



Christians should be sensitive to those around us *“to please his neighbor for his good to edification.”* (Romans 15:2) The mentality of “dress to impress”, can simply be nothing more than an “I” problem revealing a problem with our focus—on us, rather than the Lord. To do so, can easily foster partiality among believers (James 2) and serve selfish interests and is contrary to the attitude which is content to simply have food and raiment. Consider the Lord Jesus, who though He was the Lord of Glory, who in a figurative sense *“laid aside His garments”* (John 13:4) and humbly walked among us, not clothed in brilliant apparel but identifying with the common man. Modest and inexpensive dress will offend far less people and can serve to broaden the scope of our ministry among Christians and non-Christians alike.

Many Christians in agreement that we should not follow the world’s fashions can actually err in the opposite direction. Citing the example of Elijah and John the Baptist who were identified by their rough garb (2 Kings 1, Matt. 3) they feel that anything else is “flashy” and worldly. But to this perspective can easily be countered by the example of the servants of King Solomon (1 Kings 10). When the Queen of Sheba conducted her expedition to investigate the claims of Solomon, there were a few things that she noted

about his kingdom that literally took her breath away. Among them was the *“meat on his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel...”* (v. 5). Their character and their clothing reflected well on their king and on the great standing and privileges that they possessed. It caused her to proclaim *“Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants who stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom”* (v. 8). Likewise, our attitude and appearance by the way we dress displays our gratitude to the One who is a “greater than Solomon” who has raised us up and made us to sit in “heavenly places”.

Taste in dress among believers can vary greatly. But if we allow these basic principles presented to us in God’s Word to guide our way, most certainly it will bring glory to God. Whether we come together to worship Him or go out to represent Him in this world, we have the wonderful privilege to show ourselves a pattern of good works and in a tangible way the change that Christ has wrought in our lives by our dress and demeanor. *“How can we give Him less than to give Him our best?”*

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# Adorning the Doctrine of God

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*“In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works... not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they [you] may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” Titus 2:7,10z*

Although the Scriptures do not give explicit instructions as to a specific dress code for Christians, it does provide us with a few basic principles that should be taken into account before we choose what clothes we wear. Well-meaning, but ignorant believers attempting to codify these principles have run into problems trying to do so, forgetting the span of history and the diversity of cultures that represent Christ across the globe. Whether in the meeting or in the marketplace, our style of dress as much as our words and actions can reflect our inward attitude toward the things of the Lord—and toward others.



One very clear principle that is upheld in Scripture regarding dress is that of modesty. Dress and clothing styles can differ greatly among communities of believers worldwide, but modesty is an identifiable standard that is understood by all. The Apostle Paul in speaking to the older women in Christ, charged them to instruct the younger women to be “discreet” and “chaste” (Titus 2:5) – a concern that must have surely included their outward adorning. No doubt it was an issue then, as it is now in a day in which

the fashion industry pushes relentlessly against the borders of moral decency. In Proverbs 7, King Solomon makes reference to the dress of the strange woman who is characterized as having the “*attire of an harlot*”, a further reminder that the Lord draws a distinction between right and wrong clothing standards. Believers (both men and women) need to make sure that they do not adopt the world’s standards in dress and appearance, which have become increasingly salacious and mainstream in recent years. Rev. 18 cites that one segment of Babylon that will be judged for its widespread wickedness is the fashion industry (v. 12), which has profited immensely from its anti-Christian influence in the world. It gives a different slant on the words of the Apostle Paul when he said to the Corinthians: “*the fashion of the world passeth away*” (1 Cor. 7:31). Modesty in dress is not only honoring to the Lord but it affirms that we are changed people who are not to be conformed to this world, (Romans 12:2) but to be set apart from it. And older saints, who have through the years learned this important truth, need to be sensitive to younger ones in the meeting who have recently come out of “Egypt” and are just beginning to learn the implications of the believer’s sanctification.

Further, Scripture also teaches that over attention to dress should never characterize the saints. In writing to believing wives married to unsaved husbands (1 Peter 3), the Apostle Peter urged them to not put undue emphasis upon their outward appearance, but on “*the hidden man of the heart*”, the inward person whose true character is being observed constantly by the Lord. (1 Samuel 16:7) To do so, is simply self-occupation and a misplaced emphasis on the true issues of life. Rather, to cultivate godly character by

yielding to the Holy Spirit is what will bring forth fruit that is pleasing to God and is among the few things that are great in the sight of the Lord (1 Peter 3:4). It is what the husbandman waits for while He tarries – “*the precious fruit of the earth*” (James 5:7). In a day in which there is a heavy emphasis on “looks” and far less on character, it is incumbent upon Christians to make sure that character is the brightest thing we have that shines. In short, more emphasis should be put on radiating Christ than on impressing those around us by our dress. A visiting servant of the Lord felt he was having difficulty reaching the audience to whom he was preaching. When he asked a wise brother who labored in that region what the reason might be, he explained to him that the gold fob that hung from his vest pocket was a hindrance to that group of Christians, many of whom were poverty-stricken.

