

## Bringing Up Children In A Whole New Millennium

### What Does Modest Apparel Mean, Anyway?

What an issue facing the church today! It seems Christians have lost their reference points when it comes to determining what is meant by modest apparel in the Bible. In **1 Timothy 2:9(KJV) (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;)**, the Bible admonishes woman to adorn themselves in “modest apparel”. The questing before us in this article is simply this.... How do we know what the Bible means here when it talks about modest apparel. We will look at just a couple of main points to try to ascertain the answer to this important question.

First and foremost, like every other issue in the Bible, one needs to be taught what is modest and immodest. The Eunuch in Acts Chapter 8 said, “How can I understand except someone teach me.” I am afraid we have young Christians, in the Church today, who are “figuring it out on their own” instead of being taught. Where do they look for answers? Friends, the television, movies, popular magazines, etc! I doubt they automatically look to the older women in the church or to the Bible for these answers. And, I know it is not popular for preachers to teach strong lessons on modesty, decency and teen behavior these days. Anyway, the responsibility lies squarely on the shoulders of parents to teach their children. I have on several occasions heard young ladies tell their parents all about what is decent and modest. When did this role reversal occur? I sure don’t read about it in the Bible. As parents we are commanded by God to teach our children this and everything else in God’s word. There will be times they don’t like it to be sure, but, isn’t that just a good lesson for everything else in life?

Why is it so hard for a Christian to determine what kind of dress is modest and what kind is immodest? Has it always been an issue in the church? I don’t think it has always been the kind of issue it is today. It is true that there have always been Christians who tend to conform to the world rather than stand out from the world. The Bible gives us a different responsibility as Christians, **Romans 12:2(KJV) And be not conformed 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. Titus 2:14(KJV) Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.** We can see from the language in these verses that the Christian is going to be quite different from the world. I think in years gone by there was less pressure for social conformity, especially with our youth, and therefore Christians were more willing to accept the fact that they were different than the world. This was especially true in rural areas where the Church has always been more prevalent. Boys generally wore overalls and girls wore homemade dresses. Everyone went to church somewhere and there was a high moral standard in the community. We often say, “Life was so much simpler back then”, but what about Christianity and modest apparel, was it a lot more simple back then, too? If so, why? If not, why is there so much conformity to the world in this regard by the Church? Is it that hard to understand, or do we just want to do what we want to do?

Did you know that the word “modest” as used in 1 Tim. 2:9, does not mean decency per se? I think a lot of Christians have jumped on that bandwagon. Many “churches” in the

religious world have pointed this out and said, “God looks on the inside not the outside”. While it is true that God is more concerned about what comes out of the heart than what goes in or on the body, it does not mean that God has no regard for what goes into the body or what goes on the body. These issues are addressed multiple times in the Bible. If they were not important, they would not be in the Bible. So what does the Bible mean in 1 Tim. 2:9? The Bible uses these words in conjunction with modest; sobriety and shamefacedness, it also deals with things like gold, pearls and costly array. Well, the word modest is **G2887 in strong's...κόσμιος, kosmios, kos'-mee-os...** From G2889 (in its primary sense); *orderly*, that is, *decorous*:—of good behaviour, modest. It actually carries the idea of letting the outward adornment reflect the inward heart. Most scholars agree that it implies not dressing in a way that calls attention to one's self. This being true, it most likely was not addressing decency as we know it today. Why? The decency was not an issue! For the most part, people, particularly women (to whom this was addressed), already dressed decently. Even in the most pagan places, even in the hedonistic, lust fulfilling years of the Roman Empire, indecency (in public) was not the problem. The problem was that many women wanted to dress in a way to call attention to themselves. This was not considered modest. The way they tried to call attention to themselves was by dressing extravagantly. Many times they would embroider their garments with fine strings of gold! They would wear bright colors and try to get noticed. This was wrong then, and it is still wrong today! So, what is the situation today? How do women call attention to themselves today. Ah..... they want to look hot! They want to have sex appeal. So, instead of sewing the seams in gold, they just leave the seams slit and show a little thigh (and sometimes more). After the so called sexual revolution by women, the necklines came down, the hemlines went up, teen pregnancy went up, broken homes went up, STDs went up, divorce rates went up and much, much more. For a long time religious people (not just Christians) stood hard and firm against this kind of dress. After a time, the pressure to conform began to cause one religious order after another to cave-in and accept the modern wardrobe as decent and modest. Now, the Church seems to be in the process of leaving that staunch opposition and conforming just like the others. Do you think God changed his perception of modest and immodest? Do you really think that God is OK with the whole plunging neckline, rising hemlines, bare midriff, etc.? Do you think he approves of the impact this has had on our society? Are you willing to bet your soul that He is OK with all that?

Herein lies the real problem. Christians are betting their souls on this issue and many others as they allow the influence of the world and denominationalism to blur their spiritual vision and fuzz the lines of distinction between right and wrong, good and evil. Are we afraid the Church won't grow if we take a stance on modesty? Well Muslim is the fastest growing religion in the world and the U.S., yet they take a strong stance on decency. It used to be that Christians stood out in the crowd as the ones who were religious. Now, many times you can't even pick the Christian out of the crowd. But, you sure can the Muslim! Parents are too busy “picking their battles” to tell their kids, “You are not wearing that!” I don't think understanding the difference between modest and immodest is the real problem. I think conformity versus peculiarity is the real issue! Parents need to teach their children about the dangers of conformity. Children need to understand that conformity by the Church is the problem with the Church today, not the solution. Dare to be different! Dare to stand up for decency and morality.