

GOD'S STANDARD FOR DRESS



- ◆ What Does God Say About Dress?
- ◆ Does It really make a difference what we wear?
- ◆ Does it make a difference what we believe?
- ◆ How to make the right decisions when buying clothes.
- ◆ Answers to statements like, “I’m not convicted about it yet,” and “Only legalist’s preach dress standards.”

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GOD'S STANDARD OF DRESS

I. A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The subject of proper attire is one of the most controversial subjects among Christians today. It is a debate, no doubt, that every church must face. Either your church has taken a scriptural stand and has remained obedient to God's Word, or it has set a double standard, (that is, say one thing and practice another), or it has chosen to capitulate to the world, while using the excuse, "We don't want to make dress an issue." I have heard this excuse as well as many others. Therefore, I have written this booklet, not to answer the myriad of excuses offered but rather to present the whole counsel of God on the subject of dress.

The Bible tells us to . . . *sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15)*. Therefore we all must know what the Scriptures have to say concerning this subject. However, before we delve into the Word, let us consider a formidable obstacle that always rears its head at the first sign of dress standards. It is unfortunate that we must deal with this problem, but deal we must, if we are to make any spiritual headway.

What is this formidable problem? Paul calls it—carnality. *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)*.

One of the signs of an immature or carnal Christian is that he does not follow the command found in **2 Timothy 2:15** which says, *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* He remains immature and stunted in his Christian life. The Christian life must be one of constant growth. Otherwise there will be stagnation, and the stench of stagnation will be manifest in bickering, battling, and backbiting .

Peter calls this type of Christian nearsighted. *And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins, 2 Peter 1:5-9.* The *knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ* (vs. 8), is acquired through spiritual growth (vss. 5-7), and spiritual growth is acquired through studying, and obeying the Word.

Another sign of an immature Christian is that he ignores certain biblical subjects. He makes statements like, "That's your interpretation," "I disagree with you." Or, "Didn't they all wear dresses back then?" When you ask him for his interpretation, he disgustedly gives a short discourse that has no scriptural base whatsoever. And instead of admitting he has not made an exhaustive study on the subject, he'll cry "legalist!" This, once again shows his ignorance, because a legalist is one who adds to salvation (for example, salvation by grace plus baptism or salvation by grace plus communion, etc.).

This type of Christian needs to confess one of two sins. (1) The sin of laziness. He is too lazy to search the Bible to find God's mind on the subject, and/or (2) he is too proud to admit that maybe he has been wrong.

I trust that you will not be guilty of either of these sins, but that you will diligently search, study, and secure biblical truth with which to base all of your decision. Obedience pleases God. Excuse making displeases God.

WHY DID GOD CLOTHE ADAM AND EVE?

There are a couple of reasons why God clothed Adam and Eve. The first logical reason was to cover their nakedness. *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. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself (**Genesis 3:7-10**).*

God's Way

We can conclude from these verses that God does not condone nakedness. Nakedness is a shame in the eyes of God. Therefore, should it not be a shame for our eyes as well? Of course it should.

The first question that comes to mind is, "Why did Adam and Eve try to cover themselves? Were they ashamed to see each other?" No. Nakedness is perfectly acceptable **only** in the bonds of marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:4 *The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.*

Hebrews 13:4 *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

They did not want God to see their nakedness. So what did they do? They tried to cover up their nakedness by sewing together fig leaves to make an apron. Let's look at the difference between an apron (Genesis 3:7) and a coat (Genesis 3:21).

The Hebrew word for "**apron**" is the word "*chagowr*," which is translated "girdle" three times, "apron" one time, "armor" one time, and "gird" one time in the Old Testament. Strong's Concordance gives the following definition: 1) girdle, belt. 2) girdle, loin-covering, belt, loin-cloth, armor. Therefore we see that it is a partial covering of the waste and hips.

The Hebrew word for "**coat**" is "*kethoneth*," which is taken from an unused root meaning "to cover." It is translated "coat" 23 times, "garment" 5 times, and "robe" 1 time. Strong's gives this definition: 1) tunic, under-garment. 1a) a long shirt-like garment.

This definition tells us that a coat was a complete covering of the upper and lower parts of the body. Needless to say, it is obvious to note that there is a great difference between what man thought would be adequate to cover his nakedness and with what God finally covered him. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know the difference between a coat and an apron. A coat covers the entire body down past the knees (Don't confuse it with a jacket which goes to the waste.) An apron only covers the front part of the body from the waste down to the middle of the thighs (girdle, loin-covering).

Having studied the difference between these two words, we see that God wants us to cover our bodies. Consequently, it is a shame to uncover our nakedness. Since God clothed Adam and Eve to cover their shame, then we must conclude that God is interested in our attire. **Revelation 3:18** *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. . . .*

Matthew 6:30 *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

If God condoned nudity, then why would He want to clothe us? The implication is that God will see to it that we have clothing to wear. God gave us the principle of covering our bodies as a covering for shame. **Revelation 16:15** *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

Ezekiel 16:8,10 *Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. . . . 10 I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.*

If God wants us to cover our bodies, then we can logically conclude that nakedness is not of God. In Exodus chapter 32, Moses went up on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments.

While he was gone, the people became restless and demanded that Aaron make them a god to worship. **Exodus 32:7** *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They were worshipping Satan, and demon worship always leads people to disrobe themselves.*

Exodus 32:19, 25-26 *And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: . . . 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.*

THERE IS A RIGHT WAY AND A WRONG WAY TO DRESS.

In Luke chapter 8 we see that demon possession leads to nakedness.

Luke 8:27 *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.*

Satan's Way

One group is dancing to demons (Exodus 32), and the other is demon possessed (Luke 8), and both are found naked. Nakedness is Satan's plan. But God wants us to be clothed. Now let's define nakedness according to the Bible. I say that we will define nakedness according to the Bible because there are too many man-made definition being propagated today. What better source to glean answers than from the Word of God which is forever settled in heaven (Psalms 119:89). God has never changed His mind about sin. *For I am the LORD, I change not . . . (Malachi 3:6). Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever (Hebrews 13:8).*

God set the standard in the Garden of Eden. Man thought he could cover his nakedness with an apron. But God said, "No, that's not enough. I want you to wear these coats. I want your body covered." In **Isaiah 47:1-3** we see that God is more specific with women. *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. 2 Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. 3 Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man.*

God says, *Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen*, when, the thigh is uncovered. Although I am not a medical doctor, I do know a little about human anatomy. No one would argue that the thigh starts at the hip bone and goes to the knee bone. "Each lower paired appendage is composed of a thigh, leg, and foot. The thigh is built upon the femur, a large heavy bone that connects the hipbone to the

tibia of the leg. The joint between the femur and tibia is provided with some protection by the patella (kneecap), which is embedded in the tendon of the large thigh muscles (quadriceps).” *Copyright - 1993 Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc.*

God does not want the thigh of the woman to be uncovered. In God's eyes it is considered nakedness. It doesn't take a lawyer to figure out what type of clothing that would eliminate—anything that DOES NOT COVER THE THIGH DOWN TO THE KNEE! It is not the will of God for us to be unclothed, and it is not the will of God for us to see each other unclothed, except in the privacy of marriage. “You're not talking about family members, are you Pastor?” What does the Bible say?

Leviticus 18:6-17 *None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD. 7 The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. 8 The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness. 9 The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. 10 The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness. 11 The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. 12 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman. 13 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she is thy mother's near kinswoman. 14 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt. 15 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law: she is thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. 16 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness. 17 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness.*

It is a shame when family members run around the home in various states of nudity. They become desensitized to it and are no longer ashamed of being naked. You may not agree with this but the Bible is going to stand no matter what you believe. I truly believe that the main reason that incest runs rampant in our land is because we have closed our eyes to the principles and commands of the Bible.

Let's get back to the Book and live according to it.

II. A PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Let me say from the outset that I believe that more people have left churches over the subject of dress than over any other subject. This subject will bring out rebellion in a person faster than anything else that I know. You see, God's Word says that we are to submit to Him. *But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (James 4:6-10).*

Submission is obedience to God's Word. Disobedience is rebellion to His Word. God blesses those who are obedient and judges those who are rebellious.

We see that God does not want us to uncover our nakedness, except within the bound of

marriage. Let me make a practical application of this biblical principle. Unfortunately, this is where many preachers fail. Typically, they will set forth what the Bible says but refuse to apply it to our everyday lives, for fear that someone may get offended.

First of all, let me say that since I will be preaching what the Bible says, I trust that you will receive the Word with gladness. That is with an attitude of obedience.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

To receive the Word is to obey God's Word. Obedience is one of the signs of a Christian who is right with God. We must keep in mind that God blesses obedience to His Word. I'm talking about the kind of obedience that comes from within. I'm talking about obedience that originates from the heart. God knows our heart's attitude. Therefore God is not pleased with just outward conformity. He looks beyond that to our heart. . . . *for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart, (1 Samuel 16:7).*

Secondly, with that in mind we also must realize that conviction has very little to do with obedience. The carnal Christian will use the excuse that he is not convicted about a certain area.

But wrong is wrong and right is right no matter what we believe. God's Word never changes and the consequences of disobedience will never change, whether we are convicted or not.

Let me explain. A person may say, "I don't see anything wrong with mixed swimming. I'm not convicted about it yet." Does this person's lack of conviction make the Word of God void? No! God still abhors nakedness. Nakedness is still wrong, no matter what a person believes.

Remember, God covered Adam and Eve's nakedness with a coat. He wanted the upper and lower parts of their bodies covered. It's God's will for us to cover our bodies, and it's Satan's will for us to uncover them.

Now let's look at what the Word says about dress. *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, (1 Timothy 2:9-10.)*

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: (1 Peter 3:3-5).

Why does Bible place more emphasis on women's apparel than on men's apparel? God made man to be physically attracted to woman. The sight of the female body attracts the lust of man (whether the man is saved or lost). Therefore, it is very important what girls and women wear. I know it is hard for women to understand this, but men are sexually turned on by the eye gate—what they see. This is substantiated by the multi-billion-dollar-a-year pornography business just in this country alone.

A. OUR TESTIMONY TO OTHERS

1. It Effects the Men Around You

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.

The common argument against this verse goes something like this: "If a man lusts after my

body then that's **his** fault, not mine.” Let's go back and look at the verse again. Notice in the last phrase of verse 28. It says that the man has committed adultery “**WITH**” her already in his heart. Therefore she had a part in it. Obviously she was either wearing very little clothing or she was wearing something that accented the outline of her body.

Any piece of clothing that accents the figure of a woman's body, or show portions of her body that only her husband should be allowed to see can cause any red-blooded male to lust after her.

I do not believe that any Christian lady (young or old) that is right with God, or any decent woman for that matter, would knowingly cause a man to lust after her but, unfortunately, it happens all the time. Why? Because we have become conditioned to nakedness, and the main culprit is the media. Then, to make matters worse, pastors refuse to preach about God's standard of dress for fear of being called old fashioned or out of date.

Is God's Word old fashioned or out of date? No! God covered Adam and Eve for a reason, and that reason still stands today!

2. It Effects the Younger Women and Girls Around You

Titus 2:3-5 The aged women likewise, that [they be] in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 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.

What we do in moderation, the next generation will do in excess. For example, thirty years ago (1960's) public schools had dress codes. Girls wore dresses and the boys wore dress pants and dress shirts. Today the standards are gone and practically anything goes.

Therefore we must keep our standards high for the next generation. Older women should set a godly example for the younger women: a 24-hour example; not just a 9-to-5 or Sunday morning example. Young people despise hypocrisy, but they will follow and respect those who practice what they preach. It's up to you older women to set a godly example.

The Bible tells us that women should wear that which is glorifying to God; *In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; . . . (which becometh women professing godliness)* **1 Tim. 2:9-10.**

Any piece of clothing that **accents** the figure of a woman's body, or show portions of her body that only her husband should be allowed to see can cause any red-blooded male to lust after her. That includes swimming suits and any type of clothing that is tight fitting; whether the clothing be dresses, blouses, skirts, pants, shorts, culottes, halter tops, or tank tops. Remember, God wants our nakedness covered. He used a garment that covered the top and bottom portion of Adam and Eve's bodies; therefore, when we uncover our shoulders and thighs we are uncovering our nakedness.

“But in the summer it gets hot!” Is that any reason to uncover your nakedness? Is that any reason to disobey the Word of God? When are we going to stop letting the world set our standard of godliness (or should I say the lack of godliness). I'm talking to the Christian at this point, for the world has no idea what I'm talking about. This unsaved person cannot understand the things of God, for they are spiritually discerned. *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).*

God help us get back to His Word!

B. OUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD

In **Genesis 1:27** the Bible says, *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God*

created he him; male and female created he them. From this passage I see that God made two different kinds of humans, one male and one female. That may sound trite, but it is important. He created them with different emotions, different desires, and different physical make-ups. No matter what the world tries to tell us today, men and women are different.

Since Satan always tries to undo what God has done, is it any wonder that Satan is trying to erode this God-made difference? One of the ways that Satan is accomplishing his mission is by diluting God's standard of dress. God wants a difference between the sexes. This is God's will. In fact, God is so adamant in keeping a difference between man and woman that He calls it an abomination when we break down His standards.

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, (Deuteronomy 22:5).

Many Christians fall into the trap of the preacher who says that doesn't apply to us because of the context. Look at verses 9-12. They will say, "If we must obey verse five, then why shouldn't we have to obey these verses as well?"

"There were three different kinds of laws given to Israel in the Old Testament: dietary laws, ceremonial laws and moral Laws. . . .

Dietary laws restricted the items Israel was allowed to eat. . . .

Ceremonial laws were given to teach Israel spiritual lessons. Not that there was anything inherently evil in the prohibited practices, but Israel needed to learn some important Spiritual principles. For instance, **Deuteronomy 22:9,11** taught Israel the doctrine of separation. They were not to marry the heathen, nor accept their ways. This principle was carried over to the New Testament in **2 Corinthians 6:14**, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

Moral laws were prohibitions against practices contrary to the nature of God's holiness. Since God's nature has not changed, moral laws are still to be obeyed today. For instance, 'Thou shalt not kill' was a moral law. . .

How do we know that Deuteronomy 22:5 is part of the moral law of God? The answer is found in the verse: all that do so are abomination unto the LORD. Since God has not changed, that which was an abomination to Him 3000 years ago is still an abomination to Him today. . .¹

Dear Christian, Deuteronomy 22:5 cannot be ignored when deciding which clothes are right and wrong. Do not fall into the trap of "throwing the baby out with the bath water" by dropping all standards of dress. Were our forefathers wrong 50 to 100 years ago when they preached that there should be a difference between men and women? Either they were wrong or we are. God's principles never change! "Does that mean that we should dress like they did 100 years ago?" No. The Bible says that we should dress modestly. That is covering up our nakedness and not wearing clothes so tight as to accentuate the outline of our bodies.

Everyone of us will stand before God someday, and everyone of us will give an account as to our obedience and disobedience to God's Word. Therefore, let me ask you, "What will your decision be?" Will you continue to follow standards that are based on the world, or will you base your dress standards upon the Word of God? Remember, conviction has nothing to do with obedience. Just obey His Word, and you will never regret it!

¹ Allison, Mike. *Preaching Standards, Right or Wrong?* (Bible & Literature Missionary Foundation; Shelbyville, TN, 1984), pp. 45-46.

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