



HOLINESS

What does it mean?



parades on our public streets. Many authorities agree that this concentration of exposure of the body has contributed greatly to the serious problems of immorality that threaten the basic foundations of our homes and families. It has also been a cause in inviting serious sexual atrocities.

The worldly woman also makes a hobby of fashion crazes and style shows. She sets up a contest with her neighbors as to who owns the most expensive jewelry, who wears the latest clothes, and who has traveled the farthest to buy the latest creation. It makes for an interesting discussion over a cocktail, but it does not alleviate the serious problems and needs of a reeling world, which Christians are called upon to address with a Christ-like zeal to help desperate souls, both by their means and their consecration.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE

Moreover, the Scriptures teach a great difference between femininity and masculinity as to dress. "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" (Deut 22:5). The desire to emulate men in dress has seriously affected the fine and noble characteristics of womanhood. Often it takes a second glance to determine the sex of a woman today, due to the distorted and strange garments she wears and the close proximity of her attire to that of a man. The Scripture calls this practice an abomination unto God, or something God hates.

Perhaps some will say this standard has changed due to the inception of the age of grace introduced by Jesus Christ. But, this verse deals with moral law and with the nature of God, which never change, not with a ceremonial ritual fulfilled by Christ. Moreover, when the Apostle Peter wished to instruct Christian women about proper conduct, he used Sarah, the wife of Abraham, as his example (1 Peter 3:5). Thus, we are not out of order in this instance to use a verse of Scripture from the law. We rightfully go back over the years and learn a scriptural lesson that sharply rebukes the customs and practices of our day.

SCRIPTURAL GUIDELINES SUMMARIZED

Holy women of old, concentrated on adorning their spiritual life by developing the character of the heart. This is a major concentration and beautification the Christian woman. Thus, the Apostle Peter used the great dedication of women of another age to impress the woman of the first century with the need for the ornament or adornment of a meek and quiet spirit. By the same token, we are within reasonable and scriptural rights to insist that Christian women today heed the influential, sensible, and lively inspired advice of the apostles.

Here are the biblical guidelines concerning Christian example in dress for women:

1. Modesty
2. Moderation in cost

3. Inclination toward godliness (decency)
4. Avoidance of outward adornment
5. Shamefacedness and sobriety
6. Distinction between male and female

Here are the biblical guidelines concerning Christian example in dress for men:

1. Modesty
2. Distinction between male and female
3. Sobriety

The New Testament does not provide instructions expressly for men's clothing. Apparently immodest dress was not as much of a problem for men in those days, even though it often is today. However, in many instances it may well be said, "What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

The trend of indecent exposure is even having an impression on the male sex today. Comfort seems to be the overall objective instead of a cautious, considerate thought for decorum and dignity. But comfort can be achieved without some of the ridiculous, outlandish costumes now being displayed on our busy avenues.

We can honestly proclaim that the basic principles of godly appearance that apply to Christian women should also apply to men; namely moderation, elimination of ornamentation and costly finery, and distinction between male and female in hair and dress.



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Holiness involves both the inner man and the outer man (1 Cor 6:19-20; 1 Thess 5:23). We must perfect holiness by cleansing ourselves of filthiness both of the flesh and of the spirit (2 Cor 7:1). For example, lustful thoughts are as sinful as an act of adultery (Matt 5:27-28), and hatred is just as sinful as murder (1 Jn 3:15). Holiness, then, includes attitudes, thoughts, and spiritual stewardship on the other. One without the other is insufficient. Inward holiness will produce outward holiness, but the outward appearance of holiness is worthless without inward holiness. For example, a modest spirit will produce modest dress, but modest dress is of little value if it conceals a lustful heart.

Holiness or sanctification is not a means of earning salvation, but a result of salvation. As such, it comes by grace through faith. Holiness cannot be manufactured by words of the flesh, but must come as we submit to the leadership and control of the Holy Spirit. We are holy in a twofold sense. On the one hand, we receive an immediate sanctification (separation from sin) through the death of Christ when we are baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11, Heb 10:10). Good counts us holy by imputing Christ's righteousness to us. On the other hand, we must follow after and seek holiness (Heb 12:14). We must strive after holiness and receive the progressive work of sanctification. We are also called to be saints, sanctified, holy ones (1 Cor 1:2).

Early Baptists were at first grouped with the Puritans, but they began to organize separately in England in the 17th century. They too, adhered to holiness teaching. Some Baptist groups still remain quite conservative on holiness issues. For example, the Baptist Bible Fellowship opposes dancing, drinking, smoking, gambling, and going to the movies. In 1984, the Southern Baptist Convention admonished all members not to use tobacco or alcohol.

Many independent Baptists teach against worldly amusements, immodest dress, women wearing pants, and women cutting their hair. Sword of the Lord Publishers prints a number of books and booklets that deal with these issues, including John R. Rice's Amusements for Christians and Elizabeth Rice Hanford's, "Your Clothes Say it for You." Liberty Baptist College, founded by Jerry Falwell, has a dress and conduct code for its student body of over 4,000: "Men are not allowed to grow beards, mustaches, or to wear hair that touches their shirt collars or covers the tops of their ears. Women are expected to dress modestly. Students are not allowed to dance or attend movies."

Many times what we wear helps mold their expectations as well as our own. When a woman wears an immodest dress, she begins to think of herself as seductive and acts accordingly. Other people perceive her as provocative and treat her as such, which reinforces her behavior. In short, appearance both reflects and to a large degree determines what we are in the eyes of ourselves and others.

We must ask what practices of the time concerned God enough for Him to inspire this message. What clothing did

Paul have in mind when he warned against immodesty of dress? In a day when women wore robes to the ankle, what type of immodest dress existed? If Paul found immodest clothing in an age characterized by greater modesty clothing today to be immodest. Isaiah 47:2-3, God considered bearing the leg and uncovering the thigh to be shameful exposure of nakedness. God was concerned about modesty of dress in a day when even exposing the leg was considered immodest. This gives us a good idea as to what God would regard as the minimum standard of modesty, regards or culture.

The basic reason for modesty of dress is to subdue the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. The exposed body tends to arouse improper thoughts in both the wearer and the onlooker. To implement the purpose behind modest dress, the body should basically be covered, except for those parts which we must use openly for normal living. This suggests that clothes should cover our body. Reasonable guidelines, then, would be the hem of women's dresses/skirts should be to the back of the calf with no slits. Blouses should have 3/4 sleeves with a neckline to the collarbone. In addition, we should avoid very tight and thin clothing, wearing jewelry (1 Tim 2:8-9) and makeup, as well as piercings and tattoos (Lev 19:28). Since the primary effect of makeup is to highlight sex appeal, we reject makeup as immodest (Jer 4:30). A Christian woman should not wear slacks because they immodestly reveal the feminine contours of the upper leg, thigh, and hip. Lastly, swimming in mixed company is immodest.

To some degree modesty is culturally relative. We must certainly dress in a manner that would be considered modest for the occasion and in the judgement of our culture. For example, 19th century society considered it improper for a woman to expose any of her leg in public. Applying principles of Christian liberty, a Christian woman of that day should not have worn a knee-length dress, for this would have brought reproach upon her and the Lord. However, there must be a minimum of modesty that is absolute. Otherwise, if society condoned total nudity, Christians could walk around nude. If so, we could delete 1 Timothy 2:9 from the Bible because it would be irrelevant.

Finally, the heart must be modest and motives pure. Conduct, gestures, gait, body language, and speech must be modest. If a woman wants to, she can display her body immodestly and act seductively even in the most modest of dresses. We must never use dress to promote immodest conduct, and no degree of external modesty can cover-up an immodest, lustful spirit. A sign posted in an Orthodox Jewish district of Jerusalem provides an interesting definition of modesty for women's dress: "Passage permitted 'only' to women dressed modestly! Long dress, lower than knee length (no slacks). Long sleeves, beyond elbow length. Closed neckline," (National Geographic, July 1985, p. 30).

THE SCRIPTURES DECREE MODESTY IN DRESS

In ancient times, as throughout many countries today, a person's social rank could be determined by his dress. Similarly, dress is a significant measurement of Christian conduct and practice. Christians can often be identified as such by their outward appearance. Our people predicate their practices and beliefs upon the Bible. In baptism, we practice immersion in the name

of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Apostles did. We teach and preach the baptism of the Holy Ghost as a definite experience, evidence by speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, both of are essential to salvation. Since we adhere as carefully and closely to the Scriptures as possible in matters pertaining to salvation, we also measure the standards of Christian practicalities such as clothing, by the same rule.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING FOR WOMEN

The New Testament makes several specific statements pertaining to women's dress in the epistles of Paul and Peter. "I will that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. 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 2:8-10). "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husband; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 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 3:1-5).

Paul admonished women to dress according to certain standards and listed them in this order: modesty, inexpensive and non-ornamental attire, and clothing that is worn in godliness.

To be modest means to be decent and respectful. The Apostolic Christian woman seeks to emulate all the fine virtues of Christian womanhood, so she carefully and prayerfully selects her attire in order not to unduly expose her body to the stares of the public. She is not so old-fashioned as to look like a monstrosity, but she is deliberately methodical in choosing clothing that will dignify her womanhood without provoking the stares of the opposite sex.

She has dedicated herself to the cause of Christianity. This manner of dedication avoids expensive, extravagant clothing and superfluous and ornamental jewelry. The great needs of Christian evangelism and charitable assistance to the poor demand that she deny herself the exorbitant tastes of expensive fads so that she might practice the Christian art of concern for others.

Her hairstyle is again predicted upon the Word of God, which teaches her to let her hair grow uncut: "Is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (1 Cor 11:13-15).

Against this picture of scriptural womanhood, we have the worldly female of today who tries by every conceivable means, it seems, to flirt with the hazards of indecency. Costumes and apparel that are inclined toward nudity are sought after intensely. The results are demonstrated in a wanton display of seminude