

## INTRODUCTION

There are plenty of books and seminars about how to dress for success in the business world. It seems everyone is interested in learning how to succeed. However, I was surprised to learn at the University of Michigan School of Business you can take a course entitled "Failure 101." It's taught by Dr. Jack Matson. It's a tongue-in-cheek exposé of many of the get-rich schemes in the business world. But Dr. Matson is serious, because he believes nobody can really succeed in business until they have learned to deal with failure. His class is always full, and as he introduces the course he tells the students their goal for the class is to make sure they fail it!

One of his sections is on how to "dress for failure." Students actually do role playing for job interviews following certain suggestions Dr. Matson guarantees will cause them to fail to be hired:

1. Forget about fixing your hair—natural is nice.
2. Lick your finger and dig them into a bag of crumbled Oreo cookies—clean fingernails are overrated.
3. Chew three pieces of Double Bubble chewing—loudly, blowing bubbles regularly.
4. Eat two raw garlic cloves that morning—they will remember you.
5. Splash on excessive amounts of perfume or cologne—more is better.
6. Clothes? Who cares? After all, clothes don't matter!

Americans are really obsessed with how people dress. Every year there are dozens of "best-dressed" and "worst-dressed" lists published. Just recently, *Esquire Magazine* published their list of the "Ten Worst Dressed Men" for 2004. They are: (1) Vin Diesel; (2) Dion Sanders; (3) Kid Rock; (4) Will Ferrell and places five through ten went to: Anyone associated with NASCAR!

Can you really dress for success? It all depends on your definition of success. If success to you is working harder and harder to advance farther and farther in your career so you can buy more and more toys—then, yes, the way you dress will affect that. The Bible's definition of success is this: finding and following God's will. If that's the kind of success you're looking for, this passage of scripture addresses how you should dress. Let's look at I Peter 5:1-6:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

You have do dress appropriately to gain access to certain places. For instance, the sign, "No shoes, no shirt, no service" means you've got to have shoes and a shirt to get food in a restaurant. Or a fine dining establishment may require jackets for men. The same is true spiritually. If you

want to gain access to God’s best you’ve got to dress correctly. There are two kinds of spiritual clothes we will discuss in this message.

## **1. SOME ARE CHOSEN TO WEAR THE MANTLE OF LEADERSHIP**

In verse one Peter addresses leaders: “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder.” The word elder here doesn’t mean “old person.” It’s the word *presbuteros*, which was a word used for church leaders. Peter was an Apostle, but he also identified himself as an elder. These four verses are directed toward these leaders.

There is no hierarchy among Christians; we are all equal in Christ. But throughout history, God has always called out leaders from among His people. When he needed someone to lead his children out of bondage in Egypt, He chose Moses. When He needed someone to defeat the Philistines, He called out a shepherd boy named David. When He needed someone to build the temple, He called Solomon. When He needed someone to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, He called Nehemiah. When He needed someone to plant churches throughout the Roman Empire, He called Paul. To this day, God is still calling out individuals to provide leadership to His people.

The picture of wearing a mantle, or cloak, of leadership comes from the Old Testament. The prophets of Israel wore a special outer garment called a mantle. It served to identify them as a servant of the Lord. Elijah was God’s prophet and a great leader—but he is a prime example of how leaders aren’t perfect. Elijah experienced discouragement and depression. He became so despondent at one time that he sat under a tree and asked God to end his life. Instead God told him he needed someone to help him with the work. The Bible says, “So he departed from there and found Elisha who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen...then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him...then Elisha arose and followed Elijah and became his servant.” (I Kings 19:19, 21)

Peter issues a powerful challenge to those of us who have been given the mantle of leadership. The mantle of leadership is not something to be coveted or sought. God gives it to those He has called. These words are a personal challenge to me—and they should be seriously considered by everyone who is a leader in our church. We have hundreds of spiritual leaders in our church. These include all our staff and employees, deacons, Bible Study teachers, Care group leaders, committee members...in other words if you serve in some area of responsibility in the church you wear the mantle of leadership.

If God has placed a mantle of spiritual leadership on your shoulders, you should wear it conscientiously. My friends who serve as law enforcement officers often tell me one of the first things they learn is that when they wear the uniform they have to observe certain standards. They must uphold the law and never do anything that would bring shame or disgrace upon their uniform and what it represents. The same is true of the mantle of spiritual leadership. Peter writes that spiritual leaders must display two important characteristics:

### **(1) Leaders must have servant hearts**

In verse two Peter writes that church leaders must be “eager to serve; not lording it over those

entrusted to you." We all know of churches that have experienced division and turmoil due to disagreement among the leaders. Sometimes pastors resign or are fired over what is called "leadership differences." That's a nice sounding word for a power struggle in which either the pastor or deacons or both refused to have a servant's heart. Satan loves to split churches.

I've been around pastors long enough to know many possess an ego the size of Texas. And in over thirty years of ministry, I know I haven't always displayed a servant's heart. I sometimes forget I can't fix people—only God can.

I heard about one pastor who finally got so fed up he quit and became a mortician. Another pastor was speaking to him after he'd been working at the funeral home for several months. He asked him why he moved from the pastorate to being a funeral director. He said, "I was so frustrated as a pastor. I spent three years trying to straighten out John Jones who was an alcoholic, but he's still drinking. I spent six months trying to straighten out George and Mary who were having marriage problems and they still got a divorce. I spent two years trying to straighten out Bill with his drug problem, but he's still addicted. Now in this job at the funeral home, when I straighten 'em out they STAY straight!"

Our job as leaders is not to straighten people out—only Jesus can do that. Our job is to serve them in Jesus' name. It really is true that Green Acres is a unique church. Everywhere I go people say, "There's not another church in America like Green Acres." I always agree and tell them it's just a "God thing." One of the greatest things about our church is there is a spirit of service among the leaders. A few weeks ago when we hosted the new missionaries and the IMB staff and trustees, our church rolled out the red carpet. I heard dozens of comments from our guests that said our church did a phenomenal job of hosting them. This November, over a thousand church leaders from all across the South will come to Tyler to attend a conference we're offering entitled "The Full Service Church." We need hundreds of you to demonstrate this servant attitude

## **(2) Leaders must have shepherd hearts**

In verse two Peter says church leaders must also "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing,"

A good shepherd concentrates on three things. He (1) leads the flock; (2) feeds the flock; (3) protects the flock. That's basically my job description. I believe one day I will give an account to the Lord for how faithful I was to lead, feed, and protect Green Acres. After all, notice in verse 2 that Peter says it is God's flock. This isn't my church or your church—it's God's church. He's the Chief Shepherd, we're just assistant shepherds.

Good shepherds lead God's flock. But even leaders make mistakes. I have a pastor friend who was conducting a funeral for a military veteran in his church. The service was held in another church, and my friend had never been there before. At the end of the service, a special group of retired veterans were to join the pastor at the casket; then the pastor would lead this group out the side door. Everything went according to the plan. The men joined him in front of the casket and they did a right face and started to exit. My friend opened the side door and they all walked through—only to discover he had led them into a closet! He said the people attending the funeral

couldn't hold in their laughter as they all backed out and proceeded out the proper door. Even good leaders sometimes make mistakes—but they just back up and try again!

Good shepherds also feed God's flock—our food is the Word of God. The reason I teach through the Bible verse by verse is because I believe it is like nutritious food that builds healthy Christians. That's why I try to keep my teaching simple—I realize my job is to feed spiritual sheep, not spiritual giraffes, so I try to put the food down where even the little lambs can enjoy it. When you teach your Sunday Morning Bible Study class, you're feeding a part of the flock, too. Also a good shepherd protects God's flock. That means we care for the people in our church when they are hurting. Our model is the Chief Shepherd. This is how He cares for us: "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the Lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." (Isaiah 40:11) If God has placed a mantle of spiritual leadership on your shoulders, serve faithfully.

## **2. ALL ARE CALLED TO WEAR THE CLOAK OF HUMILITY**

In verse five we find the formula for a well-dressed Christian, "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another." The Greek word for humility is *tapeinoo* which literally means "to level a hill or mountain." Sometimes an angry person will say about someone, "I'm going to cut him down to size." Humility is cutting yourself down to size until you aren't "looking down at anyone." It is living a life with no protruding arrogance or ego.

This phrase "clothe yourself with humility" comes from an actual cloak a servant would wear. Whenever a servant wore this special cloak, it identified them as being at the service of the guests of their master. It was like wearing a uniform.

Whenever you go to a restaurant, how do you identify the servers? You look for someone wearing a uniform. Or if you came over to my house for supper and you saw me put on an apron, it would be an indication I was going to serve you. In the same way, humility is not a passive quality. It's an active choice—a demonstration—just like putting on an apron.

Most Americans are obsessed with wearing certain logos—whether it's Polo, DKNY or Burberry, we love the logos. You might say we are logos gringos (sorry). But the humility garment isn't a popular label. You'll never see it in *GQ* or *In Style*. Humility is a tough garment to squeeze into because it's a natural part of our spiritual DNA to be proud rather than humble.

Humility goes against our self-centered nature. Deep down inside we all embrace the sentiment expressed in the song from the 1970s by Mac Davis: Oh Lord, but it's hard to be humble, When you're perfect in every way. I can't stand to look in the mirror, 'Cause I get better lookin' each day. To know me is to love me, I must be a heck of a man. Oh Lord, it's so hard to be humble, But I'm doin' the best that I can. Pride is the opposite of humility, and it is our natural inclination. But the Bible warns that:

### **(1) GOD RESISTS THOSE WHO ARE PROUD**

In verse six Peter writes, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Let me paraphrase that verse in football lingo for all the Biblically challenged guys out there, "In the

game of life, you're carrying the ball on a toss sweep, if you run with pride, God is a 400-pound Linebacker who's gonna stuff you behind the line of scrimmage—every time.

But if you run with humility toward others, God is a 400-pound Pulling Guard who's gonna block for you—cleaning the plow of anyone between you and the Goal. So, how're you gonna run?"

If you don't put on the garment of humility, then your pride is left uncovered. Pride is like your skin—you don't have to put it on, it's part of your original equipment. The Bible is full of warnings about how pride will lead to your failure.

Here's a simple acrostic to show you downward steps of pride. First there is a powerful desire for **POSITION**—and that position is top dog. A favorite adage in the business world is: Unless you're the front dog, the scenery never changes. Numero Uno is the only coveted position in America. You never hear sports fans screaming, "We're number two!"

The second step in pride is **RANK**. We are all conscious of our rank, and everybody else's rank, and we're trying to pass them. The great conductor, Leonard Bernstein, was once commenting on different musical instruments and he said: "The most difficult instrument to play is second fiddle. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find one who plays second violin with enthusiasm, or second French horn, or second flute, now that's a problem. And if no one plays second, we have no harmony."

**I** stands for "I must be the center." The center of the word pride just happens to be the letter "I"—what a coincidence! "I" always wants to be the center of attention. The philosophers Aristotle and Ptolemy proposed the earth was the center of the universe and the sun and stars orbited around us. This was the belief for almost 2,000 years and was the official position of the Catholic Church. So, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Nicolai Copernicus (and later Galileo) proposed the sun was the center of our solar system, it was considered blasphemy. Have you made the same discovery, or do think and act as if you are the center of your own little universe? Do your evaluate everything and everyone else as based upon what "I think," "I feel," or "I want?"

The next letter in pride is for **DESTRUCTION**. The Bible says in Proverbs 16:18 says: "Pride goes before destruction; and a haughty spirit before a fall." The only place pride doesn't go before destruction is in the dictionary. According to Isaiah 14, Satan was once a beautiful angel named Lucifer. He "fell" because he said, "I will ascend and make my throne on high (position); I will be like the most high (rank). I will become #1—notice how many "I's?" he used? But God kicked him out—pride always leads to destruction. Finally, there is **EMBARRASSMENT**. Remember who is writing this letter: the big, boasting, fisherman Peter. He was the one who said, "These others may deny you, but I never will!" And before the rooster crowed in the next sunrise Peter denied Jesus three times! The Bible says after Peter denied Jesus the third time, Peter looked across the courtyard and saw the soldiers taking Jesus away. The Bible says Jesus "fixed his eyes" on Peter—and Peter ran out and wept bitterly. That's what pride leads to every time.

But on a positive note, here's why you should put on the garment of humility:

## (2) GOD REWARDS THOSE WHO ARE HUMBLE

In verse six we read: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." Humility is not becoming a doormat and letting people walk over you. When you humble yourself under God's hand, nobody will walk over you. Self-promotion is a formula for failure, but wearing the garment of humility means you will be successful in God's eyes. And He has promised to promote you—to lift you up.

To me, the best passage of scripture in all the Bible describing humility is found in Philippians 2. It says, "Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage.... Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that: crucifixion. Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings will bow in worship before Jesus..." (Philippians 2:3-10, *The Message*)

Zig Ziglar has written a best-selling book entitled *See You at the Top*. I like Zig because although he is an energetic, positive thinking, motivator, he's basically a humble guy. Zig is a committed Christian who uses his business success as a platform to tell men and women about Jesus Christ. When you listen to him speak you get the impression he is a man who is brimming with self-confidence, but he's a humble man.

A couple of years ago I had the privilege of playing golf with him when he was here in Tyler. Zig is a good golfer and he takes it seriously. As we played we were talking about how positive thinking is nothing more than faith with work clothes on. When we came to hole #6, a par three, he hit his tee shot into a bunker. He entered the sand and swung at his ball, only to see it advance about three feet and remain in the bunker. At that moment he shouted, "Zig, you idiot!" I laughed at him and said, "Zig, that doesn't sound like positive thinking to me! Come on, where's that confidence you talk about?" Without missing a beat, he said, "Oh I'm positive—I'm positive that I'm an idiot at sand shots!" And after he hit the next shot on the green he said, "David, I'll tell you something about confidence, I have about as much confidence in Zig Ziglar as I do the devil himself. All my confidence is in Christ."

So, if you want to make it to the top, you have to humble yourself. Do you understand what a paradox is? (It's not two dentists). A paradox is a statement that seems to be contradictory. The Christian life is full of paradoxes—you've got to die to live, you've got to give to receive, you've got to surrender to win...get the idea? But one of the most powerful paradoxes of all involves humility: The way down is up; and the way up is down. If you spend all your life pushing to get to the top you'll end up at the bottom; but if you lay down your life in humility, you'll end up at the top. To state it another way: The way down (failure) is up (pride); and the way up (success) is down (humility). That means if you're spending all your time climbing the ladder of success, in God's economy, you'll end up at the bottom of the ladder; but if you spend your life serving

others in humility, God will take you right to the top. Jesus said it this way in Luke 14:11, “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11)

You may be thinking, “Great! I want to be exalted! Let me put on that jacket if it means I’ll make it to the top.” Not so fast. Or some of you who are consistently wearing the cloak of humility may sometimes wonder, “Well, I’ve sincerely tried to live a humble life, and I’m not successful like Zig Ziglar—it doesn’t seem God has promoted me. When will it happen?” Look at the last two words in verse six: in due time. Some, God promotes here, and others, He passes out the promotions later. According to verse four Jesus will pass out some crowns when He appears—that means when He comes. Jesus says, “I’ll meet you at the Top.” I like His top.

All the Nobel prizes, Oscars, Emmy’s, Medals of Honor, and Best Dressed Lists will fade into nothingness, but the reward of Jesus is an unfading crown of glory.

## OUTLINE

### 1. SOME ARE CHOSEN TO WEAR THE MANTLE OF LEADERSHIP

- (1) Leaders must have servant hearts
- (2) Leaders must have shepherd hearts

"He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the Lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." *Isaiah 40:11*

### 2. ALL ARE CALLED TO WEAR THE CLOAK OF HUMILITY

- (1) God resists those who are proud

**P**osition

**R**ank

**I** must be the center

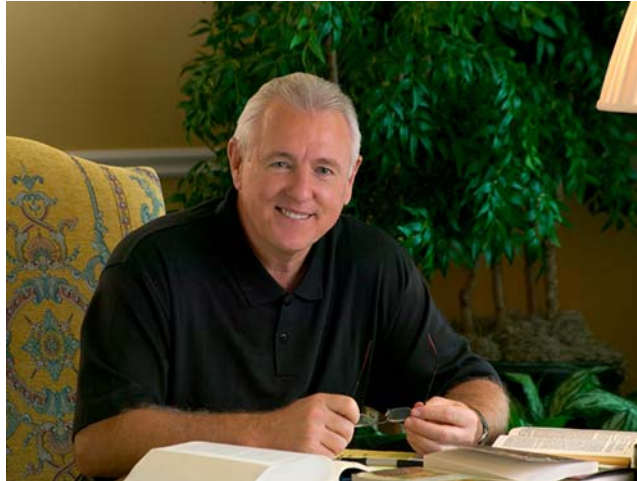
**D**estruction

**E**mbarrassment

- (2) God rewards those who are humble

"A man's pride brings him low; but a man of lowly spirit gains honor." *Proverbs 29:23*





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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes