

Modesty In Worship

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Introduction:

A. Biblical relevance

1. This matter was addressed three years ago at the request of the elders. It has become apparent to the elders that this matter be addressed again. The attire of some disciples here does not reflect the level of modesty in worship required by the scriptures, and sets a poor example for other disciples as well as those who come to hear the gospel.
2. In addition and possibly as a consequence of relaxed vigilance on attire is the matter of relaxed vigilance on the Bible teaching on the length of hair, young men allowing it to become so long that it does not reflect what the scriptures teach, and women of all ages cutting their hair so short that it fails to reflect the teaching of the word of God

B. The issue of modest attire in public has been addressed since the Bible was written - 1Tim. 2:9-10

1. The effect of immodest clothing on observers is well known and is documented scripturally and secularly
2. Gen. 38:15 - Judah thought Tamar was a harlot because of the way she was dressed
3. Likewise, the matter of clothing in worship and its effect on worshipers is also addressed in scripture - James 2:2-4
4. As part of the whole counsel of God, this matter must be addressed
5. In addition as part of the whole counsel of God and in accordance with our duty as the shepherds of this flock, we will address the matter of the length of hair

B. Current need

1. Cultural changes in clothing styles and attitudes toward formal clothing have had an impact on children of God.
 - a. Relaxed standards in the work place
 - b.. Family room informal, spectator approach to formal occasions (i.e. weddings, funerals, formal dinners) has translated to religious services
 - c. We have become so comfortable being informal in formal settings that we are now uncomfortable dressing reverentially to worship God
2. Clothing fashions change with time; some are more rapid than others)
 - a. We have seen some rapid change here in recent years, and it has caused some concerns among the elders and a number of the members
 - b. Overall increase in casual clothing, proliferation of denim, necklines that are way too low, shorts and Capri pants in church
 - c. Hair on men both long and unkempt; hair on women that for personal comfort's sake is cut so short that in an era when men wear ear rings, one must look more closely to determine gender

- C. The solution to the question of how to approach this issue is simple in theory.
1. Since I am addressing a congregation of people who respect the word of God, who follow it with clear consciences, and who love each other as family, I will just tell you what is written and trust you to apply it
- D. The measure of modesty in worship
1. Five standards that do not determine what is modest in worship
 - a. How much you paid for the clothes (a \$79 Value City suit vs. a \$129 pair of designer jeans)
 - b. What the previous generation wore to worship services (when I was a child, all women wore gloves and hats)
 - 1) "A Christian should not be the first one to put on a new fashion, nor be the last one to take it off."
 - c. What you like (if it is opposed to what is modest and appropriate)
 - d. What you find to be comfortable
 - e. What is considered to be the current fashion ("All of my friends dress this way!")
 2. Three standards that must be considered when determining what is modest and appropriate for worship:
 - a. Authority - What the word of God says
 - b. Attitude - How your heart moves you to apply what is written
 - c. Influence - The effect your clothing has on your fellow worshipers
 3. A discussion on how long or short, how thin or thick, how high or low would be endless and divisive.
 - a. Fashions and fabrics, cuts and colors come and go.
 - b. But an approach based on what is written in the word, and how we, from the heart, apply it in our lives, will be effective
- E. Why should I have to preach this sermon?
1. Parents, we shouldn't have to be the ones to instruct your sons on their appearance when in positions of leadership in worship. You should take care of this at home.
 2. Parents, we shouldn't have to be the ones to instruct your daughters on modesty and none sexual attire, especially in worship. You should have already taken care of this at home.
 3. Husbands, it's your job to help your wife understand when she crosses the line. Wives, it's your duty to encourage your husband to look like a leader when he comes to worship
 4. Grandparents, you can be a powerful and Biblically authorized influence with your adult children and grandchildren (Titus 2:3-5)
 - a. "I don't want to interfere or offend." Would you prefer they walk the path to perdition without being warned?
 4. All of us should be self monitoring and honest with ourselves. "Is this the best I can do for the Lord who gave His all for me?"
 5. We are coming to worship God, not going to the county fair.

I. WHAT IS WRITTEN?

- A. Modesty means appearance appropriate to the occasion.
 - 1. Too many want to limit immodesty to clothing that is sexually stimulating or very expensive.
 - 2. Nothing in scripture demands or even implies those limits
- B. 1Tim. 2:9-10
 - 1. Apparel - katastole - "is somewhat broader in meaning than our English word... it conveys the idea of external appearance, principally in dress. It is deportment, as exhibited externally, whether in look, or in manner, or in dress." (Wuests Word Studies)
 - 2. Modesty - "Orderly, well-arranged, decent" (Vine, III, 79).
 - a. "The well ordering is not of dress and demeanor only, but of the inner life, expressing itself in the outward conversation" (Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament, 323).
 - b. The first requirement for modest clothing is that it is orderly, appropriate, and that it does not draw attention to the wearer.
 - c. "It describes one who disciplines himself and who may thus be regarded as genuinely moral and respectable... self-controlled... disciplined... well-mannered... honorable" (Kittel, III, 895-896).
 - 3. Shamefacedness - "a sense of shame; modesty, is used regarding the demeanor of women in the church; shamefastness is that modesty which is 'fast' or rooted in the character" (Vine, IV, 17).
 - a. "The shame, or sense of honor, which hinders one from doing an unworthy act; implies reverence for the good as good; shrinks from overpassing the limits of womanly reserve and modesty, as well as from the dishonor which would justly attach thereto" (Trench, 63-68).
 - 4. Sobriety - "soundness of mind; 'sound judgment' practically expresses the meaning" (Vine, IV:44); "self-control" (Thayer 613).
 - a. "A command over the passions and desires, so that they receive no further allowance than that which the law and right reason admit and approve. This condition of self-command is taken up and transformed into a condition in which a man does not order and command himself, but is ordered and commanded by God." (Trench 66-68).
 - 5. Godliness - "the fear or reverence of God" (Vine, II:162).
 - a. "Godliness ... is respect or reverence manifested toward all things sacred, holy, and Divine. This attribute in the heart will always manifest itself in proper attire." (Marshall Patton, Commentary on First Timothy, GOT, p 50)
- B. Clothing declares a purpose
 - 1. It matters to God.
 - a. Adam and Eve clothed themselves in fig leaf aprons; God did not think it was enough, so He made them tunics of animal skins.
 - 2. Prov. 7:10 - clothing of a harlot
 - 3. 2Sam. 13:18 - clothing of a virgin

4. Num. 15:38-40 - clothing for the religious
 5. Esther 4:2 - clothing for mourning
 6. John 21:7 - clothing for work
 7. Matt. 22:12 - clothing for a wedding
- C. Length of hair declares a loyalty. Those loyal to Christ will look like it.
1. Those loyal to friends or fashion will look like it. Isa. 3:9 - "The look on their countenance witnesses against them"
- D. The word of God requires - 1Cor. 11:14-15
1. "But who judges how long or how short?!"
 2. Fashions do change, but regardless of the changes in length, one thing does not change: the capacity for reasonable people to look at a man or woman and discern that their hair is too long or too short.
 3. Ladies, when rational, honorable, caring Christians bring to your attention that the length of your hair may be sending the wrong message, your hair is too short.
 4. Gentlemen, when rational, honorable, caring Christians bring to your attention that the length of your hair may be sending the wrong message, your hair is too long.

II. WHERE IS MY HEART?

- A. The heart must be engaged in all we say and do
1. Prov. 4:23, 23:7; Rom. 12:2, 6:17
 2. One's clothing will manifest, from the heart, either obedience to or rebellion against God and His Will.
 3. God doesn't instruct us in material, color, cost, cut or style. He does give us a head and a heart and His Word to guide us, and He expects us use all of these in making our choices.
- B. "A woman's dress is the mirror of her mind." (Donald Guthrie, Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, Tyndale, p. 84)
1. Re-examine your belief that you can worship God intently from the heart inside while appearing casual, indifferent, or careless on the outside ("If it's good enough for Walmart, it's good enough for Jesus!")
 2. At the same time, remember that a coat and tie can cover a sinful heart
 3. Be careful not to judge one another
 - a. Let those who have matured be careful not to discourage the young in the faith until they can grow to accept a more reverential form of attire. Remember that some of you wearing suits today were wearing jeans when I first came here
 - b. At the same time, let those who have some spiritual growing to do be careful not to resent the efforts of those helping them to grow in this matter. Stubbornness is also a sin.

III. IS MY INFLUENCE HELPED OR HARMED?

- A. We do not live isolated from other human beings. Christians exert an influence on others regardless of the setting, including worship services
1. Your personal comfort is not the first consideration in worship.

2. We are charged with the task of sharing the gospel in this community. The influence of this congregation is critical to that purpose. What message is sent to visitors by laid-back clothes and shorts?
3. What lesson are you teaching the children when you dress for worship the same way you would dress for a quick trip to Walmart?
 - a. As children, we knew worship was important, because we put on “church clothes” for it
 - b. As a general rule, the next generation will take our behaviors one step further than we intended with ours. How far will they go beyond your casual approach to coming to worship God?

B. Appearance implies an attitude to others

1. Most of us go through life denying it about ourselves, while at the same time we measure the attitudes of others by the expression on their faces, tone of voice, body language, appearance, etc.
2. In the matter of our attire in worship, we need to be honest with ourselves and ask, “Does my appearance reflect my purpose to worship God with reverence and love?”
3. Whether you wish to be aware of it or not, you make a statement about who you really are, and what you are doing, and how you truly feel about what you are doing by your attire and the length of your hair
4. And if it is not your intention to communicate this, then you need to change what you communicate by changing your clothes & hair length
5. Ask yourself: “Is my comfort or fashion sense or desire to dress casual more important than the example I am setting for others who look to me for leadership?”

C. In view of the matter of influence, the elders are in firm agreement on the following points:

1. Clothing that enhances ones sexual appearance is not appropriate for worship: low necklines, tight pants, short skirts, Capri pants, etc.
2. Shorts are not appropriate for worship services. A good rule of thumb... if children are out of diapers, they are out of shorts
3. Those who lead in worship are asked to dress as leaders in worship.
 - a. People are looking up to you for an example and for guidance during worship. Your personal comfort comes second to your responsibility to set a good example as a leader.
 - b. Judge for yourselves: in which of these pictures do the men look like they have come to lead in worship?
 - c. If you leave today thinking the elders are attempting to establish a dress code, you have misunderstood the lesson.
 - d. “Are you saying that I have to wear a coat and tie?!”
 - e. No one here is going to judge you or demand that you wear a coat and tie. However, we are asking you to examine yourself, asking: “Am I comfortable facing the Lord in judgment, when I...”
 - 1) “...Was casual in my approach to worshipping Him,”
 - 2) “...Was belligerent when instructed about the matter.”

- f. We are asking for the following of those who lead in worship:
collared shirt tucked in, clothes and shoes that are clean and orderly, hair that reflects Christian manhood; in other words, we are asking that your appearance reflect your activity... leading God's people in worship
- 4. Just as we are laboring to help you protect your influence in this matter, so we must also labor to help protect the influence of this congregation
- D. We have every confidence that you will dedicate yourselves to considering the word of God, that you will objectively examine your own conscience, that you will come to the right conclusion, and that you will comply with this instruction.