
What
Is
Modesty?



*"In like manner also,
that women adorn themselves
in modest apparel, with
shamefacedness
and sobriety;..."*

1 Timothy 2:9

"That they may teach the young women ..." - Titus 2:4



B. Kirkland D.D.

INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of opinions concerning acceptable dress standards.

For example, some Mennonite groups would believe they have a more acceptable dress standard than those in fundamental Baptist churches. Most fundamental Baptist churches would believe their standard is more acceptable with God, than those of most evangelical churches.

In the book, **“Modesty- An Adornment for Life,”** by Rabbi Pesach Eliyahu Falk, we read on page 267, *“All women and girls, married or unmarried, must cover all parts of their main body (torso) plus parts of their arms and legs when in public or in the presence of individuals outside their immediate family. Under no circumstances may even a small part of these areas be uncovered in the presence of men or boys. ...These areas naturally provoke attention and must therefore be covered by decree of halacha (Jewish law).”*

The book also deals with the basic law concerning covering the hair both in public and in private. It deals with the neckline and what part of the arms and legs must be covered.

Orthodox Jewish women wear skirts or dresses only (no pants or shorts) and these must cover the knees even when sitting down. Similarly, shirts and blouses must cover the elbows even when reaching upward. Open-toed shoes are not allowed. The colour of all clothing must be subdued and not loud. Overall, the Orthodox Jewish style of dress is not supposed to draw attention to the body.

The Muslim Dress Code dictates that clothing must cover the entire body, only the hands and face may remain visible. (According to some Fiqh Schools) Clothing must hang loose so that the shape or form of the body is not apparent. Female clothing must not resemble the man's clothing.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET

It is not our purpose to dictate who is right or who is wrong or how people must dress. Every individual should determine his or her position and beliefs before God. The purpose of this booklet is to present materials offered by respected publications, institutions and studies as well as the Bible.

2 Corinthians 5:10 says, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”* We would all be wise to make all decisions concerning life in light of that appointment with God.

B. Kirkland D.D.

WHAT PREACHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT CLOTHES

There was a time when it was common to hear messages concerning dress standards. Today most pulpits are silent concerning the subject. Although most pastors have decided to ignore it, the advocates of today's godless styles of dress have not.

WHAT THE WORLD IS SAYING ABOUT CLOTHES

George Harrison, of the Beatles, said: "*Going in for flash clothes, or at least trying to be a bit different ... was part of the rebelling. I never cared for authority*" (Hunter Davies, *The Beatles*, p. 39).

Mary Quant was one of the designers who took credit for inventing the miniskirt and hot pants. She admitted that her aim was to entice men and promote licentiousness. She said she intended the clothes she designs to seduce men. She bragged that her creation was for the purpose of making sex more available.

In an interview she was asked what kind of person today's woman wants to be, She answered, "*A sexual creature. Today she dresses to say, 'I am sexy. I like men. I enjoy life.'*" Then she made this bold statement: "*Mini-clothes are symbolic of those girls who want to seduce a man.*"

In an interview with Alison Adburgham on October 10, 1967, Mary Quant said, "*Fashion doesn't really influence the climate of opinion; it reflects what is really in the air. It reflects what people are reading and thinking and listening to.*"

She is right! The dress fashions, or should we say *undress* fashions that have invaded our local churches reflects what Christians are reading and thinking and listening to. One reason Christian women are listening to what the world has to say might be because the churches aren't saying anything concerning the subject.

Quant said, "*That's the thing about today's fashions - they're sexy to look at ...and the crotch is the most natural erogenous zone. Clothes are designed to lead the eye to it.*" When asked where it was all leading to, Mary Quant replied with one word: "*Sex!*" She said her aim is "*To dress women so men would feel like tearing the wrapping off.*"

In an interview published in *Newsweek*, Mary Quant explained what the miniskirt represents to her. She said, "*Am I the only woman who has ever wanted to go to bed with a man in the afternoon? Any law-abiding female, it used to be thought, waits until dark. Well, there are lots of girls who do not want to wait. Mini-clothes are symbolic of them.*" (*Newsweek*, November 13, 1967, p.76)

MARGARET KENT:

Margaret Kent in her book "*How to Marry the Man of Your Choice*" (New York: Warner Books, 1987), instructs women concerning how to use clothing to "*manipulate men.*" She recommends "*body hugging skirts and revealing blouses.*" **Wait a minute!!!** Did you get that? She didn't say pants she said, "*body hugging skirts and revealing blouses.*"

Today, even our fundamental Baptist churches are filled with young women and even staff members, who would never dream of wearing pants, and yet they are quite comfortable in body hugging skirts and revealing blouses.

Kent went on to say, "*Don't let the power of clothing pass you by, for it can be a major asset in*

attracting men. ... stir his sexual imagination without satisfying his curiosity about your body." Again she said, *"To avoid being a nerd, wear clothing that follows the natural form of your body"* (pp. 29, 32, 33). It seems there are a lot of women who are members of fundamental Baptist churches these days who do not want to be "nerds."

As for pants on women, the author states that *"Jeans are likely to get a positive response because they are snug and outline the body; they also represent casualness"* (p.36). Secular advertisements leave no doubt about what part of the body is emphasized by women's jeans. A genuine Christian woman should never be repugnant, or sexually appealing, however, today's modern jeans will cause them to be one or the other, depending upon her figure.

Vivienne Westwood, who helped create the punk rock look, said, *"I think fashion is the strongest form of communication there is ... It's only interesting to me if it's subversive: that's the only reason I'm in fashion, to destroy the word 'conformity'"* (Jon Savage, *Time Travel: Pop, Media and Sexuality 1976-96*, p. 119).

THE HARLOT AND THE BRIDE

The Bible has many examples of good and bad dress. For example, the "great harlot" in the Book of Revelation symbolizes the end-time apostate religious system. In contrast, "the bride" of Christ represents the Christian. The contrast between the two women is portrayed **by their outward appearance**.

The harlot is *"arrayed in purple and scarlet."* **Isaiah 1:18** refers to scarlet as the colour of sin. It says, *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."* The harlot is said to have a name on her forehead. Roman authors tell us that prostitutes wore a frontlet on their foreheads giving their names. **One thing is sure. In Roman days or today you can spot a prostitute by what she is wearing.** In contrast to the harlot, **Revelation 19:8** says the bride of Christ is, *"Arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."*

Revelation 21:2 gives us the principle for a Christian woman's dress code. It says, Christ's bride was *"adorned for her husband."* Every Christian, man or woman is referred to in Scripture as the bride of Christ and should dress in a manner that would please Christ. John explains that the fine linen of the bridal dress represents the acts of faithful obedience of the saints to Christ.

Paul uses the same Bible imagery to describe the appropriate dress of the Christian woman. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 says, *"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."*

There can be no denying the Bible teaches the inner purity of character of a Christian woman is revealed outwardly by the way she dresses. God saw fit to represent the character of these two women by their clothing. God, and even godless society, make it plain that our clothes reveal who we are, or at least who we want the world to think we are.

No sincere Christian would question which of the two women would serve as the role model for a Christian woman's dress code. If we choose to pattern our lives after the bride of Christ, it will be seen in the modesty of outward appearance.

Adornment of The Christian Woman

Both the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter emphasized the contrast between worldly and Christian adorning. In **1 Timothy 2:9-10** Paul mentions, “...In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel...which becometh women professing godliness...”

Paul’s concern was how Christians ought to live godly lives in the face of false teachings and a depraved pagan environment. The contrast in this passage is between the adorning of Christian women and that of worldly women whose only concern is to attract attention to themselves. Like the examples of the harlot and the bride, the adorning of the body enables a person to express the real inner person.

Christians must show a consistency between the inward life and outward appearance. To pretend to come humbly before God on Sunday, while dressing throughout the week so as to show the world you are one of them is hypocrisy.

God wants the apparel we wear to be a reflection of the real person in the body that is being dressed, no matter what day of the week it is or where we are. **Romans 12:1** says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” The word “reasonable” means - “pertaining to reason or logic.” In other words, if you **think** it through it is reasonable for God to ask us to do this. The word “service” refers to us being servants. Actually, we are bond slaves. A bond slave is, “one who voluntarily gives himself up to another's will.”

THREE GREEK WORDS

1 Timothy 2:9-10 says, “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.”

WHAT IS MODEST?

We want to emphasize we are not dealing with the subject of women wearing “pants.” We are dealing with the Bible word “modest.” The dictionary says modest is, “Having or proceeding from a reluctance to call attention to oneself.” The Greek word “kosmios” means, “well-ordered, becoming,” and “dignified.”

Something that is well-ordered or not so well-ordered comes from a decision of the mind. There can be no doubt that a woman’s dress is a reflection of how she thinks. **Proverbs 23:7** says, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

The Christian is commanded to renew the mind. **Romans 12:2** says, “And be not conformed (Translated “**fashioned**” in 1 Peter 1:14) to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” **1 Peter 1:14** says we are to be, “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.”

SHAMEFACEDNESS

The second Greek word Paul used is *aidos*, translated "with shamefacedness." The term *aidos* occurs only in this text in the New Testament, however, its usage is frequent in the literature of Hellenistic (Greek) Judaism. It means "respect." (To show a courteous yielding to the opinion, wishes, or judgment of another.)

"Shamefacedness" in this verse means if a woman respects God, her husband, her pastor, and her Christian friends, she will not want to embarrass any of them by how she dresses. To follow the dress standards of today's society will most certainly embarrass God, and should embarrass every Christian. Women who follow most of today's modern dress fashions do not even have respect for themselves.

WITH SOBRIETY

The third Greek word Paul used to characterize the appropriate adorning of the Christian is "with sobriety." The word "*sophrosune*" is a compound of two words, "*sound*" (*sos*) and "*mind*" (*phrenes*).

It denotes mental vigilance, in the use of the mind to exercise restraint and self-control. The Christian women should show self-control by restraining any desire to wear attention-getting clothes. A Christian lady's dress should not say, "Look at me, admire me," but rather, look at how Christ has changed me from the inside out.

Many Christian women today desire to look more like the models appearing on the covers of sensual magazines than they desire to look like what God wants. This is a sad indication that worldly magazines have more influence on them than the Word of God does.

PETER PREACHED IT ALSO

Paul's teaching on the adorning of Christian women is repeated by Peter. The difference is, Paul focuses on the conduct of women in the local church. Peter focuses on the conduct of women outside of the local church. God does not have a double standard for Christians. God is not tricked into thinking women are spiritual who dress like Christians to go to church and dress like the world to go to the mall.

1 Peter 3:1-3, especially refers to the fact that husbands who may be hostile to Bible preaching could be influenced by how their wives dress. It says that they might, "*without the word be won by the conversation (manner of life) of the wives; While they behold your chaste (modest) conversation (manner of life) coupled with fear.*"

Peter explains in verse three that the manner of life he is referring to includes how a woman dresses. It says, "*Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.*"

IT'S ALL ABOUT SUBMISSION

It is noteworthy that both Peter and Paul spoke about the adorning of Christian women in the context of a submissive attitude. This suggests that both apostles recognized that outward adorning is determined by the inner attitude of the heart. (Something that even Mary Quant recognized.)

HOW A WOMAN DRESSES AFFECTS HOW MEN THINK

A police publication reported. *"Abbreviated costumes are no doubt a factor in offences against women,"* Sergeant George Gough of Toronto's Morality Squad said, *"When a girl in a short skirt is followed by a man after she gets off a street car at night, there isn't much doubt as to what attracted her assailant."*

Following the introduction of the miniskirt in 1964 a newspaper article said, *"Rapes have increased by 68 percent in the U.S. and by 90 percent in England,"* Canadian police reported, *"Ninety-one percent of Toronto policemen think a woman in a revealing miniskirt is more likely to be a rape victim than is her more modest sister."*

Dr. Luchenstein, a physician at Tombs Prison in New York City, worked with 170,000 prisoners over a twelve-year period. He said, *"The so-called crimes of passion are increasing alarmingly, and will continue to do so... until the principal cause is eliminated. This, it seems to me, is the present style of dress, which, to say the least, is immodest. Immodest dress has a direct bearing on crime incitation, no matter how innocent the wearer may be."*

HOW A CHRISTIAN CAN DETERMINE WHAT TO WEAR

Dr. Bruce Lackey wrote an excellent article entitled – **"Bible Guidelines for Clothing."** Below are five questions from that book as well as thoughts I have added.

IS IT WORN BY THE OPPOSITE SEX?

"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."

Some would suggest this is an Old Testament verse and does not apply to us. **They are wrong!** The Bible rule of *"rightly dividing the word of God"* is, if a principle found in the Old Testament is repeated in the New Testament, it is for us today.

Example: In 1 Corinthians chapter ten Paul preached that we're not under the law but under grace, however, again and again, in the same chapter he uses Old Testament Scriptures to teach important principles for us today.

WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION AT THE END OF THE AGE

He concludes with verse 6 that says, *"Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."* Verse 11 says, *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."*

You won't find a New Testament verse that says we should observe the Sabbath day. You won't find a New Testament verse that says we are to kill an animal and have a blood sacrifice. You won't find a New Testament verse that says we can only walk a Sabbath's Day's Journey. So, we don't do these things in the local church age.

You will find verse after verse in the New Testament talking about how Christians should dress. The *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* concerning Deuteronomy 22:5 has a parallel reference in the New Testament of 1 Corinthians 11:3-14. This proves that Bible scholars have learned that 1 Corinthians 11 contains the same principle that is stated in Deuteronomy 22:5.

WHAT DOES IT MAKE OTHERS THINK OF ME?

The Family Weekly magazine had a true or false question and answer section. **“Question:** *People use clothes as a way of communicating with others?* **Answer: True.** *Psychological studies at Britain’s University of Newcastle have demonstrated that people use clothes to tell others what they want them to believe about them.”*

Whether we realize it or not, men look at certain portions of a woman’s body; and it doesn’t matter whether we think that is good, bad, or otherwise, they are going to do it!

1 Samuel 16:7 says, “...*man looketh on the outward appearance.*” If clothing is worn that attracts attention to the body, it can cause some men to sin just as surely as Bathsheba was instrumental in King David’s sin. When considering what kind of clothes to wear, we need to ask ourselves this question: “*What does it make other people think about me?*”

PREDOMINATELY, WHO DRESSES THAT WAY?

A policeman who is going to be an undercover agent attempting to infiltrate a motorcycle gang will not dress like a policeman. He would let his hair grow long, and wear sloppy, slouchy clothes, because he wants them to think he is one of them.

One reason a Christian woman wants to wear clothing that is *worldly* is because she wants the world to think she is one of them. *She wants to get the stigma off the fact she is a Christian.* When dressing the body God gave us to live in, we need to ask: “*Do I really want to identify myself with Christ or with the Christ-rejecters?*”

MUST I USE THE ARGUMENTS OF THE WORLD TO JUSTIFY MY DRESS STANDARD?

1 Corinthians 1:20 says, “*Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*”

1 Corinthians 2:5 says, “*Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*” **1 Colossians 1:9** says, “*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*”

There is a difference between the wisdom of the world and spiritual wisdom. Christians are carnal when they resort to the wisdom of the world to justify what they are doing. We ought to be able to use the wisdom of God. If you are going to defend your position, you ought to be able to go to the Bible and use spiritual wisdom to do it. Only a carnal Christian will use worldly wisdom to justify clothing or actions.

WILL IT CAUSE OTHERS TO STUMBLE?

Romans 14:21 says we are not to do, “...*any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*” The definition of modesty is always something that has been debated; however, *there can be no debate over the fact that anything which causes someone to stumble is wrong.*

And certainly any kind of dress which causes our fellowman to sin must be classified as wrong. Christian women should at least be honest enough to admit that exposing the human body is capable of stirring up sin in both thought and action.

King David walked on his roof top. He was out of God’s will at the time and therefore was a prime candidate for the wiles of the Devil. David fell into sin when a woman was showing off her body in a place where David could see her. You might say David should have been looking out for himself. David certainly was to blame for his actions and he paid dearly for it. Bathsheba paid dearly for her sin too because she caused David to stumble.

GET IT FROM THE BIBLE

Sincere Christians need to be sure their manner of living is based on Scripture. When you believe something is *right* or *wrong*, you need to have a good **Bible reason** for believing it. I have had more people leave the churches I have pastored because I have dealt with what the Bible says about modesty, than all other issues combined, however, I have **NEVER** had one woman who left, support her position with Scripture.

DON’T BE INTIMIDATED

If you have a Bible conviction about how to dress, do not be intimidated by what others think. If it is wrong to wear a bathing suit to work, it is wrong to wear one any place where you will be exposed where you might cause someone to sin. Be firm in your convictions and be consistent in your convictions!

I never cease to be amazed how fundamental churches demand no mixed bathing for kids at Christian camps but avoid the issue in the pulpits of the churches. *What are we teaching the next generation?*

IT’S A MATTER OF THE HEART

Less than 100 years ago women would have been shunned for wearing what many women, who name the Name of Christ, wear to a church service today. Christians are wondering, “*How much can I get away with before it is considered sin?*” And “*How tight is too tight? How short is too short? How low is too low for my blouse?*”

The question should be, “*What will please God? What is God’s best for me?*” Christian ladies should honestly ask themselves (and their husbands!) if their wardrobe is pleasing to God. “*Is it pleasing to God to wear clothes that are tight or direct men’s eyes to parts of my body that will cause them to sin?*”

Ask yourself, “*Does God think my clothes are too tight? Will people at the church think they are too tight? Will my appearance teach the young girls at church how to dress as a Christian?*”

Ask yourself, “*Will my manner of dress be responsible for causing a brother to stumble?*” To

say, "It's his problem if he lusts!" is the more common reply, but it only reveals the real heart of the person saying it.

It is a sad day indeed when God's people follow the world's dress standards shamelessly all in the name of "Christian Liberty." The feminist from our society today cries, "It's my body and my choice how I dress or undress it and it's my choice if I want to kill the baby in my body."

Some Christian women are only one step behind in that statement. Will people be calling themselves Christians in the next hundred years and killing their babies under the banner of Christian Liberty? "Nonsense," you say! That is what would have been said 100 years ago if someone suggested Christian women would be seen in public as they are seen today.

TWO COMMANDS

God has not given us "liberty" to pick and choose which of His commands we think are worth obeying. In 1 Timothy 2:1-8 God commands "men" to pray. Verse 9 continues, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel..." Nobody would argue that prayer is important to God. "In like manner," women dressing modestly is **equally** important to God.

Whether we are talking about a man's prayer life, how women dress, or any other Bible commands, the final word on it all has to do with the heart. Ephesians 6:6 says, "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

The Psalmist asked in Psalms 116:12, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?"



Services

Sunday School - 10:30 AM

Morning Service - 11:00 AM

Evening Service - 6:00 PM

Thursday Night Meeting - 7:00 PM

"The Friendly Little Church"

On The Corner of George & Russell"

P.O. Box 501 - Sarnia - Ontario - N7T 7J4

Telephone: (519) 337-3052