

What
Should I
Wear?



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“WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?”

This question has been around as long as there has been variety in clothing. In today's society it can present quite a dilemma for men as well as women. However, the Bible gives definite guidelines for the appearance of the Christian before God, other believers, and the world.

WHAT ABOUT CLOTHING?

What is the main purpose of clothing, and why was it instituted by God? Before Adam and Eve sinned they were naked before God and before each other. When they sinned they immediately lost their innocence.

First they covered themselves with fig leaves and then they hid from God (Gen. 3:7-8), all because they were ashamed. God, in his mercy, provided them with animal skins (Gen. 3:21). The curse of sin was already realized in the death of these animals sacrificed to cover the nakedness of sinful man.

Covering For The Body. According to the Bible, then, the primary purpose of clothing is to cover the body. Since the unbelieving world is estranged from God and freely practices sin, it is no surprise that its styles often violate God's primary purpose for clothing. When Christians

wear styles that expose, rather than cover the body, they dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ. Brief, tight, or otherwise revealing clothing is designed to accentuate those parts of the body which God intended to be hidden from sight.

While this applies to both sexes, women need to be especially careful about what they wear because men are so easily aroused sexually by what they see. This is evident



considering that the world-wide, multi-billion dollar pornography industry appeals to the lustful desires of the man.

If a woman wants to be loved and treated as a person, and not as a sex-object, she should *not* wear clothing that exhibits her body in a sensuous or provocative way. If she does so, she will be liked and wanted for her body—and often nothing else. She might also unwittingly be the cause of sinful thoughts and practices in others (Mt. 5:28).

Enticing clothing, a product of our sexually permissive society, has been directly linked with the increase in rape, sexual abuse and other sex-related crimes. This was documented a number of years ago by Dr. Lichenstein, physician of the Tombs Prison in New York City (as reported in

R. K. Campbell's booklet, *Women's Place According to Scripture*). Revealing styles often denote deficient moral values of the wearer and of our world as a whole. Realizing that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20), and that we are to glorify God in our bodies, we should avoid sexually arousing the opposite sex, because that is a direct appeal to the flesh and its lusts (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:13,16).

Distinction Between the Sexes. God created man and woman different from, yet complimentary to each other. As their bodies are different, so their clothes should portray that difference. Realizing that the blurring of distinctions between the sexes can lead to perversion, God says in His Word: "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God" (Dt. 22:5).

In today's permissive society where perversion is on the increase, men sometimes dress as women and vice versa. As Christians, we should want to honor God by dressing in a manner that clearly maintains the masculine/feminine distinctions which God has established.

With this in mind, when we shop for clothing, we should select apparel which is distinctly feminine or masculine. By doing so we will

visually testify to those around us that God created two sexes, not a unisex.

In most cultures the distinctions between male and female clothing is clear, but questions may arise about certain types of clothing. For example, while slacks may be more modest and comfortable for women in sports, work or casual activities, they should not become the pattern of dress for all occasions. An honest examination of our own motives for choosing one type of clothing over another will help us dress in a manner worthy of Him who created us male and female.

Modesty. The fact that God wants our clothing to be modest is evident in the following verse: "In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (1 Tim. 2:9-10). Notice that modest apparel shows forth godliness; and the best adornment is our good works.

In its definitions of "modesty," "propriety" and "moderation," the dictionary gives us some guidelines for how a Christian should dress: "in a humble manner, free from excess, not vain, not calling attention to self, decent and displaying proper restraint." In short, as Christians we should not attract attention to ourselves by

The trend toward sloppiness and carelessness in casual dress is an extreme which every Christian should avoid. While purposely ripped, torn and stained clothes may be fashionable, should they characterize the Christian? Clean, decent and appropriate clothing can be obtained in almost every country of the world.



Association. Certain styles of clothing identify the wearer with various groups or lifestyles. Just as there are types of clothing associated with certain professions, should there not also be a standard of clothing associated with those professing to know the Lord?

Beware that your clothing does not identify you with those who may be godless or even Satanic. For instance, printed T-shirts immediately associate the wearers with the message on them. While a scene or design may be acceptable, names of rock groups or alcoholic drinks, and symbols depicting death, destruction and violence should be avoided.

This sort of association, however slight, could ruin your testimony as a Christian. Remember, "You are not your own. For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19).

WHAT ABOUT MAKE-UP AND JEWELRY?

As with clothing, let us ask ourselves, "What is the purpose of cosmetics and jewelry?" Simply stated, the reasons can range from enhancing our outward appearance to drawing attention to ourselves. Cosmetics to cover blemishes and scents to eliminate offensive odors are one thing; but copying the world by making ourselves up to appear seductive and tantalizing will neither please God nor enhance His testimony on earth.

The lack of make-up can hardly hinder our testimony, but excessive make-up can definitely associate us with the wrong element of society. Since the cost of make-up and perfumes vary so greatly for both men and women, the Christian needs to be wise in purchasing that which is necessary without being extravagant.

Jewelry was widely used in Old Testament times; but in the New Testament Paul reminds us that God would rather have us adorn ourselves with propriety, moderation and good works (1 Tim. 2:9-10). Those we come in contact with should remember us for these things, not

for the jewelry we wear. Peter affirms this when he says that our jewelry should be “the ... ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Pet. 3:4). In other words, he stresses modesty and the beauty of the inner person. Should this not be the jewelry, or ornamentation, we are really concerned about wearing?

There is a growing trend today towards more jewelry for men. The Christian man needs to be particularly cautious not to attract attention to himself by wearing multiple rings, bracelets, necklaces and even ear rings. Again, the question needs to be asked, “Why am I wearing this? Do I really need it? What will the Lord think?”

Another current consideration is the increased marketing of jewelry associated with the occult. Christians should be careful not to purchase any jewelry fashioned with signs or symbols that are linked to the devil, witchcraft and the New Age movement. Some examples are: the upside down cross, the number 666, pentagrams, a goat's head, astrological signs and the all-seeing eye. Wearing this type of jewelry and saying that “it doesn't really mean anything to me,” or even wearing it through ignorance,



can still allow Satan to hinder our testimony before the world (1 Th. 5:22; 2 Cor. 6:17).

WHAT ABOUT HAIR?

Current trends in hair styles have departed much from the guidelines which God sets forth in these words: "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her" (1 Cor. 11:14-15). According to this verse it is shameful for men, but glorious for women to have long hair. The emphasis here, as with clothing, is on the distinction between the sexes.

Regardless of the society, the culture, the customs or the current styles, a man should always be distinguishable as a man by his short hair, and a woman should be distinguishable as a woman by her long hair, at least to the extent that is naturally possible. While there are no absolute standards set forth about how long is long, God knows; and people can generally readily observe whether or not we are seeking to please our Lord or simply to conform to the world's fashions in the matter of our hair length or style.

CONCLUSION

Following current trends for the sake of style or convenience, at the expense of the Lord's desires as revealed in the Bible, hinders our

spiritual growth and does not enhance our testimony for Christ. However, sensitivity to the Lord's will in these areas can lead to increased blessing and usefulness. His word, as expressed in 1 Samuel 2:30, is still true today: "Those who honor Me I will honor."

We must remember that we are not under law as a rule of life (Acts 15; Gal. 3:5; Col. 2). It should be each believer's desire to walk in a way that pleases the Lord. His standards should become our standards in all things. We should avoid giving offense or causing others to stumble by our manner of dress, adornment or hair length/style (Rom. 14:21).

At the same time we must not become dogmatic in these areas, but through our consistent, good example and words of encouragement, allow individual convictions to form. God has not appointed any of us to serve as the conscience for another. However, he has instructed His servants to "not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition" (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

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