

*Does God Care What I Wear?*

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .....	i
Preface .....	ii
Introduction .....	1
Grace versus Law	
Modesty of Dress .....	4
Modest Dress Does Not Call Attention to the Body	
Modest Dress Does Not Distract From Her Inward Beauty	
Distinction of Dress .....	9
Three Types of Biblical Law	
The Two Commands of Distinction	
The Beginning of Women Wearing Pants	
Testimony of Dress .....	18
Authority of Dress .....	20
Conclusion .....	21
Endnotes .....	21

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## Acknowledgments

It is with great trepidation that I undertake the printing of this simple message on Christian dress. With such a subject comes the great possibility of an adverse reaction. Few subjects can so quickly raise the ire and temperament of fellow believers, like that of the subject of dress standards.

As Solomon stated, there is nothing new under the Sun. Therefore, I cannot claim originality on any thoughts contained in this booklet. These principles are the outcome of my diligent study on the matter of biblical principles. They are also the culmination of the years of influence of Godly men and women.

One such influence is that of my friend, Dr. Mike Allison. Some of this material will reflect the influence of his book, *Preaching Standards: Right or Wrong<sup>1</sup>*. His insights on the various biblical laws were of great help. My gratitude is extended to him for the information shared in his book.

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May the Lord use this brief booklet to challenge believers to a higher standard of living for Christ. Such living will help to brighten our light and empower our witness.

*Marty O. Wynn*

# Does God Care What I Wear?

Text: Titus 2:11-15 and Selected

## Preface

In the ministry of our church, it has been my pleasure to see the Lord bless with the addition of new believers to the church family. Of course, new believers present unique opportunities for growth and ministry. These new believers are untaught in the Word of God and, yet, their desire is to know more of the Word and to grow into the likeness of Christ.

Having observed many uncertainties in the lives of new believers, it became my conviction that it was time to preach a series of messages on the foundational beliefs of the Christian life. In order to insure that their questions were answered, the members of our church submitted questions that they would like to see answered during the forthcoming series of messages. It has been a joy to teach those who have had no prior teaching on the basic matters of Christian living. Several of the questions related to the issue of proper Christian dress. Thus, the two-message series of "*Does God Care What I Wear*" was given birth.

In this booklet, biblical principles of the Christian decorum are presented. It is the understanding of this author that there will be those who hold different positions. It is desirous that conflicting opinions are held with a gracious spirit. This booklet is not an attempt to declare the standard by which all dress is measured. Neither is this study an attempt to define a line of separation by which all fellowship must be determined. Rather, it is a treatise on Christian dress by which those, who are earnestly seeking to maintain Godly standards, can benefit and learn.

May the Lord grant you guidance and wisdom as you seek His direction in the area of dress for your life. It is the author's desire for this simple booklet to be a blessing and a challenge to high standards of Godliness and Holiness.

## Introduction

To address the subject of Christian dress, it must be stated that the Word of God is to be our final authority. The Bible, alone, defines what is right and what is wrong. Our beliefs and practice must be based upon what is right and what is wrong.

For many people today, the issue of dress is a non-issue. They argue that God is concerned only with what is within the person. They further argue that what we decorate the outside with is of no real concern to God. Their proof text for this is a quotation from First Samuel 16:7b which states, “*for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*” While it is true that God looks on the inside, it is erroneous to use this verse to teach that God ignores the outside. Proper exegesis of this verse would render the idea that God was telling Samuel that man sees only the outside, but God sees both outside and inside.

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Others argue that the New Testament believers should not concern themselves with standards (i.e., convictions). They use the argument that we are not under law anymore, but under grace. While that is a true statement, it communicates a false message. The idea that Old Testament saints had to adhere to standards of Godly living to be right with God, and that New Testament saints are not constricted by standards anymore, is an erroneous teaching that has no biblical foundation. The New Testament teaches us that grace is not a license for Godless living (Rom. 6:1-2; cf. Titus 2:11-12). Titus says that God’s grace teaches the believer that he is to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and that we should live Godly in this present world. Therefore, we must conclude that God is still interested in righteous and holy living for His people.

Concerning dress, the Bible does have much to say. In the examination of this issue, please understand that most of the discussion will deal with the woman’s dress. This is for two reasons. . .

(1) Men are visually stimulated and, in general, women are not.

*(In Matthew 5:28, Jesus warns the man about looking at a woman. Nowhere in Scripture is the woman warned about lusting after the man. Even though society is striving to change this principle, men are still more visually stimulated than women. This fact can still be proven by the fact that pornography is a multi-billion dollar business, and is funded mostly by men).*

(2) Women are, generally, more concerned with clothes than men.

*(Example: Even the retail stores know this. That is the reason the women's department is always large, and the men's is, normally, off in a corner. This fact is further evidence by the number of women's shoes available, in contrast to the men's).*

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Because of these two reasons, more attention will be given to the principles of dress for the women. Attention will be given to four basic principles. These principles are: (1) Modesty of Dress, (2) Distinction of Dress, (3) Testimony of Dress, and (4) Authority of Dress.

Again, the reader should be reminded that God's Word is our final and absolute authority. This authority must dictate and direct how we live our daily lives. One's understanding of Biblical principles is meaningless if it does not translate into daily living and practice.

In studying this issue, the believer should be ready to give Biblical support for any position that is embraced. Biblical support must include a proper exegesis of Scripture and not eisegesis. Such support must never be a verse extracted from its context. Paul's admonition to Timothy was to study and rightly divide the Word of Truth (II Tim. 2:15).

Chapter 1

## Modesty of Dress

*1 Timothy 2:9-12; 1 Peter 3:1-5*

Too often the attention is given to the specifics of what is acceptable and what is not. Many people are more concerned about individual articles of clothing, rather than the Biblical principles involved.

If the believer will develop an understanding of the Biblical principles, the details will be quick to follow. The issue must not become, “Can I wear \_\_\_\_\_?” The issue must revolve around what God finds acceptable and modest. What does it mean to be modestly dressed? Once again, we must remind the reader that modesty is not to be defined by society. Rather, the Bible must be our guide and authority. In the Bible, the student can find answers to this question.

### *Modest Dress Does Not Call Attention to the Body*

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The Word of God states that modest dress does not call attention to the body. Proverbs 31:21b-22, 25 states, “*for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. . . Strength and honour are her clothing.*” In this text, the virtuous woman is known for strength and honor, and not for her body, nor for her outward adorning. When a woman’s clothing draws attention to her body, then she is immodest. The same can be said for men, who dress to draw attention to the body.

A person advertises what they are trying to sell. The same applies to clothing. This is the reason that the Scriptures refer to the “*attire*” of a harlot (Pro. 7:10). There is a way that the harlot dresses in order to call attention to her body and, hopefully, attract a paying customer. As the military uniform on a man identifies him as a soldier, so the clothing on a person identifies their character. If a woman does not want to be thought a harlot, then she should not wear the clothing of a harlot. When she does wear such clothing, she is advertising her body and, thus, soliciting to sell. What does harlot’s clothing look like?

In today's society clothing is promoted as being "sexy." In other words, the person who wears these articles of clothing will be advertising sex. If a person does not wish to have someone thinking of them in a sexual context, they should dress appropriately.

Modesty also concerns the issue of nakedness. The Bible is clear in its condemnation of nakedness (cf. Lev. 18). Nakedness is always connected with shame (cf. Gen. 3:7). The tragedy of our age is that nakedness is promoted, endorsed and embraced. It no longer produces guilt and shame. Nakedness is advertised under the pretense of appreciating the human body. How sad it is that man chooses to glorify dust (cf. Gen. 2:7).

Throughout Scripture, the beauty of the human body is never extolled. This is not to say that we should attempt to achieve ugliness, or seek to neglect the body. Rather, we should not be consumed with a lifestyle that focuses on bodily beauty. The Bible warns against the traps of "*her beauty*" (Pro. 6:25; cf. Esther 1:11). Because of the emphasis on outward beauty, nakedness has become an accepted norm. Contrary to God's Word, the outward appearance has become more important than the inward (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

We are not to be naked. Nakedness is always condemned, and is the result of sin (cf. Gen. 3:7; 9:22; Ex. 28:42; 32:25; Lev. 18:6-19). Before the fall of man, in the Garden of Eden, nakedness was not a sin. It is probable that their nakedness was covered by the light of their righteousness, as the saints of Heaven will be (cf. Rev. 19:8). However, the entrance of sin revealed the sinfulness and shame of nakedness (Gen. 3:6-7). Only within the confines of marriage is nakedness permitted, and only for each other.

God also gives a strong command concerning looking at the nakedness of others (Lev. 18:6-19). He states that a person is not to look at the nakedness of family members or others. In a day when sexual abuse is on the increase, it is tragic that many families ignore God's clear command in the Scriptures. They believe that looking at the nakedness of family members is acceptable. Children running naked through the house is often considered cute. Parents have no

modesty around their sons and daughters. This writer has heard parents talk about showering with their five and six year-old children. The Bible condemns these actions as sinful.

If modest clothing does not reveal nakedness, and we are not to be naked, then we must understand what nakedness is. According to the world's definition, nakedness means having no clothing on. One dictionary defines nakedness in the following way: "Having no clothing on the body; nude."<sup>2</sup> In other words, the only way a person is naked is if they have absolutely no clothes on. But what does God define as being naked? Of course, the answer to this lies within the pages of God's Word.

To see what God calls naked, we must examine a couple of passages of scripture. First, consider God's warning through His prophet, Isaiah. He states, "(1) *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. . .*" (Isaiah 47:1-3). In this passage God tells the people that their nakedness "*shall be uncovered.*" What was being naked? Verse 2 states that uncovering the locks, baring the leg, and uncovering the thigh will be nakedness. The uncovered locks remind us that the New Testament says that a woman's hair is her glory and covering (I Cor. 11:15). The next part of this defined nakedness is the baring of the leg. Contrary to modern culture, the bare leg is sinful and not sexy. It should be noted here that there are legitimate differences of opinion on what constitutes the leg. Some scholars have stated that the ancient definition of the leg was from waist to the knee, or the upper thigh (*see the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*). Others have stated it was only from the knee to the ankle. Therefore, even if we accept the former viewpoint, then anything we show from the knee up, would be declared nakedness. This would define that a person wearing clothing, that reveals flesh above the knee, as being biblically naked.

Another example of Biblically defined nakedness is found in John chapter twenty-one. *“Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea”* (Jn. 21:7). In this text, Jesus has performed the miracle of the catch of fishes. When John declares that the man standing on the shore is the Lord, Peter wraps his coat around him and jumps in the sea because, as the Bible says, he was naked. It would be obvious to state that this did not mean that Peter was fishing in his birthday suit. It did not say he was nude. Rather, as was the custom of many fisherman of the day, he had removed his shirt and had picked up his robe and tied it off. In other words, he was bare chested. Therefore, when a man does not cover his chest, he is biblically naked.

Of course, these definitions of nakedness run contrary to the world's modern-day definition. The world would scoff at the idea that baring the upper leg, or a man's bare chest would be nakedness. Yet, the question is . . . To whom will we give account one day? If the God who gave us His definition of nakedness is the same God before whom we will stand one day. He will not be impressed with redefined words. God said what He meant, and meant what He said.

### ***Modest Dress Does Not Distract From Her Inward Beauty***

When a woman is dressed modestly, it will not detract from her inward beauty. Attention will not be focused on parts of her body that are to be reserved only for the attention of her husband. Modest dress will draw attention toward the face, and nowhere else.

First Timothy discusses being clothed in “modest” apparel (I Tim. 2:9). The word translated “*modest*” in our Bible is the word kosmios, and means “orderly, of good behavior, modest.”<sup>3</sup> The next phrases in the verse define the behavior of modesty. It speaks of “*shamefacedness*.” The *Strong's Concordance* defines this word as, “bashfulness, that is, (towards men), modesty or (towards God) awe: - reverence, shamefacedness.” The verse continues, and describes being of “*so-*

*briety*,” which means to demonstrate a sound mind or self-control. In other words, our clothing should not draw attention to itself, but should be evidence of reverence and the proper attitude toward God.

Other passages of scripture that describe clothing revealing the inward character, and not the outward content, are found in Proverbs chapter 31 and First Peter chapter 3. Proverbs describes the virtuous woman, who wears nice clothing, but it reveals her strength and honor (Pro. 31:22-25). Peter states that a woman’s clothing should reveal her chaste, or pure, character (I Pet. 3:1-5).

Therefore, it must be concluded that dress which detracts from the character and inward beauty cannot be Biblical. Neither can dress that focuses on revealing the outward and bodily beauty cannot be Biblical.

Before concluding this particular thought, one caveat should be issued. The Bible does not condemn the wearing of nice apparel. Neither does it condone the neglect of personal appearance. Asceticism offers no spiritual virtue. Rather, the biblical issue is that what we wear is a definite statement about who we are. Since we are believers and, thus, children of God, we should dress accordingly. To dress in a manner that identifies us with the fads of the world should not be our goal or objective.

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*Chapter 2*  
**Distinction of Dress**

*Deuteronomy 22:5*

Throughout the Scriptures, God has made it plain that He expects a clear distinction between the sexes. He made “*male and female*” (Gen. 1:27; 5:2). God gave them different roles (cf. Eph. 5:21-25). He assigned different authority (cf. I Cor. 11:1-3), different hairstyles (I Cor. 11:14-15). It is also true that God expects the clothing of men and women to be different.

There is probably no other verse of scripture that has been the source of so much contention in regard to the distinction of dress. Deuteronomy 22:5 has been misused, misquoted and misunderstood. There are those who declare that this verse is Old Testament and no longer has any bearing on our dress today. There are others who argue that verse five cannot be extrapolated from the surrounding verses so we cannot plant various kinds of seed in the same garden, nor wear clothing with mixed fabrics.

These arguments arise from a failure to rightly divide the Word of Truth. Obviously, the Old Testament is part of the “*scripture*” that Paul said was both inspired and profitable (II Tim. 3:16). We are also admonished that the Old Testament events were given for our example (I Cor. 10:11). Concerning the argument about the verses surrounding verse five, proper exposition of the Scriptures will resolve any conflict.

***Three Types of Biblical Law***

As stated, Deuteronomy 22:5 is often rejected as having little meaning for the New Testament believer, due to the fact that it is Old Testament. Or, it is rejected as being a standard on dress due to the fact that it is located within verses that say not to mix seed in the same field, or materials in the same garment. However, these objections come from a failure to understand the three types of laws given by God to His people in Old Testament times.

First, we find there are dietary laws. These laws governed the diet of Israel. Obviously, the conditions of their day were not of the sanitary level of our day. Some of their diet laws are still good practice for our day, and will help to maintain good health. God was taking care of His people and their health with these laws. However, to violate any of these laws was not abominable to God. He pronounced that such a violation would be an “*abomination unto you*” (Lev. 11:10-12, 20, 23).

Next, there were the ceremonial laws. These laws governed the worship of Israel. These laws were always for the purpose of teaching a spiritual lesson. For example, the principle of separation is taught by the ceremonial laws contained in Deuteronomy 22:9-11, “(9) *Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled.* (10) *Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.* (11) *Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together.*” However, as with the dietary laws, any violation of these laws is never said to be an abomination unto God.

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The final type of law in the Old Testament, is the moral law. The moral laws concern the holiness of God. These laws were for the purpose of instructing God’s people concerning who God is, and what He is like. These laws are immutable and eternal because God’s Holiness never changes. What makes these laws truly unique is that a violation of these laws are often said to be an “*abomination unto the Lord*” (cf. Deut. 7:25; 17:1; 18:12; 22:5; 23:18; 25:16). Violation of these laws are something that God takes personally.

The word “*abomination*” means something that is absolutely disgusting. In other words, there are some actions and attitudes that God finds absolutely disgusting. Is it not, therefore, prudent to find out what God finds to be an abomination and avoid it? If the Bible were to say, “for whosoever driveth a car shall be an abomination unto the Lord,” would we not determine to never drive a car again? Or, if a verse were found that said, “for whosoever eateth potato chips shall be an abomination unto the Lord,” would we not declare a moratorium on potato chips? It is then obvious that the sincere believer

should earnestly seek out all that God finds abominable, and avoid it. Now read what Deuteronomy 22:5 states that God finds to be an absolutely disgusting thing (i.e., an abomination).

*“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.”*

Notice that there is something in Deuteronomy 22:5 that God finds abominable. One is a woman wearing anything that pertains to a man. The second is a man putting on a woman's garment. God finds such cross-dressing as abominable. This is because it was God who placed a definite distinction between the sexes. The Scriptures record this distinction, when we read “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them*” (Gen. 1:27, emphasis added). Since the distinction is ordained by God, it should be worthy of study to consider the commands of distinction.

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*“The distinction of sexes by the apparel is to be kept up, for the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity, Deut. 22:5. Nature itself teaches that a difference be made between them in their hair (I Cor. 11:14), and by the same rule in their clothes, which therefore ought not to be confounded, either in ordinary wear or occasionally.” (Matthew Henry)*

**Women are to look like women.** Therefore, they are not to wear that which “*pertaineth*” to a man. Notice that this does not use the word apparel or garment. It says that which “*pertaineth*” to a man. Therefore, it is not only referring to clothing, but anything that pertains to a man. Strong's Concordance defines “*pertaineth*” as, “something prepared, that is, any apparatus (as an implement, utensil, dress, vessel or weapon).” The command thus included anything that is considered to appertain to a man.

The blurring of dress distinction is part of the Satan's subtle ploy to destroy the distinction of the sexes also. If a woman will wear a man's clothing, then she alters her feminine appearance. Of course, there are those who will argue that there are "men's" pants and there are "women's" pants. It is true enough that most of the pants that women wear would certainly look peculiar on a man. However, the design of the pants is not the issue. Remember, the question is. . .Are pants in the category of that which "*pertaineth*" to a man. To answer this question, the following information must be considered.

First, the only mention of pants in the Bible is when they are actually called "breeches" and are only for the priest (Ex. 28:42). Nowhere in the Scriptures are women said to wear "breeches" (or, as we would say "britches"). It is true, that not all men wore this article of clothing. Most men of biblical times wore the masculine design of the robe of their day. Yet, it must be confessed that when the "breeches" are mentioned, it is always in a masculine context.

Second, we see that pants are a man's garment because of the history of women wearing pants. The idea of women wearing pants was conceived in the hearts of those in the feminist movement's of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consider the following article:

### **The Beginning of Women Wearing Pants**

*It is interesting to study the history of clothing in America. From the time the first Pilgrims arrived, to the beginning of this century, clothing for women did not change that much. Women basically wore long skirts with blouses, or long dresses. Can you guess who started the move, toward the shorter skirts and pants? **It was the first feminists in, the late 1800's.** They insisted that women had miserable lives, and should be liberated. The feminist thought the answer was for women to dress and act like men. **One of these women was named Mrs. Bloomer (we still use the word bloomer to describe the baggy pants she advocated).** In 1851 the early feminists were denied admission to most churches and buildings even though they had a skirt past the*

*knee and bloomers to their ankles. When she realized it was hurting the women's movement, she gave up trying to wear men's clothing, and no more was heard of women wearing pants for 40 years. As the feminist movement grew, the push to dress like men grew too. Shorter hair, pants, and suit jackets are all socially acceptable today, less than one hundred years later. Wouldn't these early feminist be pleased to see the way most women dress today? Are we truly surprised that currently feminists support abortion and lesbian rights?* (From:<http://users.bigpond.net.au/joeflorence/Modesty.htm>). (Mrs. Amelia Bloomer was the editor of a feminist paper called The Lily). (Emphasis Added)

Thus, we can readily see that the idea was conceived from the desire to deteriorate the distinction between the sexes. It is somewhat amazing that Christians debate this issue, due to the fact that even the world considers pants a man's clothing. This fact is seen in the signs outside the doors of public restrooms. The figures, that are used to represent the men's room, always has on pants. The figures that are used to represent the ladies room, always has on a dress.

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If I were to hold up a dress and ask someone to determine if it pertains to a man or a woman, the answer would unanimously be a woman. If I were to hold up a pair of high-heeled shoes and ask the same question, the answer would again be a woman. Yet, hold a pair of pants up, and the answer becomes blurred. Why, do people attempt to maintain a double-standard? It is because Satan desires to remove every vestige of divine authority from society.

God's design has always been for a distinction between the sexes. This is again reiterated with the fact that the Apostle Paul commanded that women are not to wear short hair (I Cor. 11).

**Men are to look like men.** As previously stated, it was God who placed a distinction between the sexes. One of the pronouncements of God's judgment concerning Babylon is that their men would be like women. *"The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as*

*women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken.”* (Jer. 51:30, emphasis added).

The clothing styles of our day have blurred the line of distinction between the men and women. While Deuteronomy 22:5 prohibits a woman from wearing that which pertaineth to a man, it also prohibits a man putting on a woman’s garment. Notice that it did not say not to wear it, but it said to not even put it on. It appears that the Holy Spirit knew that there would come a day when organizations (including churches) would host an “Ugly Woman” contest where men would dress in women’s clothing and parade in front of a laughing crowd. How can God’s people laugh at that which God Himself calls abomination?

The hair styles of our day have further blurred the distinction of the sexes. In First Corinthians chapter 11, the Holy Spirit states that it is a shame for a man to have long hair (I Cor. 11:14). This writer can remember a day when the hippie movement was sweeping the country. The argument then was, “how long is long?” Members of the male species began wearing full, shoulder-length or longer hair. It was an outward, visible sign of rebellion against the “establishment” of the day. Although the connection with rebellion is no longer associated with long hair, the biblical truth is that it is still a shame for a man to have long hair. In reading the full text of First Corinthians 11, verses five through fifteen, we see that it is also a shame for a woman to have short hair. The question then must be. . .What is long and what is short? The obvious answer then is found by understanding that God placed a distinction between the sexes. In other words, one’s hair should readily and easily identify him or her with their own gender. When a man’s hair more resembles that of a woman, it is sin. When a woman’s hair more resembles that of a man, it is sin.

Men are to look like men. It is common in our day for men to wear necklaces, bracelets and earrings. Does the Bible address these items? Again, we must remember, the issue is the distinction of the sexes. There was a day when such jewelry was understood to be a ladies item. No self-respecting man would have been caught dead wearing an earring. Yet, in our modern day, it is seen as a common

item for men to wear. What happened? Could it also be part of the devil's plan to undermine God's authority by blurring the line of distinction? Remember, that First Corinthians, chapter 11, tells us that God is the head of the man, and the man is the head of the woman. If Satan can blur the distinction, then he can blur the authority. Let us examine the one issue of the earring.

Did men in the Bible wear earrings? Yes, there are some men who are said to have wore earrings. A study of the Bible will reveal only two groups of men who wore earrings. First, we see the children of Israel in Exodus, chapter 32. This is the place where Moses had been gone for forty days, to be with God on Mount Sinai. The people then came to Aaron and told him they did not know what had happened to Moses, "*the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt*" (Ex. 32:1, emphasis added). Notice, their spiritual discernment had already departed. They no longer attributed their freedom from bondage as a mighty act of God, but as the simple leading of man. As a result, they demanded of Aaron an ungodly act. They declared, "*Up, make us gods, which shall go before us*" (Ex. 32:1). Fulfilling such a request is a violation of commandments one and two of the Ten Commandments. Yet, the people feel no compunction in the demand. Why not? Obviously, they had been desensitized by the world and its influence.

Their worldly influence is evidenced by Aaron's response. He says, "*Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, **of your sons**, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me*" (Ex. 32:2, emphasis added). It must be remembered that Egypt, in the Bible, is always a picture of the world and bondage. God's people had spent four-hundred years in the presence of the Egyptians. These had been years of worldly influence. As a result, they had assimilated some of the pagan Egyptian practices into their own lives. Their adaptation of the world and their demand for an idol god, is a valid proof of their spiritual decline. Thus, they were backsliders in their fellowship with God.

The second group of men, who wore earrings in the Bible, are found in Judges chapter eight. These men were the prey of Gideon's

men, who had defeated them in battle. Upon reading the text, it is plain to see that the golden earrings on the men were because of their nationality. The verse reads, “*For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites*” (Jud. 8:24c, emphasis added). The Ishmaelites were the descendants of Abraham’s son, Ishmael, the son of the flesh (Gal. 4:22-25). Isaac was Abraham’s son of the promise (i.e., faith). Throughout the Old Testament, the descendants of Ishmael were in conflict with the descendants of Isaac. Thus, the Ishmaelites were the avowed enemies of God’s people. It is still true today, through the modern-day Ishmaelites know as the Arabs. It is an interesting note to realize that this son of flesh versus son of faith conflict can be a picture of the war of the flesh against the spirit (cf. Gal. 5: 17).

Therefore, when a man wears an earring, he is identifying himself with those who were either backslidden children of God, or those who are the avowed enemies of God. It is rebellion against God to seek to destroy the distinction between the genders.

The world’s attempt at denigrating any differences between the sexes has taken its toll on the family. It is a day when men boast of the “feminine side,” and women boast of their ability by saying, “I can do anything a man can do.” The end result of this illogical, and unbiblical, thinking is that we have placed women in harm’s way in military combat, we have spawned an industry called “Day Care” for those families who ignore God’s distinctive roles for the home, and much more damage has been done to the ladies of our day.

The blurring of God-given distinctions between the sexes has left our nation and society in moral disarray. The collapse of any such society is eminent, unless repentance occurs. The city of Nineveh, in Jonah’s day, was a city of moral wickedness. Yet, when confronted with the message of pending judgment, they repented and the city was spared the wrath of God. On the other had, history bears witness to the demise of the Roman Empire. A perfunctory reading of Edward Gibbons (1737-1794) *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, will bear witness that the Roman Empire fell victim to the same debauchery that we witness in our own nation. It also started with the breakdown of God-ordain distinctions and authority. No nation or

empire can spurn God's Law and continue to survive. Israel, Babylon and Rome all serve as historical witnesses against such breakdowns of truth.

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*Chapter 3*  
**Testimony of Dress**

*1 Corinthians 8-10*

In the book of First Corinthians, Paul takes three chapters to deal with areas of living that are not specifically addressed by Scripture. The Word of God contains what Moses called commandments, statutes and judgments (Deut. 6:1). The commandments are those absolutes, such as “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not.” The statutes are those principles that govern areas not covered by the commandments. And, the judgments are the consequences for violating the commandments or statutes.

In chapters 8 through 10 of First Corinthians, Paul deals with some principles of Christian liberty. In other words, what are the guidelines that should govern the believer, in areas where the Bible has no particular command?

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These principles can equally be applied to the current discussion on Christian dress. These principles are defined in the following paragraphs.

*Three Questions to Consider in Deciding What to Wear. . .*

**Principle #1:** The Principle of Conscience (I Cor. 8:9-13; 10:29-33).

In other words, do my actions cause a weaker believer to stumble, or violate their conscience? The Holy Spirit, through Paul, said that when we demand our rights (or, liberties), even when it causes an offense with those who are weaker in the faith, then we have sinned against God (I Cor. 8:12).

**Principle #2:** The Principle of Concern (I Cor. 9:16-27).

Are you so set on proving your right and freedom, that you do not care for the eternal destiny of lost souls? Do my actions, and restraint, prove my willingness to do anything to win a soul?

**Principle #3:** The Principle of Christ (I Cor. 10:23-31).

Do my actions prove that I love Christ, and desire to bring glory to His name? Do my actions help or hinder my testimony for Christ?



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Chapter 4  
**Authority of Dress**

*I Peter 3:5*

In conclusion, we should briefly consider what kind of authority dress communicates. It is interesting to note that both military and law officers understand this principle. Yet, God's people seem to find joy in trying to debunk the principle.

The military uniform communicates the authority of the one wearing it. If you are exceeding the speed limit on the highway, and you are stopped by a law officer, his uniform communicates his authority to issue a traffic citation. Likewise, even the business world recognizes the authority of dress. Various "How to Dress" books write about the "power tie," the "power suit," etc.. For men, the coat and tie is world-wide symbol of business and authority.

In the same manner, believers must understand the authority that dress communicates. For instance, consider the issue of pants, as discussed earlier. There are times when someone, about a woman, will make the comment "*she wears the pants in that family.*" What they mean is that she is the one who makes the decisions and carries the authority in that family.

The Scriptures are clear that women are not to usurp over the men (I Tim. 2:12). Their dress should reflect that of submission to the authority that God has put over them (cf. I Pet. 3:5). This is not to say that women should dress in sackcloth and ashes! Rather, their dress should be reflective of a Godly attitude. The virtuous woman, as described in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs, clothed herself with strength and honor (Pro. 31:25). Obviously, such a woman was not a doormat for her husband. She cared for, and loved her husband (Pro. 31:11-12). When she displayed the right spirit and submission, her husband also honored her (Pro. 31:28b).

Although this particular point may seem insignificant, in comparison with the previous points, it does bear weight in the issue. Dress communicates authority, or the lack thereof.

Does your dress communicate that of an ambassador for Christ (II Cor. 5:20)? Or, does your dress communicate a friendship with the world?

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it seems that God does care what we wear. The clothing that adorns the outside is a reflection of that which is on the inside. Believers should not be swayed by the fads of the world. The Holy Spirit reminds us that everything that is in the world is not of the Father (I Jn. 2:15-16).

It should be the desire of every believer to honor Christ and preserve their testimony through their dress. If your dress does not readily identify you as a believer, then you may need to consider the revising of your wardrobe.

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### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Allison, Mike. Preaching Standards: Right or Wrong? (Shelbyville, TN: Bible and Literature Missionary Foundation, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

<sup>3</sup> Strong's Concordance.