

Is modesty in dress still required by God?

You would think by listening to the world, and to some of my younger brethren, that modesty is no longer required of people in general, nor even of Christians in particular. But God has never changed His mind on the subject! Young people need to understand that dressing modestly is not only a biblical principle but also a means of maintaining one's own dignity and character. For example, if a young teenage girl dresses in a provocative manner (short shorts, short skirts, tight-fitting clothes, or revealing tops), then she is announcing to all of her male counterparts that she is a young person of low morals who is probably available. If that same young lady dresses modestly, attractively, and in style, then everyone will admire her -- even her own peers! She now has both the attention and the respect of others.

The same thing applies to young men. If they want to dress in torn-up jeans, dirty tank tops, worn out sandals, and add a couple of "rings" somewhere on their face or body, then they certainly will not be a likely candidate for a good-paying job! Yes, businesses are judged by appearances, and so they judge their potential employees by the same standard! There still remains today "business attire" (dress shirt, tie, and maybe even a suit or sport coat). "Business casual" will permit pressed khaki pants, sports shirt, but still no open-toed shoes. I wonder why?

I grew up as a young, impressionable teen in the late 60's -- a time of great rebellion and social upheaval. Any clothing standard was rejected and angrily opposed as being part of governmental restraint. Well, the hippies would have no part of that! To show their disgust and rebellion to the "standard," younger people everywhere were disrobing, literally. There were those who would run naked anonymously in public and gained the name "streakers" just to make a point. "Skinny dipping" was a major problem at many of the rock festivals in the rural areas. "Love" (unrestrained sex) was also part of the scene. Mini-skirts, bikinis, halter tops, hot pants, etc. were worn commonly in that time because young people were either making a rebellious "statement," or they were just going along with the crowd and wanted to fit in. It was a time of great social upheaval. It was not a happy time.

So many decades later there is much more decency and restraint by the general public. But there is also more license to sin. There are few taboos and young men and women talk together about things that would have made a sailor blush in my youth! In a much more subtle way, people are affirming in their lifestyles that the standard is that there is no standard! Unfortunately, real Christianity has suffered greatly in America during this time because of it. But Christians need to continue to be a light to the world (Matt. 5:14), moral people in an immoral world: "children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world," Philippians 2:15. Proper dress is a big part of the message. Christians have always had to balance current style with Divine standards. The apostle Paul told Timothy to instruct Christian women to dress in clothing "that is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (1 Tim. 2:10). "Modest" (1 Tim. 2:9) is the Greek word *kosmos*, from which we get our English word *cosmos*, and means in its primary sense "orderly." Paul describes the Christian woman's demeanor as "shamefaced" or "bashful." She also has "sobriety" which has to do with soundness of mind, sanity, self-controlled. So the Christian's dress reflects his/her mindset; it is a reflection of who they are. What does your dress reflect about your heart?!