

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Excuses, Excuses

By Linda J. Cruz

My daughter will never be a cheerleader. Oh, she's got the coordination and the enthusiasm, but the love of God and his word prohibit cladding oneself in a skimpy little uniform and parading around on display for a crowd. That alone is sufficient, not to mention the lewd and suggestive routines that pass as cheers today. Some professional teams more accurately refer to their cheerleaders as "dancers."

Nor will she be likely to learn any form of dance. I would be willing for her to train in ballet or tap provided she be allowed to dress in modest apparel, not in a skin-tight, body hugging leotards and tights as the practice is today. This same problem with modest apparel will probably prevent her from a study of gymnastics. Again, I would be glad for her to train and reap the benefits of such physical exercise but not at the expense of her soul.

"Oh, they're just little girls," some will protest. That's right - little girls who grow into big girls. What magic age is the right one to begin instilling modesty in a child? At 10, 14, or 17? When do you teach children to keep their bodies covered and chaste? When does a parent begin to make a distinction in the way the world dresses and in the manner in which God's people clothe themselves? Do we allow them to dress immodestly all through the formative years and all of a sudden impose restrictions at puberty? I believe that it's never too early; Timothy knew the Scriptures from his childhood (1 Tim. 3:15)

Others argue, "Why make the teen years more difficult than they have to be? It's cruel to make the child look so different." First of all, these attitudes reveal a lack of Bible knowledge. We are to be pilgrims (Heb. 11:13), not conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2). Secondly, we don't have to look like alien creatures. (It may one day come to that at the present rate of undress dictated by the fashion world.) We don't have to wear veils or neck-high and foot-low dresses to be modest, but if our mode of dress serves to set us apart, then so be it. We should be like Moses . . . choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25). Look at the example of Noah: only eight souls of the world's population were abiding in righteousness. We all want our children to excel, to be outstanding in some area, to stand apart, to be a leader rather than a follower. Why, then, are we so reluctant to allow them to be different from the world in manner of dress? Dressing immodestly can make the teenage years more difficult and more trying than necessary; and often with devastating results. Many fear the attention that will be given to one who dresses differently. But when it comes down to it, attention is the motive behind dressing scantily, so the argument fails. If dressing modestly in a world that gives no thought to being chaste is the greatest sacrifice that we or our children have to make, then we should all thank God that our sacrifice is so small.

"You're just an old-fashioned fuddy-dud, behind the times and ignorant of what's in style," is usually an excuse given by the young. Yet, it is possible to be fashionable and stylish without parading and prancing our bodies before the world. There are still long-enough, high-enough and loose-enough clothing styles to choose from for most any activity we participate in. I go to the beach (yes, in the water, too) wearing a shirt and knee length pants over a bathing suit, and I daresay I have just as much fun as those who are making public displays of their bodies. Regardless of popular customs, God's law has always called for modesty. You will recall, after their disobedience and realizing their nakedness, Adam and Eve made "aprons" of fig leaves for themselves but God clothed them in "coats of skins" (Gen. 3:7,21).

In warmer climates, we hear, "It's too hot to wear so much. Less is cooler." If the pioneer women of this country could wear long dresses, often with long sleeves, pantaloons, boots, and who knows what all else, what am I complaining about? They wore these things laundering and cooking over an open fire, working in the field, etc. I can certainly wear modest clothing when I have air conditioning, electric fans, stoves, and other such labor saving devices which I am blessed with. You can be sure, however, that if fashion designers tomorrow declared shorts, halters, cropped shirts, tube tops, etc. to be out of date and passe, such clothing would be abandoned in the blink of the eye, regardless of the weather.

"Part of the beauty of ballet is seeing the body. It's art. Other clothing would inhibit the movements." Publishers of pornographic magazines and producers of pornographic films refer to their products as "art." This in no way excuses them. The human body is a wondrous thing but the fact remains that God demands modest apparel (1 Tim. 2:9). Students of the martial arts wear heavy canvas uniforms which don't interfere with the artistic aspects, nor with the coordination and precision required of such students. Body hugging clothing is not necessary to enhance their techniques. (And just imagine how hot those uniforms get in a workout period!)

Others compromise with, "Schools require certain uniforms for physical education classes and for team sports." If I have to deal with the school system regarding standard uniforms, then I must. But I have known others who were successful in and survived such conflicts. Immodesty is immodesty regardless of whether it's at the mall, on school grounds, on the beach, or assembling with the saints. Lotteries and abortions are sanctioned by the state, but that in no way justifies such sin nor does it change God's attitude. We must never fail to keep in mind the higher Authority to whom we will answer (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

One of my favorites is, "I can't control the thoughts of others who look at me. It's not my problem." The whole motive and idea behind concern with our looks and appearance is so that others will have favorable impressions

and opinions. You are, in essence, trying to exert some control over the thoughts of others when it comes to your appearance. What we cannot control is who looks at us. Walking down the street scantily clad affords no control over who sees what. It may be someone who has a tight rein on their thoughts. Or it may be one who is weak or it may be someone who has impure thoughts and motives. Or it may be someone who is deprived of any morality. We must not be guilty of evoking lust or sinful thoughts in others (Matt. 5:28).

"If you've got it, flaunt it," is the attitude many in the world and far too many Christians. We all want to look our best and receive some acknowledgment for our efforts, but our preoccupation should not be attaining attention for our looks (1 Pet. 3:3,4). We are not to set a stumbling block before others (Rom. 14:13), be it those who would follow a wanton example or those who would be guilty of lusting.

I am amazed at the way some women allow their daughters to dress. Are they blind? But even more astounding is that their fathers would allow it. All men were once young; and men know men. They are well aware of the temptations which abound. Why would they allow their own daughters to so present themselves? It is a mystery to me.

I've spoken mainly of female apparel but the same criteria will be the standard for my son. There is no difference in the Bible's code of morality for men than there is for women. What's my point? Women should be chaste, covering their bodies, living in a modest and pure way. The same applies for men. Women should wear their blouses and men should keep their shirts on, too. Yes, I'm making these decisions now before my children are of an age to want to participate in such. (My children are ages 6 - 2 years and 7 months.) I am also insistent that they brush their teeth regularly and not play in the street. I am not doing so to deprive my children, but out of love for them. It is a shame that I have to exclude my children from so many activities - but it's the devil who's drawing the lines, and I dare not cross over. I will teach my children the Bible principles behind these decisions and hopefully they will reach the same conclusions. If they do

not, it will still be my responsibility to look out for their well-being, both physical and spiritual.

When we submit to the Lord in baptism and commit to living the Christian life, we have to put some activities and actions away. We can't continue in them and walk in the light. We may need to put some of our clothing away as well. I'm reminded of the Christians in the book of Acts (chapter 19) who had a book burning; I think we may need to torch some clothes, too.

Ask yourself the following:

Is my outfit something I would wear while trying to teach and convert others to Christ? Do I exert a godly influence? We are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20) and we are epistles (2 Cor. 3:2-3).

Is my clothing exemplary of a meek and gentle spirit (1 Pet. 3:4) or does it exhibit a far different attitude?

Are you ashamed to be seen in it by certain people, i.e. elders, preachers, Bible teachers, faithful Christians? (I'm embarrassed when folks stop by and catch me in my yard-work clothes or my painting outfits because it's not a pretty sight, but I'm not ashamed.)

Is my outfit holy and acceptable unto God (Rom. 12:1, 2)?

Do I lie? Cheat? Steal? Murder? Dress immodestly (Jas. 2:10-11)?

Would I want to be "caught dead in it" (Luke 12:20a)?

What do I sacrifice by dressing modestly? What do I sacrifice by dressing immodestly (Luke 14:28; Matt. 16:26)?

- Via Guardian of Truth, 02/01/1990

- > "You lose a lot of battles in the process of winning the war!"
 - > "A smile is the light in the window of your face that tells people your heart is at home!"
 - > "We'll never truly consider the lost until we start considering the cost!"
 - > "Be an organ donor. Give your heart to Jesus!"
 - > "A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing!"
 - > "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding." Prov. 3:5
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*A Spectacular Healing!*" (Text: Acts 3:1-11); Sunday evening: "*A Straightforward Sermon!*" (Acts 3:12-26).