

Modest Clothing

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The Minneapolis Church

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Table of Contents

I. As Christians, we must not be conformed to this world, but must be transformed by the renewing.....	2
II. God's ministers must put a difference between the clean and the unclean	2
III. Nakedness must be covered	2
3. It is a shame for one's nakedness to be shown.....	2
4. What constitutes nakedness?	2
5. What must be covered for nakedness to be covered?.....	3
IV. What about doctor's exams?.....	5
V. Women are to be adorned with modest apparel	5
VI. Can women wear pants, slacks, or jeans?	7
VII. What about clothes, such as "goth", "skater", or other such garb?	7
VIII. Swimwear	8
IX. Dressing modestly is not only for church or when the pastor is present.....	9
X. What about children?	9
XI. How should we dress for church?.....	9

- I. As Christians, we must not be conformed to this world, but must be transformed by the renewing of our minds (**Rom 12:2**).
1. There is probably not a more important area of our lives that needs to be not conformed to this world than our clothing.
 2. In order for our lives to be acceptable to God, we must present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, which includes sacrificing what we want to wear in order to please God (**Rom 12:1**).
- II. God's ministers must put a difference between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane (**Eze 22:26; Eze 44:23**).
- A. There must be a standard for acceptable clothing, or anything goes.
 - B. That standard must come from the word of God.
 - C. As a minister of God, I must set a standard for modest clothing within the framework of the word of God and the church should respect it (**Heb 13:7,17**).
- III. Nakedness must be covered (**Lev 18:6**).
1. Nakedness - 1. The state or condition of being unclothed or destitute of clothing. Also *transf.* a naked person.
 2. Naked *adj.* - I. 1. a. Unclothed, having no clothing upon the body, stripped to the skin, nude. †Also occas. having only an under-garment on. (**Job 24:10**)
 3. It is a shame for one's nakedness to be shown (**Exo 32:25; Rev 3:18; Rev 16:15**).
 - A. Shame *n.* - I. 1. a. The painful emotion arising from the consciousness of something dishonouring, ridiculous, or indecorous in one's own conduct or circumstances (or in those of others whose honour or disgrace one regards as one's own), or of being in a situation which offends one's sense of modesty or decency.
 - B. A person's sexual organs are referred to as their shame in the Bible (**Isa 47:3**).
 - C. Shame *n.* - 7. *concr.* The privy members or 'parts of shame'. 1611 Bible Rev. xvi. 15 Least hee walke naked, and they see his shame.
 - D. It is a shame and wickedness to look on the nakedness of someone of the opposite sex who is not one's spouse (**Lev 20:17**).
 - E. It is not a shame to see the nakedness of one's spouse -- their nakedness belongs to their spouse and no other (**Lev 18:8,16**).
 4. What constitutes nakedness?
 - A. Breasts of women (**Eze 23:3,18-21; Pro 5:19-20**).
 - B. Buttocks of men and women (**Isa 20:4**).
 - C. The loins (**Isa 20:2**).
 - i. The loins include reproductive organs (**Gen 46:26**).
 - ii. Loin *n.* - 1. a. In the living body. Chiefly *pl.* The part or parts of a human being or quadruped, situated on both sides of the vertebral column, between the false ribs and the hip-bone. 2. Chiefly Biblical and poet. This part of the body, regarded a. as the part of the body that should be covered by clothing and about which the clothes are bound; so, to gird (up) the loins (lit. and fig.), to prepare for strenuous exertion.

- iii. The loins are the mid section of the body (the area of the hips and groin) that a girdle (**2Ki 1:8; Jer 13:1**) and a sword are worn on (**2Sa 20:8**).
 - iv. Girdle *n.* - 1. a. A belt worn round the waist to secure or confine the garments; also employed as a means of carrying light articles, esp. a weapon or purse.
 - D. Sexual organs of men and women (**Hab 2:15-16; Nah 3:5**).
 - E. Uncovered thighs are nigh unto nakedness (**Isa 47:2-3**).
- 5. What must be covered for nakedness to be covered?
 - A. Since women's breasts are considered nakedness (**Eze 23:3,18-21; Pro 5:19-20**), women's breasts must be covered in their entirety including all cleavage.
 - B. Adam and Eve provide us with some clues about how nakedness should be covered.
 - i. Before man sinned, it was not a shame to be naked (**Gen 2:25**).
 - ii. After Adam and Eve sinned, it became a shame to be naked and they covered their nakedness (**Gen 3:7**).
 - iii. They made themselves aprons to cover their nakedness (**Gen 3:7**).
 - a. Apron *n.* - 1. a. An article of dress, originally of linen, but now also of stuff, leather, or other material, worn in front of the body, to protect the clothes from dirt or injury, or simply as a covering.
 - b. An apron generally covers from the chest to near the knees.
 - c. Even in their fallen condition, they had enough sense not to make themselves speedos, bikinis, one-piece bathing suits, or "Daisy Duke" shorts, to cover their nakedness.
 - iv. God later clothed Adam and Eve with coats of skins (**Gen 3:21**).
 - a. Coat *n.* - 1. a. An outer garment worn by men; usually of cloth, with sleeves. In olden times the name was sometimes given to a tunic or close-fitting garment coming no lower than the waist (cf. waistcoat); and it was especially applied to the close-fitting tunic which when armed constituted the coat of mail (sense 5), as in quots. c 1300, c 1475. In modern use, coat means a garment for the body with loose skirts descending below the waist. 2. a. A garment worn suspended from the waist by women or young children; a petticoat, a skirt.
 - b. God made them garments that extended below the waste to cover their nakedness.
 - c. God didn't make them speedos, bikinis, one-piece bathing suits, or "Daisy Duke" shorts, to cover their nakedness.
 - C. God specified that the priests would wear breeches to ensure their nakedness was covered (**Exo 28:42**).
 - i. Breech *n.* - 1. A garment covering the loins and thighs: at first perh. only a 'breech-cloth'; later reaching to the knees.
 - ii. Nakedness *n.* - 1. The state or condition of being unclothed or destitute of clothing. Also *transf.* a naked person.
 - iii. These breeches would cover the loins and thighs (**Exo 28:42**).
 - a. Loin *n.* - 1. a. In the living body. Chiefly *pl.* The part or parts of a human being or quadruped, situated on both sides of the vertebral column, between the false ribs and the hip-bone. 2. Chiefly Biblical and poet. This part of the body, regarded a. as the part of the body

that should be covered by clothing and about which the clothes are bound; so, to gird (up) the loins (lit. and fig.), to prepare for strenuous exertion.

- b. Thigh *n.* - 1. The upper part of the leg, from the hip to the knee (in man).
 - iv. In that the thighs are connected to the knees, the breeches that God gave to cover nakedness reached to the knees, as the definition states.
 - a. This would ensure that the priest's nakedness was not seen if he were walking up stairs (**Exo 20:26**).
 - b. It is true that the breeches the priest wore were for their priestly work and were not the garments that they usually wore (**Exo 28:43**).
 - c. It is also true that the thighs themselves are not nakedness, though they are close to it (**Isa 47:2-3**).
 - v. But the important point to be taken from **Exo 28:42** is that God required that the priests wore garments that covered their nakedness, and the garment God chose was breeches which covered the thighs down to the knees.
 - vi. Therefore, God sees fit that to ensure nakedness is covered, the thighs should be covered down to the knees.
 - a. The priests ministered standing up, so the breeches they wore would have extended to the knees in a standing position.
 - b. If God gave a garment to cover nakedness that covered the thighs down to the knees, who do we think we are to wear garments that only cover the genitals by a fraction of an inch (bikini bottoms or one-piece bathing suits) and claim that we are modestly dressed, alleging that we have our nakedness covered?
 - c. To ensure that they are meeting God's standard for modesty, Christians should make sure that their shorts, dresses, and skirts come down to the knee.
 - d. If this is done, there is no question concerning whether a person is covered sufficiently.
 - e. We must abstain from the appearance of evil (**1Th 5:22**).
 - f. Why would a Christian want to push the limit and wear clothing that covers less than a garment that God himself gave to ensure that nakedness is covered?
 - vii. *For the church service and church events, all church members shall wear clothing that extends at least to the knees.*
- D. It was a shame for David's men to be seen with their garments cut off "in the midst hard by their buttocks" (**1Ch 19:4-5; 2Sa 10:4-5**).
- i. Hard by - *A. prep.* Close by; in close proximity to; close to, very near to.
 - ii. Their garments were cut off very close to where their legs met their butt cheeks.
 - iii. Their garments were shameful to wear.
 - iv. Therefore, clothing that only extends to very close to where the butt cheeks meet the legs is shameful.
 - a. Bikinis, one piece bathing suits, and "Daisy Duke" shorts only cover to where the butt cheeks meet the legs.

- b. Therefore, bikinis, one piece bathing suits, and "Daisy Duke" shorts are shameful when worn in public.
- v. Therefore, the thighs should be covered.
- E. The loins, which a girdle covers, including the genital organs, hips, groin, and butt (see Section III,4,C) are considered nakedness (**Isa 20:2**), and therefore should be covered.

IV. What about doctor's exams?

1. Gynecological, breast, urological, and prostate exams all require that nakedness be uncovered.
2. These exams would not constitute a breach of God's law because a higher law in the scripture takes precedent, that being the law of the preservation of life.
 - A. Jesus' disciples were not judged for plucking ears of corn and eating them on the sabbath day because the higher principle of preservation of life prevailed (**Mat 12:1-8**).
 - B. David broke God's law when he and his men ate the shewbread when they were hungry, but were not judged for it because preservation of life trumped that law (**Mat 12:3-8**).
 - C. Jesus repeatedly healed men on the sabbath day, which was technically work and therefore a violation of the sabbath law, to show that the saving or preserving of life is a higher law than the sabbath law (**Mat 12:10-13; Joh 7:21-23**).
3. To uncover one's nakedness to be examined by a doctor for the preservation and maintenance of life likewise supersedes God's prohibitions on nakedness.

V. Women are to be adorned with modest apparel (**1Ti 2:9**).

1. Modest *adj.* - 1. Well-conducted, orderly; not harsh or domineering. *Obs.* 3. Of women, their attributes and behaviour: Governed by the proprieties of the sex; decorous in manner and conduct; not forward, impudent, or lewd; 'shamefast'. Hence (in later use also of men), scrupulously chaste in feeling, language, and conduct; shrinking from coarse or impure suggestion. b. Of female attire: Decent, not meretricious. 1611 Bible 1 Tim. ii. 9 That women adorne themselves in modest apparell
 - A. Meretricious - 1. Of, pertaining to, characteristic of, or befitting a harlot; having the character of a harlot.
 - B. Harlot *n.* - 5. Applied to a woman. a. As a general term of execration. c. *spec.* An unchaste woman; a prostitute; a strumpet. (Very frequent in 16th c. Bible versions, where Wyclif had hoore, whore; prob. as a less offensive word.)
 - C. Shamefacedness - 1. Modesty, bashfulness, shyness.
2. Modest apparel is clothing that is not pertaining to, characteristic of, or befitting a harlot.
 - A. Harlots wear a type of attire which is sexually arousing (**Pro 7:10**).
 - B. Prostitutes have always dressed provocatively.
 - C. Consider how prostitutes dress.
 - i. Prostitutes normally do not go out in public totally nude.
 - ii. Prostitutes normally do not dress with their breasts, butt, or vagina entirely exposed.
 - iii. They normally dress in short skirts which show most of their thighs and come very near showing the bottom of their butt cheeks.

- iv. They normally dress with shirts that show the top part of their breasts, but not with the nipple exposed.
 - v. They often dress with a shirt that shows their belly and mid section.
 - vi. They often also dress with skin-tight clothing that shows their body parts in detail.
 - vii. In other words, harlots dress very similar to the way that modern women (and Christian women, too often) dress.
- D. Since modest apparel is apparel that is NOT characteristic of a harlot, therefore modest apparel is clothing that covers the thighs, midsection, and the entirety of the breasts (showing no cleavage), without being skin-tight, so as to show their body parts distinctly.
- E. Said another way...
- i. Dresses, skirts, shorts, and swimwear that do not cover the thighs are NOT modest apparel because they are characteristic of the attire of a harlot.
 - ii. Shirts, blouses, dresses, or swimwear that show any cleavage of the breasts are NOT modest apparel because they are characteristic of the attire of a harlot.
 - iii. Shirts, blouses, or swimwear that show a woman's mid section are NOT modest apparel because they are characteristic of the attire of a harlot.
 - iv. Skin-tight pants such as yoga pants which show the contours of a woman's butt and private parts are NOT modest apparel because they are characteristic of the attire of a harlot.
- F. THINK!!! -- The average harlot dresses more modestly at work than the average Christian woman does at the pool or at the beach, in that the harlot only shows *most* of her thighs, while too many Christian women show ALL of their thighs in a bikini or a one-piece bathing suit.
3. If you are not a harlot, then don't dress like one at any time in public, whether out on the town or on the beach.
- A. Abstain from the appearance of evil (**1Th 5:22**).
 - B. Don't use your liberty as a occasion to the flesh (**Gal 5:13**).
 - C. We are to hate even the garment spotted by the flesh (**Jud 1:23**).
4. Helpful pointers.
- A. Don't wear a shirt, blouse, or dress that is low enough to *almost* show cleavage, because it will when you lean forward.
 - B. Check yourself in the mirror, leaning forward, before you leave the house.
 - C. Husbands, don't be apathetic or clueless when it comes to what your wives or daughters are wearing.
 - i. You are the head of your family and it is your job to say "no" when necessary.
 - ii. You will bear responsibility for what your wives and daughters wear.
 - D. Ladies, consider what dressing provocatively by showing cleavage or thighs does to your Christian brothers.
 - i. Men are aroused by sight -- remember David and Samson.
 - ii. Don't cause them to stumble.
 - iii. Be discrete (**Pro 11:22**).
 - E. Mothers, teach your daughters to dress modestly, both by example and instruction.

- F. Older ladies, teach the younger women to be discrete and chaste in their fashion and attitude (**Tit 2:3-5**).
- G. Older ladies should be setting a good example by the way they dress for the younger ladies in the church.

VI. Can women wear pants, slacks, or jeans?

1. God forbade men and women from wearing each other's clothes in the Old Testament (**Deu 22:5**).
2. God also forbids men from acting like women in the New Testament (**1Co 6:9**).
 - A. Effeminate *adj.* - 1. Of persons: That has become like a woman: a. Womanish, unmanly, enervated, feeble; self-indulgent, voluptuous; unbecomingly delicate or over-refined.
 - B. A man dressing like a woman is effeminate and is condemned by God.
3. Since the principle of **Deu 22:5** is carried over into the NT in **1Co 6:9**, the prohibition against men and women wearing each other's clothes is still in force today.
4. The question is: are all pants, slacks, or jeans men's garments and therefore not to be worn by women?
5. Clothing styles change over time.
 - A. None of us today wear the kind of clothes that men and women wore in the first century.
 - B. The key thing is that there must be a distinction between men's and women's clothes.
 - C. Sometimes men's and women's clothing will look similar, but is still distinct.
 - i. For instance, men and women both wore robes in the first century, but there was a noticeable difference between a man's robe and a woman's robe.
 - ii. Men even wore skirts in Biblical times (**Rut 3:9**), but they were men's skirts, not women's skirts.
 - iii. Today in Scotland, a man could wear a kilt and a woman could wear a plaid skirt which both look similar, but they are still distinct enough that a man wearing a kilt would not be guilty of wearing a woman's garment because it looks similar to a skirt.
6. The same things would apply to pants, slacks, and jeans today.
 - A. There are men's pants and jeans, and there are women's pants and jeans.
 - B. As long as women are wearing women's jeans that look like women's jeans, then they are not guilty of wearing a man's garment.
 - C. As long as men are wearing men's jeans that look like men's jeans, then they are not guilty of wearing a woman's garment.
7. This is a grey area.
 - A. Women would be wise to not wear baggy jeans that look like men's jeans.
 - B. Men would be wise to not wear tight jeans that look like women's jeans.

VII. What about clothes, such as "goth", "skater", or other such garb?

1. Such clothes would not be considered *modest apparel* because they are not *decent* for a Christian to wear.
 - A. Modest *adj.* - 3. b. Of female attire: Decent, not meretricious. 1611 Bible 1 Tim. ii. 9 That women adorne themselues in modest apparell

- B. Decent - 1. a. Becoming, suitable, appropriate, or proper to the circumstances or special requirements of the case; seemly, fitting. b. Appropriate with regard to rank or dignity. 3. a. In accordance with or satisfying the general standard of propriety or good taste, in conduct, speech, or action; esp. conformable to or satisfying the recognized standard of modesty or delicacy; free from obscenity.
- 2. Such clothes are not appropriate for the dignity of a Christian.
- 3. The same would go for wild hairstyles or colors, excessive body piercings, or tattoos.
- 4. We must abstain from the appearance of evil (**1Th 5:22**).

VIII. Swimwear

- 1. Biblical modesty standards don't change when we step on the beach or into the swimming pool.
- 2. No Christian woman would be caught dead in her bra and underwear in public.
 - A. But plenty of women who profess to be Christians think nothing of wearing a bikini to swim or sunbath in.
 - B. Wearing only a bra and underwear is immodest because it doesn't meet the biblical requirements of covering from above the breasts down to and including the thighs.
 - C. A bikini covers the same amount to skin as a bra and underwear.
 - D. Therefore, wearing a bikini is immodest.
 - E. It doesn't matter if the bikini is made of a thicker material because the same amount of skin is shown.
- 3. One-piece bathing suits
 - A. From the waste down, a one-piece bathing suit covers the same amount of skin as a bikini bottom.
 - i. A bikini bottom is immodest for the reasons given in the previous section.
 - ii. Therefore, a one-piece bathing suit is immodest.
 - B. A one-piece bathing suit could be modest if, 1) a knee-length skirt or swimming trunks was worn with it and, 2) it did not show any cleavage.
- 4. What about a swimming competition where a skirt or loose-fitting modest swimming wear would hinder performance?
 - A. Biblical modesty standards don't change simply because a Christian wants to participate in a swimming competition.
 - B. This would not be a matter a higher law trumping God's law regarding modesty.
 - C. It is not necessary for a Christian to participate in a swimming competition.
 - D. If rules for the competition forbid modest swimwear, then a Christian must abstain from the competition.
 - i. This would be no different from a Christian declining to work at Hooters because a requirement of the job is to dress immodestly.
 - ii. This is a time when a Christian must "suffer" for their faith (**1Pe 4:16**).
 - E. If the rules for the competition allow for modest swimwear, then a Christian could participate.
 - i. If wearing modest swimwear to the competition put the Christian at a disadvantage, so be it.
 - ii. He or she will should rejoice for being able to "suffer" as a Christian (**1Pe 4:14,16**).

- iii. This would also be a great opportunity to show the world that we are different, and it could result in a chance to share our faith.

IX. Dressing modestly is not only for church or when the pastor is present.

1. You should be obeying the word of God, not only in my presence, but in my absence also (**Php 2:12; Gal 4:18**).
2. I may not see it, but God sees it (**Pro 15:3**).
3. He also knows your heart (**Heb 4:12**).
4. Be sure your sin will find you out (**Num 32:23**).

X. What about children?

1. Parents should train up their children in the way they should go (**Pro 22:6**) and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (**Eph 6:4**), which includes Biblical standards of modesty.
2. Just as a parent would not allow a child to use the Lord's name in vain, steal, or fornicate, neither should they let him or her dress immodestly, including swimwear.
3. Parents should be providing a good example to their children in the way that they dress.

XI. How should we dress for church?

1. In the OT, God required the priests to dress differently for church than at other times (**Eze 44:17-23**).
2. Every church member is a priest in the house of God (**1Pe 2:5**).
3. God wants our best at whatever we do.
 - A. When Israel was not giving God their best, God reasoned with them and told them to give their sacrifice to their governor and see if he would accept it (**Mal 1:8**).
 - B. They thought nothing of giving God something that they wouldn't give to a person of far lesser importance, and they were condemned by God for it.
4. When it comes to the clothes that we come to the house of God in, are we giving God our best? How about even close to our best?
5. Ask yourself:
 - A. Would you go to meet the governor of Minnesota or the president of the United States dressed like you do to meet God in His house?
 - B. Would you go to work dressed like you go to church?
 - C. Would you go out to eat with your spouse at a nice restaurant on a special occasion with the same attire that you wear to eat the Lord's supper with Him?
 - D. What does your outfit say to strangers about how you value the house of God?
 - E. What does your outfit suggest about your zeal for the house of God?
6. It is true that we are not supposed to show respect or favoritism to a person who comes to church with fine clothing (**Jam 2:1-5**).
 - A. James' censure is *not against people wearing nice clothing to church*, but is against *brethren showing favoritism to people wearing nice clothing to church*.
 - B. Notice that the rich man is not condemned for wearing goodly apparel to church (**Jam 2:2**).
 - C. Notice it is *the poor* who were coming to church in vile raiment (**Jam 2:2**).
 - D. The poor have an excuse for coming to church in vile raiment.
 - E. Their vile raiment may be the best thing they have to wear.

- F. What would it say about a wealthy man's heart if he cared so little for the house of God that he came to church in vile raiment, or in clothing that he would not wear to any other respectable event?
7. Think on these things.