

MODESTY AND DANCING

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About the author...

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Modesty

It is apparent that as each year passes men and women are exposing more and more skin to the public. People are under the impression that less is better when it comes to clothing. For example in the world of sports (i.e. gymnastics, ice-skating and track and field, etc.) the clothing has become extremely abbreviated and more revealing. Also, swim wear (as compared to what was worn at the turn of the last century) has gone beyond shameful and in the future, if trends continue as they are, will probably be eliminated altogether. Clothes that people wear every day are shorter, skimpier, and designed to be sexier looking. Social influences definitely affect the attitude of church members. People imitate the things they see others do. It has been called the “monkey see, monkey do syndrome.” Yes, even ladies in the church are starting to show more of their flesh. Their shorts are getting shorter and their necklines are dipping lower. It is unfortunate that they fail to see a problem with it. The world has conditioned them to believe that if it is socially acceptable, then it is also morally acceptable. It is apparent that more teaching needs to be done on the subject.

It is my belief also that Genesis three is the logical place to begin a study of modest clothing. In the sequence of events found in Genesis three God reveals elementary matters on the clothing that He prefers. When Adam and Eve sinned for the first time their eyes were opened, and it was at this point they perceived that their bodies were naked (Genesis 3:7). The first couple immediately tried to cover their bodies; it was their first attempt to clothe themselves. The Bible says they made aprons of fig leaves (Genesis 3:8-9). They knew that being naked was not the way to be seen of God. Their nakedness made them ashamed. Men and women must learn the same sense of shame. It is shameful to be naked before the eyes of others.

Adam and Eve worked to cover their private parts with the fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). But the fig leaves did not cover enough of their bodies. It is tremendously important to recognize that God was not satisfied with the aprons which Adam and Eve had made. Brevity is not what God is looking for in clothing. The aprons did not pass the inspection of God. The aprons were immediately replaced with coats of animal skin (Genesis 3:21). Even though there were only two people inhabiting the earth at this time, it was time for them to become accustomed to having on clothes, for they were to wear them for the rest of their lives. If the abbreviated clothing was not acceptable to God then, what makes us think that He is different now?

The tunic is a long garment that covers a major portion of the body. All those wishing to please Him must duly note the fact that God wanted their bodies **completely** covered. God did not make short shorts, mini-skirts, bikinis, halter-tops, etc. He did not make clothes that look like the outfits Tarzan and Jane wore in the Hollywood movies. Artists have often portrayed Adam and Eve in

clothing that resembles the cave-man look (rough, shaggy-looking animal skins). Do we not think that God is capable of making something more tailored than a cave man suit? The priests under the law of Moses also wore coats, however, artists in these instances are always careful to draw human images with longer and more beautiful garments (Exodus 28:40; 29:8; 39:27). Do the artists really think that God is incapable of making beautiful clothing? If God made the clothing, and He did, then why do we think it was crudely constructed? God can make beautiful clothing and He can make it modest at the same time. Coats are long garments, therefore we know that God has authorized such as modest apparel. Who can deny it? Fashion designers in Paris or New York may think skimpy clothing is in vogue, but God does not.

Whatever God does is highly significant. If man is to please God then close attention must be paid. The account of Adam and Eve happened approximately six thousand years ago, even so the Bible does not record an instance where God has change this initial standard of long clothing. It was long for modesty then, and it must be the same for modesty today. Yes civilization has made advancements and many things are different now, however this does not mean that God's standard of modest clothing has changed. Just because we drive automobiles and Adam did not, does not mean we can shorten our clothing. If God is to be pleased then it must be done with modest clothing. God has set the standard and we must stay accustomed to it.

That standard of modesty can be seen again in the robes that the Levitical priests were commanded to wear. The same word that is translated "*coat*" in Genesis 3:21 is also used to refer to the robes of the priests. Because it is the same word, we can be sure that the coats of Adam and Eve are similar in length to the ones worn by priests. Today it is believe that if the climate is hot then you ought to take clothing off to stay cooler. However, consider that for the first forty years these Levitical priests wore their coats it was in the very hot desert wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. Even today, residents of Saudi Arabia wear long flowing robes in this hot region. Wearing less does not equate to cooler body temperatures. Clothing that is wet with perspiration is far cooler than just the bare skin. Besides, God was not trying to make life miserable for the priests, but that they would be modestly dressed.

Let's not attempt to associate culture with what God required of people in those times. Culture had nothing to do with the way Adam and Eve dressed. There was no culture in the beginning; Adam and Eve were the setting the trends in their day and the trend called for long garments. It had nothing to do with culture but everything to do with pleasing God. The same was true of the children of Israel. They were separated from all other nations before the robes were made, hence the robes did not need to meet with any cultural requirements of the day. They just followed the pattern set by the Lord.

Furthermore, beneath the coats the priests were commanded to wear pants (Exodus 28:40-43). God gave the following instructions, "*And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach*" (v.42). Underneath the priestly robes, their nakedness was to be covered with trousers. The robes were long and covered many parts of the body, but still were not sufficient. Other precautions were taken to ensure a modest appearance. Do not forget, it was God who instituted these requirements. The office of the priest was to maintain the highest standards of dignity. This included the clothing they wore. Things written before, in the Old Testament, were written to teach lessons necessary for proper behavior before God. According to Romans 15:4 these important Old Testament principles were recorded for the purpose of teaching people today. The priests were holy and in representing God were required to wear clothing that demonstrated perfect purity. Nakedness, whether partial or complete are

embarrassing and shameful.

Christians are also New Testament priests who represent the same holy God that the priesthood in the Old Testament served (1 Peter 2:5-11). Those wearing the name of Christ should be very careful to wear clothing that presents purity before the Lord just as was manifested in the Old Testament. Servants of the Lord must avoid every appearance of evil; which includes immodest clothing (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Christians should always be more modestly dressed than our present world. Certainly we should never be just like it. Clothing designed to appeal to the sexual appetites of the flesh should be rejected. Christians should “...*adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety...*” (1 Timothy 2:9). Sexual reserve must be practiced in regard to the clothing worn. The wardrobe of Christians should portray godliness (1 Timothy 2:10). Mini-skirts, short-shorts, bikini tops and bottoms, tight jeans, unbuttoned blouses and the such-like does not present an image of one professing godliness, but that of worldliness.

Fathers and mothers need to put their foot down with their children in regard to clothing. A return to decency must begin with Christian homes leading the way. Every Christian Bible camp that I have ever been associated with required knee length shorts to be worn. Short shorts, halter tops, tank tops, etc. have never been permitted. These camps do not allow boys and girls to swim together at the same time. There is always a privacy fence placed around the swimming pool to keep the eyes of the opposite sex from viewing those who were swimming. Robes and other clothing were worn over the bathing suits as swimmers went to and from the swimming area. Are these camp directors just old fogies? Do they need to update their standards for the new millennium? NO! These camp directors understand what the Bible teaches about modest dress and are attempting to teach standards of modesty to the young folk who attend. May God bless them as they continue to uphold principles that are right.

Dancing

Let us also address dancing. Speaking of Bible camps, I have never known of a camp that allowed dancing. No summer camps sponsored by faithful brethren permit dancing of any form; be it square dancing, waltz, ballet, modern, jitter bug, etc. To my knowledge no sound churches that have ever arranged to have a dance at their church building; it just does not happen. A lot of my sound brethren play volleyball, softball, dominoes, card games, eat homemade ice cream and water melon, but never, ever, put on a dance. Dancing allows the bodies of males and females to touch in the wrong places. It puts their bodies into motion in ways that are indecent. Until recent years, not even denominational churches would have sponsored dances. I state all of this to establish the following point—generally people have recognized that dancing and religion are two elements that do not mix. Men closely embracing the wives of other men at a dance cannot be the way to maintain thoughts that are pure and wholesome (Philippians 4:8). This generation already has enough trouble controlling lustful thoughts without creating a situation that encourages more. How can teenagers be encouraged to keep their minds pure if the church arranges situations where they put their bodies together in such close intimate contact for long periods of time?

Let's do some testing and proving as the Bible commands us (1 Thessalonians 5:21). What would happen if a school planned to have a dance, but all of the boys were to dance together in the gym and all of the girls danced together in the cafeteria—totally separated? I asked a group of young men this question and they responded, “No one would attend.” This proves one point: dancing is

sexually motivated. If boys and girls were separated when they danced it would eliminate the need for chaperones policing the kids to stop more intimate things from developing. Teens want to be intimately embraced with the opposite sex in dancing or they will just stay at home. They want to shake their stuff in front of some handsome boy or a shapely girl, not before others of their own gender. Current dances feature bodily gyrations that are sexually suggestive. Dancing seen on television shows that dancing has just gotten worse provocatively speaking. There is no question that dancing is all about sexual enticement. Anyone who denies it cannot be speaking honestly. It is an impure as it can be.

Let's make another observation about the dance. Under what conditions are people found dancing? Is it not in darkened rooms? In one town our family lived across the street from a school cafeteria where school dances were held and consistently the room was always very dark except for some tiny strobe lights that flashed. Why is it that people like to dance in a darkened atmosphere? Its because they want a "romantic" atmosphere to go with the intimate embracing that associates dancing? Where can most adults be found dancing? Is it not in nightclubs, beer joints, dance halls, all of which dimly lit places. In these establishments men come to pick up women or visa versa. After dancing, they often leave together for a night of sexual activity. Dancing is commonly associated the consumption of beer, wine and whiskey. In these night clubs the booze flows like water. As a matter of fact dancing and drinking go together like drinking and drunkenness; alcohol and liver disease; tobacco and cancer; where the one is there will be the other also. When people have a party in which alcoholic beverages are served, it almost always has dancing too. Does this cause dancing to appear a wholesome activity for Christians? Does this association with drunkenness put dancing in a good light? Hardly! This does nothing but incriminate dancing as unholy, indecent and worldly.

There are two Greek terms that incriminate dancing as sinful: *lasciviousness* and *revellings*. Both terms are found in a list of works of the flesh located in Galatians 5:19-21. This passage teaches that people who participate in these activities will not inherit the kingdom of God. Included in the definition of *lasciviousness* is "unbridled lust, excess, shamelessness" also, "indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc." (Thayer 79). That definition fits perfectly what is seen in the modern dance. Dancing is unbridled lust. It displays shameful and indecent movements. The body is seen gyrating sexually suggestive ways. Dancing is also the unchaste handling of the bodies of males and females. *Revellings* has been defined as "drinking parties" that involve "carousals in the streets." This puts one in mind of events like New Year's Eve bashes in New York City and Mardigras in New Orleans, where people are out in the streets, drinking and dancing in an unbridled, lustful atmosphere.

Who can defend dancing as a wholesome activity for Christian men and women, boys and girls? There is not scriptural basis by which it can be exonerated. If you let one man embrace another man's wife, cheek to cheek, without the music, impropriety can be easily identified. We can also understand how two unmarried individuals embracing for a long periods of time, body touching body, will have wholesome thoughts encouraged. Adding music will not change the situation in the least. How right-thinking Christians can believe that dancing will encourage purity of mind is a mystery. Christians are commanded to maintain holiness and dancing does not fit into the formula (1 Peter 14-16).

Christians have so many wonderful ways to enjoy life. Fishing, hunting, golfing, gardening, baseball, dominoes, reading, crafts, etc., are all innocent and harmless activities. We do not need dancing to have a good time. Jesus, the apostles or any New Testament Christian are said to have

involved themselves in dancing. Nonetheless, we believe that they were people who rejoiced, were blissful and lived a full and rewarded life. It seems to me that some Christians do not believe that life will ever be worth anything if they and their children are denied participation in worldly activities. How sad it is that they feel this way. Let us remember that life is of the highest quality when we follow the plan that God has laid out in His word. I believe Jesus when He said that He was come “...*that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*” (John 10:10). Dancing was not included in the abundant life.

Works Cited

Thayer, Joseph Henry. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House (1977).