
Back to School Clothes

**An article from the Cathedral Times
by the Rev. Nate Huddleston**

I needed the new pair of Bo Jackson Nike Cross Trainers and an ocean blue polo shirt to match. It was the only way I was going to step through the doors of University Park Elementary school that year. With a desperate longing to fit it and stand out all at the same time, my mother took me back to school shopping. Trying to find things that would fit me in the present moment, while hoping that they would last the year, was always at the heart of my mother's struggle. But after years of practice, she knew what the necessities were. Amongst all the neon Hypercolor shirts and shorts that looked like a Jackson Pollock painting, there always a few staples. A blue button-down shirt, a pair of khaki shorts that would go with anything, and tube socks that made my Bo Jacksons fit perfectly.

As many of us prepare to go "back to school," our shopping lists might look a little different this year. Instead of new Nike Air Maxes, it might be new LL Bean house shoes. New pencils have been traded in for new webcams and finding the perfect Zoom backdrop has replaced Topps baseball card folders. In the midst of redefining what going back to school means, it becomes paramount for us to hold on to and remember what it means to come back to Christ as well. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to wear a wardrobe that is rooted in love.

You might ask what this Jesus-centered wardrobe looks like or the list sent out by the school. It looks a little different than shoes and pencils. Speaking to the Colossians, Paul gives us a back to school wardrobe and even gives us clues on how to wear it, saying "So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it" —Colossians 3:12-14 (MSG).

Paul encourages us to wear love. To approach every interaction—whether it be through a computer screen, checking out at Publix, or just walking through Chastain Park—with the clothing of our soul draped in sacrificial love. A love that permeates who we are and who Jesus has called us to be. We must be able to put on shirts dyed with compassion, shoes cobbled with humility, and jackets weaved with kindness so that love becomes the garment for every occasion. This is the back to school wardrobe that is at the heart of our life in Christ but more importantly our life in community.

As you venture back to schools, or to offices, or to dining room tables, remember that your wardrobe is more than just your clothes. Remember to wear love and if the opportunity presents it, to take off your jacket and clothe someone else who needs the warmth of Christ in their own life.