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From Where I Sit . . .

“Honoring God by the Clothes We Wear”

One very sensitive area for discussion has to do with the clothes we wear. Styles change, as do the attitudes of people toward clothing. Summer always brings with it the difficult choice of “What is appropriate to wear as a Christian when seen in public?” Modest apparel is a Biblical subject (**1 Timothy 2:9-10**) and we must give consideration to it in spite of the discomfort it often brings.

Raising a family is hard enough without having to enter the “war zone” over what is permissible attire. The word “modest” is associated in the Bible with the word “decent” and orderly. Webster tells us it is freedom from coarseness, indelicacy or indecency. Obviously we each have an obligation to be certain that we are not seen in a manner that is immodest. It often comes down to inches, and I don’t want the job of standing at the door with a ruler to see who fits. There is a line however that a Christian should not cross. Probably it should be measured more in terms of which and how much flesh is left exposed, or whether clothing is so formly fit that it reveals parts of the body that can plant lascivious thoughts. Too tight, too low cut, too see-through, too short, too clingy, and in some cases, too loose – a sure test for immodest.

Gawdy could also be immodest, if we recognize that modesty does not call undue attention to one’s self. If I dress in a manner that makes others feel I am arrogant, haughty, or in some way better than everyone else, I may have crossed the line. There must be some balance between buying clothes that are suitable for my role in life, and the community in which I live, and the point of becoming vain. We should apply good taste to what we choose to wear and consider whether it limits our influence for Christ. Taste is affected by the community in which we live, admittedly, and thus the problem of setting up dress codes. Overalls may be Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes in some communities whereas coats and ties may be in another. If I go to a community where everyone wears overalls, I would be out of place to impose a coat and tie dress standard. I might even have to shed the coat in order to be accepted in that community. The same logic would **not** hold true if the dress code was of clothing that did not adequately cover that which God meant to be covered. **We don’t just dress like the culture we live in if that culture is crossing the line.** I don’t always know where that line is, but I do know that a Christian must examine carefully whether we’re conveying to the world that we are not “of the world.” More and more, society is pressing on the church to conform to its standard. We should try to lift men up heavenward instead of allowing the world to pull us down to “earthy.”

One should ask the question of himself/herself, “Am I dressing in a manner that will honor God?” Not only should we be concerned with how much of the body our clothing “reveals,” but also what message we are sending to others. Quite literally this would be true of many shirts with messages and graphics printed on them that are worldly. It’s also true when it comes to taste in how we dress (what to wear and when). The occasion may call for different but “modest” clothing. Study carefully the occasion and choose appropriately. Even restaurants recognize a certain standard for what is appropriate: “No shirt, No shoes, No Service.” Some restaurants require coats and ties, others are quite casual. I wouldn’t want to attend certain events without being clothed fitting for the occasion: funerals, weddings, a day before the judge in court, outdoor recreational events. To a certain extent, churches across the board recognize some apparel as more suited to recreational than spiritual. No one can write a rule about what one wears to services, except that it be modest and in good taste, and that it properly represent the Lord before a community we hope to win for Christ. **Just some points for us all to ponder.**

. . . . Terry Broome