

POWER

“the gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16)

The Role of Culture in Clothing

One of the biggest difficulties in trying to understand proper modesty in clothing is to determine the role that culture plays in determining what is or is not modest. In some Middle Eastern cultures, it is considered immodest for a woman to be seen in public without being fully covered from head to toe. In some tropical cultures, the typical clothing (if any is worn at all) is merely a loincloth. **Culture often plays a large role in what people actually wear, but that doesn't mean that God approves of it.**

As you will see from some of our other articles, we can glean from the clothing of the first man and woman that in God's sight the tunic is acceptable, while the loincloth is not acceptable. This principle goes back to the beginning of mankind and can be considered universal, regardless of the culture. Louis Rushmore properly stated, “There is a sense in which *modesty* is not variable. God's Word does not change.” God has clearly set a minimum standard that applies to all of mankind regardless of their culture. **Thus, culture cannot be used as an excuse to override God's specific commands or examples.**

Once the minimum standards of decency have been met, culture appears to play an important role. Within a cultural setting, there may be certain clothing that properly covers the body but is still considered immodest. For example, if in a certain culture only harlots carried a red purse, then it would be immodest for a woman to carry a red purse due to the message that carrying it sends to those around her. However, in a culture where there is no stigma attached to red purses, carrying one would be totally acceptable. **So culture may add to God's standard of modesty, but cannot take away from the “minimum standards” that He has commanded.**

THUS, CULTURE CANNOT BE USED AS AN EXCUSE TO OVERRIDE GOD'S SPECIFIC COMMANDS OR EXAMPLES

Another aspect of modesty in dress where culture plays a major role is in determining what is or is not excessive or gaudy. Styles can vary widely from culture to culture and sometimes even from community to community within a culture. The apparel that is considered common in a wealthy community could be considered excessive in a poorer community. Culture should be allowed to determine what is considered excessive and what is not. However, there appears to be an absolute limit upon which to base our understanding – **apparel must not be an overwhelming feature of a person, regardless of culture.** Thus, if a culture were to accept as “normal” styles that would overshadow every woman's inward beauty, one would have to break from that style. However, I believe that Louis Rushmore made an appropriate comment when he stated, “The modern day problem over *modesty* is not primarily the putting on apparel, but the taking off apparel or clothes.”

We must be sure not to let our view of culture (i.e. fashion) override our understanding of God's basic principles. Some have made the excuse that immodest clothing is “all that

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JULY 26 - 30, 2015

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Sunday, July 26

- 9:30 am - 10:30 am Jesus: A Case Study of Reproving, Rebuking, and Exhorting..... Glenn Hitchcock
- 10:30 am - 11:30 am 2 Timothy 4:2 – An Overview Robert Jefferies
- 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm Christian Relationships: Getting Past the Superficial and into Deeper Relationships.....B.J. Clarke

Monday, July 27

- 9:00 am - 10:00 am Preaching the Word with All Authority – Titus 2:15 Gary Colley
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am Developing an Atmosphere Conducive to Growth in the Local Congregation Mike Hixson
- 1:00 am - 12:00 pm Preaching Only Positive Sermons Kills Congregations..... Lane Dix
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Matthew 18 – Going to a Brother in Sin without Gossiping..... Dan Cates
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm Teaching with Meekness – 1 Peter 3:15 Clifton Angel
- Ladies — 2:00 pm Training Up My Children Without Provoking Them to Wrath..... Becky Honeycutt
- 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Making Christianity Attractive..... Joe Wells

Tuesday, July 28

- 9:00 am - 10:00 am A Case Study of Barnabas..... Chad Dollahite
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am Eli: A Case Study in Failing to Discipline Children Eric Lyons
- 11:00 am - 12:00 pm How God Chastises His Children – Hebrews 12:7-11 Rob Whitacre
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Training Up My Child in an Anti-Spanking World Kevin Rutherford
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm “As Many as I Love” (Revelation 3:19): The Proper Motivation for Reproof..... Jim Dearman
- Ladies — 2:00 pm “Angry Words, O Let Them Never.....” Sheri Blackwell
- 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Preaching on the “Taboo” Topics: Modesty, Morality, and Mixed Swimming..... Cliff Goodwin

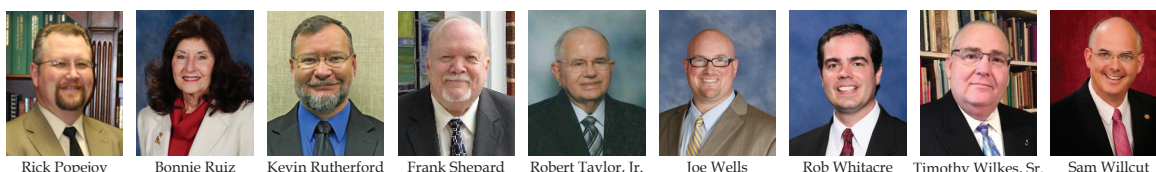
Wednesday, July 29

- 9:00 am - 10:00 am Death and Life are in the Power of the Tongue Proverbs 18-21 Bill Irby
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am Preaching Against Sin: Homosexuality Ben Giselbach
- 1:00 am - 12:00 pm If Your Brother Sins Against You, Rebuke Him Luke 17:3..... Sam Willcutt
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Overcoming Negativity and Learning to be an Encourager Frank Shepard
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm The Hateful Rebuker – Rebuking with Love Without Compromise..... Neal Pollard
- Ladies — 2:00 pm “Setting My Husband Straight” – Dealing with a Husband with a Sin Problem Kathy Pollard
- 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Am I “Shepherd-able”? Submitting to the Authority of Elders..... Eric Owens

Thursday, July 30

- 9:00 am - 10:00 am When It’s My Toes: When the Rebuke Applies to Me Phillip Hines
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am Church Discipline: How to Do It Successfully – Proper Motivations, Methods for Winning Back Souls, etc... Timothy Wilkes, Sr.
- 11:00 am - 12:00 pm Rebuking: Is it Sinful to Call Names? Must I Go Privately to a Public False Teacher? Rick Popejoy
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Elders Must Have Backbone – Titus 1:9 Tony Lawrence
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm A Soft Answer Turns Away Wrath Steve Higginbotham
- Ladies — 2:00 pm How God Encourages His Children – “Comfort Scriptures” Bonnie Ruiz
- 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm A Case Study of Paul: Knowing the Difference Between Matters of Judgment and Doctrine (Acts 15 vs Galatians 2)..... Robert Taylor, Jr.

Ladies’ Classes will be held in the Fellowship Hall



I can find.” Such is not the case, as can easily be seen through numerous internet-based businesses that specialize in modest apparel. Each person must realize that the clothing that they wear is a decision that they make. **If one chooses to shop at stores that carry only immodest clothing and chooses to purchase and wear that clothing, they are responsible for their choices.** I believe that Daniel Botkin well summarized this sad choices of some when he said, “The Lord of Hosts has established certain standards of dress and appearance for the people in His army, and these standards are neglected by a great number of Christians today.”

Footnotes:

- 1 In a similar manner, Jesus taught (Matthew 19:3-12) about God’s timeless design for marriage by referring back to Genesis 1-2. Likewise, when Paul taught about the relationship between man and woman (I Corinthians 11:8-9, I Timothy 2:13-14) by referring back to the creation order given in Genesis 2.
- 2 Rushmore, Louis, “Modesty: Biblical Investigation, Contemporary Application” – emphasis in original
- 3 Rushmore, Louis, “Modesty: Biblical Investigation, Contemporary Application” – emphasis in the original
- 4 Examples of such web sites would include:
WWW.MODESTCLOTHES.COM and WWW.MODESTAPPARELUSA.COM.

Bibliography

Rushmore, Louis, “Modesty: Biblical Investigation, Contemporary Application”, [HTTP://WWW.BIBLE-INFONET.ORG/BIN/FEATUREARTICLES/LIVING/MODESTY.HTM](http://WWW.BIBLE-INFONET.ORG/BIN/FEATUREARTICLES/LIVING/MODESTY.HTM)

Botkin, Daniel, “The Outward Appearance of God’s People: Does It Matter?” [HTTP://MESSIANICPUBLICATIONS.COM/DANIEL-BOTKIN/THE-OUTWARD-APPEARANCE-OF-GODS-PEOPLE/](http://MESSIANICPUBLICATIONS.COM/DANIEL-BOTKIN/THE-OUTWARD-APPEARANCE-OF-GODS-PEOPLE/)

“Summer Is Here!”

by Heath Stapleton

I remember a bulletin article or sermon someone preached years ago, and the title was “Summer Is Here, And The Clothes Fell Off.” How true and unfortunate that is. Back in 1999, Becky and I came back to America for her to give birth to William. It had been a while since we were in America. I’ll never forget one of the first things that jumped out at me: The clothing! Or the lack of clothing. It is not like I had not seen immodest clothing before; but we had gone three years or so without seeing immodesty, and when we did, it was like, “Can you believe they are wearing that?” It was not too long ago in Tanzania where they would stone young women for wearing jeans; or if they saw a young woman in even loose jeans, they assumed the worst about her. The men still always wear pants and shirts. A man never wears shorts of any type. And by the way, this is on the equator, where it is really, really hot and dry. The women always dressed with a blouse and a long “kanga,” a wrap that covered them down to their ankles. Then you imagine, living there for years where the most skin you might see on a woman is her neck, face, arms, ankles and feet, to traveling 24 hours, then landing in Dallas in September. Wow! “Becky, did you see that?”

Could it be that so many dress immodestly in America today because we have grown accustomed to seeing this sin, that we no longer blush, and it no longer bothers us, so we have accepted this as the norm and do the same? But even if that is the case and society accepts a certain style or type of clothing, and even if we feel what people are wearing today is acceptable, all of that still doesn’t change what God thinks! I mean some people believe there is no God. It still doesn’t change that God is, and what He thinks. But pertaining to modesty, as in all things, God has not left us without witness.

First, in Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve sinned, they realized they were naked, and they fashioned some clothes. These clothes probably covered nothing more than modern day swimsuits, but they were content wearing these clothes before each other; and being husband and wife, the case can be made, that is fine. It is husband and wife. But when another came into the picture, they ran because what they deemed appropriate between them was no longer appropriate in the eyes of another. Then God decided to visit them, and they hid. And God asked, “Why are you hiding?” And they responded, because we are naked. Then in 3:21 we read that God made them coats and “clothed them.” He taught them from the beginning what He determines to be modest.

Secondly, in Exodus 28, God was instructing Moses on the clothing for priests. God said in Exodus 28:42, “You shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh. They shall reach from the hips to the thighs.” Now, these were

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men. It is clear God is not referencing women here; but it goes without saying that if God considers it nakedness for men to show their thighs, the same would be true for women.

Thirdly, In Isaiah 47, Isaiah was prophesying about the destruction of Babylon. He describes it as a virgin trying to escape through a river (verses 2-3). God declared that her nakedness would be revealed. How? 1) Her veil would be removed. 2) Her robe would be removed. 3) Her legs would be uncovered. The result is uncovered legs, in God's eyes, is nakedness.

There is a clear, consistent pattern throughout the Bible that anything showing above the knees is considered nakedness. So it's summer time. It is going to get hot. People are going to say, it is so hot, we must take off our clothes. Really? Or is that just an excuse to wear what you want to wear? I have lived in a land hotter and drier than this, a land where all men still wear pants and shirts and all the women still cover themselves as God intends, and they don't melt away.

This summer, let's not allow catalogs, web-sites, or society to say what is acceptable to wear. Let's ask God what He thinks, and find the answers in His Word.

POWER from the ORIGINAL

MODEST WITH SHAMEFACEDNESS

by Daniel F. Cates

Modesty is one of many Biblical concepts which has been thrust to the wayside by popular culture in many western cultures; as a result, clothing which would in past days make even beachcombers blush is now seen in malls, offices, and even worship assemblies. While man's view of modesty has certainly become more lax through the years--especially since the 1960s, equally certain is the fact that God's view of modesty, and His guidelines, have not changed. Moreover, God's view is not merely a censure of scant clothing; it is also one of any clothing designed to attract undue attention to one's own self. A study of three Greek words in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 can help give great insight into the mind of God on the matter of modesty: "modest," "shamefacedness," and "becometh."

The apparel women [contextually, these women are contrasted with the men of 1 Timothy 2:8, but the principle can fittingly be applied to the men's dress as well] are to wear is to be "modest." The word "modest" is from a Greek word which in this form is used only twice in Scripture--the other being a chapter over where it is translated "behaviour" in describing one of the qualifications of elders (1 Tim. 3:2). This word in its more familiar form is used 188 times. The forms are κόσμιος (kosmios) and κόσμος (kosmos), respectively. The latter is usually translated "world," but it means "orderly arrangement"¹ [which in another study is a great line of thought for the teleological, or design, argument for the existence of God]. That idea is included in its former use as a term for modesty; that is, modest dress is orderly, neat, not drawing any attention due to its want of order.

Women are to wear this apparel with "shamefacedness," literally, "without looking." The word here is αἰδώς (aidos), a Greek compound of the negating α (alpha) and the Greek verb εἶδω (eido) which means to see. This is a worship context; therein, the woman's face is to exhibit, as James Strong worded it, "(through the idea of downcast eyes); bashfulness, that is, (towards men), modesty or (towards God) awe."² The attention in that setting is not to be on the woman--or for that matter even on the man, but is to be upon God as the object of worship. In modern terms, the worship assembly is not a runway for modeling the latest fashions. The only other use of this word in Scripture is in Hebrews 12:28, wherein service to God is with this "reverence."

The attention-drawing dress of the woman will not be her physical garb, but her action as one obedient to God, "which becometh women professing godliness." "Becometh" is the third important word for this short study. It is πρέπω (prepo), meaning "to be becoming, seemly, fit"³ or appropriate or suitable. The woman's outfit should be suited to the task at hand, here it is worship. Her outfit should look like one that someone would worship in; otherwise, she will draw undue attention to herself for not wearing something which is fitting for the situation.

Can these three principles apply beyond the context of worship? Yes, indeed. All of God's children should be as orderly, humble, and fitting as any situation demands, and these attributes should be reflected in their dress.

References

- ¹ "G2889," James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, (1890), the electronic edition used is Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries in e-Sword 10.3.0.
- ² "G127," Strong.
- ³ "G4241," Thayer's Greek Definitions, electronic edition in e-Sword 10.3.0.

BRINGING OUT THE RULER...AGAIN

by Rob L. Whitacre

Summer will be here before we know it and the temptation to wear immodest clothing will be stronger than ever. Parents will be tested in the department stores and in their own homes as they battle a culture that has no problem with public nakedness. Even worse, compromise, watered down preaching, and just plain ignorance has filled churches of Christ on the subject of modesty. While some are backing down, we are calling on Christians to bring out the Ruler and teach their children about the shame of public nakedness and the need for modest attire.

Modesty is a Bible topic. Since the very beginning of time, God has spoken about how He desires His people to be clothed. Adam and Eve clothed themselves with fig leaves and hid from God because they were “naked.” In response, God made “coats of skins” to cover them. The Hebrew word for “Coats” is **Ore** and it means a covering from the shoulder to the knee. God pays attention to our clothing or lack thereof! Naked(ness) is mentioned no less than 100 times in the Scriptures. God has plenty to say on this topic, if we are willing to listen.

There are several myths about modesty that need to be dispelled. First, modesty is not determined by style, culture or society. Since we have established that modesty is a Bible subject, we must use this as our sole standard of authority (II Timothy 3:16-17). Second, modesty is not a matter of personal preference. What I “think” or “feel” is modest or immodest is not relevant. Did not Solomon pen, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12)? Third, modesty is not abrogated due to special situations. Weddings, beaches, lakes, parties, vacations, sports, or recreation do not permit one to display public nakedness. If you chose to change your clothes to accommodate a changing venue, please don’t take off your Christianity. Jesus has all authority under Heaven and Earth (Matthew 28:19) and he is always watching!

The standard for modest dress must be understood in the light of the following principles. First, godly attire always covered the thighs of a man and woman (Exodus 28:40-43; Isaiah 47:1-3). Second, God calls the exposure of one’s breasts nakedness (Ezekiel 16:7-8). Third, the uncovering of the buttocks is a shame (Isaiah 20:4). Clothing must cover our nakedness at all times. Moses admonished Israel,

“Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon” (Exodus 20:26). What might be modest while standing or walking may be immodest while sitting or bending.

The New Testament writers admonish ladies to be “discreet and chaste” and to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety...” (Titus 2:5; I Timothy 2:9). This admonition is directed to ladies because men are normally stimulated by what they see and not how they feel. The word “modesty” means to arrange in an orderly manner. The word, “shamefacedness” means to retain the ability to blush. If you are comfortable with looking at the nakedness of others or displaying your own nakedness in public, you have lost your ability to blush, and should be ashamed (Jeremiah 6:15). Before Peter went to see the Lord he first had to “girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,)...” (John 21:7). Although Peter had his inner garment on, he still had to wear his outer “coat” before leaving the privacy of the boat and meet the Lord on the public beach. Water and sand do not excuse your nakedness!

The surest way to determine if what I am wearing is modest is to bring out the Ruler. Paul said, “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (Colossians 3:15). Would I walk down the street in this outfit with my Lord? Would what I am wearing invite others to stumble (Luke 17:1-2)? Is what I am wearing in harmony with purity, honesty, goodness, virtue, love, and praise (Philippians 4:8)? Is my outfit form fitted therefore drawing attention to those areas of the body God want’s covered? Remember, fornication begins in the boardroom and not the bedroom (Matthew 5:28)!

I remember the old time preachers saying, “Don’t advertise what you don’t want to sell.” Instead of advertising our flesh, let’s advertise our Lord. Our dress is a reflection of our heart. It applies in every situation, including worship and Bible study. Strapless tops, low cut blouses, skin tight clothing, and short-shorts have no place in the life of a Christian. May we take great care and respect for our bodies by clothing them with purity and chastity. The pleasing sight of a man and woman are left to the holy institution of marriage (Hebrews 13:4).



POWER from the PAST

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FAIR WEATHER CHRISTIANS

by David Powell

As spring and summer approach and God clothes the earth in appropriate colors, something strange happens: people begin to unclad to an inappropriate degree. This includes many who call themselves Christians.

In times past, the Lord's church spoke out against mixed bathing, shorts, and immodest dress. But today it seems we have adopted the world's standards of "moral dress" when we should be teaching them moral standards from the Bible! Do we only dress as a Christian should when the weather is foul?

Some claim they can wear "decent" swimsuits and not have indecent thoughts toward those who are illclad. I question their judgement on both accounts. In 2 Samuel 11:1-5, we have the story of David and Bathsheba. David saw her bathing. This led to adultery, an illegitimate child, lying, murder, and the death of their child. Now, please explain to me how harmless is our "American" tradition of observing "a little skin." David was not a "dirty, old man" but "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). Which one of us men is going to claim to be stronger than that? What happened? David found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time and didn't flee. Read about Joseph in Genesis 39. Many brethren are seeking for such places to go, rather than avoiding them. A porno magazine would cause a brother to blush and yet he will participate in the old American pastime of undressing in public.

Sin takes a little time to get used to but after a while it doesn't bother one at all. Jeremiah said, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed, nor did they know how to blush" (Jeremiah 8:12). This was spoken to false teachers, and they hated Jeremiah for teaching the truth.

Are we, by example, teaching truth when we "aid and abet" the world in immoral dress? We are false teachers when we soothe the world's conscience in its sin. Let God set the standards, not the fashion designers!

Isaiah says nakedness is a shame and "uncovering the thigh" (Isa. 47:2,3). Jesus said, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Some try to get just as close as possible and yet avoid sin. In Bible times, exposing one's undergarments was considered nakedness. Could you imagine going to church in your underwear? Then how can you wear even less during the summer and call it decent? I know how: "woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (Isaiah 5:20,21). Perhaps you've noticed that I've quoted quite a bit from the prophets. Their message wasn't popular then and it is even less popular today. Will you also cast stones at them and deny their message? Will you also say, "Do not prophesy to us right things; speak deceits" (Isaiah 30:10)?

Friends, I tell you these things, not to ruin your fun, but because I love your souls! Christians, enjoy the summer, dress modestly, swim when it won't compromise your Christianity, but always put God first in every single thing you do. And please don't ever lose the ability to blush.

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