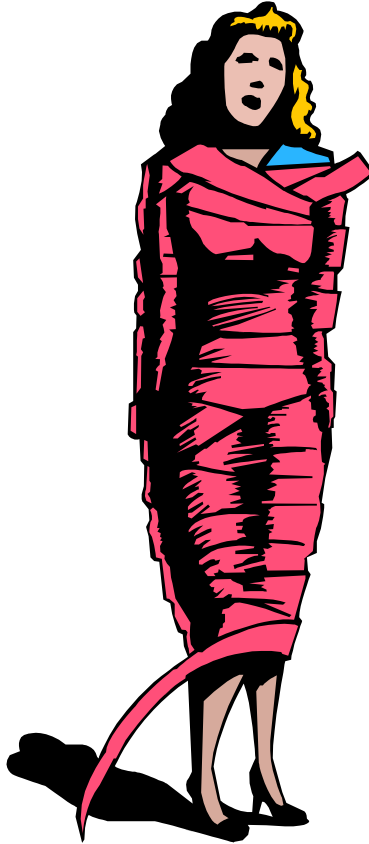


Just What Exactly is Modest Apparel?



“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;”
(1 Timothy 2:9)

Written By
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Introduction

In writing this booklet, I am very conscious of the fact that Christianity today is closer to the world in its lifestyle than perhaps any other time in recent church history. Bible-preaching churches are moving away from a strong stand against sin and worldliness, and are sadly embracing a “peaceful” compromise with the very world that mocks their message. It is unpopular, “unscholarly”, and reproachful to teach and preach holy standards of living today. The concept of personal holiness has well nigh disappeared from pulpit and pew alike. However, popularity and acceptability must not determine what is taught and preached in the church. The pastor or teacher is bound by Divine mandate to preach the whole counsel of God, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

If there is one area of doctrine and practice that is sure to ruffle someone’s feathers, it is the area of Christian dress standards. My goal in writing this treatise is not to offend or agitate, but rather to enlighten and instruct. I have personally questioned the scriptural validity of the doctrines that this publication espouses, and have thus spent many hours studying and scrutinising those doctrines to test their soundness. The conclusion I have reached after much study and prayer is that the Bible does indeed teach standards of dress for the Christian. As unpopular as this may be, I am thoroughly convinced that the sincere, submissive, studious Christian will reach the same conclusions that I, and many others, have reached, because, “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” (2 Peter 1:20). I trust that you will read this booklet with an open heart and mind, and that you will submit to the leading of the Spirit of God as He instructs you by His Word.

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1. Why are Dress Standards Important?

Just how important is the subject of Christian dress standards? Should pastors make a big deal of teaching and preaching on Christian modesty? Are those pastors who do so making a mountain out of a mole hill? Are they just forcing their personal preferences upon their unsuspecting congregation? Or, is the man of God required to address the subject of modest apparel because it is part of the whole counsel of God? Let us find out.

A common objection to standards of Christian dress is the comment, "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. So, it doesn't matter how I dress, because God sees my heart." The Scripture they are referring to comes from 1 Samuel, although they take the passage out of context to support their opinion.

1 Samuel 16:6, 7 "And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the **outward appearance**, but the LORD looketh on the **heart**."

This argument is obviously flawed, because those who use it would certainly not consider being in public totally naked. The truth is that every Christian has some standards of dress, even if they are low standards. Certainly God sees the heart, but He knows that man sees our exterior, and that is why the Lord gives us guidelines on how we should and should not dress. I will explain this later.

One passage of Scripture that is used as the basis of warning against a variety of sins of the flesh is found in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: **therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit**, which are God's."

This passage is rightly used to condemn such sins as smoking, drinking, drug use, sexual immorality, etc. But, the principle of glorifying God in our bodies also applies to Christian modesty. As blood-bought children of God, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our body is not ours to do with as we see fit; it belongs to God, and is under His authority. We are to glorify and please God both in our spirit **and** in our body. As I will show, what you wear (or don't wear) can be glorifying to God, or it can be hurtful to His holy name.

Here are 3 Scriptural reasons for the importance of dress standards:

1. The Connection Between Sin and Nakedness.

We Australians live in a society that has become so accustomed to nakedness that we are anaesthetised to the moral danger of baring the human body. Public nudity, such as on our beaches, various stages of undress in public places, and nakedness on the television and movie screen have warped our thinking and numbed our consciences to the connection between sin and nakedness. However, it doesn't take much honest study of the Scriptures to see the connection between nudity and sin. Consider these four examples:

A) The Israelites were naked when they worshipped the golden calf while Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai.

Exodus 32:21-26 "And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought **so great a sin** upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf. And when Moses saw that **the people were naked**; (for Aaron had made them **naked unto their shame** among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him."

B) The man possessed of a legion of demons was naked, but he put on clothes when he got saved.

Luke 8:27, 35 "And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and **ware no clothes**, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs...Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, **clothed**, and in his right mind: and they were afraid."

C) David committed adultery with Bathsheba after he saw her naked while she was bathing upon her rooftop.

2 Samuel 11:2-4 "And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof **he saw a woman washing herself**; and the woman was **very beautiful to look upon**. And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent

messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.”

D) **Noah’s son, Ham, was cursed for staring at his father’s nakedness.**

Genesis 9:20-25 “And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was **uncovered** within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the **nakedness** of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the **nakedness** of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father’s **nakedness**. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had **done unto him**. And he said, **Cursed be Canaan**; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.”

You see a clear trend in the Word of God: Not only does nakedness lead to sin and immorality, but the further a person gets from God, the more clothes he takes off. What about the example of backslidden Peter?

John 21:7 “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (**for he was naked**,) and did cast himself into the sea.”

There is definitely a connection between sin and nakedness. If you aren’t convinced, you might visit such immoral countries as Germany and Denmark, and you will find that nudity is perfectly acceptable. Men and women even bathe together in public baths while totally naked, and nothing is thought of it! To think that nudity does not lead to sin is naïve and foolish.

2. The Bible Demands that we Dress Modestly.

If a certain standard of behaviour is demanded by the Bible, then I am not to question whether or not that behaviour is really important. We do not believe or practice relative morality, where man determines what is right and wrong. We believe in and practice absolute morality, where the Bible sets the benchmark for right and wrong. For example, the Bible commands me to be sober; it tells me that drunkenness is a sin. Am I to question that? Am I to ask myself whether or not the issue of drunkenness is important? Certainly not. Then why would I question the importance of Christian modesty, when **Christian modesty is commanded in the Bible**? For example, consider two Scriptures:

Titus 2:4, 5 “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, **chaste** [*innocent, modest, perfect, clean, pure*], keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

1 Timothy 2:9, 10 “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in **modest** [*chaste, decent; especially not displaying one’s body*] **apparel**, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

3. The Need for Distinction from this World.

Churches today have become so worldly and sensual that most Christians are indistinguishable from the world. This is not how God intends for his people to live! God commands the Christian to be holy, pure, and above reproach. As we grow in grace, we are to become less like this evil world, and more like our Saviour. We are to be **different**.

1 John 2:15, 16 “**Love not the world**, neither the **things** that are in the **world**. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For **all that is in the world**, the lust of the **flesh**, and the lust of the **eyes**, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

Romans 12:1, 2 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And **be not conformed to this world**: but **be ye transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Ephesians 5:8-11 “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: **walk as children of light**: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather reprove them.”

A pastor friend makes a pertinent point when he states, “Many well-meaning Christians soak up the philosophies, fashions and trends of the world without a second thought as to whether they are biblically or morally right or wrong.”

Have you ever stopped and considered where much of the world’s fashion has its roots? The answer is Paris, France - one of the most sensual, ungodly, wicked, immoral countries in the world. Yet, many Christians never question the fashion trends that come out that cess pit, but rather embrace them wholeheartedly. **May God help us to stop learning the way of the heathen.**

2. Can Dress Standards Be Considered a “Grey Area?”

You might perhaps agree that modest apparel is important, but then you say, "Dress standards are a **grey area**. I'll pray about it and let the Holy Spirit convict me about what is right and what is wrong." Is that reasonable? Is that spiritual? Is that **Scriptural**?

The "grey area" philosophy is one that has quite a following today, even among Bible-believing Christians. However, it is a philosophy which is unreasonable, unspiritual, and unscriptural. Let me show you why.

A) The Christian is to study the Word of God and find the line drawn between good and evil.

2 Timothy 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

One reason why many Christians insist on "grey areas" is simply **laziness**; they are too lazy to spend much time in the Word of God to find the answers to their questions concerning Christian conduct.

B) The Christian is to be unspotted from the world.

James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself **unspotted from the world**."

How do you get the colour grey? Simply by mixing black and white. How, then, do we get a grey area of morality? By mixing good and evil! Yet Christians are commanded to keep themselves completely pure and "unspotted" from the world. How can I keep myself unspotted while still allowing "grey areas" in my life? It is neither wise or Scriptural to try to do so.

C) The Christian is to keep as far away from sin as possible.

Romans 12:9 "Let love be without dissimulation. **Abhor that which is evil; cleave** to that which is **good**."

2 Timothy 2:22 "**Flee also youthful lusts**: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

1 Thessalonians 5:22 "**Abstain** from all **appearance** of evil."

1 Peter 2:11 "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts**, which war against the soul;"

Isn't it interesting that those who espouse the "grey area" theory are usually living dangerously close to the edge of sin, rather than staying as far away from sin as possible? Why do they so often err on the side closer to sin and worldliness? Scripture teaches us, as does common sense, that it is far wiser to live a long distance from temptation, lest we fall into sin.

If I suffered from vertigo, and I bought some land near the top of a steep cliff, how foolish would I be to build my house right by the edge of the cliff? One small mistake and I would fall off the cliff and be killed. I would be wise to stay as far away from the cliff as possible, for my own protection. Did not the Lord Jesus say in His model prayer, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" ?

D) The Christian is to be holy, even as God is holy.

Leviticus 20:7 "**Sanctify yourselves** therefore, and be ye **holy**: for I am the LORD your God."

1 Peter 1:15, 16 "But as he which hath called you is holy, **so be ye holy in all manner of conversation**; Because it is written, **Be ye holy**; for I am holy."

The concept of personal holiness is one that has well nigh disappeared from the pulpit and pew alike. However, you would have to ignore many portions of Scripture to insist that right living is not paramount in the life of the Christian. Holiness means to be separated from that which is evil, and separated unto that which is good. The process whereby a believer grows in personal holiness is called sanctification, and it is the will of God for every Christian.

1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4 "For this is the will of God, even your **sanctification**, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in **sanctification** and honour;"

Titus 2:11, 12 "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts**, we should live **soberly, righteously, and godly**, in this present world;"

E) The Bible divides moral areas into only two categories: good and bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be **good or bad**."

Hebrews 5:13, 14 "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of **full age**, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to **discern** both **good and evil**."

The Bible is a book of black and white, of good and evil, not of grey and compromise. If I have not yet matured far enough in my spiritual life to discern between good and evil in a certain situation, or with regards to a certain action or behaviour, then I must seek counsel from a godly Christian mentor or leader.

3. Are Dress Standards Legalistic?

The idea of standards of dress and behaviour is repulsive to some Christians. **Many Christians today look at rules as an enemy.** When confronted with a pastor, teacher or author who challenges their behaviour, the offended Christian resorts to using his spiritual **liberty** as justification for his actions, and accuses the dogmatic leader of being **legalistic**. The misuse of this term is well explained by pastor and author, Paul Chappell:

“Many Christians want to understand freedom as their permit or license to live the way they want to live. They resort to unfriendly and untrue terms, the favourite being *legalistic*, with reference to those who believe that we are disciplined by grace to live a holy life, who would go so far as to say that abstaining from a specific sin would benefit our spiritual growth and discipline. Ministers who provide examples of holiness by preaching about certain types of sin are often misunderstood or misrepresented by people who want their own way...The problem is that some Christians use *liberty* as their code word or rationale for a rebellious heart - a password used to justify a rebellious lifestyle...Liberty is simply freedom from sin and freedom to serve Christ from a genuine heart of love. It is not an excuse to live a lifestyle that quenches the Holy Spirit.”

The word legalism has a true meaning entirely different from that given to it by rebellious Christians. The term properly means to add works to salvation. The book of Galatians was written by the apostle Paul to address the problem of legalism in the churches of Galatia. These Christians were in danger of reverting back to Judaism, of mixing faith and works together as a means of salvation and acceptance with God. So, by the true definition, people such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Catholics would be legalists. The word legalism has nothing to do with Christian standards of living, or with separation from worldly practices.

Christian dress standards are not a question of **salvation**, but are rather a question of **separation** and **sanctification**. The Law of God tells me how to be set apart, or sanctified, from this world:

John 17:17 “Sanctify them through thy **truth**: thy **word** is truth.”

Christians are no longer under the **condemnation** of the Law, but are under the **moral direction** of the Law. After all, the Bible defines sin as the transgression of the Law.

1 John 3:4 “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law.**”

You might be asking, “What about my Christian liberty?” Well, with regard to Christian liberty, Jesus Christ did not set me free **TO** sin; He set me free **FROM** sin:

Galatians 5:13 “For, brethren, ye have been called unto **liberty**; only use not liberty for an occasion to the **flesh**, but by love **serve one another.**”

Romans 6:1, 2, 14, 15 “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? **God forbid.** How shall we, that are **dead to sin**, live any longer therein?...For sin shall not have dominion over you: for **ye are not under the law**, but under grace. What then? **shall we sin**, because we are not under the law, but under grace? **God forbid.**”

I cannot claim that my standing as a New Testament Christian under grace excuses me from obeying the moral Law of God and enables me to live as I please. To do so would be to twist and distort Scripture beyond recognition. I am still responsible to live according to the moral mandates of the Law, even though I am not required to keep the ceremonial Jewish laws that were given by God to the people of Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ came, by His own admission, not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it. In fact, Jesus Christ demands more of Spirit-filled Christians under grace than was demanded of those under the Law. For example, the Law said that men are not to commit adultery. What did the Lord Jesus say concerning that subject?

Matthew 5:27, 28 “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit **adultery**: But I say unto you, That whosoever **looketh** on a woman to **lust after her** hath committed adultery with her already in his **heart.**”

My aim as a Christian is to be drawn ever closer to the Lord Jesus Christ, and be continually conformed to His image. I am to separate from sin, and separate to God - this is sanctification, and it is the will of God for every believer (1 Thessalonians 4:3,4). I am not changing my lifestyle to simply fit in with a certain church or to please a particular teacher. **Rather, the motivation for sanctification is the love of God.** Pastor Paul Chappell explains the point well:

“Separation begins in the heart with an attitude toward God prompted by His love and grace. Separation is a Biblical

principle that steers Christians away from the potholes of false doctrine and ice patches of licentiousness. The first matter in discussing separation is not, "What am I separating from?" but "To whom am I separating?" Biblical separation has both positive and negative aspects - separation is unto Christ as well as away from the world."

If you agree that a Christian must be set apart from sin to serve God, then you can understand the need for Christian standards. Let me explain what I mean by a standard:

- A **principle** is a Bible truth that I must live by.
- A **conviction** is a personal belief based upon a Bible principle.
- A **standard** is a policy that helps me to keep my conviction.

Christian standards, be they concerning music, alcohol, dress, language, or whatever, are rules that I employ to protect me from sin and keep me close to God. Standards are based upon my convictions, and my convictions are based upon Bible principles. They are used for my sanctification. Therefore, standards are not my enemy; they are my friend, because they help me to stay far from sin and keep close to my God. Isn't that what being a good Christian is all about?

4. The Distinction Between the Sexes

Our modern society has been duped by the unisex movement. Every distinction between men and women is being blurred to deceive us that males and females are almost identical. However, the Bible is very clear that men and women are fundamentally and unalterably **different**.

Genesis 1:26, 27 "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; **male and female created he them.**"

Mark 10:6 "But from the beginning of the creation God made them **male and female.**"

It has been well said that the Lord made Adam and Eve - not Adam and Steve! God made men and women very distinct from one another, with different appearances, anatomies, personalities, and roles. **Thank God that He did!**

One particular way in which God made men and women different is the way in which they are stimulated or aroused sexually. Men are typically aroused by the sight of an attractive woman, while women are more likely to be aroused by the physical nearness or touch of a man. That is just the way God made us. Why do you think it is that the multi-billion dollar pornography is largely funded by lustful men who pay to look at lewd pictures of women?

This difference in men and women is reflected in God's commands for the two sexes. For men, the Lord gives a warning not look at a woman and lust after her. For women, the Lord gives a command to dress in a modest, unprovocative fashion.

Matthew 5:27, 28 "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit **adultery**: But I say unto you, That whosoever **looketh** on a woman to **lust after her** hath committed adultery with her already in his **heart.**"

1 Timothy 2:9 "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in **modest apparel**, with **shamefacedness** and sobriety;"

It is interesting that God gives men a warning about their eyes, and gives women a warning about their attire. God knows how men and women work!

Why do prostitutes wear tight, revealing, gaudy clothing? So that they attract the attention of men, and secure their business. They know from experience that men are attracted by what they see, so these women of ill repute are advertising their wares.

Proverbs 7:10 "And, behold, there met him a woman with the **attire of an harlot**, and subtle of heart."

As an illustration of the difference between men and women, consider the fashion of night clubs. It is common knowledge that men and women meet in such wicked places for the purpose of getting together for a casual relationship, or for one night of ungodly passion. The way in which women dress, or don't dress, at such places is quite shocking. Their clothing is tight, short, low-cut, and brightly coloured, revealing and focussing attention on the bosom, thighs and buttocks. Are these women just being fashionable? Or are they on show, luring lustful men into their bedroom? You be the judge.

The truth of the matter is that most women do not realise how corrupt the minds of men are, whether saved or unsaved. If ladies knew the filth that pollutes the mind of the average man on the street as he sees a beautiful, sensually dressed woman walk by, they would be quick to adopt modest standards of dress. If you don't believe me, perform a simple little experiment. Stand on the street corner, and notice the reaction of men when a beautiful, half-dressed woman walks by, and you will see the proof of what I have stated. This should not surprise you, after all, because Scripture attests to the nature of man's heart, particularly with reference to sexual sin:

Galatians 5:19 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; **Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,**”

Ladies, doesn't it bother you that men are entertaining evil thoughts about you as you walk by them with your body exposed? It ought to. Does it not bother you, fathers, that men are lusting after your daughters because of the immodest way that they are clothed? Does it not irk you, husbands, that other men are enjoying your wife in their minds because you won't help her to dress with modesty and shamefacedness? If not, then you have a serious heart problem.

Women who dress immodestly are tempting men to commit sin, and they ought to be ashamed of themselves. It is especially reproachful for a Christian woman who knows better to make men stumble by her unchaste appearance. What a tragedy that Christian men must sometimes avert their eyes in a church service to avoid being tempted to think unseemly thoughts! Ladies, you might think that you can dress any way that you please because of your Christian liberty, but you stand condemned by the words of the apostle Paul,

1 Corinthians 8:9 “But take heed lest by any means this **liberty** of yours become a **stumblingblock** to them that are weak.” Christian homes and churches in this modern society are being torn apart by sexual immorality and impurity. One of the reasons for this is the immodest clothing of both men and women. Christians are too comfortable with seeing the bodies of the opposite sex, and are too often tempted to lust because of the nakedness so prevalent around them. We cannot change the dress standards of the world, other than trying to lead sinners to Christ. However, we can make sure that we, the children of God, do not dress in such a way as to tempt one another to lust and fornication.

5. Principles Governing Christian Dress

Christians have a strange idea that the clothes we wear make no difference to God. We can dress any way we want to, without guilt or condemnation, according to most believers. Christians follow the dress trends of the world without any thought of whether or not their attire is pleasing to God. However, the obedient, devout Christian wants his whole lifestyle, including his clothing, to be pleasing to the Lord:

1 Corinthians 10:31 “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, **do all to the glory of God.**”

As an example of clothing that seemed acceptable to man but was unacceptable to God, consider the first designer outfits that Adam and Eve made for themselves:

Genesis 3:6, 7, 21 “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that **they were naked**; and **they sewed fig leaves together**, and **made themselves aprons...Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.**”

Why did the Lord make Adam and Eve clothing out of animal skins? The first reason was to show them that “the wages of sin is death”, and to teach them that a blood sacrifice is required for sin. The second reason was that **Adam and Eve's clothing was unacceptable to God**. The Lord knew how important it is to thoroughly cover the nakedness of man, so He made Adam and Eve clothes from animal skins. So, it is obviously possible for clothes that are acceptable to us to be unacceptable to God.

As we try to wear clothing that is acceptable to the Lord, we are driven to study the Word of God, for all our standards of Christian behaviour are to be based upon **Bible principles**. Your standards of dress must be yours by conviction, not just by preference. Search the Scriptures and prove these guidelines for yourself.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is **profitable** for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for **instruction in righteousness**: That the man of God may be **perfect**, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

There are five clear Scriptural principles that govern what we should and should not wear. After we discuss these principles, we shall look at common items of clothing and see if these items are approved or rejected by the principles.

1) A man must wear masculine clothes, and a woman must wear feminine clothes.

Deuteronomy 22:5 “The woman shall not wear that which **pertaineth unto a man**, neither shall a **man** put on a **woman's garment**: for all that do so are **abomination unto the LORD** thy God.”

This Scripture says very plainly that a woman is not to wear a man's clothing, and a man is not to wear a woman's clothing; those that do so are an **abomination** to the Lord. The word “abomination” means “extreme disgust, loathing, abhorrence, hateful, shamefully vile.” Obviously this Scripture tells us that it is a very serious sin to cross dress between the sexes.

In the days that this passage was written, it was common for the female worshippers of Venus to put on men's clothing and armour during religious rites., and the men would put on women's clothes. God told the Israelites not to do such a thing, and proclaimed this practice an abomination unto Himself.

Was there a clear distinction between men and women's dress in Bible times? Consider what Zondervan's Pictorial Dictionary has to say on this subject:

"Among the Hebrews neither sex was permitted by Mosaic Law to wear the same form of clothing as was used by the other (Deut. 22:5). A few articles of female clothing carried somewhat the same name and basic pattern, yet there was always sufficient difference...so that in appearance the line of demarcation between men and women could be readily detected. The women wore long garments reaching almost to the feet, with a girdle of silk or wool, many times having all the colours of the rainbow."

Some Christians have claimed that Deuteronomy is a ceremonial law, and so does not need to be observed today. Actually, the whole chapter is a mixture of moral laws and ceremonial laws. How can we tell which verse 5 is? It's simple, really. God **never** uses the phrase "abomination unto the Lord thy God" for a ceremonial law. This very sombre judgment is used **only** for moral laws. Some other examples of things that are an abomination to the Lord include:

Leviticus 18:22 "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is **abomination**."

Deuteronomy 7:25 "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an **abomination** to the LORD thy God."

Deuteronomy 18:10-12 "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an **abomination** unto the LORD: and because of these **abominations** the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee."

Note that Deuteronomy 22:5 is not only for the Jews, but for both Jews and Gentiles. How do we know that? The Scripture says, "...**all** that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God." Any man, Jew or Gentile, who wears a woman's clothing is an abomination unto the Lord, and vice versa.

2) The thigh must not be exposed in public.

Isaiah 47:1-3 "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, **uncover the thigh**, pass over the rivers. **Thy nakedness shall be uncovered**, yea, **thy shame shall be seen**: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man."

Exodus 28:40-42 "And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. And thou shalt make them **linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach**:"

Here we have two passages of Scripture which help to define nakedness for us. In the Isaiah 47, we see that the woman is going to uncover her locks, make bare her leg, and uncover her thigh. As she does this, God says that she is uncovering her **nakedness**, and that her shame shall be seen. In Exodus chapter 28, God gives instruction for the clothing of the priesthood. The Lord tells the Jews to make linen breeches (trousers) to cover the nakedness of the priests. How much of the man's body must the trousers cover in order to cover up their nakedness? "from the **loins** even unto the **thighs** they shall reach:" It is, therefore, a shameful thing for a man or woman to uncover their thighs in public, and it is, according to the Bible, uncovering their nakedness.

Also, the thigh must not be exposed because it attracts the attention of the opposite sex and stirs their fleshly desires. Compare the reaction of worldly men to an attractive lady wearing a modest, knee-length skirt, with their reaction to a beautiful woman wearing a shirt that exposes her thighs; the latter attracts much more attention.

3) A woman must dress in modest, chaste apparel.

1 Timothy 2:9, 10 "In like manner also, that women **adorn themselves in modest apparel**, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

Titus 2:4, 5 "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, **chaste**, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

Webster's Dictionary defines *modest* as, "chaste; decent; especially not displaying one's body." The word *chaste* means "innocent, modest, perfect, clean, pure." A woman's apparel, then, is to be innocent, pure and decent, and it is not to display her body. As we studied earlier, one reason for this principle of dress is to prevent lust and fornication, to preserve moral purity among God's people.

Someone once put this principle in the vernacular: **“If you’re not selling, don’t advertise.”** A woman is not to display her body for men to see.

There are two ways in which a woman’s clothing may be immodest. The first is by her showing a lot of flesh, or showing her nakedness. The second way is by displaying her form. Any clothing that is tight enough to reveal a woman’s figure should be avoided.

4) A woman must dress with shamefacedness.

1 Timothy 2:9, 10 “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with **shamefacedness** and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

The word *shamefacedness* comes from the Greek word *aidos* which means “the idea of downcast eyes, or bashfulness towards men.” A woman with the character trait of shamefacedness does not want to draw the attention of any man except her husband. So, her clothing that is worn in public must not draw attention of men. Again, the principle of keeping moral purity is behind this rule.

The idea of shamefacedness goes completely against the philosophy of the world, where women thrive on attracting as much male attention as possible. Christian ladies are certainly not going to please this world by dressing and acting with shamefacedness, but that is unimportant. Remember the exhortation,

Romans 12:2 “And **be not conformed to this world**: but be ye **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

5) A Christian’s dress must not cause another believer to stumble.

Romans 14:21 “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”

1 Corinthians 8:9 “But take heed lest by any means this **liberty** of yours become a **stumblingblock** to them that are weak.”

1 Corinthians 8:13 “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

An important Scriptural principle that governs our behaviour is the idea of not doing anything that would cause a brother or sister to stumble. This could sensibly be applied to men and women’s clothing. If the clothing of a Christian is providing a temptation for another believer to lust in his or her heart, then that clothing has caused a fellow Christian to stumble. We must try to wear apparel that is so pure, decent and inoffensive that we will not be in danger of causing another brother to stumble.

Let me give you an example of this principle. It is common today for young people to swim together, whether at the beach or swimming pool. A good Christian man will seek to keep his mind pure, and avoid lustful thoughts. However, this is extremely difficult, even impossible, to do when surrounded by beautiful young women who are wearing bikinis and swimsuits that reveal every curve of their body. A Christian girl who wears such immodest clothing is causing her brother to stumble, and vice versa, so it is wise for men and women not to swim together. The problem with mixed swimming is the fact that it involves mixed immodesty. If this seems harsh or restrictive, remember the admonition of Holy Scripture:

2 Timothy 2:22 “**Flee also youthful lusts**: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Let’s review the five Scriptural principles concerning Christian dress:

- 1) A man must wear masculine clothes, and a woman must wear feminine clothes.
- 2) The thigh must not be exposed in public.
- 3) A woman must dress in modest, chaste apparel.
- 4) A woman must dress with shamefacedness.
- 5) A Christian’s dress must not cause another believer to stumble.

Now let us examine and evaluate different types of clothing using these five principles that we have learned:

A) Skirts and dresses

Skirts are obviously not a man’s garment. However, not all skirts meet the criterion of Scripture concerning modest apparel. Some skirts expose the nakedness of woman by showing the thigh, either by being above the knee in length, or by having a long slit. Others are immodest because they cling too tightly to the woman’s figure and draw a man’s attention to her thighs and buttocks. The miniskirt is an extreme example of an immodest skirt. Here are some interesting facts on

the miniskirt:

“The Atlanta Journal, March 3, 1970, reportedly ran a survey by Hollywood Social Studies of top law enforcement officials in fifty states. Of those who answered the questionnaire:

- 90% believed girls who wear miniskirts risk increased danger of a rape attack.
- 94% thought statistics showing increased molestation of young girls might be caused by shorter dresses now being worn.
- 98% said provocative clothing, including short skirts, might encourage men to commit sex crimes.

Though statistics on forcible rape declined in the five-year period ending in 1963, they suddenly shot up in 1964, up 68% in the United States and 90% in England. One factor, the report said, could have been Mary Quaint’s introduction of the **miniskirt**. (She designed it, you may remember, to announce that she was ready to go to bed with a man anytime, night or day.) The Hollywood Social Studies report concluded, “No other adequate cause for this strange reversal has been found.” (Elizabeth Rice Handford)

B) Clothing material

Some items of clothing are unacceptable simply because of the material from which they are made. Materials that draw attention to a woman’s body by being see-through, shiny, clingy (eg. swimsuits), or even very brightly coloured, fail to meet the criterion of Scripture for modest apparel.

C) Shirts, tops and blouses

Any shirt, top or blouse that exposes a lot of flesh, or is very tight, is unacceptable because it cannot be worn with shamefacedness. Halter tops are clearly not modest, and sleeveless tops are not good because they draw attention to the bust line. Bare backs, bare shoulders, low cut front, unbuttoned buttons reveal flesh and draw attention, and are thus unacceptable.

D) Trousers

In 1933, Marlene Dietrich performed in a night club while wearing a men’s tuxedo. According to the article written at that time concerning this event, she was the first woman ever to appear in public in a man’s suit. When asked why she dared to do so, she retorted, “Because I’m tired of men having all the fun in life.” Nowadays, with the influence of the feminist and unisex movements, her masculine clothing is commonplace, but it wasn’t always so.

Trousers, or pants, on women violate at least two Scriptural principles concerning Christian dress: **they are not feminine** (they are garments that pertain to men), and **they are not modest**. Let me explain.

In the day that we live, it may seem absurd to state that it is wrong and sinful for a woman to wear trousers. Anyone who dares make such a statement is sure to raise a good deal of controversy. But, it would not have been controversial in the early 20th century, because trousers were rarely seen on women, if at all. Trousers were considered the apparel of men, and dresses and skirts were considered the apparel of women. If you doubt that, rent a few old movies or look at some old newspapers, and notice the change in clothing over the last few decades. Check out your public toilet doors and you will notice that trousers and dresses distinguish men from women. Trousers pertain to men, and dresses pertain to women. If not, then why would it be so unacceptable for a man to wear a frilly, pretty dress to work? Just because women today wear trousers doesn’t mean that it is right; it just means that society has changed the fashion so that men and women are no longer easily distinguishable by their clothes.

What has led to a change in this fashion? Simply put, this change can be attributed to the upsurge of the feminist and unisex movements. With these movements also came the push for the ‘career woman,’ increased demands for child care, and a general abandonment of the accepted role models for men and women. The masculine apparel adopted by women in the middle and late twentieth century was necessary to confirm the change of women’s role in our modern, perverted society.

The further that our society moves from God’s principles of living, the more human values change to accommodate man’s sinful desires. It is now commonplace to see feminine jewellery, such as earrings and necklaces, on men, and masculine fashion, such as trousers and short hair, on women. While churches and even society may have shunned such behaviour decades ago, it is now the accepted trend.

“To the feminist, the thought of pre-defined roles for men or women is repulsive. It is this feminist, anti-God, anti-Bible philosophy which has slowly permeated our society causing many to reject the “moralism” which was once widely accepted by our culture at large. God, however, does not change. God is still for sex distinction and any behaviour, clothing or attitudes which blur that distinction is an abomination to God.”

If trousers are not men's apparel, then where did we get the phrase, "Who wears the pants in that family?" If trousers are not men's apparel, then why do many lesbians wear trousers and have short hair? If trousers are not men's apparel, then why is it unacceptable for a man to wear a dress? If trousers are not men's apparel, then why do perverted transvestite men wear dresses and makeup?

Many Christians have the attitude toward this subject, "Well, what's the big deal?" God says in Deuteronomy 22:5 that unisex fashion is an abomination to Him. **It is a "big deal" to God, so it ought to be a "big deal" to us!**

The first reason why trousers on women are unacceptable is because they are a man's garment. The second reason why they are unacceptable is that they are not modest apparel. Let us examine this reason.

In 1 Timothy 2:9, the Bible commands women to wear modest apparel. The Greek word for apparel in that verse occurs only once in the New Testament; it is the word *kata-stole*. The word *stole* means a long robe. According to Greek scholar Thayer, the word *kata-stole* means "properly a lowering, letting down, a garment let down." As we saw previously, the word "modest" means "chaste; decent; especially not displaying one's body." So, the woman is to wear a long robe that is lowered, one that is decent and does not display her body. Trousers certainly do not meet this requirement.

Trousers are immodest because they plainly outline a woman's figure, hugging her hips, buttocks and legs. A decent dress or skirt has no such effect, which is one reason why they have for many years been considered the appropriate attire for ladies. Many sincere mothers would not let their daughters go out dressed in such tight-fitting clothing if they knew the effect it had on men. Many good Christian teenagers would stop wearing trousers and start wearing modest skirts and dresses, if they knew how men looked upon them. Trousers may be more modest than a miniskirt or pair of shorts, but they do not meet the Scriptural, common-sense definition of modest apparel.

Do trousers blur the distinction between men and women? **Yes.** Do trousers indecently expose a woman's figure? **Yes.** Honest, sincere Christians will conclude that **such fashions are in contradiction to God's design laid out in the Bible, and are therefore unfit for godly, feminine Christian women.**

E) Shorts

Shorts are unacceptable attire for ladies because they are not feminine, they are not modest (shorts reveal the hips and buttocks), and they reveal the thigh. Short shorts on men that reveal the thigh are also unacceptable because they reveal the man's nakedness and draw attention to his backside.

F) Swimming costumes

Swimming costumes fail four of the five Biblical principles that we have established. For a Christian lady to wear a bathing suit in public is a clear, unquestionable violation of God's Word. Swimsuits are certainly not modest and chaste; they expose the thigh; they draw attention to the body; and, they set a stumbling block before men. If you don't think this is true, then why have sports magazines started putting women in swimsuits on the cover to attract more customers? The answer is obvious. **There is no such thing as a modest bathing suit**, especially when they get wet and cling to the female form.

The Bible commands us in 2 Timothy 2:22 to **flee youthful lusts**. For a man to go to a place where women are running around naked and showing off their body is foolish and sinful. How can you pray the Lord's prayer ("lead us not into temptation") and then deliberately go to a place like a beach or public swimming pool where you will be bombarded with temptation? If you do so, you do so because you want to, not because you know it is right. Don't blame God for not giving you victory over mental adultery when you knowingly expose yourself to blatant temptation. Remember the principle of avoiding temptation:

Proverbs 16:17 "The highway of the upright is to **depart from evil**: he that **keepeth his way preserveth his soul.**"

G) Long hair and earrings on men

Long hair on men, earrings, necklaces, etc. are another example of the world blurring the external distinction between men and women. Even as recently as when I was in high school (the 1980's), men usually did not wear earrings unless they were homosexual, or very radical, because earrings were considered to be women's apparel. The influence of the unisex movement and homosexuality has made such feminine fashions as long hair, necklaces and earrings acceptable for the man to wear. However, this is an abomination to God, because the man must not wear that which pertains unto the woman. Also, the Bible clearly rebukes the man who would wear his hair long:

1 Corinthians 11:14 "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have **long hair**, it is a **shame** unto him?"

6.

True Christian Freedom

As you consider these principles of Christian modesty and apply them to your life, it is crucial that you understand the reason behind the rules. We separate from sin and worldliness so that we might be closer to God and more pleasing to Him. We practice personal holiness not to conform to a church or to a man's preferences, but rather to conform to the mandates of Scriptural principles. Study these principles, and make these convictions your own. Yield your will to God, and seek to please Him in every area of life, even in your personal appearance. You will never please God or bear much fruit until you are totally yielded to Him.

Rules are not your enemy; rules are your friend. Standards of behaviour that are based upon Biblical principles will protect you and your family from sin and immorality, and will thus prevent much sorrow and heartache. We should embrace Christian dress standards because we love God and we want to live a pure, holy, useful life. If God has your heart, He will have your wardrobe, too.

You may find that there are a few activities which you enjoy that you may not be able to participate in quite as you did, because they involved wearing immodest apparel. Do not be discouraged - being committed to Christian dress standards does not mean to stop having fun. Use your creativity to find a way to enjoy those activities while not displeasing God. For example, enjoying the surf in the early morning or evening can protect you from temptation while still allowing you to enjoy God's beautiful creation.

Let me challenge you to sincerely study these principles and standards with an open mind and a soft heart, being fully yielded to the Holy Spirit. When I first heard some of these things, I was surprised and amused, until I began to study their Scriptural basis. Make these convictions your own, live by them, and you and your family will never be sorry that you did. Not only will you please God as you glorify Him in your body, but you will protect you and your loved ones from the wiles of the Devil as he seeks to tempt you and cause you to sin. Remember: **true Christian freedom is not freedom TO sin; it is freedom FROM sin.**

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