

Dressing as a Transformed People

By John R. Gibson

In preaching and teaching I prefer to deal in issues where the lines are clearly drawn by Scripture, but you can't always do it that way. Some things have a certain measure of subjectivity to them and we need to be careful how we deal with them. E.g., while we must not turn "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2) into a requirement that a man be the most skilled teacher anyone has ever known, we cannot ignore the passage either. Most would understand that "pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17) does not mean we pray 24/7, but it also doesn't mean prayer can be a sporadic part of our lives. In a similar way, the Bible does not give a specific list of things which constitute modest apparel and that appropriate for one professing godliness (1 Tim. 2:9-10), but that doesn't mean we can dismiss what it does say.

I don't want to become a lawmaker, but I hope all will carefully study the following principles and then deal honestly with the questions that follow.

Vital Principles

God has called us to be a holy people. *"Be holy, for I am holy."* 1 Pet. 1:13-17

We are to "flee sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18). If anyone doubts or seeks to deny that dress can be seductive and contribute to sexual desire, he or she should be required to explain the success of Victoria's Secret®.

In our dress and in everything we do, **we are not to engage in lewd, lustful, lascivious, or licentious conduct.** *"Let us walk properly,...not in lewdness and lust..."* (Rom. 13:13, 14; 2 Cor. 12:20, 21).

We must avoid putting a stumbling block before others. *"For whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depths of the sea"* (Matt. 18:6, 7; 1 Cor. 8:9; 10:31-33). Since looking at another person with lustful desire is sin (Matt. 5:28), we must not allow our dress (or lack thereof) to be the stumbling block that causes another to sin.

We are called on to be different, to be an influence for good (salt and light) in a corrupt world filled with darkness. Our aim is to be *"children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world"* (Phil. 2:15, 16; Matt. 5:13-16). The call to avoid being conformed to the world (Rom. 12:2) is one which should guide us in all our apparel selections.

Are we willing to maintain a holy dedication to God which dares to be different in the way we dress? Will our commitment cause us to refuse to dress in ways that satisfy the desires of those who have *"eyes full of adultery"* (2 Peter 2:14)? Will our determination to avoid immorality, lust, and lewdness lead us to keep our clothes on? Will we dress in such a way as to lead to lust or will we our choices be as a light shining in the darkness?

Let's Be Honest with Our Answers

Several years ago I came up with six questions I believe everyone should ask before they leave their room. Despite the passing of a few years and the different fashions which have come and gone, I still believe they are valid and offer them now for your careful, honest consideration.

Is this too short? (When fashion designers want to add sexual appeal, the display of the thighs usually seems to be where they start.)

Can I sit down and still retain my modesty? (There may be “shorts” or dresses that are acceptable when one is standing, but don't forget that you will need to sit down at some point. Hint: if you find yourself continually tugging at the bottom of your shorts or your skirt—too short.)

Is it cut too low? (Let's recognize that the fashion world refers to low-cut apparel as sexy and daring, never as modest, holy, and pure. Continually needing to pull up on your top? Too low!)

Is it too tight? (Form-fitting clothes are made to display the attractiveness of the human form—do we not see the problem with that? Let's save the Spandex for undergarments, not outer ones.)

Is it too brief? (Where is the sense of shame when men and women will appear in no more than Adam's fig leaves?)

Is it too sheer? (Some fabrics may “cover” the body, but still allow the skin and/or underwear to be clearly visible.)

Instead of dressing with conformity, let's be guided by a transformed way of thinking. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* Rom. 12:1-2

Unless noted, all quotes from the New King James Version.