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Magnificent Makeover

Friday, October 28, 2011 | Written by Laura Z. Sowers

One of my favorite guilty pleasures is watching the show *What Not to Wear*. For the uninitiated, the premise is that someone is nominated for a head-to-toe makeover that requires throwing out all their old clothes and going on a shopping extravaganza in New York City to buy a new wardrobe. So far so good. But there's a catch: all this comes with a large dose of humiliation, shopping rules that must be followed, and the obvious implication that they are a blight on the landscape and need to *change*.

For two weeks before this person even knows what's going on, she is filmed going about her fashion-train-wreck life wearing her muffin-top mom jeans and clogs from the '80s to the office, or dropping off her mortified child at school while wearing her stilettos, halter-top, and bigger-than-Dallas hair. Then, she is "surprised" by a group of knowing and pitying friends ("I just want her to look on the outside, the way she is on the inside,") Stacey and Clinton (the style gurus) and the film crew spring the good news that the last two weeks will be shown on national TV. To offset these otherwise prosecutable actions, they hand her a card loaded with \$5,000, throw away all her current clothes, and send her to New York like a lamb to the slaughter.

From the comfort of my family room, in my tee shirt and "happy pants" (any pants without a zipper), I get to watch in self-righteous horror as these clueless fashion disasters are brought to see the light of good taste, sturdy bras, and expensive shoes. Yet invariably in the first store they enter, they head straight for the halter-tops, mom jeans, and stilettos. *What's up with that?* I shake my head in delighted disgust.

Funny thing. This week I changed out my closet from summer to fall clothes. I took all the summer stuff and put them on the guest room bed, and brought all my fall clothes and put them on my bed. When I stood back from the scene I realized I had about a dozen very similar, if not identical sweaters in a variety of colors, turtlenecks and shirts in a stunning array of browns, grays, and blacks, and then there were the jeans. There were black jeans, dark-wash jeans, light denim jeans, white jeans, tan jeans, skinny jeans, flared jeans, straight jeans, and classic jeans. But to offset this snooze of a wardrobe, there were three skirts—that's it—three—and two were brown. I could almost hear Stacey behind me exclaiming, "Shut the front door!"

I admire style and I know it when I see it. In the late 90s, Craig and I went to Europe. In Paris, I noticed something remarkable--the women really were stunning just as I'd always heard. They had that effortless Audrey Hepburn look that you immediately recognize as the product of hours of behind-the-scenes facials, expensive haircuts, and a wardrobe of the absolute best of the basics. They wore high heels, expensive but simple jewelry, and carried purses probably worth more than my entire wardrobe. They glided with an air of confidence. Oh, and they were skinny.

In fairness to me--my lifestyle pretty much matches up with a jeans and sweaters wardrobe, but it forced me to realize I'm just like the rest of them--in a bit of a style rut and resistant to change. For most people, change is difficult. We say we like it, but what we mean is we like nice, painless change that makes things effortlessly better. If someone comes in and wants us to throw away our parachute pants, well, that's a different story.

If we struggle this much with superficial change, it's no wonder we wrestle with changing the deep workings of our inner man (or woman). Truthfully, we simply can't do it without God. Ironically, God, the Agent of spiritual change is Himself changeless: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Yet our relationship with Him requires no less than drastic change from us from the very beginning.

John the Baptist wasn't one to sugarcoat the message. He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt 3:2). By this he meant we must change our mind about our wrong behaviors and regret our sins. This is not change for the sake of change; it is vital to our current and future well-being. If we don't recognize our sinful condition, why in the world would we even need a Savior?

Throughout the Bible we find accounts of individuals who had a variety of obstacles that caused them to put off, deny their need, and refuse change.

1. **It's Not Convenient.**

Felix was a Roman governor--a man of wealth and position. Through a chain of God-designed circumstances, Paul appeared before Felix to be judged for talking to the Jews about Jesus. Paul, undaunted, used the opportunity to witness to Felix. Felix was intrigued, but when he realized his acceptance meant a drastic change in his sinful lifestyle, he uttered these words: "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you" (Acts 24:23). There is no indication that a more convenient time ever came. He may have put off the decision that would change both his life and his eternal destination.

2. **I Don't Understand.**

Sometimes we just don't get it. We wonder: What is the true message of the Bible? What does it mean? How does it affect me? What do I have to do?

In the book of Acts, we find Philip directed by an angel of the Lord to go down to Gaza to be a divine tutor. There he found a man of Ethiopia who was sitting in his chariot reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip didn't wait to be asked, rather, he asked the man: "Do you understand what you are

reading?" (Acts 8:30). To which the man replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" The door was opened and Philip began "...preaching Jesus to him" (v.34).

Whether we are the one seeking answers, or the one called to direct others to the answer, these seeking moments are rare and should never be ignored.

3. **I Don't Want to Give Up _____.**

I feel such fondness for the rich young ruler spoken of in Luke 18:18-23. He sounds like a wonderful young man who tried his best to keep the commandments and live a good life. Yet something in his soul told him it wasn't enough. So he went directly to Jesus and asked, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk. 18:18). Even the question suggested a realization that his good actions were not enough, because an inheritance by its very nature is not earned.

When Jesus told him to sell all he owned, give it to the poor, and follow Him, the young man was not willing to make that change. "...he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich" (Acts 18:23). Jesus saw the self-righteousness and the true love of his heart. He did not want to give up his wealth. I hope this "good" man thought about it for a while, changed his heart and mind, and followed the "good Teacher."

I think it's interesting that invariably the people on *What Not to Wear* are thrilled with the changes once they see the big picture. Often they are quick to talk about the inward changes the outward changes have inspired. I'm delighted when I see a woman with a renewed respect and understanding of her own value. Weren't we raised on the idea of the lovely but deprived young girl who is liberated by a sparkling ball gown, glass slippers, and new hairdo?

When we become a believer, our makeover is far more long lasting and meaningful. We stand before the King's closet and put on the love, peace, security, and righteousness of Jesus Christ. These inward changes transform everything about our outward lives. We reflect the image of our Savior, always in style, forever lovely, and regarded as beautiful and holy in the eyes of God. Nice makeover.