how a priest should dress and act. Many times we try to play for God’s team but want to look and act like the world.

George Barna did a study of people who believed they were born-again Christians, and the results were staggering. He found that 98 percent of young people who claimed to be born again did not reflect in their daily lives Christlike attitudes or actions.*

In Leviticus 22:1–8, God details what it means to be clean and unclean—specifics that would make some people squirm if they were read aloud at a worship service. God expects more from people who claim they
are His own. He cares about the details. It’s because of His grace that He wants us to be new creations (2 Cor. 5:17).

God wants us to have something more than the world has to offer. And through His Word, He offers “MapQuest directions” on how to get there. These directions are clear. Yet so often we fail take His direct route. Sometimes we don’t take His route because it seems to be too long and full of hairpin turns, too full of hills and valleys. “You want me to give up what?” Sometimes we don’t take God’s directions because they go in the opposite direction from everyone else. “Well, that person does that, but he’s still a leader in the church!” We make excuses. “Well, some of my friends don’t worship on the Sabbath, and they seem like good people.”

The world says, “Let’s make the outside look beautiful.”

God says, “Let’s make the inside beautiful.”

The world says, “It’s all relative. There are no absolutes.”

God says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

The world says, “Let’s take compatibility tests and career tests to figure out our direction.”

God says, “Ask me.”

And when you die, the world says, “You made it one stage away from a monkey.”

But God says, “You are headed toward living for eternity.”

Whose perspective do you want to take?

**Don’t Give Up! (Heb. 4:14, 15; Rev. 21:12–14)**

So often we are like Peter. We walk along with Christ, and though it may be dark and stormy, we don’t notice it. Some describe this as a “mountain-top experience.” Soon, however, we turn away. We get distracted. We see something inviting, entertaining. We take our eyes off Jesus and start to sink into the water. Only then do we notice how dark the world is, how close we are to drowning. “Lord, save me!” we yell, like Peter did. Then Christ reaches down to save us from ourselves (Matt. 14:22–32). That is grace. Hebrews 4:14, 15 says that because we have a High Priest who can relate to us, we are not to give up on what we believe! When the storm rages about us, we don’t have to give up. “Been there, done that, got the t-shirt.” That is what Christ has done for us.

The snow was really deep. Whoever would have thought we could go hiking that day? The lead person plowed through knee-deep snow. When he veered from the trail, he was in almost over his head. But the person following? No problem. God’s grace has also laid a path before us, but when we get off that path, we start postholing in deep snow, and the journey grows long and tiring. But we can accept God’s grace and remain on the path that He sets before us. What is your destination? Read Revelation 21:12–14—a description of the New Jerusalem. It’s a job-benefits package that is truly out of this world!

“Moses at the burning bush was directed to put off his sandals, for the ground whereon he stood was holy. So the priests were not to enter the sanctuary with shoes upon their feet. Particles of dust cleaving to them would desecrate the holy place. They were to leave their shoes in the court before entering the sanctuary, and also to wash both their hands and their feet before ministering in the tabernacle or at the altar of burnt offering. Thus was constantly taught the lesson that all defilement must be put away from those who would approach into the presence of God.”

“No fig-leaf garment . . . can be worn by those who sit down with Christ.”

“To the church it is given ‘that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,’ ‘not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ Eph. 5:27. The fine linen, says the Scripture, ‘is the righteousness of saints.’ Rev. 19:8. It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Savior. . . .

“This is what the transgressors of God’s law have done ever since the day of Adam and Eve’s disobedience. They have sewed together fig leaves to cover the nakedness caused by transgression. They have worn the garments of their own devising, by works of their own they have tried to cover their sins, and make themselves acceptable with God.

“But this they can never do. Nothing can man devise to supply the place of his lost robe of innocence. No fig-leaf garment, no worldly citizen dress, can be worn by those who sit down with Christ and angels at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

“Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God’s presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. . . .

“This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us.”

2. Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 310, 311.
Often when we are going through hard times or temptations, it is easy to slip into the feeling that no one else has ever been there. Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus “has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (NIV). When we have feelings of despair or loneliness, we can remember that we have an Advocate who has been there and who is willing to walk the way with us.

Sometimes it’s easy to let our pride get in the way. Human nature does not want to ask for help. We need to run to our sympathizing heavenly Father and let Him put His loving arms around us and guide us through our temptations.

One day I was really discouraged. Nothing seemed to be going right. I had a huge English exam looming over my head, and I really didn't know where to turn for help. But a friend mentioned that when she had been in the same situation she also had worried about the test. She shared with me that God had given her strength to study for the test, and then He helped her to pass it. She also was able to give me some pointers that helped ease some of my anxiety about it. This illustrates our text for today. Jesus has been in the same situations we are facing, and He is therefore able to offer encouragement.

Contemporary Christian musician Steve Green sings about how we leave a legacy to those who follow us: “Oh, may all who come behind us find us faithful, / May the fire of our devotion light their way.”* As Christians, we are leaving a legacy for those around us to watch. Just as Christ has left a legacy, providing us a path, let us be a light to others.

Hebrews 12:2 says that the only way we can finish the race of life and have the crown of life laid upon our head is to fix our eyes on Jesus. He is the only one who can give us the strength, grace, and the mercy of forgiveness to run and to finish the race.

**REACT**

1. What are some ways in which your relationship with Christ has helped you in the past? What does this tell you about the future?
2. What are ways we can follow Christ’s example today?

*Jon Mohr, “Find Us Faithful.”*
For outdoor adventurers, bad weather is less of a hazard than is bad clothing. Those of us who live in mountainous country know by experience how quickly the weather and temperatures can change. For example, on December 14, 1924, the temperature in Fairfield, Montana, U.S.A., dropped from 63 degrees at noon to minus 21 degrees at midnight—a whopping 84 degrees in a 12-hour period. Snow often moves in during the annual camp meeting in Bozeman, Montana; and cold, icy storms are possible any time of the year.

One outdoor clothing company uses three $W$ terms as a checklist for outdoor clothing shoppers: (1) “wick-away” for the layer of clothing against the skin; (2) “warmth” for the cozy in-between layers; and (3) “weather” for the wind and moisture-repellent outer shell. Now let’s compare some priestly privileges with the functions for each of the three layers of outdoor clothing.

**We can reflect God’s love, which prevents and heals the damages of sin.**

*Wick-away—the innermost layer.* When we observe sweat-drenched spiritual travelers laboring under heavy burdens, we can tell them of a God who clothes us in His wick-away garment that removes the clingy discomfort and fatal risk factors of remaining saturated in our sin (Ps. 103:1–12). Furthermore, we can share the good news that this friendship-initiating God offers to personally yoke up with each of us as we pull onward and upward in our everyday spiritual journey (Matt. 11:28–30; Gal. 5:1).

*Warmth—the middle layer.* As we come upon dispirited travelers, we can warm their icy morale by giving them our companionship. We can share an even greater warmth by introducing them to Christ, the constant Companion (2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 1:1–4).

*Weather—the outer, protective layer.* As we pay attention to weather-beaten pilgrims, we can reflect God’s love, which prevents and heals the damages of sin. We can point to His love as the most trustworthy of all covering protection (1 Pet. 4:8).

As the enemy’s bitter blasts and winter blizzards aim to freeze out the love in every human heart, we can, by God’s help, counter the very bad weather by wearing and sharing good priestly clothing.
A story forwarded by e-mail grasps the truth of grace surprisingly well. There is a line of people outside of heaven waiting to get in. Peter announces that 100 points are needed to enter. Each person will get a chance to tell him what he or she has done to deserve entrance. Then he will award points.

The first person proclaims that he was married to the same woman for 50 years and never once cheated on her in thought or deeds. Peter gives him three points. Surprised, the man adds that he went to church his entire life and supported it through monetary gifts and service. Peter issues an additional point. Racking his brain, the man states that he also started a soup kitchen and worked at the veterans’ homeless shelter. Peter awards him two more points. Exasperated the man cries out, “At this rate, the only way I can get into heaven is by the grace of God!” Peter then issues him 100 points and welcomes him in.

Of course this story isn’t true. However, it makes the point that no matter how much good we do, it is still by God’s grace that we are welcomed into heaven. So just how do good works fit into the scheme of things? Some people say it doesn’t matter what you do, that grace totally covers everything. Other people stress the necessity of works. The balance between the two can be difficult to maintain.

The priests were covered by their priestly garments, but they still had specific tasks to perform. These actions varied from keeping their heads covered at all times to not going near a dead person.

God’s grace covers us. It is the only way we are saved. As we grow in that grace, the Holy Spirit gives us strength to obey His general commands for all Christians and His specific commands to individuals. He calls all of us to keep the Ten Commandments, which are based on love for Him and love for people. Then He calls on us to be missionaries—either away from home or in our neighborhood. Our works won’t save us. Rather, they are an outgrowth of our salvation, of our relationship with our Savior. We don’t do good deeds to be saved—we do them because we are saved.

**REACT**

Do you lean more toward salvation by works or salvation by grace? Explain your answer.

Kristi Rich, Bozeman, Montana, U.S.A.
CONCLUDE

Grace goes against every human instinct regarding fairness and justice. We feel it most keenly when we are the ones wronged. Why should someone “get away with” hurting us or taking what they didn’t earn? Yet when it comes to our relationship with our perfect Savior and the spiritual predicament in which we find ourselves, grace is the only option. We’re powerless to do anything to save ourselves. All we can do is respond to the grace that God freely offers. It’s easy to confuse the gift and the gratitude, but salvation cannot be earned, only accepted.

CONSIDER

- Drawing an illustration of your spiritual journey that features where grace fits in.
- Meditating and reflecting on the role grace has played in your life.
- Reaching out to someone who has shown “grace” to you, whether through a kind word, a meal, or some other unexpected favor.
- Listening to the lyrics of the song “Grace,” by U2.
- Composing a song wherein grace transcends chaos.
- Looking up the word grace in a Bible concordance to see how it’s used in Scripture.
- Celebrating God’s grace to you with a joyful response.

CONNECT

Sons and Daughters of God, pp. 98–127.
Steps to Christ, chap. 6.
“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death”

(2 Cor. 7:10, NKJV).
Tom Bennett was gifted and talented. He graduated from Fairmount Academy as valedictorian and president of his class. Earning his BA summa cum laude and his master's at the age of 25, he became math and science teacher at Fairmount. At 28, he became vice principal, and at 30, when the principal, Mr. Sellers, retired, Tom had completed his doctorate and was ready to take his place. Dr. Bennett worked earnestly with his teachers to ensure top-quality instruction, and he could often be seen leading a group of students in some form of community service. The small town in which Fairmount was located looked with favor to the school on the hill.

“**I’ll need a double portion of your ability!”** he cried.

Eventually, there appeared in the registration office a man slightly older than the other students. Bob had quit school at the age of 16 to help his father work their farm and raise the younger children after their mother's death. Bob was now 20 years old and entering academy as a junior.

Bob soon began helping Dr. Bennett with various tasks in which students were taught to work with their hands. Experienced in maintenance and a good leader, Bob's help was invaluable.

In due time, Bob graduated from college. Dr. Bennett was still the principal at Fairmount and invited Bob to return, where he settled into his career of teaching, becoming vice principal, and endearing himself to all who knew him. After several years, Dr. Bennett called Bob into his office. “Bob,” he began, “you’ve proven yourself to have what it takes to be the chief administrator of this school. I would be proud to have you work closely with me for the next year. Then when I retire, I’ll recommend you for the position of principal.”

Can you recognize a resemblance to the history of Elijah and Elisha? Elijah, a prophet of God and leader in the schools of the prophets, followed God’s guidance and named Elisha as his successor. Elisha felt his inadequacy to fill Elijah's place. “I’ll need a double portion of your ability!” he cried.

“If you see me leave, you shall have it,” replied Elijah. As Elijah was caught up into heaven in a fiery chariot, Elisha stood gazing upward. Finally, he saw something floating downward. He watched intently as it wafted gently and slowly toward him on the breeze. It was Elijah’s mantle. This week we’ll look at various types of clothing mentioned in the Bible and at the spiritual lessons we can draw from each one.

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2 Kings 2:1–18

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**Elijah and Elisha’s Mantle**

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Lea Hardy, Richmond, Virginia, U.S.A.
Ezekiel 16 focuses on God’s judgment concerning His people. In doing so, He uses the symbol of a harlot. He tells the prophet that the people of Jerusalem’s “birth and nativity were from the land of Canaan,” their “father was an Amorite” and their “mother a Hittite.” God also states that they were born and raised by someone else and not by Him. He says that their navel cord was not cut and that they were washed in water that did not cleanse them. They were thrown in an open field, and no eye pitied them. But then a miraculous thing happens. God passes by them, sees them struggling in their own pity, and simply says, “Live!”

God then covered their naked bodies, washed their bloody bodies with water, and anointed them with oil. He adorned them with jewels and priceless linen. They then went out to show their beauty made perfect through God’s splendor. But they became full of their fame. They became proud of the rich clothing God had given them as if their own doing had provided it. It didn’t take them long before they poured their harlotry on everyone who would have it. They took their multicolored garments and adorned high places for themselves. Even the jewelry God blessed them with was used to build idols. Just as a harlot sells her body for money, so the Israelites sold themselves to Satan. They became liars and cheats, acting as if their success was a result of their own making.

“Raised to the pinnacle of glory under Solomon’s early beneficent reign, Israel began to trust in her greatness and prosperity. Losing sight of God’s high destiny for the Hebrews, Solomon set to work to make Israel a great and powerful empire among the nations of the earth. To do this he entered into foreign contracts and alliances.”¹ Playing the harlot is “a metaphor to describe foreign alliances for political advantages, which God had emphatically forbidden (Deut. 7:2; Judges 2:2), or to describe the substitution of any form of worship for the worship of Jehovah. The figure is common in the Scriptures (see Ex. 34:15, 16; Lev. 17:7; Deut. 31:16; Judges 2:17; Isa. 1:21; Jer. 2:20; James 4:4).”²

**Ezek. 16:15, 16**

**Evidence**

**The Clothes of a Harlot**

They became liars and cheats.

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₁. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 628.
₂. Ibid., pp. 628, 629.
The texts for this week’s lesson portray some noteworthy insights regarding the concept of clothing. It should be noted that the text selections, when compared to a chronological Bible, are in chronological order. As you study this week’s lesson, remember that as “children of light,” our clothing should reflect our King. Today, we are faced with the tremendous challenge of turning from the “garments of harlotry” that this world has to offer to the “mantle” of heaven offered by God.

Mantle as Clothing or Insigne of Office? (1 Kings 19:1–19)

The dictionary tells us that a mantle is “a loose sleeveless garment worn over other clothes.” It can also be “a figurative cloak symbolizing preeminence or authority.”

In 1 Kings 19:1–19, the word *mantle* first appears in verse 13 (NKJV). “The mantle, made of camel’s hair, was the characteristic robe of the prophets (see Mark 1:6; The Desire of Ages, page 102).” The story here is clear. Wearing his rough cloak of camel’s hair, Elijah has made his way to Horeb, or the mount of God. He has just witnessed God’s power in wind, earthquake, and fire, when he hears the “still small voice” of God (verse 12). As if to shield himself from God’s presence, Elijah pulls the mantle (or cloak) around his face because no one has seen God and lived! Here we see the mantle as a protection or shield.

In the last verse of this passage (verse 19), the mantle is used for a different function—a sign of “calling” as Elijah “casts” it upon Elisha as he walks by. “So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him, and threw his mantle on him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah. . . . And became his servant” (1 Kings 19:19–21, NKJV). It is obvious that regardless of the way the call came, it was clear, convincing, and imperative.

The Breezy Garment—Sackcloth! (1 Kings 21:21–29)

*Sackcloth.* The very word conjures up cloth used to make sacks. In Hebrew, it is “a mesh (as allowing a liquid to run through), i.e. coarse, loose cloth or sacking.” In some countries today, the equivalent of sackcloth would be a gunnysack, feed sack, or cheesecloth, which is a lightweight material. The very word conjures up cloth used to make sacks. In Hebrew, it is “a mesh (as allowing a liquid to run through), i.e. coarse, loose cloth or sacking.” In some countries today, the equivalent of sackcloth would be a gunnysack, feed sack, or cheesecloth, which is a lightweight material.
cotton gauze. “Under the severe censure of Elijah, Ahab bowed himself to the dust and clothed himself in sackcloth. It was a strange thing for the proud, tyrannical king to put on the garments of a mourner and adopt the attitude of suppliant.”

**The Deeper Meaning of the Mantle (2 Kings 2:1–18)**

As Elijah and Elisha approached the Jordan River, their minds must have gone back to two other crossings in history—the Red Sea and the waters backing up at the Jordan as the children of Israel cross over into the Promised Land. This time, however, it was not Moses’ rod but the rolled-up mantle of Elijah that smote the waters of the Jordan River and miraculously parted them, allowing the prophets to cross over on dry ground (2 Kings 2:8).

Elisha’s actions added further meaning. He tore his clothes and took up the mantle left to him by Elijah. “Elisha’s rending of his garment was probably not so much an indication of his grief as of the fact that henceforth he would need his old garment no more—he would wear the mantle of Elijah. . . . The mantle was an insigne of Elijah’s prophetic office. . . . Now the mantle was left to Elisha as a bequest from the elder prophet, and as an indication that he must now undertake the responsibilities of leadership which thus far had been carried by Elijah. Returning to the people with this badge of authority, he would be recognized as Elijah’s successor.”

**Garments of Ill Repute! (Ezek. 16:15, 16)**

This closing passage looks at the garments of a harlot. Ezekiel, a major prophet, is trying to call Jerusalem back from her unfaithfulness. Time and time again she has wandered away both physically and spiritually. Solomon said that there is nothing new under the sun, and even in today’s “red light” districts the color of the clothing is the same. The important questions we need to be asking are these: What is the color of my heart? Is it stained with sin, or has it been covered by the blood of Jesus Christ? To whom do I give my devotion? Does my iPod playlist reflect whose side I am on? Does my choice of films clothe me in the garments of a harlot?

**REACT**

1. How would you choose to “mentor” someone?
2. How can we weave “mantles” on the heavenly loom?
3. Ahab donned sackcloth to show God that he was seeking forgiveness. How can we show God that we desire forgiveness?

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5. Ibid., p. 853.

Kevin Pires, Lexington, South Carolina, U.S.A.
"When believers are neglectful of their dress, and are coarse and rough in their manners, their influence hurts the truth. ‘We are,’ said the inspired apostle, ‘made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.’ All heaven is marking the daily influence that the professed followers of Christ exert upon the world.‘"

"The Bible teaches modesty in dress. ‘In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel.’ 1 Tim. 2:9. This forbids display in dress, gaudy colors, profuse ornamentation. Any device designed to attract attention to the wearer or to excite admiration is excluded from the modest apparel which God’s word enjoins."

"The Bible teaches modesty in dress."

"I am often pained as I enter the house where God is worshiped, to see the untidy dress of both men and women. If the heart and character were indicated by the outward apparel, then certainly nothing could be heavenly about them. They have no true idea of the order, the neatness, and the refined deportment that God requires of all who come into His presence to worship Him."³

"Some will enter the place of worship with their hats on, in soiled, dirty clothes. Such do not realize that they are to meet with God and holy angels. There should be a radical change in this matter all through our churches. . . . Because of the irreverence in attitude, dress, and deportment, and lack of a worshipful frame of mind, God has often turned His face away from those assembled for His worship."⁴

**REACT**

1. How can Christian men and women dress so that they are modest and attractive by God’s standards and still be part of today’s society? Give examples.

2. Dave is a new Christian. He comes to church in a pair of clean jeans and an everyday shirt because he doesn’t have any “church” clothes. Is he being disrespectful? Explain your answer.

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2. Ibid., p. 351.
4. Ibid., p. 499.

Karen Pires, Lexington, South Carolina, U.S.A.
God has created in each human being the desire to communicate. We send e-mails, make phone calls, instant message our friends, and talk with others face to face every day. All these forms of communication use words, either written or spoken. However, some research suggests that only about 7 percent of the communication process actually involves words. The tone of voice might account for approximately 38 percent of the total message, while body language might account for 55 percent of the total message.* When we examine the stories of Elijah’s confrontation with Ahab and the passing of Elijah’s mantle to Elisha, we also learn that the clothes we wear can say much more about ourselves than do our words. Here’s how:

**The clothing we wear can often communicate the condition of our hearts (1 Kings 21:17–27).** Ahab’s reaction to Elijah’s confrontation was to tear the clothes he was wearing and to dress in sackcloth, which we learned earlier is an itchy, coarse, uncomfortable material that lets in moisture and is a sign of contrition. Tearing his clothes symbolizes that his heart was torn by the message of God’s prophet. His repentance is symbolized by the sackcloth he was willing to wear. Today, do our wardrobes “say” that we want to impress others by wearing designer clothing? Or does what we wear “say” that we respect ourselves and our Creator and what He does for us as our Redeemer?

**The clothing we wear can serve as reminders of who we are (2 Kings 2:11–15).** When Elisha picked up the mantle that Elijah had worn, he remembered the message of his mentor. By wearing Elijah’s mantle, Elisha was communicating that God’s anointing now rested on him to continue the work as a prophet in Israel. Another example is that of the Israelites who, while wandering in the desert, were commanded to tie blue tassels to the bottom of their garments to remind them of the Lord. Our clothing should remind us, and others, of our true identities: sons and daughters of God. The fashion industry would have us believe that we are what we wear. For the Christian, however, we should wear what we are.

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Elijah was a prophet for the Lord during a corrupt time. His faith and courage were seen at Mount Carmel. However, when Jezebel sought his life, he fled, saying, “It is enough!” and he asked God to let him die. God, however, had different ideas. Elijah was to train his successor. God commanded him to literally pass his mantle on to another so that His work could continue.

Today, this principle is often neglected. Someone will start a great work for the Lord, a work that is later neglected when that person is gone. Without such “Elishas” to carry on, the Lord’s work is hindered and the blessings He’d intended are lost.

More than once, I personally have seen Bible workers or colporteurs come into a church to begin an outreach ministry, or to start Bible studies or an evangelistic series. Yet when they leave, the work is neglected, potential opportunities are put off indefinitely, and everyone assumes someone else will do it. Even in foreign missions, I have witnessed this same loss. One missionary I knew went to a great deal of effort to set up a children’s health ministry. When she left, no one had the willingness or know-how to take over.

When Elijah consecrated Elisha, God gave us an example to follow. When we see an opportunity, feel a call, or recognize a need, we shouldn’t assume that someone else can or will do it. We should accept the opportunity for learning and for spiritual growth while it exists. Likewise, leaders should prayerfully search for those people who can keep the momentum strong.

Today, God is calling “Elijahs” to work zealously. He also needs Elishas to receive their mantles and continue working with a “double portion” of the Lord’s spirit. As with God’s help Moses chose Joshua, Elijah chose Elisha, and Jesus chose the Twelve, so Christians today should seek God’s aid in finding leadership to continue every ministry, from the smallest children’s program to the grandest of international organizations.

**REACT**

1. What qualities made Elijah a truly powerful worker for God?
2. Why do you think it was important for Elisha to spend time with Elijah before he ministered alone?
3. What ministries are you currently involved with? How can you help to make sure they continue?
CONCLUDE

The lives of Elijah and Elisha were characterized by faithfulness—to God and to each other. In contrast, Israel's faithfulness to God was only temporary. They followed a predictable cycle that repeated itself for hundreds of years: fidelity, carelessness, idolatry, devastation, repentance, fidelity. Instead of remaining faithful to God, Israel exchanged the mantle of God for the pleasures of sin, and in every case, they suffered because of their choices. They also misrepresented God to the nations around them. As we near the end of time, are we being faithful to God? Or are we giving our loyalty to the things of the world?

CONSIDER

• Graphing the major events in your life—showing the “ups and downs” you have experienced. Has your life followed a similar pattern as that of the Israelites? How can you go through difficult times and still remain faithful to God?
• Making a list of people whom you consider to be modern-day Elishas—those who have been willing to carry on the work started by others.
• Writing out your own personal testimony concerning the call God has made on your life. Look for an opportunity to share with others what you have written.
• Singing the words to “Work, for the Night Is Coming,” hymn no. 375 in The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal. Prayerfully consider what work God has equipped you to do in the spreading of the gospel.
• Using Play-Doh® to create a visual representation of your current relationship with God.
• Making a second representation of what you would like it to be if you feel your relationship is less than it could be.
• Interviewing a school principal about the effects that different styles of clothing have on the behavior of students.
• Thinking about various jobs and professions that require uniforms. What is the purpose of the uniform in each case? Is there a Christian uniform? If so, what is its purpose?
• Thinking about the messages you are sending by what you wear. Prayerfully consider removing anything from your wardrobe that could be a stumbling block to others.

CONNECT

Steps to Christ, pp. 77–83.

Renee Coffee, Gobles, Michigan, U.S.A.
In the Shadow of His Wings

“Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice” (Ps. 63:7, NKJV).
Introduction

Ps. 17:8

If I Wear a Shadow, Am I Naked?

Many of us are familiar with the fairy tale “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” by Hans Christian Andersen. In this story, Andersen tells about two swindlers who offer to make the emperor a new suit of clothes out of magic thread that anyone who is unfit for office or unusually stupid would not be able to see. As the story progresses, everyone pretends to see what is not there.

Unlike the emperor’s clothing, being physically or spiritually clothed with a shadow requires the presence of a tangible object.

The concept of being clothed in a shadow may be difficult to grasp. After all, isn’t it a lot like the emperor’s new clothes—an imaginary covering? A shadow. What is it? How does it work? How do you know you are wearing one? And why would God use this imagery as a symbol? There are three elements in producing a shadow. First, there must be a light source. Second, an object to cast the shadow must be present. Third, another object shielding it from light and ultimately the effects of light must also be there. Consider this: almost any time you wear a piece of clothing, you also are wearing a shadow. This can be painfully obvious during the summer months when tan lines appear and your skin becomes darker in exposed areas. Unlike the emperor’s clothing, being physically or spiritually clothed with a shadow requires the presence of a tangible object.

The bottom line is that a shadow is the result of being shielded. When we are clothed with Christ’s righteousness, we are in His shadow. We often do not see what He is shielding us from, making it easy for us to forget His presence so that we do not know we are in His shadow. When shielded from the wrath of God against sin, the resulting shadow is salvation. When shielded from the fiery darts of Satan, the resulting shadow is protection. Through Christ’s death and resurrection, He has placed Himself between us and God’s wrath, us and Satan’s destruction, and us and sin. We choose to remain in the refuge of Christ’s shadow or move out into the elements. We are not to build, make, or fix our own covering, but to rest, take refuge in, and enjoy the benefits of the shadow garment Christ provides for us.

Tehani Burnett, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada
Read Psalm 91:4. The God of the universe is willing to cover us, to protect us, and to save us. He is willing to make us heirs to His kingdom. He knows that we love to stay in our comfort zone. Like Abraham, however, it is necessary for us to step out of that zone if we really want to follow Him. When we move beyond these zones of comfort, we will find safety in the shadow of His wings.

When she reached the podium, she asked, “How do you like my outfit?”

Under His Wing (Ps. 63:7)
This week, we are focusing on being in the shadow of God’s wings. The words wings and shadow have multiple definitions. Wings is defined in a variety of ways, from the two forelimbs of most birds and of bats; to a means or instrument of flight, travel, or progress; to either of the two-sided portions of an army or fleet. Definitions for shadow include shelter, protection, a reflected image, and a dark figure or image cast by an object or part of an object upon a surface that would otherwise be illuminated by the theoretical light source. As is the case with the multiple definitions of the two key words for this week’s study, so are there layers in God’s ability to cover, shelter, and protect His children, despite who they are, what they are doing, or where they are located. God’s ability to cover, shelter, and protect far surpasses the layers and multiple meanings of these words.

Layer Upon Layer of Clothes (Ps. 51:2)
As I watched a well-dressed conference speaker with an expensive pair of shoes and a handbag walk to the podium, I thought, How can any woman walk so confidently in those narrow pair of heels? When she reached the podium, she asked, “How do you like my outfit?” No one responded. She then asked, “How many of you have ever wondered what our heavenly Father meant when He said that ‘He will cover you with his feathers’ (Ps. 91:4, NIV)?” She continued, “We should feel secure in our heavenly Father no matter what comes our way. God said, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee’ (Isa. 26:3). We have to be careful not to let sins weigh us down. Like King David we should always pray that our heavenly Father will ‘blot out all mine iniquities’ and ‘create in me a clean heart’ (Ps. 51:9, 10).”

Then our guest speaker proceeded to undress in front of us.
first layer of clothing were dirty old clothes. Next, she rubbed dirt on her face. Her next question to the audience was, “How many of us look good on the outside in our proper clothing, but underneath we are ragged and tattered?” She then began to take off that set of clothing, and underneath were clothes that looked as though they had never been ironed. Then she asked, “How many of us are wrinkled on the inside? What are we using to cover those wrinkles? Are we using neatly put together clothes and expensive toiletries? Or are we using expensive makeup, or have we had cosmetic surgery? Are we wearing the latest fashion or the newest fad?”

When she took off another layer, she was in her Sabbath attire—a simple, yet elegant, loosely fitting dress. She then asked, “Are we coming to Christ daily? What attire is necessary for us to present ourselves before the Master of the Universe—the Master who covers and shelters you?” Finally, in her true Sabbath dress, our speaker presented us with a sermon on how we are sheltered in God’s arms.

**Shelter in Place (Ps. 36:7)**

With all the world has to offer, it is easy to get confused about what is important or about what our priorities should be. It is easy to lose sight of the goodness of life and the Life-Giver. It is challenging to stay focused on the Protector of the universe—the only One with the wherewithal to provide the kind of cover, dress, and shelter to keep us safe and secure. It is vitally important to remember always that we are safe in the shadow of God’s wings. Despite the distractions and the confusion, frustrations and disappointments, questions and longings, we must remain focused on the truth that God’s constant security provides serenity.

How do we go to Christ daily? Are we trying to serve our heavenly Father with a willing heart and outstretched arms? Are we waiting patiently for the bountiful blessings He offers? Are we staying surrendered, expecting only the greatest gifts? Or is our vision clouded with the things of this world, having no preparation for what our heavenly home has to offer? God has been sheltering us under His wings since Adam and Eve first disobeyed, and even before that. This protection comes to us today with great promise. May we willingly receive this shelter with open arms.

**REACT**

1. How do you expect God to protect, shelter, or cover you as you go about your daily life?
2. A Christian is seriously injured or killed in an accident. Another Christian is diagnosed with a life-threatening disease. Your parents divorce, or you cannot find enough money to pay tuition for the rest of the school year. Do these scenarios mean that God was not sheltering the people under His wings? Why or why not?
3. In what ways do you feel God’s protecting power in your life today?
“God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If there were no light, there would be no shade. But while the shade comes by the sun, it is not created by it. It is some obstruction that causes the shadow. So darkness emanates not from God, but is the result of an intruding object between the soul and God. . . . Disregard of the light that God has given brings the sure result. It creates a shadow, a darkness that is more dark because of the light which has been sent. . . . If a man withdraws himself from light and evidence, and yields to Satan’s seducing arts, he himself draws the curtain of unbelief about him, so that light cannot be distinguished from darkness. More light and evidence would only be misunderstood by him. The greater the evidence, the greater will be the indifference. This will lead the deceived soul to call darkness light and truth error.”

“Fix your thoughts upon the Saviour. Go apart from the bustle of the world, and sit down under Christ’s shadow. This you must do if you receive the rich blessings He is waiting to bestow on you. Give your thoughts to high and holy things. Then, amidst the din of the daily toil and conflict, your spiritual strength will be renewed.”

“When you arise in the morning, rise with the praise of God on your lips, and when you go out to work, go with a prayer to God for help. . . . Wait for a leaf from the tree of life. This will soothe and refresh you, filling your heart with peace and joy. Fix your thoughts upon the Saviour. Go apart from the bustle of the world and sit under Christ’s shadow. Then, amid the din of daily toil and conflict, your strength will be renewed. It is positively necessary for us to sit down sometimes and think of how the Saviour descended from heaven, from the throne of God, to show what human beings may become if they will unite their weakness to His strength. Having gained renewal of strength by communion with God, we may go on our way rejoicing, praising Him for the privilege of bringing the sunshine of Christ’s love into the lives of those we meet.”

2. This Day With God, p. 154.

Nvischi N. Edwards, Winter Park, Florida, U.S.A.
In today’s text, David cries out: “Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, / for in you my soul takes refuge. / I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings / until the disaster has passed” (NIV). A shadow occurs when direct light from a light source is obscured by an object. David asked God, his Light Source, to cover him so he could take refuge. Do you ask God for the same?

His wings cover and protect us even when we aren’t able to see or feel it.

The story is told of a hen and her chicks who were caught in a barn fire. Upon arrival and clearing of the debris, firefighters found the hen who had died along with the other animals. When they brushed away her charred feathers, they uncovered all the chicks—alive and well within the shadow of their mother’s wings. It is thought that the chicken sacrificed her life for the lives of her chicks, having full knowledge of the risk she was taking with her own life.

In the same way, we are sheltered and protected under the wings of the Most High God. During times when the evil one attempts to prevent our access to the Light Source, we can become discouraged by the darkness of evil. We may feel lonely and think that God is rejecting us because of experiences we’ve had that left us feeling unworthy of God’s protective covering. However, it is especially during times like these that we are to hide in the shadow of His wings, just as the chicks hid under the wings of their mother during the fire.

There may, however, be times of darkness during which we are not aware of God’s protective covering. Then, like David, we may plead with God for shelter. Know at these times, as at others, that His shadow is our protection. His wings cover and protect us even when we aren’t able to see or feel it. We can trust God’s covering, sheltering, and protecting power.

**REACT**

1. When have you felt the protection of God in your life?
2. How have you extended that same type of covering to someone else?
3. What confirms God’s covering for you?

Ngozi Edwards, Winter Park, Florida, U.S.A.
When I was about five or six years old, I never wanted to get out of bed. If I could, I would have slept all day. When my parents would tuck me in at night and pull the covers over me, I felt so safe and secure. In the morning, when it was time to go to school, I did not want to let go of that feeling. In fact, I did everything I could to hold on to it until I heard my dad call, “Wake up, sleepyhead!” He did this every morning without fail—right before he would pull the covers off me. I was never finished sleeping, so I would just follow the covers down to the end of the bed.

If you have ever had the pleasure of being safely tucked into bed by a parent or loved one, then you know the feeling well. God wants us to feel that same way when we seek refuge under His wings. This week we have been reading about what it means to be in the shadow of His wings. Throughout his life, King David experienced this covering. In the Psalms we learn that we can seek covering underneath God's wings for many different reasons. We have read about the results of David's transgressions, but we also have read about God's mercy and grace toward him. God provided covering to David during times of his greatest need. Let’s consider some instances when we, too, can be covered under God's wings.

**God will be our help when times are hard.** God promises us that He will always help us when we are going through difficulties, even if nobody else will (Ps. 63:7).

**God will be our hiding place when we need to escape.** Whether it’s from a stressful day at work or feeling overwhelmed in school, we can go to God when we need a hiding place (Ps. 17:8).

**We can trust Him when we have no one else to turn to.** God sent Jesus to die for us on the cross to prove to us that we can trust Him with our lives. In His hands we will always be safe and secure (Ps. 36:7).

**React**

1. Think of a time in your life when you recognized God’s protection over you or a loved one. How did it make you feel, knowing God was protecting you?
2. Why is it so important for you to be under God’s wings?

Karla Lawrence, Hyattsville, Maryland, U.S.A.
"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." When I was a child, I loved singing the scripture song of Philippians 4:4. It helped me to be happy about who God is and His presence in my life. But then I grew up, and I began experiencing enough negatives that I dared to question the value in rejoicing. What I’ve often failed to remember, however, is that what the text really means is that I can rejoice because of what God has already been to me. I’m rejoicing because God already has been faithful in sheltering me. He gave me the wisdom I needed to make tough decisions; and He showered me with the right amount of divine peace so that I could walk boldly through tough situations.

A well-known hymn begins with the words, “Under His wings I am safely abiding.” It then paints a picture of how incredibly blessed we are to be able to abide under God’s wings.* Psalm 63:7 pushes the concept of being under God’s wings even further by suggesting that we can find reason to rejoice in the wing’s shadow. Last I checked, we don’t find any security in any other shadow.

If we can see someone’s shadow, we know the person’s actual body is close by, close enough to touch, and that it is their actual body that provides protection, security, and assurance that all is or will be well. The same is even more so for God’s shadow, yet perhaps harder to reckon with because we can’t see God’s actual body. So I choose to remember the first part of Psalm 63:7—“Because You have been my help . . .” By faith I know that He is with me, and by experience I know that He has already done so much for me. God and I have a history together. Sometimes I journal about the experiences we’ve had just so I can remember. And sharing these experiences with others keeps the memory alive even more. When others tell me their stories, I’m reminded that God is so great that the shadow of His wings is able to cover all of us at the same time, no matter how large or small our plights may seem.

Just imagine. He’s so great, that even His shadow protects us.

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* "Under His Wings," The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, hymn no. 529.

Michaela V. Lawrence, Knoxville, Tennessee, U.S.A.
CONCLUDE

There is nothing quite so soul scorching as living amid the wreckage that is planet Earth. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, human beings have been on an inexorable downward spiral. Save for the wonderful gift of Jesus Christ, humanity would be mired in deep, dark hopelessness. In the midst of challenges from without and within, God offers His “shadow” to protect us from the fiery darts of the evil one. Having spent approximately 33 years feeling every pain we experience and overcoming them, Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension remind us that we, too, can overcome if we abide in the shadow of the Almighty—as He did while on earth.

CONSIDER

- Reading Psalm 70. King David is often lionized for his bravery in the face of a determined foe—Saul. Does dwelling in God’s shadow mean that we will always experience times of deep disquiet and unease?
- Rating on a scale of 1 (total serenity) to 10 (total distress), how would you rank your current trust in God’s ability to watch over and protect you? Then ask someone who knows you well to share the number they think best captures your level of trust in God.
- Conducting an interview with someone you admire. Ask him or her to share with you a dark moment of his or her life—perhaps the death of a loved one, or failure at some important task. Ask him or her to explain how he or she was able to overcome this challenging moment in life.
- Selecting a song that best captures the feeling you get when you think of all the sins for which God has forgiven you. Play that song for a friend and tell that person why it means so much to you.
- Reflecting on John 14:27. Write a short journal entry on what it means to have Jesus’ peace. What connection is there between Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and the peace He promised us all?
- Watching a nature program on birds. What essential quality about birds did Jesus highlight during the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:25–27)? Communicate this truth to one person you meet today.

CONNECT

Genesis 49:25; Psalm 103; John 15 and 17; Revelation 21 and 22. 
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 24.
Garments of Splendor

“I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10, NIV).
If you could choose, would it be Gucci, Prada, Old Navy, Gap, Guess, Calvin Klein, or Ralph Lauren? Or maybe your style is a little less fussy. Then there are shoes. Would they be Timberland, Nike, Adidas, Skechers, Pierre Dumas, Vera Wang, or Giorgio Armani? Or would you prefer just Crocs, advertised as comfort for your feet? Whatever the style, we’ve all spent a moment or two gawking at an outfit we really liked, whether it was in a store, on a friend, or worn by a complete stranger.

And yes, we all know it’s not about the “what” that is worn, but about the “who.” Yet there is just something captivating about stylish clothes, on a person or mannequin, that convives us to pause a moment. For some, that moment may pass quickly. For others with more creative imaginations, it may last longer and take an interesting trip.

But alas, the sad reality hits in various ways: I probably can’t afford that. They probably don’t make it in my size. I could never walk in those shoes. It probably wouldn’t look that good on me. And the list goes on. There may be many different factors that we think would “disqualify” us from being the owner of a particular outfit. And even for those who are able to obtain the desired garment, the satisfaction is not usually long lived because material possessions don’t offer lasting happiness. Then again how can they, when material possessions themselves don’t last long?

However, that’s the difference with the garments our heavenly Father offers us. Christ’s robe of righteousness doesn’t cost us a thing; and one size really does fit all!

How much more sensible is it then to invest in the best quality garment there is—one that is made in heaven and designed by Jesus? He freely offers everyone specially crafted garments of righteousness. We need only to come before Him, humbly confessing, repenting, and accepting. He then will remove our garments of iniquity from us and clothe us in the most precious of robes. Then we will be covered with garments of salvation, and regardless of where we have been or what we have done, He will bring us to higher heights. For the people of Isaiah’s time, and for us, the question is, Do we claim these garments for ourselves, or do we continue to live in the shame of our defilement and nakedness? As you study this week’s lesson, decide how you will answer this question.

Lisa Munroe, Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies
The Greek word for splendor, lamprotita or lampsì, refers to “brightness,” “luster,” or a “shining” that is similar to light. In Hebrew it denotes “magnificence” or “gloriousness.” The Hebrew and Greek words for garments denote a covering wrap like a robe. The phrase garments of splendor indicates coverings that wrap in lustrous light. Christ invites us to accept such garments of splendor that He has made for us. But why do we even need these garments?

It became necessary for us to be clothed in order to hide the shame of our nakedness when Adam and Eve sinned and lost their garments of innocence (Gen. 3:10, 11). Since then, we have tried to clothe ourselves with many types of temporary garments (Gen. 3:21).

Jesus, however, offers us garments that will not wear out or become outdated. On Calvary, Jesus paid the price so we may be clothed in His glory. “Do not listen to the enemy’s suggestion to stay away from Christ until you have made yourself better; until you are good enough to come to God. If you wait until then, you will never come. When Satan points to your filthy garments, repeat the promise of Jesus, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ John 6:37. Tell the enemy that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.”*

Christ offers us the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness (Isa. 61:10). He gave His life so that we could wear these “clothes.” If we reject them, we have no part in Him. This garment is essential in covering our nakedness and wrapping us in lustrous light, a light that will protect us from evil and keep us grounded in our God.

We cannot put on the robe of righteousness unless we have first put on salvation. As we live by Christ’s righteousness, people see a marked difference in us and are attracted to it. Also, it is by this robe that we can stand righteous and pure before God’s judgment seat. Unworthy as we are, He offers us these garments through His love.

**REACT**

As the coming of the Lord is very near, what does John admonish us to do with our garments? See Revelation 16:15.

*Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 205, 206.*
“The white raiment is purity of character, the righteousness of Christ imparted to the sinner. This is indeed a garment of heavenly texture, that can be bought only of Christ for a life of willing obedience.”¹

**A History of Garments (Gen. 3:7, 8, 21)**

Garments became important when Adam and Eve yielded to Satan’s temptation. When they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their eyes revealed to them their nakedness. Sin equates nakedness on both the physical and spiritual level. In shame over their nakedness, they sewed together fig leaves to cover themselves. Even though God pronounced judgment on them, He was merciful. He gave them another chance for eternal life; and Genesis 3:21 tells us that He made them clothes from animal skins. This tells us that God is in the business of clothing us appropriately. Adam and Eve manufactured the first garments. But God properly clothed them with new garments. These garments “were a constant reminder of their lost innocence, of death as the wages of sin, and of the promised Lamb of God, who would by His own vicarious death take away the sins of the world. He [Adam] who had been commissioned protector of the animal creation now unhappily found himself taking the life of one of them. They must die that he might live.”²

By clothing themselves, Adam and Eve sought to save themselves; but they could not. Only God’s garments of salvation and righteousness could do so.

**Garments of Splendor (Isa. 61:10; Luke 4:16–20; Eph. 6:11–17)**

Garments of splendor are spiritual characteristics we must develop. These characteristics eradicate self and give praise to our Savior. Isaiah 61:10 tells us that we are clothed with salvation and righteousness. When Jesus lives in us, we reflect His love, His grace, His salvation, and much more. When we wear these garments of splendor, the world will know that we are His.

Ephesians 6:11–17 tells us that we are called to put on the whole armor of God. God’s armor consists of truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, salvation, and the Holy Spirit. With such armor, we can withstand Satan’s
advances. With such armor, our character is perfected, and we will be able to stand firm for Christ.

When someone goes to a nightclub, they dress a certain way. When someone goes to a fancy restaurant, they dress accordingly. When someone walks with Jesus, they have a certain look. When people see and hear us, they should be able to tell that we walk with Jesus. Our entire being should be a witness. Jesus Himself set an example for us. Luke 4:16–20 tells us that when He was on earth, people were amazed at His words and demeanor. In fact, their eyes were fixed on Him.

**Receiving Garments of Splendor (1 Sam. 16:7; Isa. 3:18–23; 1 John 2:15)**

In this day and age, fashion is high on the agenda of the world. However, fashion offers many inappropriate styles. God has something better to offer—garments that will cover us spiritually, changing us completely. Isaiah 3:18–23 shows how one day the Lord will take away from us everything we are so proud of, including our expensive clothes and accessories. In 1 Samuel 16:7, we are told that the Lord does not see us as we do. While we admire a person’s outward appearance, He looks on the heart.

As God’s stewards, we have a responsibility to accurately portray Christ. So let us not make outward beauty our main focus. Rather, let us concentrate on our inner beauty by developing the qualities of our Savior. These qualities will, in turn, be reflected in our choice of outward apparel.

We are called to be godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven; but because of sin, we sometimes go contrary to this. However, there is hope. God has provided garments of splendor for us. For the Holy Spirit to re-create in us the character of our Lord, we should involve ourselves with those things that will produce Christlike purity, health, and love. Our beauty should not consist of an outward style but in the imperishable style of a gentle and quiet spirit.

First John 2:15 urges us not to love the world nor the things that are in it. The world cannot save us. Let us accept and keep the garments of splendor given to us by our Savior.

**REACT**

1. What do you think about people who place no emphasis on their outward appearance but claim to be spiritually connected?
2. Why is it so difficult for people to accept the garments of splendor God wants to give them but so easily accept designer clothing?
3. Think about both your physical clothes closet and your spiritual clothes closet. How do they compare/contrast with one another? Which closet has more in it, and why?

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1. Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 88.

Andre-Paul Wright and Dian Bailey, Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies
“The great Redeemer represents Himself as a heavenly merchantman, laden with riches, calling from house to house, presenting His priceless goods [Rev. 3:18].

“We must have the buyers and the sellers cleared out of the soul temple, that Jesus may take up His abode within us. Now He stands at the door of the heart as a heavenly merchantman. . . . He invites us to buy the white raiment, which is His glorious righteousness; and the eyesalve, that we may discern spiritual things. . . .

“They know what it means to have a change of raiment.”

“We cannot provide a robe of righteousness for ourselves, for the prophet says, ‘All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.’ Isaiah 64:6. There is nothing in us from which we can clothe the soul so that its nakedness shall not appear. We are to receive the robe of righteousness woven in the loom of heaven, even the spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness.”¹

“The wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ, and represents the character of those who will be accepted as guests for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Those who have transgressed the law, who have committed sin, can find no saving quality in the law which condemns them, but Christ has become the sin-bearer for the whole world. John says: ‘My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.’ Those who receive Christ as their personal Saviour, yield up their way to his will and his way. They cast their sins upon him, and receive and rejoice in the imputed righteousness of Christ. They know what it means to have a change of raiment. ‘As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. . . . And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.’ ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.’”²

¹. Our High Calling, p. 350.
². The Youth’s Instructor, October 21, 1897.

Roger Davis, Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies
We clothe ourselves every day and include accessories to add to the beauty and purpose of our garments. Unfortunately, we often clothe ourselves with synthetic garments without paying much attention to the spiritual details—the things that define our relationships with God. Paul warns us that we also need spiritual garments because we are not wrestling with man, but with principalities and powers, against rulers of darkness in high places.

**Will our words and deeds attract people to Christ? Or will they push people away?**

The devil seeks to keep us from wearing our spiritual garments. However, in Ephesians 6:10–18, Paul urges us to “suit up” with the whole armor of God. This armor includes the following “garments”:

*Truth and righteousness.* Our lives must be a constant testimony to God’s truth and righteousness. What do your purchases, especially in the clothing line, say about your relationship with God?

*Mission.* Jesus tells us in Matthew 28:18–20 that we are to make disciples of all people. We are commissioned to tell everyone about His love and the salvation He offers. What effect will our appearance have on our words and deeds? Will our words and deeds attract people to Christ? Or will they push people away?

*Faith.* Even faith as small as a mustard seed can do great things. When we wear the shield of faith, we will be able to stand against the devil’s lies. To doubt God is to put down the shield (faith) that gives the devil an obstructed target.

*Salvation and the Holy Spirit.* Daily consecration to Christ is paramount. It is this daily renewal of the mind and heart that changes our perceptions of the world and how we react to it. Second John 2:15 tells us to love not the world neither the things of the world. When we join with Christ, we forget about the world and the things that separate us from Christ.

**REACT**

1. Why can’t we survive by wearing only parts of the armor?
2. Why do we still need the armor if Jesus won the battle when He rose from the grave?
3. Explain why kind words and deeds might sometimes be better clothing for the Christian than outright evangelism?
The church today is facing a problem—its young adults are becoming more like the world. Many of them have no spiritual appetite. This is evident in their deportment, the company they choose, the places they go, the sexual immorality they are involved in, their idle jesting, and the way they dress. If we choose to remain clothed in our sinful natures, we deny Christ. It’s almost as if we are ashamed to be in the Lord’s army and to share His love and goodness with others, and we wonder why the Lord has not yet returned.

Just imagine an army of soldiers on a battlefield wearing casual attire.

Oftentimes we claim to be children of God, yet stand by the wayside, stubborn, self-willed, waiting to criticize others, not realizing that we are acting out the spirit of Satan. This is uncharacteristic of being fully clothed in God’s garment of salvation. When we acknowledge that we are sinners, saved by grace, when we ask that God clothe us in a change of raiment and cover us with the robe of righteousness, then we will have tender pity for others who are suffering in sin.

To me, the issue of being clothed in garments of splendor should be significant in the eyes of everyone. Just imagine an army of soldiers on a battlefield wearing casual attire. The destruction the enemy could inflict in such a case would be enormous. Soldiers wear protective gear to resist the enemy’s attacks as well as to distinguish themselves from the opponent. Similarly, we need to be clothed in a way that will enable us to withstand the devil as well as to be identified with Christ. To be clothed in Christ’s garments, we need to die daily to sin and submit our will totally to Him so He can keep us covered with His robe of righteousness. When we are fully clothed in such garments of splendor, we will have an earnest desire to share the good news of salvation with those with whom we come in contact. Our walk, talk, and look will then always provide opportunities to share with others how they, too, can wear garments of splendor.

**REACT**

1. How can people who are suffering in sin partake in the abiding joy of being clothed in garments of splendor?
2. What are some of the problems we face when we do not allow God to clothe us in His righteousness?

Troy Clarke, Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies
CONCLUDE

Prophets, as did the priests, served as God’s representatives to His people. Like many of God’s prophets, Isaiah lived during troubling times. Bible commentaries discuss the greed, vice, and poverty that was rampant during his tenure as God’s spokesperson. In addition, great numbers of God’s people turned away to follow heathen gods, while others expected that the outward forms of their faith would save them. Against such a backdrop, Isaiah urges God’s people to clothe themselves not with the attitudes of the world but with the righteousness of their Creator God.

CONSIDER

- Painting a description of either the bridegroom or the bride as described in Isaiah 61:10. Research wedding apparel during the time of Isaiah to help you make your painting authentic. As you participate in this activity, think about the luxury of salvation’s garments.
- Investigating the cost of a wedding. Include the cost of flowers, invitations, wedding apparel for the entire wedding party, the reception, the minister’s fee, and so on. How does the figure you come up with compare or contrast to the price Christ paid for the robe of righteousness He offers to give to us?
- Composing music to go with the words of Isaiah 61:10.
- Producing, with one or more of your friends, a rendition of responsive reading No. 807 from The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal. This reading is based on Isaiah 61:10. What type of lighting will you use? How can you use sound effects? What type of costumes could you wear? Plan to give your performance for Sabbath School or church sometime before the quarter is over.
- Writing “care instructions” for maintaining the purity of Christ’s robe of righteousness once a person has accepted it.
- Observing and contemplating aspects of nature that signal a complete change, such as animals that change color to protect themselves. Compare this to the change that overcomes us when we accept God’s robe of righteousness.

CONNECT

A Brand Plucked From the Fire

“‘See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes’” (Zech. 3:4, NKJV).
Introduction

Christ Expression

Being a student missionary has changed my opinion on a lot of things, one of those things being dress. Here in the islands, it’s skirts and t-shirts for girls; but every once in a while you’ll find a young rebel wearing shorts in her fight for attention and freedom.

Why do we feel that the way we dress has any effect on who we are? Because we often use the way we dress as a form of self-expression. So as Christians, what should our dress be? Our memory text this week says, “‘See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you’” (Zech. 3:4, NIV).

When we clothe ourselves in His rich garments, we are ultimately clothing ourselves in His virtues.

As Christians, when we accept the ultimate gift of salvation, God clothes us with His righteousness. He takes away our old, stained, nasty clothing (sin), and puts His rich, clean garments (righteousness) around us, so that we can reflect His character to those we meet. Romans 13:14 tells us, “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (NIV).

What exactly does this clothing look like? Is it a literal cloth that we put on when we make the decision to be followers of Christ? “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12, NIV).

As Christians, we need to represent Christ in everything that we are, do, and say. So when we clothe ourselves in His rich garments, we are ultimately clothing ourselves in His virtues. As we develop these virtues here on this earth through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are preparing ourselves for Christ’s return. “The spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world.”

In our lesson this week we’ll be taking a look at how the war in heaven has affected our daily lives. Ellen White wrote, “When Satan seeks to cover the people of God with blackness, and ruin them, Christ interposes.”

Now let’s take a look at the lesson and investigate how the great controversy affects us and what Christ’s robe of righteousness is really all about.

The Right Clothes for the Right Occasion, Part 1 (Exod. 3:1–14)

Everybody knows that how you turn yourself out for special occasions matters. The goal is to turn up “looking absolutely divine, darling!” We’ve always been wise to that, from Cinderella right down to the Oscars.

When Moses first met God, there were clothing difficulties. God was wearing a conflagration, which for some reason did not burn up the bush He was hiding in (Exod. 3:2, 3). Jehovah had chosen His costume with great care because, if He didn’t wear something fiercely protective to keep Moses from actually seeing Him, the man would have been consumed by God’s glory.

And Moses had on his sandals, which just wasn’t good enough. Seraphims’ wings as veils were more the correct apparel in the presence of God (Isa. 6:2), but how was Moses to know that? What he probably knew was that when Adam and Eve had sinned, they tried to cover themselves with leaves (Gen. 3:7). They were turned out of the Garden, and to keep them from returning, God stationed “cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way” at the gate (Gen. 3:24).

Now Divinity had come down all the way from heaven for this burning bush, sandalless occasion. He didn’t just get into a fiery chariot, go to the Orion Expressway, and take one or two right turns. Instead, He descended a vast distance. Even so, He didn’t force Himself on Moses. The man chose to turn to meet God (Exod. 3:3) and so helped God save a whole nation of slaves.

In this scene we are introduced to the “am I” and “I am” phraseology. When God called to Moses, Moses said, “Here am I” (verse 4); but notice that this is immediately after God twice called him by his name. This is a rather personal and up-close encounter—God turning to man and man turning to God. And when the man asked for the password for his part in the cosmic salvation campaign, God said, “I am” (verse 6). He is the only One in the whole universe who is so complete and absolute that He is defined by the fact that HE IS—“from everlasting to everlasting” (Ps. 90:2). He could have said, “I am just. I am merciful. I am love.” But what He said was, “I am.” And this eternal God meets us here and now.
The Right Clothes for the Right Occasion, Part 2 (Luke 15:17–22)

It matters how we are dressed for such meetings as described above. When the prodigal son turned his feet back to his father, he was full of this “I” stuff too: “I perish . . . I will arise . . . I have sinned . . . [I] am no more worthy” (Luke 15:17–19). But after his turning back, “while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (verse 20). The father kissed the son while the son was in his worst outfit ever, but it was all he had at the time. It was good enough. And it wasn’t good enough. Not for this occasion. “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet” (verse 22). Next came the party, far more special than any Oscar ceremony.

How’s that for great? One Hollywood star supposedly said, “The problem with instant gratification is that it isn’t fast enough.” God offers something far superior to instant gratification. Jesus said to the thief on the cross “today” (here and now) you are saved. They were both in an apparently hopeless situation. But the thief turned to Jesus. Jesus turned to the thief, and, suddenly, there was salvation (Luke 23:39–43)!

What About Our Clothes? (Eph. 2:8–10)

For those of us who are not thieves on a cross, there’s the question of what to do after that moment of faith and grace (Eph. 2:8). What are the shoes we are going to walk in from then on? They are the “good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in” (verse 10).

These good works do not save us. They are what we do in the plan of salvation. They are what we do as a result of being saved. Like Moses, who went on to rescue his nation, we are to do things that will “work together” with God’s plan of salvation (Rom. 8:28). These good works aren’t so much a duty as a hope. We turn to the God who has turned to us. After we turn our feet to Him, we put on our shoes and walk the way of good works through the power of His Holy Spirit. In turn, He gives each of us a robe of righteousness that is absolutely perfect.

No matter what you are wearing at this moment, the God who became a human is facing you. No, He’s racing toward you with a robe washed in blood to make it white. Especially for you. Here. Now.

REACT

1. What parts of your inner life are you wanting to protect, and why? If you were to turn those parts of your life over to God, what would He give in exchange for them and why?

2. If you were to ask God what part you are to play in the salvation of the world, what do you think His answer would be?
“In the Revelation he [Satan] is declared to be the ‘accuser of our brethren,’ ‘which accused them before our God day and night.’ Rev. 12:10. The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil and whose name is registered in the Lamb’s book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one. . . . He leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love; he tempts them to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it; therefore he presents their sins before them to discourage them. . . . By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he endeavors to secure their condemnation.”

“Christ imbues men with the attributes of God.”

“The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God’s holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can ‘be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ Rom. 3:26.”

“By His life and His death, Christ proved that God’s justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan’s charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.”

**REACT**

How can you show your appreciation for what Christ is doing on your behalf?

3. Ibid.

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Michael John J. Diaz, Ebeye, Marshall Islands, U.S.A.
In Exodus 3:5, God desires to meet with Moses to give him instructions regarding the Israelites’ deliverance from Egyptian slavery. But before Moses could approach God, God instructed him to remove his sandals. Because “the reverential Oriental mind considered it sacrilegious to enter a . . . holy place with shoes on,”¹ this command informed Moses that it was God who was speaking. God’s instruction to Moses “was in conformity with a usage which was well known to Moses, for the Egyptian priests observed it in their temples, and it is observed in all Eastern countries where the people take off their shoes or sandals, as we do our hats. . . . With them the removal of the shoes is a confession of personal defilement and conscious unworthiness to stand in the presence of unspotted holiness.”²

Zechariah 3:1–4 gives us a picture of reality regarding our problem with sin and how the grace of God, offered to us through Jesus Christ, takes away our sin. This vision was given to Zechariah to show the power Christ has over Satan, our accuser.³ The filthy garments symbolized “the defilement of sin,”⁴ while the removal of those garments “signified the remission of sin and restoration to God’s favor. The new raiment represented the imputed righteousness of Christ.”⁵ The “clean turban” (verse 5, NKJV) being placed “upon Joshua signified that his transgressions had been pardoned and that he was qualified to function in his holy office.”⁶

As we read and study these verses in Exodus and Zechariah, we can imagine ourselves coming before God, showing reverential respect to Him and wanting Him to cleanse us from our sin. We can imagine Him removing the filthy garments of sin from us and clothing us with Christ’s righteousness. Then, like Moses, we are fit to proceed in His work. He can commission us to tell the world, through our words and our deeds, of His great saving love and grace. God is willing to clothe us with Christ’s righteousness if we invite Him to dwell in our hearts.

3. The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1092.
4. Ibid., p. 1093.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
Once we have accepted the garment of Christ’s righteousness, how should we live? When God bestows His love upon us, we no longer are free to do whatever we want. Rather, we are to show that our new garments are from the Ultimate Designer by obeying Him. Read 1 John 5:3.

We learn to obey by doing the following:

- **Becoming as little children** *(Matt. 18:3)*. What is it about being like a child that helps us to obey God? “The simple trust and loving obedience of a child are representative of traits of character highly treasured in the kingdom of heaven. Notice that Jesus speaks of ‘little’ children, those who have not learned, from the poor examples set by adults, the sins of doubt and disobedience.”** This is exactly how we should be as adults in our relationship with Christ.

- **Believing** *(1 John 3:23)*. Believing God is not just about intellectual assent. Believing also requires us to act upon what He says. Those who do not keep His commandments through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit do not really believe in Him.

- **Making an effort** *(Matt. 22:37)*. Because of our sinful natures, it often seems effortless for us to commit sins. So we need to make extra effort in obeying His commandments. Matthew 22:37 explains that we should love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds. Loving God with our entire hearts, souls, and minds is choosing to love Him with everything we do. Yet we must also remember that this is possible only when we invite God’s Holy Spirit to live in our hearts.

- **Yielding** *(Matt. 16:25)*. To yield or surrender is what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 16:25. Surrendering every part of our lives to Him is what’s required of us to clean out any inkling of doubt we might be harboring.

The apostle Paul wrote, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” *(1 Cor. 11:1, NKJV)*. Far from condemning the law, Paul shared with us that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” *(Rom. 7:12, NKJV)*. He delighted in God’s law (see Romans 7:22) and wrote that “keeping the commandments of God is what matters” *(1 Cor. 7:19, NKJV)*.

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*The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 639.*
In this week’s lesson, we learned about how and why God takes away our filthy robes of sin and replaces them with His pure white robe of righteousness. The texts we studied explain how it is possible for us to rid ourselves of the garments of sin and to accept God's garment of righteousness. These texts also helped us to understand the awfulness of sin and our guilt.

**Acts of kindness and love help to make known God’s character of love.**

I believe that “God has wanted very much that His wayward world should get to know Him. He wants to undo the fear, distrust, and misunderstanding which have separated us from our wonderful God. He eagerly longs for the time when His family will be together with Him. And our God has always had a plan by which He could make Himself known to His people. He could not appear personally, with all His divine glory, before the eyes of sinful people. So He chose to make Himself known through His messenger. Then one day God made a large plan. Instead of making Himself known through individual people, He would make Himself known through a whole group of people—a chosen nation. Think of it! There would be a whole nation living together in the peace and joy and health that comes from following God’s way. It would be a nation so remarkably different, so wise, and so strong that the whole world couldn’t help but notice. This nation could show the world how wonderful it is to live in loving loyalty to the only true God. It would be a nation with a mission: to make God known. What a powerful plan it was!”

Those who will share in the victory are those who have accepted Jesus’ righteousness (Eph. 2:8–10). Their highest goal is to know Him through a deep, personal friendship marked with love (John 14:15), trust, loyalty, and obedience. These acts of kindness and love help to make known God’s character of love. We say that they have true faith. That is why in the judgment we are still saved by our faith in Jesus’ gift of Himself to us, yet judged by works.

**REACT**

1. What acts of kindness does the Bible specifically mention? In today’s world, are these acts still needed? Why, or why not?
2. What other acts of kindness not mentioned in the Bible might be needed in today’s world?

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*God Is the Victor, p. 71.

Stewart Van Loriezo, Bacolod City, Philippines
CONCLUDE

In Zechariah’s vision of chapter 3, Joshua’s filthy clothes were not merely covered by God. Satan, who was standing ready to condemn Joshua for his sins, would have quickly pounced on that loophole. Instead, God stripped away every sinful garment and clothed Joshua from head to foot with clean clothing. Not just clean, but beautiful, one-of-a-kind garments. Imagine being dressed by God!

God replaces our poor-quality, imitation Christianity with the real thing. He doesn’t just cover up our sinful nature; He does a complete makeover, fashioning us into a whole new creation.

CONSIDER

• Selecting and wearing an item that in some way symbolizes your relationship with God.
• Repairing something that has been damaged, whether it’s clothing, appliances, a car, or a relationship. How does this reflect what Christ does for you?
• Researching the clothing designs worn in Israel during the Babylonian occupation. What types of fabrics and garment construction techniques were used? Use the following Web sites for your research: http://www.keyway.ca or http://www.womeninthebible.net.
• Doing the laundry. While the clothes are being cleaned, read Psalm 51:2, 7 and Revelation 22:14. Meditate on what it means to you to know that God washes away sin.
• Applying numerical values to the symbols mentioned in one of Zechariah’s visions to create a mathematical equation that reflects the symbolism found in this lesson.
• Paraphrasing one of the visions from Zechariah 1–3, using contemporary, everyday items (iPods, Starbucks, cell phones, and so on) for the symbolic images used in the Bible. How can everyday phrases or items be used to convey larger concepts?
• Giving new clothing to someone or to a charity in need (for example, someone living on the streets, a homeless shelter, or a mission project).

CONNECT


Luan Miller, College Place, Washington, U.S.A.
The Prodigal’s New Clothes

“...But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found”

When the prodigal son decided to return home, his expectation and resolve was that he would ask his father only to employ him as one of his laborers. Because he had disregarded his father’s counsel, made all the wrong choices, wasted his lot, and sold his share, he believed that he was unworthy of anything more.

What the father did, however, was to clothe him with the best clothing in the house, which included a robe, a ring, and a pair of sandals. The father’s bestowing of these gifts demonstrates the grace God extends to sinners. Though sinners wander away from God, He is waiting, just as the father waited for his son, to reveal His grace to them.

When Paul spoke to the Galatians concerning the grace of God and its abundance, he told them that he desired them to grow in that grace. Earlier, he had taught them how Jesus had come to earth, invaded Satan’s kingdom, and made the Galatians His heirs. They joyfully received Paul’s message and became followers of Christ; but after Paul left, other teachers came and told them that they had to earn the salvation of God and His favor by doing certain things. Today, the story of the prodigal son continues to portray the true nature of God’s grace. The father (God) clothed the son (us) with a clean garment (God’s righteousness). The son had done nothing to deserve such gifts. Yet the father accepted him back into the household. Likewise, when sinners repent and accept Christ’s righteousness as their own, they become once again their Creator’s children. When we return, He treats us as if we had never been away. This is the grace of God, which we do not deserve.*

This week, we will study the Father’s willingness to clothe us in His righteousness. We also will look at the nature of that righteousness and how “wearing” that righteousness will affect our lives. As you study, remember that your acceptance of His righteousness will determine whether or not you will enjoy the party He hosts for us when we return to Him.

In today’s text, we see that Jesus welcomed the very people the scribes and the Pharisees rejected. Yet the three parables He shared were for all four groups mentioned in verses 1 and 2. This week, we are concerned with the last of the stories—the story of the prodigal son—and what it teaches us about God’s gift of righteousness.

Typically, a son would receive his inheritance at the time of his father’s death. The fact that the younger brother instigated the early division of the family estate showed a rebellious and proud disregard for his father’s authority, not to mention a selfish and immature attitude. How often have we shown such an attitude toward God?

Pigs are unclean animals. Jews were not even allowed to touch them. When the son took a job feeding them, and when he even longed for their food to fill his belly, we see just how low he had fallen. He had hit rock bottom. But in doing so, he finally came to his senses. Sometimes we have to hit rock bottom before we recognize our sin and our need to accept God’s righteousness.

The father symbolizes our heavenly Father. He waits patiently, with loving compassion, for us to return to Him with humble hearts. He offers us everything in His kingdom, restoring us to a full relationship in Him with joyful celebration. He doesn’t even dwell on our past waywardness.

Clearly the older son is just like the scribes and Pharisees. Their self-righteousness prevented them from rejoicing when sinners returned to God. Their bitterness and resentment kept them from developing forgiving spirits and blinded them to the treasures that lay before them.

The parable reveals God’s character and His desire that all sinners may return to a parent-child relationship with Him. The scribes and Pharisees considered certain people to be unworthy of God’s kingdom, and they criticized Jesus for enjoying their company. Thus the parable of the prodigal son reveals both God’s love for those who are ready to accept it (the prodigal son who returns to his father), and His rejection of the Pharisees’ self-centered righteousness (the older son in the parable).

**REACT**

1. Why does the sinner have a chance before God?
2. How can we be free from self-righteousness?
Even though the story of the prodigal son has been around for thousands of years, it still has much to teach us about how God saves us from sin.

God desires each of us to find salvation in Him.

How the Father Treats Sinners (Luke 15:20)
The son heads off to a faraway land, leads a wild life of adventure, and squanders everything of value (literally and symbolically). Not until he’s confronted with failure and despair does he return home, repentant and willing to do anything to win back his father’s favor. To his surprise, however, and to the surprise of others, the father welcomes him into his loving and forgiving arms without question. No amount of time, no amount of money, and no amount of rebellion could get in the way of his patience and unconditional love for his son. “‘For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found’” (Luke 15:24, NKJV). Of course, the awesome message here is that God is patient and gracious with all of us, no matter what we’ve done. He is willing to welcome each of us home into His loving and forgiving arms.

The Father’s Righteousness (Luke 15:22–24)
The son’s clothes and body were a sorry mess by the time he returned home. He and his clothes were smeared with the filth of his sweat and muck from the pigs’ pen. Yet the father hugged him and called for fine clothes and jewelry to be brought to him. The son’s sorry state represents our human condition before we come to Christ. We are sinful by nature, and therefore, our thoughts, words, actions, and desires stain our lives. The father’s garments represent the purity and righteousness of Jesus. Clothed in His righteousness, we are able to face our Creator, Savior, and Lord. We should always remember that there is nothing we can do to gain His favor. The clean clothes, ring, and pair of shoes “were not necessities, but special tokens of favor. The father not only provided for the needs of his son, but honored him, and in so doing gave evidence of the love and joy that filled his own heart.”

Our Response (Luke 15:28–32)
The elder brother “is sometimes an officer in the church, a leader in
reform groups, a ‘key citizen.’ He thinks, or wills to think, that all other races are ‘inferior.’ A man out of work is simply unemployable: ‘I was always able to find work, and always worked hard.’ A prodigal like the younger son is just a wastrel: ‘Actually you can do nothing with them,’ he says.”

How do we react when a sinner comes into the fold of God? Are we like the older brother? Many times mature Christians think that “newcomers” are not sincere. They are suspicious of new converts and unwilling to embrace them. Many do not believe or accept that others just like themselves can be in need of the saving grace of God or are deserving of it. Hence, they have been obstacles to souls that God otherwise would have encouraged. Unlike the prodigal’s brother, we are to welcome those who have chosen to follow the Lord. We are to help them and hold them dear. When the prodigal son returned home, he needed acceptance, and that is what the father gave him.

The love that God has bestowed on us who love Him is needed in the world now more than ever. Many souls are daily coming to us, and our reaction to them will determine whether they stay in the house of God or they wander back to the foreign country of sin. God desires each of us to find salvation in Him. He offers us that salvation and asks that we share His offer with others.

“Strength and grace have been provided through Christ to be brought by ministering angels to every believing soul. None are so sinful that they cannot find strength, purity, and righteousness in Jesus, who died for them. He is waiting to strip them of their garments stained and polluted with sin, and to put upon them the white robes of righteousness; he bids them live and not die.”

**REACT**

1. The invitation to join the family of God is extended to each of us. How can we ensure that we share this invitation with others?

2. The prodigal son had to remove his filthy rags in order to accept the robes that the father offered. What meaning does this have for our daily lives?

3. What did the prodigal son have to remove from his life?

4. While the father was able to forgive the younger brother, it appears as though the older brother could not. How do you think this inability to forgive affected his life? Is there someone in your life whom you need to forgive but cannot? How is this affecting your life? Pray to God that He will give you a loving and forgiving spirit.

5. Luke 15:20 says that even when the son was a long way off, the father saw him. What does this tell us about the father and thus about God?

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2. *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 8, p. 279.

Daniel Osewe, Olembo District, Central Nyanza Field, East Africa
“In the parable of the prodigal son is presented the Lord’s dealing with those who have once known the Father’s love, but who have allowed the tempter to lead them captive at his will.”

“The love of God still yearns over the one who has chosen to separate from Him, and He sets in operation influences to bring him back to the Father’s house. . . . It was that love which was drawing him [the prodigal son] toward home. So it is the assurance of God’s love that constrains the sinner to return to God. ‘The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.’ Rom. 2:4. A golden chain, the mercy and compassion of divine love, is passed around every imperiled soul. The Lord declares, ‘I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.’ Jer. 31:3.”

“The father will permit no contemptuous eye to mock at his son’s misery and tatters. He takes from his own shoulders the broad, rich mantle, and wraps it around the son’s wasted form, and the youth sobs out his repentance. . . . The father holds him close to his side, and brings him home. No opportunity is given him to ask a servant’s place. He is a son, who shall be honored with the best the house affords.”

“In the parable there is no taunting, no casting up to the prodigal of his evil course. The son feels that the past is forgiven and forgotten, blotted out forever.”

**REACT**

1. What does this parable teach you to do if you feel that your life is not heading in the right direction and that you need to change?

2. Think of something that you believe is keeping you from having a deeper relationship with God. How does His willingness to welcome you home speak to you now?

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3. Ibid., pp. 203, 204.
4. Ibid., p. 204.

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*Jackson Watembo, Ongata Rongai, Kenya, Africa*
The Bible teaches us about the love of God, and in several places, it explains what God is doing to redeem humankind. The book of Zechariah and the story of the prodigal son are two such places. The filthy garments of the wandering son and of Joshua, the high priest, represent our unholy state of being and our sins. The exchange of clean garments for dirty ones in both stories represents God’s taking away our sinful natures and our sins and covering us with Christ’s righteousness. As God makes this exchange, we are to do the following.

If you do not doubt, you will feel God revive you.

Accept that we are lost. This includes confessing our sins and repenting of them. When we do so, all of heaven rejoices, and the Father forgives us. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NIV).

Step out in faith. Make an effort to seek the Lord and to dwell in His presence always. “We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” (1 John 5:17, NIV).

Wait upon the Lord and have hope in Him. Then He shall renew your strength (Isa. 40:31). Claim His promises to lift you up and to redirect your path. If you do not doubt, you will feel God revive you.

Accept others into the fold when they also accept God’s new, clean clothes. Let us not be like the prodigal son’s brother, who because of his harsh attitude was himself a prodigal.

“By faith in His merits I am free from the condemnation of the law. He clothes me with His righteousness, which answers all the demands of the law. I am complete in Him who brings everlasting righteousness. He presents me before God in the spotless garment.”*

During His ascension, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, who would be our Helper and Comforter. He fulfilled this promise at Pentecost. Now we who are called by His name know that we are not orphans because He is always with us in the person of His Holy Spirit.

**REACT**

If you are lost and don’t know the way home, what should you do?

*A New Life, p. 27.*

Sarah Kwamboka Monyoncho, Nairobi, Kenya
The parable of the prodigal son presents an issue that Jesus sought to address throughout His earthly ministry—self-righteousness. Self-righteousness was at the core of the Pharisees’ behavior. Like the older son in Luke 15:11–32, they never saw the welcoming of the prodigal son for what it was—the dead in sin brought back to life. Rather, they saw it as an opportunity to make themselves look good. In order to further explore self-righteousness, I would like to examine another parable that Jesus addressed to the Pharisees. If you haven’t already done so, take time to read this parable now in Luke 18:9–14. Then notice the following:

The difference in character between the tax collector and the Pharisee. The Pharisees were indifferent as to the real state of their hearts. They were concerned only about appearing to be righteous. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Tax collectors were notorious for exacting more than their due and were looked upon as disgraceful and disreputable. Yet it was the tax collector in the parable who recognized the need of salvation.

The difference in behavior between the tax collector and the Pharisee. The Pharisee stood where everyone could see him. The tax collector, however, stood at a distance, would not look up, and beat his breast.

The difference between the prayer of the Pharisee and the prayer of the tax collector. The Pharisee boasted of his goodness and contrasted his behavior with the behavior of robbers, adulterers, and the tax collector. The tax collector acknowledged that he was a sinner and pleaded for mercy.

The difference in how each prayer was answered. Jesus said that the tax collector went home justified. He humbled himself and was therefore exalted by God. The Pharisee, however, was not justified and therefore could not be exalted. The tax collector was poor in spirit, and so he was justified. The Pharisee, rich in merits and self-esteem, went away empty.

The point we must clearly understand is that true repentance is required for all, whoever they are and regardless of their outward conduct. It is not our morality and our virtues that hinder our salvation, but that proud feeling that we ourselves are somehow worthy. This self-righteousness prevents us from clinging to the cross and from accepting the righteousness of Christ.

Isaac Nyakundi Mokaya, Kisii Central District, East Africa
CONCLUDE
The story of the prodigal son has something for everyone: people who feel a heavy burden of guilt and people who don’t; people who know they’ve walked away from the Lord and those who don’t. As it turns out, each one of us needs to experience the unconditional love of a merciful Father.

CONSIDER
- Acting out this parable for your Sabbath School class. You would need someone to write a script and a few actors.
- Writing a short paragraph about each character in the story of the prodigal son and a time in your life when you identified with that character.
- Visiting a pig farm if you have access to one. Take in the sights, sounds, and smells, and think about what it was like for the prodigal son to live on a pig farm and eat with the pigs.
- Reaching out to a new believer or church member, letting that person know what rejoicing his or her arrival has brought to you and your church family. Maybe your church or class could even have a banquet to welcome that person.
- Listening to some of your favorite songs about God’s forgiveness. “Forgiving Eyes” (Michael Card) and “Mercy Came Running” (Phillips, Craig & Dean) are two good ones.
- Listing people in the Bible who were forgiven something. By their names, write the sin they committed and what they went on to do with their lives after God forgave them.
- Writing a letter thanking someone who has forgiven you for something or who has modeled the open arms of the Father for you.

CONNECT
Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 198–211.
“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1, NKJV).
How would you feel if all of your favorite clothes were burned before your eyes? That’s exactly what happened to Xiao Baojuan, a corrupt vassal under Emperor Liangwu of China. Baojuan was known for his late-night activities and his many hats and five-colored garments. When Emperor Liangwu removed Baojuan from power, he had Baojuan’s extravagant clothes burned on the imperial avenue for all to see. After this, many people gave up their tendency toward extravagance.1

Spectators laughed as the flames ate up his magnificent clothes.

It must have hurt Baojuan to be stripped of his fine garments and to watch them burn. Spectators laughed as the flames ate up his magnificent clothes. Yet in a way, he was lucky. He was given the chance to see how arrogant he was and how meaningless such clothes really are.

In all likelihood, many of the spectators thought that Baojuan deserved to have his clothes taken away from him and destroyed. They probably wrapped their “robes of righteousness” tightly around them, as they contrasted their better morals with those that brought down Baojuan. Yet as they pointed their fingers at him, they were, in fact, pointing three of their own fingers at themselves. They opened their eyes to their brother’s fault, while they themselves were most likely guilty of a much greater wrong—thinking that they were so much better than Baojuan (Matt. 7:3).

The parable of Matthew 22:1–14 helps us to better understand this type of thinking, also known as self-righteousness. Upon the third invitation, those who were invited to the wedding feast came. However, all but one wore the wedding garment that was customarily given to guests.2 Those who wore the garment represent Christ’s true followers—those who accept His garment of righteousness. The person who dressed in his own clothes represents people who call themselves Christians but who wear their own garments of self-righteousness. God offers His righteousness to everyone, but not everyone accepts it. This week we’ll study this parable and the painful truth it reveals—not all who profess to be followers of Christ really are. As you study, remember that we are not to make the judgment between the faithful and the unfaithful (Matt. 7:3). Only God is qualified to do that.

2. Life Application Study Bible, p. 1698.
Naked Results (Gen. 3:9–19)
When Adam and Eve disobeyed a direct command from God, their spiritual garments of innocence were taken from them. Thus they made their own garments from fig leaves to cover their nakedness. Unfortunately for Adam and Eve and the rest of humankind, sin has made us all spiritually disgraced in God’s holy eyes. And nothing we try to do can make us fit again to enter His kingdom and join the wedding celebration of the Groom and His bride.

The King, still loving them, gave them another chance. Again He invited them.

Coming Judgment (Eccl. 12:14; Dan. 7:10; Matt. 22:1–8)
God will not tolerate forever the amount of wrongdoing that continues to flow like a raging river between the first sin and now. A time is coming when everyone will be judged and sin will be removed from the planet for eternity. The judgment books will be opened and even the motives behind each one’s actions will be made known to all. Yet even now we can be sure of the outcome—but not because the outcome is rigged or the jury bribed. We are assured of the outcome because of what He has revealed to us through the parable of the wedding garment. He gives us all the choice of accepting the wedding garment—the garment of His righteousness.

“All people will have to stand before God and be judged for what they did in this life. We will not be able to use life’s inconsistencies as an excuse for failing to live properly. To live properly, we need to (1) recognize that human effort apart from God is futile; (2) put God first—now; (3) receive everything good as a gift from God; (4) realize that God will judge both evil and good; (5) know that God will judge the quality of every person’s life.”

The Gospel Invitation (Matt. 22:1–8)
The invitation to join the marriage feast of the King was first made to the Jewish people. They were the ones whom God originally chose to give to the world His invitation to accept salvation. But without giving much thought to the efforts made by the King and His servants, and to the love He expressed by extending an invitation to them, they ultimately rejected it. The King, still loving them, gave them another chance. Again He invited them. Again, they showed nothing but contempt for Him and His invitation. And this time, they not only refused His invitation, they killed...
His messengers as well. As a nation, the Jewish people rejected Jesus as their King. They rejected the garment of righteousness He wanted to give them to cover their sins and to make them fit to participate in the ultimate wedding feast. Instead, judgment came through the destruction of Jerusalem.

**Gentiles Invited (Matt. 22:9–14; Rev. 21:2, 9)**

After the Jewish nation rejected the gospel message, the invitation was opened to the Gentiles—that is, to everyone who is not a Jew, including you and me.

If we are to enter the kingdom and attend the marriage feast prepared by the King, we must humble ourselves and accept not only the King’s invitation but the prescribed wedding garment as well. To enter in, we must be wearing the robe of righteousness that the King gives to all who confess faith in Him as their Savior. It is only the righteousness of Christ, which the wedding garment represents, that will gain us entrance into His kingdom.

Because the wedding garment reflects Christ’s righteousness, “the rejection of the garment represents the rejection of those traits of character that qualify men to become sons and daughters of God. Like the guests in the parable, we have nothing suitable of our own to wear. We are acceptable in the presence of the great God only when clad in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, by virtue of His merits. This is the ‘white raiment’ Christians are counseled to buy (see Rev. 3:18; cf. ch. 19:8).”

Only a character that reflects Jesus and that is developed through His power will fit us for the kingdom. Today, Christ continues to send His invitation to the marriage and the feast. He still gives wedding garments to those who accept His invitation. If we accept the garment of His righteousness, allowing it to cover our sins, He will let us enter the heavenly wedding feast God is preparing.

**REACT**

1. Have you accepted the garment that Jesus Christ offers? Why, or why not?

2. Why will our deeds be judged when we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus, our Lord and Savior?

3. What does Christian perfection mean? What traits of character qualify us to be God’s children, and how do we develop those traits?

4. The following verses also involve clothing metaphors in relationship to righteousness and salvation. Which one of these verses speaks to you the most, and why? Ps. 132:16; Isa. 61:10; Rev. 3:4, 5; 19:7, 8.

5. Read about another set of clothing in Revelation 17:4 and 18:16. How does this clothing contrast with the clothing we are studying this week?

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1. *Life Application Study Bible*, pp. 1150, 1151.
I always believe that appropriateness is important—in every place and on all occasions. But in the sight of a merciful God, I have at times wondered why mere attendance at the marriage feast isn’t enough. Following is an answer to my question.

“By the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ’s true followers will possess. To the church it is given ‘that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,’ ‘not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ Eph. 5:27. The fine linen, says the Scripture, ‘is the righteousness of saints.’ Rev. 19:8. It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Savior.”

“It is not enough for us to believe that Jesus is not an impostor, and that the religion of the Bible is no cunningly devised fable. We may believe that the name of Jesus is the only name under heaven whereby man may be saved, and yet we may not through faith make Him our personal Saviour. It is not enough to believe the theory of truth. It is not enough to make a profession of faith in Christ and have our names registered on the church roll.”

“The man who came to the feast without a wedding garment represents the condition of many in our world today. They profess to be Christians, and lay claim to the blessings and privileges of the gospel; yet they feel no need of a transformation of character. . . . They have not overcome their hereditary or cultivated tendencies to wrongdoing. Yet they think that they are good enough in themselves, and they rest upon their own merits instead of trusting in Christ.”

“The truth is to be planted in the heart. It is to control the mind and regulate the affections. The whole character must be stamped with divine utterances. Every jot and tittle of the word of God is to be brought into the daily practice.”

2. Ibid., p. 312.
3. Ibid., p. 315.
4. Ibid., pp. 313, 314.
Massachusetts Institute of Technology lives by its motto, *mens et manus*. This phrase means “mind and hand.” The parable of the wedding garment considers this same idea. The king’s call to the feast is made to everyone. Anyone who chooses to come should have a twofold intention.

1. **Purpose (mind).** The king’s invitation to the feast is open to everyone. Because those people who accept have specific reasons for doing so, their acceptance is purposeful (mindful).

Knowing, alone, is not enough. Doing, preparing for the feast, is an integral part of our journey there.

2. **Preparation (hand).** Those people planning on attending must make necessary preparations. These preparations follow purpose. The reasons why people choose to attend govern the way in which they will prepare.

Our minds give us our purposes for accepting the king’s invitation. Our hands translate these purposes into actions (preparation). The results of our “mind and hand” combined will eventually define us—not only to other people but, more importantly, to the king. The invitation and our acceptance of it are not meant to reside only in our minds. They must also reach our hands. Knowing, alone, is not enough. Doing, preparing for the feast, is an integral part of our journey there.

God’s invitation to heaven is open to all. Still, we do not get to heaven without preparing for it. Our knowledge of His invitation must be translated into actions—actions that God Himself has defined and shown us.

A friend has asked me to be her bridesmaid. Coming from a Filipino-Chinese family, she desires to abide by Chinese cultural practices for the engagement lunch and the wedding ceremony. Because I am the only Filipino in her wedding party, she is briefing me about these practices. For instance, a dark-colored dress must not be worn to the lunch. Knowing the rule (purpose/mind), I plan to dress accordingly (preparation/hand). Because I am her friend, I desire to dress appropriately. This desire translates into preparations on my end. Therefore, preparation, the *mens et manus* motto, defines our friendship, showing the depth of our relationship.

**REACT**

1. What preparations have you made so far to attend the Lord’s feast?
2. Is there a time when your mind thinks one thing but your hands act differently? Why do these inconsistencies exist?
Planning a wedding and planning on attending God’s wedding feast in heaven are similar in nature:

*Define your wedding.* Will it be formal, semiformal, or informal? Your dress must match the type of wedding you are having. The parable about God’s wedding feast shows that we also must prepare for that event, especially when it comes to what we are to wear.

*Determine the time of year and day the wedding will be held.* Nobody knows exactly when Jesus will come. Yet His Word faithfully reminds us that He will return and that we are to wait for Him expectantly while we do His good works.

*Three to twelve months is enough time to make sure the gown will fit properly and to choose accessories and colors to complement the dress.* This will give the seamstress time to make alterations. A bridal gown can require as many as five fittings. What if you gain weight or lose a few pounds? You also will want to choose flowers and shoes, dresses for your attendants, and wedding apparel for the groom and those who will be standing with him. When God says that the time for the heavenly wedding has arrived, Jesus will come to take those who are dressed in His righteousness for His bride.

*Find out if there are going to be any requirements that will limit your gown selection.* Some churches require that bridal gowns be modest regarding certain aspects of fashion. Remember that modesty does not preclude beauty. To attend the heavenly wedding feast, we are not to wear our tattered attempts at righteousness but the complete robe of Christ’s righteousness that He graciously offers to us.

*Your dress can be white no matter what you’ve done in the past.* The same holds true if you are planning a second marriage. Likewise, all the good things we do will not make us altar-worthy when it comes to the heavenly wedding. We cannot produce our own cure for sin. Instead, God counsels us to buy white raiment from Him (Rev. 3:18), which is the righteousness of Jesus—the only remedy for sin. It is sin-stain proof, for it is washed in His blood. When you are wounded by your battle with sin, ask God to forgive you. When Satan points out your unworthiness, look to Jesus, your righteousness.
My sister loves the color orange. Her school bag, shirts, gym clothes, jacket, slippers, bed sheets, even her motorcycle, are all orange. So I wasn’t surprised that the color she chose for her wedding was tangerine—a brighter shade of orange. I thought twice about wearing a tangerine-colored dress. I really preferred to wear pink. So I told my sister about it. I didn’t mean to belittle her choice. But that’s exactly what I did. Her eyes grew wide when she heard my request—perplexed whether I was serious or not. So I quickly told her to forget my desire. I didn’t want to ruin her special day. (Neither did I want people to think I was quite so selfish.)

The robe of righteousness is . . . like a uniform that is easily identified.

This experience helped me to understand the parable of the wedding garment. Many people claim to be on God’s side, but their actions demonstrate otherwise. The Christian life naturally must be about developing a Christlike character. The wedding garment represents God’s righteousness. Thus, when we accept His righteousness, He gives us His power so that we can be transformed. Many have tried to justify themselves by believing that because God is loving and merciful, He will understand and accept their sinful imperfections. However, that is far from the truth.

The robe of righteousness is something people are privileged to receive. It’s like a uniform that is easily identified. And just as wedding guests expect a bride to wear a wedding gown, so people expect Christians to be like their Savior—loving, kind, helpful, and obedient to His Word. The very act of “wearing the garment” signifies submission to Him. We might prefer another garment and actually wear a different one for a while. But we would be doing so in defiance of Christ’s desire for us. In our Christian life, wearing His righteousness equals obedience to Him.

REACT
1. How noticeable are our actions when we do or do not wear Christ’s robe of righteousness?
2. What does Jesus mean at the end of the wedding parable when He says that “‘many are invited, but few are chosen’ ” (Matt. 22:14, NIV)?
3. What experiences have you had that helped you to understand the parable we studied this week?
CONCLUDE

There are several ways in which Jesus described the responses of those who are excluded from His kingdom: the foolish builder in Matthew 7:26, 27; those who relied on good works in Matthew 7:21–23; and the protesters in Matthew 25:41–45. In each case, those who were rejected failed to appreciate and recognize the incalculable value of the salvation offered. Jesus illustrates this by comparing eternal life to gaining the whole world (Matt. 16:25, 26). The main reason for rejection is neglect of the gift offered. There is no excuse available, hence the response of the man with no wedding garment. He was speechless.

CONSIDER

- Inviting a friend to church or a Bible study/small group. Or planning a meal and inviting people with whom you do not normally socialize.
- Designing an invitation from God to lost humanity to get ready to go to heaven to live with Him. Share it with a friend and describe how you feel about God’s invitation.
- Choosing a hymn or a piece of music that has special significance for your relationship with Jesus. Play it and reflect on how special Jesus is to you.
- Making a list of the characteristics of Christ’s righteousness with which you want to decorate your heavenly wedding garment.
- Taking a clean cloth and writing a good deed on it. Then read Isaiah 64:6.
- Taking a rag or old piece of cloth and writing on it all the things that might prevent you from accepting Jesus’ offer of a robe of righteousness. Pray and ask God to exchange this rag for His robe of righteousness.
- Paraphrasing the story of the wedding garment in a modern setting. Be prepared to share it during Sabbath School.

CONNECT

Genesis 3:7, 21 and Revelation 3:18. As you read these verses, compare and contrast the clothes mentioned in each one. What was the purpose of each piece of clothing?


Audrey Andersson, Lindesberg, Sweden
More Clothing

Imagery

“If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well”

(Mark 5:28, NKJV).
I grew up watching Superman. I wanted to be just like him—saving and having people trust me to help them. Even though Clark Kent was a newspaper reporter by day, he still wore the cape and got the pretty girls by night. I, too, wanted to wear the cape and have the good looks. But when I got to know Jesus better, I learned that He wasn’t so worried about being a super hero, but that He spent His life being super humble.

Yes, He did things differently from the way our typical superman does.

Before His earthly ministry began, Jesus most likely helped His earthly father in the carpenter shop. His hands were dirty and worn, and being a bit of a carpenter myself, I’m sure He even smashed a few fingers. Jesus came from a lower-class family, but they were a God-loving family. This respect for God went a lot further than hair gel and a fancy cape. The humble beginnings He came from taught Him that people weren’t in a high or low class. They were just people who needed a Savior.

When Jesus was in the upper room with His disciples, He was preparing for the toughest hero’s job ever. A few hours later, He was overwhelmed by the enormity of what His heavenly Father was asking Him to do. He asked that this mission be taken from Him—but only if it was God’s will (Matt. 26:36–46). He trusted God, and He knew that His mission would save lives, even though it meant losing His own life. Yes, He did things differently from the way our typical superman does.

Instead of donning a cape and flying over Metropolis city, He took off His outer clothing and wrapped a towel around Himself. In washing His disciples’ feet, He humbled Himself. He showed that He wasn’t afraid to do the work of a servant. He wanted them to see that being a hero doesn’t mean putting on fancy capes, but that it means taking off the images the people have given us and reflecting God, the Designer of humankind.

This week we’ll look at clothing in the Bible in the context of Jesus’ ministry and crucifixion. We’ll study the woman who believed that all she had to do to be healed was to touch His clothes. Then there’s Jesus, laying aside His garment so that He could wash the disciples’ feet. We’ll also study the high priest who, standing before the Lord, tore his own garments in an act that sealed his doom. Then there’s Jesus in the garments of mockery, put on Him by Roman soldiers. Finally, we’ll look at the soldiers casting lots for Christ’s garment, thus fulfilling an ancient prophecy.
The hem the woman touched wasn’t what we normally think of as a hem. In this case, what she focused on was the blue border around the edges of Jesus’ garment, or the tassels that hung from that border. Like many other faithful Jewish men, Jesus wore this garment in response to God’s direct commandment made through Moses. Read that commandment in Numbers 15:38, 39.

They say that “clothes make the man,” but on that day clothing actually remade a woman.

The idea was that the clothing—with the distinctive border and fringes—would remind the children of Israel of their unique connection to God. Whenever they would lift their hand or raise a foot, that distinctive blue border with the swinging tassels would remind them that they belonged to God and that their actions should reflect that connection.

We often connect a person’s clothing to a particular profession. We see a white coat over loose-fitting green scrubs, and we think “medical professional.” A blue uniform with epaulets and brass buttons reminds us of the military or the police. A hard hat, overalls, and heavy boots? Construction worker! When it comes to clothing expressing a connection to God, we think of clerical robes, a nun’s habit, a priest’s collars, or a black suit. However, the fact is that every Christian’s clothing should reflect his or her connection to God!

Thus, when this sick woman, with her embarrassing medical condition, looked at Jesus’ clothing, the blue fringe and tassels must have emphasized that here was a Man truly connected to God! And that spoke volumes to her, because for years she had been feeling rather disconnected. In fact, a part of the law even added to her feelings of isolation. Read Leviticus 15:25.

But on that day, looking at Christ’s garments, all she could think about was the possibility of reconnecting with God through Jesus and His connection to God. If only she could find a way to connect with Him and avail herself of His connection; if she could just touch the border of his garment. They say that “clothes make the man,” but on that day clothing actually remade a woman.
Let’s talk about dreams and fables—both more loved by children than adults, whose horizons have become narrowed by reality.

**Fables:** How about “The Emperor’s New Clothes”? You might remember hearing about them when you were a child. A vain emperor was tricked by two clever tailors into paying for and then wearing the most stylish and expensive outfit ever. It was an outfit for such discriminating tastes that supposedly only the wise could even see the clothing. That’s how a naked monarch came to be parading down the street in front of his awed subjects. It took a child, not quite up to the mind games at work, to say, “But, Mommy, he has no clothes on.” *Hmm.* Just why did Jesus say we must become like little children? Kids are so honest—but in the way of clothing we are not really always dealing with honesty, are we? After all, clothes are to cover up something.

**Dreams:** There’s one I’ve had a few times over the years; and, while it comes less often now, it always rattles me. You know the one—most people have it at some time. You are in a public place either naked or inappropriately dressed.

It seems to me that clothing is far more than the sum of natural and artificial fibers woven and sown into body coverings. Without it, we are infantile and vulnerable. With it, we can define ourselves. Without it, our vulnerable self is exposed. And in most cultures, certainly in Bible times, clothing defined people and the positions they held.

Ever since God covered an unhappy couple with animal skins, clothes have been the necessary transaction between what we are, what we say we are, what we want to be, and how others see us. Clothes can obscure or reveal the true person. Let’s study a few examples.

**The High Priest (Matt. 26:59–68)**

The high priest’s robes were specified by God as to design and cleanliness. The uncovered priest would never dare to enter the temple. He was in a sense in borrowed glory. That surely was why he was forbidden on pain of death to rip his clothing—even though it had become fashionable for those in grief or distress to do so. The man underneath the robes was not to intrude. So the act of the high priest when supposedly outraged at Jesus’ claim to divinity was in reality a revelation of his own sinful and naked self.

The woman with an issue of blood was not as tentative as we usually think. Jesus was, after all, a rabbi with some divine connection. As such, His ability to heal, especially when doctors could not, had spread far and wide. As with the high priest, His clothes, whatever their form, were His badge of office and to touch them—even the hem—was to touch the office bearer.

Pilate’s guards must have picked up on the governor’s inkling that Jesus was more than a teacher whose views inflamed the priests’ hatred. They in all likelihood shared the Roman view that the meddling priests were just another quirk of an alien culture. They didn’t care for any king but Caesar. No doubt they would rather have been torturing an acknowledged king of the Jews instead of another revolutionary. These guards put on Jesus a scarlet or purple robe, then proceeded to mock Him as king. Where did they get such a robe? Normally it would be above their pay grade and forbidden to their rank. It is possible that Pilate gave it to them. After all, for him, clothes would seem to make the man.

The Roman soldiers at the cross dividing up the clothing of Christ saw only the wardrobe of the criminal. They were used to the spoils of their trade. They knew that they were carving up the very life of the person as they divided the clothes—but that was the point; He was now theirs, they imagined. It must have been a little jarring to encounter the seamless tunic. It was a sign of wealth beyond the usual profile of a person deemed of little use to society. How ironic that they defined Jesus by His earthly clothes rather than by the fleshly clothing of Divinity on the cross.

When we celebrate the Last Supper, we seldom take the time to visualize what really happened as Jesus ministered to His disciples by washing their feet. He lowered Himself to perform what normally only a servant would do. But, in the way of clothing, He elevated Himself. Jesus “laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded himself.” Then after washing the disciples’ feet, He began “to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded” (John 13:4, 5, NKJV). As with the wine and bread, Jesus was presenting His very being, the human form of Himself, in order to present to His followers His inner self. No clothing in the manner of animal skins or even torn priestly robes could suffice. Instead, He gave His body as proof of His reality. Clothes might make a man, but surely not a God.

REACT

1. Would it have been more appropriate for the woman with an issue to have touched Jesus Himself? Why or why not?
2. How can clothing show our spiritual state?
3. Consider what the clothes you wear say about your relationship with God.

Lincoln E. Steed, Hagerstown, Maryland, U.S.A.
In Matthew 27 we read about the soldier’s attempt at irony. They thought it would be clever to dress Christ in royal robes to show just how much they disrespected Him and His followers. This mockery ultimately mocked God the Father, who sent His Son to “‘save His people from their sins’” (Matt. 1:21, NKJV).

“[Fashion and display] rob the world of the gospel of the Saviour’s love.”

Do we mock God by the clothes we wear? Do we say we believe in Him, but dress like the world? Ellen G. White wrote about how our outside clothing often reveals our heart. “In the professed Christian world enough is expended for jewels and needlessly expensive dress to feed all the hungry and to clothe the naked. Fashion and display absorb the means that might comfort the poor and the suffering. They rob the world of the gospel of the Saviour’s love.”¹

“Our clothing, while modest and simple, should be of good quality, of becoming colors, and suited for service. It should be chosen for durability rather than display. It should provide warmth and proper protection. . . .

“It should have the grace, the beauty, the appropriateness of natural simplicity. Christ has warned us against the pride of life, but not against its grace and natural beauty.”²

Ellen White also points out that “the most beautiful dress He bids us wear upon the soul. No outward adorning can compare in value or loveliness with that ‘meek and quiet spirit’ which in His sight is ‘of great price.’ 1 Peter 3:4.”³

Because He is our Creator and wants only the best for us, we can trust God to give us the clothing we need. Read Matthew 6:28–33.

Yes, we can confidently trust God. We don’t need to spend time and money worrying whether we display the height of fashion. We don’t need to make a mockery of the unique beauty that God has given each of us. Instead, we first should seek His kingdom!

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2. Ibid., pp. 288, 289.
3. Ibid., p. 289.

Stephanie Yamniuk, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
When reading Mark 5:25–32, it’s quite clear that clothes are simply coverings and no more. They are not instruments of healing. If that were the case, we could abolish all health care and simply issue holy clothing to heal all illnesses, plagues, and deformities. How easy would that be? No, Jesus clearly states that it is the woman’s faith that heals her, not His garments. She believed—faith. She touched—works. That is what Christianity is all about. So how can we develop the awesome faith this woman had?

First of all, understand that God is the Source of all spiritual and physical life (John 1:1–4). John is referring to “the life principle shared by all living things, the antithesis of death. John evidently thinks also of spiritual life and, more particularly, of everlasting life, to which the one who receives Christ and believes in Him is given access.”

Ask God to help you develop faith (Mark 9:17–24). Have you ever been like the father in these verses? He believed in Jesus. Yet when faced with a crisis, doubts arose. Still, he took these doubts to God. “Help my unbelief!” he begged of Christ. Like this father, we can receive only what we ask for. And one thing is certain. Jesus always will answer such prayers. Such pleas for faith are pleas to be healed both physically and spiritually. The outstretched hand of the hemorrhaging woman was a similar type of plea without which Christ cannot heal either physically or spiritually.

Accept God’s victory on your behalf and be thankful for it (1 Cor. 15:57). Too often, we take God’s promise of salvation for granted. However, 1 Corinthians 15:57 “presents the theme, or objective, of all the books of the Bible, namely to show that the restoration of man to favor with God and to his original condition of perfection and freedom from all the effects of sin, is brought about by the mighty power of God working through our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . For this triumph over the power of the adversary the redeemed will give praise and glory to God throughout eternity.”

Giving thanks involves remembering how God has led you in the past, sharing with others how He has helped you, and helping others through gifts of your time and talents.

2. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 813.

Angela Michelle Brydges, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
Maybe Jesus was quite fashionable back in His day to cause soldiers to cast lots for His garment. Or maybe it was the “myths” about this particular garment that made it so desirable. Perhaps this was the garment He had on when He healed the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:24–34). Or maybe that particular incident just caused people to think that His miraculous power had its secret source in the clothes He wore. Whatever the case may have been, one thing is sure: the garment was seamless, and Jesus had performed miracles while wearing it—and that carried a lot of value.

To wear His seamless robe is to do as He would do.

The garment being “seamless” means that the garment was woven as one piece of clothing. It had not been cut and altered to fit the person wearing it. To have a garment like that could only mean that it was custom made. Likewise, Jesus was “custom made” for our sinful condition. He came and wore that seamless robe so that we could trade our clothing of unrighteousness for His robe of righteousness.

Our robes of unrighteousness are full of holes: sexual immorality, idolatry, hatred, discord, jealousy, anger, selfish ambition, envy, dissensions, and more (see Galatians 5:19–21). However, Christ died so that we could wear His righteousness: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23, NIV). “The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured . . . declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear the burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise.”*

Jesus still wears that seamless garment and has much to share. But remember this: You cannot wear His seamless robe on top of the one you already have. To wear His seamless robe means to live His life; to pray as He prayed, to talk as He talked, to walk as He walked. To wear His seamless robe is to do as He would do.

**REACT**

How can you keep Jesus’ seamless robe from turning into filthy rags?

*The Desire of Ages, p. 755.*

Allen Shingai Mavundukure, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
CONCLUDE

It’s said that “clothes make the man.” For followers of Christ, though, life is about far more than outside image. The Christian life begins in the heart, in a connection to God that’s lived out in acts of service and love. Christians seek to glorify God through every aspect of life, from how they treat their bodies to how they develop their minds to how they treat others. Their ultimate focus is not on the temporary things of earth but on eternal matters—relationships, character, and wisdom. They witness to a greater reality than the flimsy, fleeting things of this world, and their witness is revealed in every aspect of their lives—from their countenances to their priorities to how they carry themselves.

CONSIDER

- Tallying up how much you spend each month and year on discretionary expenses, such as the latest fashions, entertainment, and charities, and considering what these tallies reveal about your priorities.
- Sketching your image of a typical Christian. Is he or she joyful? Fearful? Repressed? Depressed? Purposeful?
- Sorting through your closet and elsewhere for clothes or items that might be a greater blessing if you donated them to others.
- Studying how God provides for His creation in light of Matthew 6:28–34.
- Listing some of the nonmaterial blessings God has given you throughout your life.
- Brainstorming ways your church can beautify its community.

CONNECT


_The Desire of Ages_, chapter 36.

Clothed in Christ

“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature”

(Rom. 13:14, NIV).
“Oh, man, the strings are coming loose. The worn area is starting to turn into a hole. The hems of the legs and the pocket are ratty. Do I really have to replace these jeans?”

You know the kind of jeans I’m talking about, right? The kind that feels so comfy you forget you’re not in sweats. I’ve had this pair for a long time. We’ve traveled to many places together and had quite a few adventures. I’m sure you have a pair of jeans like this too.

**What are you in a rush to get home for?**

*Just go in and look.*

Succumbing to reality, I face the fact that I have to begin the inevitable search for the pair of jeans. As I’m driving home from spending a weekend with wonderful friends, I pull off the highway for gas. While filling the tank, I hear in my head, *Go to that store over there and look for jeans.* My response comes all too loudly in my head, *But you’re only halfway home. You have three more hours to go.* The argument, however, continues, *What are you in a rush to get home for? Just go in and look.* So I give in and realize I don’t need to rush home, and it would be good to walk around for a bit, wake up, and maybe find the pair of jeans.

Once inside the store, I scan the clearance racks first. I am scouring for the perfect color, perfect style, and just the right fit. After I’ve looked in all the places that elusive pair of jeans could be, I look in the empty dressing rooms.

_I slip off the old pair and slip on the new... _and... oh my. They are so comfy. They look good on me, and I barely know I switched jeans. I can’t believe it. I check the price tag. Great! They’re half off! Did I really find the pair of jeans? Of course, I purchased them and went on my way. Now, every time I wear those jeans, I think of how God provides and cares for our simple needs, how He wants us to and even helps us to replace old habits with better ones. I also think about how He cares for us better than we could ever care for ourselves. During this final week of studying the Bible’s clothing imagery, we’ll look at some special clothing metaphors from Scripture that reveal these promises of renewal and restoration.
“I’ve been redeemed, by the blood of the Lamb. I’ve been redeemed . . .” That song would echo through the halls at church nearly every Sabbath morning as my junior-aged peers and I would sing at the top of our lungs. Later, in the worship service, we would join the adults in singing “Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It.” Many of us grow up singing about being redeemed by Christ’s righteousness, and many songs tie in baptism and being clothed in Christ. But what does all the symbolism mean? And how does it apply to us?

Freed From Sin (Rom. 6:1–6; Eph. 4:22–24)

Baptism into Christ is one of the most public ways we demonstrate total devotion to God. Yet, the act of baptism does not physically do much except to get us wet. It is the symbolism of baptism—what it means—that makes the event so life changing. By going under the water, we symbolically die to our sinful selves and enter the “tomb” with Christ. As the pastor raises us out of the water, we are “resurrected” into life, into righteousness. God has redeemed us from sin. He has freed us from its death grip.

Ephesians 4:22–24 says that we are taught to become new people, “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (verse 24, NIV). If we continue to live out our own desires, we will self-destruct. Only through Christ’s righteousness can we be restored into the image of God, the way He created us to be. That restoration begins when we are baptized. “In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ” (Gal. 3:26, 27, NRSV).

Baptism Is Just the Beginning (Col. 3:1–12)

Clothing ourselves in Christ at baptism does not guarantee that we will automatically remain in Christ. We are reminded in Colossians 3 that we must daily choose to live as God’s people. Though our sinful natures will try to return, we must choose to focus on heavenly concepts and allow God to continue His work of renewing our characters and restoring our spirits. The temptations that will come to each of us will vary. However, Colossians 3 is quite specific in naming worldly traits that God despises: sexual sin, perversion, passion, lust, greed, anger, hatred, cursing, lying. Take a moment to consider how Satan tempts you. What worldly, evil
traits try to gain a foothold in your life? During times of temptation and weakness, how do you remain clothed in Christ?

**This World Is Not Our Home (2 Cor. 5:1–4)**

Some days it seems as though we are continually battling Satan and our sinful natures within, especially right after baptism. It can be discouraging to realize that though we have chosen to walk with God, it is sometimes difficult to do so. Sometimes it may seem that we have not progressed much since we were first clothed with His righteousness. But we are not called to change ourselves. That effort would be futile. Rather, we are commanded to seek God’s kingdom and His righteousness and everything else will be taken care of (Matt. 6:33).

In 2 Corinthians 5:1–4 we are reminded that God has prepared us for eternal life and “has given us his Spirit to guarantee it” (verse 5, GOD’S WORD). This world is not our home; it is a temporary existence that prepares us for our heavenly home. Each victory we achieve in Christ brings us closer into the likeness of God in preparation for living with Him eternally. In the good and the bad times, we must remember the promise in Philippians 1:6, which says “that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ” (NIV).

**Lo, He Comes (1 Cor. 15:49–55)**

Right up until the Second Coming, the clothing imagery continues to teach us about God and His love for us. We who are perishable will be clothed with the imperishable. We who are immortal will be clothed with immortality. Notice the passive tense in verse 54. We cannot dress ourselves in immortality. Only Christ can give us such clothing. Only He can make our bodies whole and fit for eternal life, as if sin had never made them crippled or diseased. And when He does so at His return, death will be “swallowed up in victory” (verse 54, NIV).

“Paul has no desire for death, which he compares to nakedness, or being unclothed. Rather, he wishes to be further clothed by being transformed to a new, immortal existence, which he compares to a building from God. This new state expresses God’s will for His people, and He has given the Spirit as a guarantee, or down payment, that assures us that such hope is not vain [see 2 Corinthians 5:1–5].”*

How wonderful it will be to sing in our “new state,” “I’ve been redeemed!”

**REACT**

1. Have you chosen to be clothed in Christ through baptism?
2. Are you allowing God to restore you into His image?
3. What Bible promises do you hold dear when you are faced with temptation?
4. What role do you play in being redeemed?


Amy Schrader Meythaler, Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.
‘Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments’ (verse 3). Thus sinners appear before the enemy who by his masterly, deceptive power has led them away from allegiance to God. With garments of sin and shame the enemy clothes those who have been overpowered by his temptations, and then he declares that it is unfair for Christ to be their Light, their Defender. . . . Hear the words of Jesus: . . . ‘I will blot out his transgressions. I will cover his sins. . . .”

“The filthy garments are removed; for Christ says, ‘I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee’ (verse 4). The iniquity is transferred to the innocent, the pure, the holy Son of God; and man, all undeserving, stands before the Lord cleansed from all unrighteousness, and clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ. Oh, what a change of raiment is this!”

“When Satan tells you that the Lord will not regard you with favor, because you have sinned, say, ‘Jesus gave His life for me. He suffered a cruel death that He might enable me to resist temptation. I know that He loves me, notwithstanding my imperfection. I rest in His love. God has accepted His perfection in my behalf. He is my righteousness, and I trust in His merits. He takes away my sin-stained garments, and clothes me with the robe of His righteousness. Clothed with this garment, I stand before the Father justified.’”

“As we approach God in Christ’s name, . . . we are clothed with His priestly vestments. The Saviour draws us close to His side, encircling us with His human arm, while with His divine arm He grasps the throne of the Infinite.”

It is no wonder the prophet exclaimed, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, / My soul shall be joyful in my God; / For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, / He has covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10, NKJV). May our voices be lifted up in similar exclamations, for no matter how big or small we are, Christ’s raiment fits all!

**REACT**

Think of ways to remind yourself to ask Christ to dress you today.

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3. Ibid.
It’s so hard to give up our ideas of how things should be and accept God’s ideas for how to live our lives. It’s hard to give up our thoughts and accept God’s, to put on the clothing He gives us—the clothing of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (Col. 3:12). God’s plan doesn’t always make perfect sense at the time. But the Bible is packed with stories of people who received much more than they had bargained for, in a good way!

You can trust Him with today and tomorrow, even all of your yesterdays!

Ruth was a Moabite. But when her Jewish husband passed away, she stayed with her mother-in-law and pledged to follow Naomi’s God. As a result, God led her to a new life, and she eventually became the great-grandmother of King David, and much further down the family tree, a relative of Jesus Himself!

When they were captives, Daniel and his friends asked to eat only healthful meals that honored God. They could not have expected the amazing results of their decision to follow God’s principles. Did it make sense to quibble over food when they were prisoners? Not really. But God’s way was once again the best way.

In John 5, Jesus asks a crippled man if he wants to get well. The man answers that no one will help him to the water. He had the same shortsighted vision that many of us do. Jesus is standing beside him, and he is still worried about his methods of saving himself! Christ, however, took mercy on him and healed him.

Mary and Martha were upset when Jesus didn’t follow the plans they thought He should (John 11). They wanted Him nearby to cry with them over the loss of their brother. But Jesus’ plans were bigger and better than that! He miraculously returned their brother to life and proved God’s power to many people that day.

When we give up our own habits and schemes and accept God’s blanket of righteousness, we receive the salvation that we never could have earned, along with the blessings of God’s better judgment. He knows the beginning from the end. You can trust Him with today and tomorrow, even all of your yesterdays! Far greater than earthly perks is the reality that God’s way brings life—eternal, brilliant, perfect life.
Some people think that if they wear a famous label they’ll be popular. But as a bargain shopper, I want to share with you the deal Jesus died to give us! While designer pants may look spiffy for a time, we should be ecstatic that the clothes He offers us will never become ragged or out of style. Forget price tags. When we accept His clothing, we receive these benefits:

- We become children of Christ (Gal. 3:26–29). While it’s tempting to think we’re better than others when we wear clothes from heaven, we are instead united with our brothers and sisters in Him as we become His children.

- We put on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:13–18). These clothes are for protection. We are instructed to put on the whole armor of God. We can’t refuse to wear the helmet because it’s old-fashioned. We need all parts of the armor to fight against the enemy.

- We put on the new person (Eph. 4:22–24). We must take off our filthy rags that appear so beautiful to earthly eyes and accept the spotless, white robe Jesus offers us. We must fully rely on Him for salvation instead of trying to earn it ourselves. This is how we become more and more like Him. In this we find the true meaning of “dressing for success.”

In order to gain these benefits, we must accept that it is Christ’s righteousness that is of value. The blessings we receive aren’t because of who we are or what we’ve done, but because of who He is and what He has done.

The key to putting on Christ’s righteousness is to “consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” (Phil. 3:8, 9, NIV). When those name-brand clothes fade and tear, we will continue to be renewed through Christ’s power as we wear the clothes He gives us. Instead of determining our worth by what we wear on these earthly bodies, we must look to Christ to clothe us in garments that will truly last.

**REACT**

What are some of the blessings that come with being clothed in Christ?

Rachel Alleman, El Dorado, Kansas, U.S.A.
There were times in my life when I read the Bible, prayed, did something good for another person, fasted, and kept the Sabbath faithfully, all the time thinking that perhaps Jesus would take out His points book with my name on it and give me ten, fifteen, twenty, or even one hundred points for performing these tasks. Yet as the years have passed by, I have realized it is never my work that makes me acceptable in His sight, but His grace and mercy.

Christ’s righteousness is the robe He freely puts on us, even though we don’t deserve it. His purity and goodness cover all of our sinfulness. There is nothing we can do to earn His righteousness or His favor. He freely gives it. The only action on our part is to accept this robe and have faith that He has taken our sins and cast them into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19).

It’s not about what we do or don’t do. It’s about keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus. God desires to give us abundant lives. He makes that possible through Christ’s death. By faith, we accept His death on our behalf and allow the Holy Spirit to transform our lives. Daily, He will cleanse our hearts and give us the power we need to be conquerors in this sinful world. If we sin, there is nothing we can do on our own that will grant us our Father’s forgiveness. When we ask Him for forgiveness, He will be “faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NKJV).

Why would Jesus do that for us? I ask myself this question a lot, and each time I do, I conclude that it’s because He loves us and no one else on earth loves us as much as He does. So why not accept His righteousness? Why not accept His love? Today, we can breathe the air of freedom knowing that He clothes us with His righteousness, gives us the power we need to overcome, and will complete the work He started in us when we accepted Him as our Savior. It’s not about the points I used to think we got. Instead, it’s about constantly going to Jesus and accepting His transforming work in our daily lives.

REACT
Think about Christ’s righteousness and what it means to your life.
CONCLUDE

All false religions have one thing in common—they promote the idea that people are capable of saving themselves. By appeasing the gods, carrying out prescribed rituals, or making sure that their good deeds outweigh the bad, millions are attempting to become their own saviors. Only Christianity admits our hopelessness when it comes to paying the price of sin. By accepting Jesus as our Savior and allowing Him to live in us, we have not only the assurance of salvation but also the power to reflect His character.

CONSIDER

• Writing the phrase CLOTHED IN CHRIST vertically. Then write words or phrases that start with each letter and describe a person who has “put on Christ.” For example,
  ▪ Concerned about others
  ▪ Loves God, not the world
• Singing the words to “Cover With His Life,” hymn no. 412 in The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal. As you sing the song (using the tune shown or making up your own), reaffirm your acceptance of God’s offer to cover you with His righteousness.
• Choosing two or three sins or weaknesses that you’d like God to remove from your life. With white correction fluid or permanent markers, write each on a small stone. Walk along a river or beach, praying about each change you want Him to bring about. Toss the stones into the water, symbolizing God’s willingness to “cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic. 7:19, NKJV). When you are done, thank Him for His promise to cover you with His robe of righteousness.
• Explaining to a child what it means to be clothed in Christ.
• Identifying a new habit that would help keep your mind focused on God and protected from the influence of the world. Over the next 21 days, practice the new habit, journaling your progress.

CONNECT


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Renee Coffee, Gobles, Michigan, U.S.A.
Worship

If you have not received a copy of CQ for third quarter 2011, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1 Worship in Genesis: Two Classes of Worshipers


Memory Text: “ ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.’ And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!’ ” (Genesis 28:16, 17, NKJV).

It has been said that, as human beings, we need to worship something. What we worship . . . well, that is a different matter, though it is one fraught with exceedingly important consequences, especially in the last days, when two groups of worshipers are made manifest: those who worship the Creator and those who worship the beast and his image.

Yet, the seeds for that contrast can be seen early on in the Bible. In the story of Cain and Abel, two kinds of worshipers appear, one worshiping the true God as He is supposed to be worshiped and one engaging in a false kind of worship. One is acceptable, one is not, and that is because one is based on salvation by faith and the other, as are all false forms of worship, is based on works. It is a motif that will appear again and again throughout the Bible. One type of worship is focused solely on God, on His power and glory and grace, the other on humanity and on self.

Lesson 2 Worship and the Exodus: Understanding Who God Is


Memory Text: “ ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me’ ” (Exodus 20:2, 3, NKJV).

In speaking to the woman at the well, Jesus said, “ ‘You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews’ ” (John 4:22, NKJV). Imagine, worshiping what you do not know.
In a sense, that is what almost all the world has done, or perhaps is doing now—worshiping what they do not know. When you see someone bowing down and worshiping a block of stone, thinking it will answer their prayers, you are seeing folk worshiping what they do not know. That is, they are worshiping what they think can bring them salvation but cannot. In a more modern context, people who make gods out of power, money, fame, and self are, likewise, worshiping what they do not know. They are worshiping that which cannot save them.

In the immediate Christian context, the question for us could be, do we know what we are worshiping? Do we know the Lord whom we praise and honor with our mouths? Who is He? What is His name? What is He like?

This week we will look at early accounts of the children of Israel and how their encounters with the Lord reveal to us more about the nature and the character of the God we profess to serve and worship. After all, what sense does it make to worship what we do not know?