

Wear Something Baggy

Doug Brendel

My stomach is way too big. Please don't look at it.

I don't want to wear just any shirt. I want to wear one that fools you into thinking I've got rigid abdominal muscles. Or at least it doesn't draw any undue attention to ... you know ... *that*. Certainly it doesn't show you what's really underneath.

I wear a certain black wool suit that turns my wife's head.

"You look great," she says.

What she means is, I look better covered up in a certain way.

We'd love to be sexy, but our bodies dangle and droop. So we cover up. We package ourselves. We wear disguises.

We look in the mirror, smoothing that dress or tugging on that collar, and tell ourselves we look good. We'll get away with it.

A woman's eyes are too small, but mascara and eye shadow can make them look bigger. A man's bald spot needs artful combing over. The list goes on: padded bra; power tie; dark glasses.

I don't want to think about it. I don't want to see the truth about myself. So I learn to look in the mirror and tell myself a different story. Disguised artfully enough, and consistently enough, I'm able to maintain the self-deceit. Day after day, year after year, we so faithfully apply ourselves to the task of looking good that we rarely think about it consciously.

But with my kids asleep and my wife out of town, I look in that mirror and confront the truth: my stomach is way too big. I need to eat better, or eat less, or do sit-ups, or all three. Will I? Probably not. I'll wear baggier shirts.

God, of course, isn't fooled. He's unimpressed with my baggy shirts. He sees through to my flabby stomach. To him, I'm always naked.

He also sees my *character* as it really is. He is not fooled when I hang the good-looking wool suit of church attendance, for example, over my morally unfit pride. To him, my pride is still just as obvious — and unimproved by my acts of religiosity. I'm in the "unclean" demographic that the prophet identified in Isaiah 64:6: all my "righteous acts are like filthy rags." When I rationalize some deliberate departure from God's design for my life — let's not call it "sin," or if we have to call it sin, let's call it a "smallish" sin — he sees through the loose-fitting shirt to the flabby lack of character.

I paint "trusting God" on my face, but he sees through the mascara to that plain-faced person he knows me to be. I can comb all the excuses I want to over the bald spot of my laziness. Maybe I don't want you to know I have a weakness or a need — but God sees through the padding to the pitiful

truth. Maybe I'm blind to my own weakness or need — but God sees past the power tie to the reality I've so instinctively dressed up. And when I'm secretly crying, the dark glasses don't throw him off. He sees through my bravado, to my pain.

Jesus knew how futile it is, and how exhausting, to spend your life covering up, masquerading, pretending, or even simply misunderstanding. He looked at people squandering their energies on deceiving themselves and each other, and it broke his heart — it frustrated him — it infuriated him. To witness firsthand his Father's prized creation being so wasted by lies — *that* was the maddening thing about life on earth.

So he set out to reveal to people the truth about themselves. The truth about how God sees us. The truth about how God designed us, how he intended us to function, how we can experience the fullest and richest possible life — the life God dreamed of us having when he first dreamed us up!

Jesus sees right through me. What does he see? And what does he see when he looks right through *you*? Let's find out.