

The Modest Appearance

“I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.”
(1Timothy 2:9-10)

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.” (1Peter 3:3-6)

Every man and woman was created by God and He adorned them with distinctive beauty. But the beauty of a man and woman according to God's standard is different from the standard of the world. God created us beautifully for a purpose. God does want us to have lasting beauty, contrary to the world's trend or style that changes every season. Worldly people look at the physical appearance of man; God looks at the heart. Yet God requires us to be dressed according to His standard in our physical appearance. We are the royal priests that maybe worldly people look at as old-fashioned or out-of-style people. But if our beauty including our physical apparel is according to God's standard it is surely everlasting. Thus our beauty and our responsibility as royal priests and a holy nation are ordained by God in order to fulfill God's purpose for mankind – to worship God.

1- We should dress with decency: We are the priests who worship God and who lead people to worship God. As we come into God's presence we should dress with decency which means our apparel should itself show courtesy and politeness to our God, and be respectable before the people. ***“Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests. Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor.”*** (Exodus 28:1-2)

The worker who stands in the church meeting should wear clothes that bring glory to God; apparel that is clean, ironed, fixed properly, and that which covers our attractive body parts, especially of the women. Our clothes should cover our upper arms, shoulders, chest, back, abdomen, and thighs in order not to entice men to sin.

To dress with decency should apply to men as well. Wearing shirts that expose arm muscles, shoulders, chest, or wearing short pants that expose the thighs of men is not honorable to God. Men who dress in this way would also entice women to sin. We are the priests so we must dress decently so that we can properly minister to people and we can bring people to Christ. Keeping sensitive body parts exposed is not decent in God's sight instead it dishonors our Creator who created us according to His image and likeness.

God commanded Moses about the priestly garment of Aaron and his sons that gives dignity and honor. The Lord said, ***“² Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron to give him dignity and honor.”*** (Exodus 28:2) ***“The priest shall then put on his linen clothes, with linen undergarments next to his body,”*** (Leviticus 6:10a) God required them to wear undergarments under their priestly apparel so they would not die. ***“⁴² Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. ⁴³ Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the tent of meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die.”*** ***“This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants.”*** (Exodus 28:42-43) Nowadays there are churches that allow people to come to worship wearing something only like an undergarment exposing parts of their bodies which is unacceptable to the Lord. ***“And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be***

exposed on it.” (Exodus 20:26) God is very precise about our apparel especially when we come to the altar to minister.

- 2- **We dress with modesty:** We are God’s servants and we should dress modestly which means to wear clothes that reserve our modesty. Short and tight clothes that entice opposite sex and clothing that does not cover properly the fleshy tissue of a man or a woman will not give glory to God. We ought to apply the dress code of modesty to both men and women because wearing clothes that expose fleshy body parts arouses lust for the opposite sex and entices sin and immorality. ***“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.” (Ephesians 5:3)*** There should not be a hint of sexual immortality among the people of God. The woman who wears a tight dress might not intend in her mind to attract men or to show off her body’s beauty. But such type of dress could be a temptation for someone to fall into sin. ***“And do not give the devil a foothold.” (Ephesians 4:27)*** Immodest and daring attire that appeals to the sexual desire of man and woman is the foothold of the devil for people who lack self-control and are easily enticed by sin and immorality. ***“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.” (1Corinthians 10:31-32)***

Even if we are not in church worship meeting, but in our homes, in our work places, or in public places, we must always observe modesty in our appearance. If we, Christians dress in the same manner the nonbelievers do, then what is the difference between them and us? How can the world see Christ in us?

More than that, we are molding our children’s young mind according to the example that they see in us. Definitely they learn from us the habit of wearing proper or improper attire. Children acquire a taste for certain styles of apparel in their early age, so let us begin training them to dress properly while they are small. If there is something we do not want our daughter or son to wear when she/he is fifteen years old, let us not make her/him dress that way while she/he is five years old or younger.

“And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.” (Exodus 20:26) Body movements and actions that expose intimate or personal body parts to others are not acceptable and should be avoided or to be done in the absence of the opposite gender’s observation. Likewise we admonish men not to expose the parts of their bodies in front of their daughters. And we admonish girls not to expose their body parts to their fathers or brothers.

The purpose of wearing clothes is not primarily to protect us from the elements of heat or cold. It is modesty! When Adam and Eve sinned their first impulse was to cover themselves with fig leaves. But later God gave them animal skin to cover their bodies. ²¹***The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21)*** God gave them a better kind of garment to cover their nakedness.

- 3- **We dress with propriety:** To dress with propriety means to dress correctly and appropriately. But it does not mean to wear beautiful and expensive apparel. For the beauty of the women should not come or depend on the braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or expensive clothes, ***“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.” (1Peter 3:3)*** The Scriptures do not prohibit Christian women to have braided hair, or to wear fine clothes and put perfume. Naomi said to Ruth, ***“Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don’t let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking.” (Ruth 3:3)*** Scriptures do not prohibit men and women from wearing gold, jewels, or pearls, but as royal priests if we think that our beauty depends on such things, or if we use such things to boast, to show off and make ourselves attractive, then that is sin. Furthermore if we keep silver, gold, pearls, diamonds, and other

expensive apparels because we have greed in our hearts or because we love material things, these things become our idol and ultimately we sin against God.

God's benchmark for a beautiful woman is never surpassed by any apparel or adornment that we see or buy in the market. Desperately, the so-called world's beautiful women only last for years while they are young, but God's standards make women beautiful till eternity. ***For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful:***

- a) **Beauty that comes from inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.** The woman who is gentle in speech and accent, who is quiet in behavior and action is the woman in whom the Spirit of God finds a place to stay. ***“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.” (Proverbs 31:30-31)*** The Holy Spirit resides in the gentle, quiet, and submissive woman. The Holy Spirit finds a place to work in a woman endowed with such character traits. The Holy Spirit makes her face look radiant and glorious even under pressure or problem in life. The woman who is submissive to her husband is a beautiful woman. A woman who respects her husband is a beautiful and attractive woman to her husband. ***“For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands.” (1Peter 3:5)*** Whatever physical beauty the woman has in her body if she shows no submission and respect to her husband, her husband would no more be attracted to her. No man would love and become attracted to his wife if she shows no respect and submission toward him.
- b) **Beauty that comes from their good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.** Women who are suitable helpers to their husbands are beautiful in the eyes of their husbands. The wife of good deeds is described as a fruitful vine for the royal priest. ***“Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;” (Psalm 128:3a)*** A woman of good deeds is the wife of the royal priest and is described as a wife of noble character. ²³ ***Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.*** ³¹ ***Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.” (Proverbs 31:23, 31)***

I- We dress with dignity for service: The Lord commanded Moses to make garments for Aaron and for his sons whom God chose to minister to Him in the Tent of Meeting. ***“Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the LORD by fire, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come.” (Exodus 30:20-21)***

Ceremonially the priests were clean every time they entered the Tent of Meeting. Today we are the priests washed by the blood of Jesus. We minister to God, to our family, and to the people in our church meetings. We stand and lead people to offer praises and worship to God and sometimes for longer hours. Thus it is practical to have a bath, to clean our physical body and wear proper clothes for service.

God also required the priest to wear linen turbans and linen undergarments. ***“They are to wear linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments around their waists. They must not wear anything that makes them perspire.” (Ezekiel 44:18)*** The purpose of linen turban and undergarment that God recommended is most likely to absorb the sweat so that their bodies are kept fresh. In the same manner let us also keep our body fresh and free from bad smell when we

minister to God and to the people. Physically fresh and clean body inside the proper clothing also develops our dignity and self-esteem.

In our place of work there is always a dress code that needs to be observed and we are reprimanded by our superiors if we do not abide. The Lord Jesus Christ is our boss above all and the Bible has also the dress code that we need to follow. Wearing decent and modest apparel facilitates us to bring the pure message of God to the people around us in a clearer way.

We are the Royal Priests and our apparel should also show that we are the royal priests of God. Sometimes for some reason wearing formal attire is not feasible like while travelling over long distance, going into a remote area with non available facilities, or staying in an area with unfavorable weather, too cold or too hot. But still we are advised to do our best to present ourselves to people and to Christ holy and acceptable, and to bring glory and honor unto God in the manner we dress ourselves. Let us present the message of Jesus Christ to the whole world in words, in deeds, and in our appearance with proper apparel as royal priests of God.