

TUESDAY, MARCH 20

COLOSSIANS 3:5-11

We had a baptism on Easter at our church a few years ago. At the end of the service, as the band continued to play, I asked if anyone who hadn't planned to be baptized wanted to take the opportunity to be baptized. A friend, who strongly identified as agnostic when I met him a year earlier, unexpectedly made his way to the front and told me he was ready to be baptized. I was thrilled during that conversation. He shared that living for himself wasn't working anymore, and he was ready for something new. He wanted to follow Jesus. We made our way to the horse trough which served as our baptistry and, without hesitation, and to everyone's shock, my friend took off his shirt and pants, leaving him standing in just his boxer briefs.

That story is still a strange story to tell. I have a hard time imagining that it would fly in our modern churches for people to rip their clothes off for baptism on a regular basis: it would probably make the news for all the wrong reasons, but this is exactly what Paul had in mind as he wrote these words in Colossians 3.

In the first century, those being baptized would remove their clothes before being immersed in the water. After coming up out of the water, they would receive a new set of white clothes. This probably wasn't very practical for people who were soaking wet, but it did have incredible significance. The old life was dead and a new life was found, put on, and displayed for everyone to see.

Sexual immorality, lust, evil desires, greed, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language all describe the clothes that need to be put out with the trash. Nobody exercises, takes a shower, and then puts back on the same sweaty gym clothes before walking back into the office. Brand new life shouldn't be lived with old clothes.

My friend didn't have a change of clothes, which is why he disrobed before being baptized. He did receive a new spiritual outfit that day, though. You and I also have been given the gift of Christ, who clothes us with his grace, mercy, righteousness, and holiness.

What are some earthly desires or actions that you need to remove from your life?