

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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DRESS CODES

Men, how would you react if the elders of the local church should compose the following guidelines with regards to your appearance in worship? "(1) Men . . . must wear dress shirts, ties, dress slacks, and dress shoes. (2) Jeans are not allowed . . . (3) Tennis shoes are not acceptable dress. (4) Shirts with writing and cartoons on them are not appropriate dress. (5) Hair styles must be neat, trim, and clean."

Ladies, how would you react if the elders of the local church should compose the following guidelines with regards to your appearance in worship? "(1) Women . . . are required to wear dresses, skirts, and blouses, or pant outfits, and all must be coordinated and conservative in style. (2) Strapless or spaghetti strap dresses and bare midriffs are not acceptable. (3) Dress shoes and hosiery are required with every outfit. (4) Tennis shoes are not appropriate dress. (5) Jeans are not allowed . . . (6) Shirts with writing and cartoons on them are not appropriate dress. (7) Hair styles must be neat, trim, and clean."

Comment: Most brethren would resent receiving from the elders a published set of dress guidelines. "They are over stepping their bounds," many would say. Others would say, "they are binding what God has not bound." And many would go on wearing what they wanted to wear, however inappropriate for the occasion.

However, the preceding "Dress and Grooming Code" has been composed and imposed! Not by the elders of this church. Nor by the elders of any congregation that I know of. But by SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO. for its sales persons in the "Los Angeles Group." Amazingly enough, they make no apology for their "dress and grooming code." They do, however, offer this explanation: "There is no substitute for good judgment in appropriate dress. Our customers deserve and expect to shop in a pleasant, professional-appearing, courteous environment. Our employment relies on our ability to attract and retain the business of our customers."

Observation: Jesus, on one occasion, said, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8). Could it be that, with regards to the items herein under consideration, the officials in charge at SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO. "are in their generation wiser than the children of light"? Of course, the SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO. "dress and grooming code" was designed with one main objective in mind - the desire "to attract and retain the business" of their customers. But our desire "to attract and retain" the approval of God and the interest of others ought to be at least as great as is the desire of SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO. for the "business" of others! When Joseph was called from prison to meet with Pharaoh "he shaved himself, and changed his raiment" and then "came in unto Pharaoh" (Gen. 41:14). As we would say, he "put his best foot forward." Appearance-wise, he showed respect for the king of Egypt. When a smelly, long-haired, bearded, ragged, and filthy hoodlum is apprehended for a crime, and later appears in court because of his crime, what preparation does he make for his court appearance? Among other things, he takes a bath, cuts his hair, trims his beard, and wears a nice suit. Why? Because he wants to make a good impression on the judge and jury. In so doing, he has a better chance of getting a light sentence or perhaps (as conditions now are) no sentence at all.

Conclusion: To my knowledge, the elders here have never even discussed imposing on the members here a "dress and grooming code." And I am not suggesting that they either compose or impose such a code. But I do concur with the officials at SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., "there is no substitute for good judgment in appropriate dress." Especially when we assemble together to worship God! And when we, in these assemblies, "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24). Whether or not we care to admit it, our dress and appearance reflect our respect for the occasion. Frankly, I believe some of our brothers (and sisters) in Christ could well afford to show more respect for the worship occasion!

- Bobby Witherington, via *The Pekin Bulletin*, April, 1984

BONSAI CHRISTIANS

Have you seen those little miniature bonsai trees? They have all the features of full-grown trees, but are only a fraction of the size, even though they may be many years old. The process in this oriental art is interesting. The tree, as I understand it, is not different from any other to begin with. But the grower clips some of the tree's roots, pinches its limbs, and starves it by using very little soil and water. The result is a tiny tree, pretty for decoration but worth little else.

Some Christians are like these bonsai trees. Their spiritual growth has been stunted. Their spiritual roots have been clipped. They have been starved, having made only a shallow study of the Word of God. Opportunities for growth have been plentiful. They could be mature, could be bearing fruit. But spiritual growth has been restricted. The result? A dwarfed Christian.

The failure of a tree to grow is no great tragedy. The failure of a Christian to grow is. Paul wrote: "When I was a child, I spake as a child I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (1 Cor. 13:11).

How much growing have you done? Have you grown more Christ-like in disposition, or is the temper and tongue still childish? Have you grown in knowledge, or are you still at kindergarten level? Have you grown more others-orientated, or is your life still childishly self-centered?

The possibility of growth is still there. The bonsai tree is destined to forever be a miniature. Not so with the Christian. He can begin taking spiritual nourishment from the Word of God, break out of his shriveled state, grow up, and bear fruit.

- Joe R. Burnett

Questions at the Close of Life

Nathan C. Schaeffer wrote: At the close of life, the question will not be:

- "How much have you gotten?" but "How much have you given?"
- Not "How much have you won?" but "How much have you done?"
- Not "How much have you saved?" but "How much have you sacrificed?"
- It will be "How much have you loved & served," not "How much were you honored?"

THE BIBLE

"The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its main subject, our good the design, and the

glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."

- Unknown

Assembly Required!

When shopping for things we need or want, it is not uncommon to investigate the characteristics by reading the packaging. Several times we may notice the expression, "some assembly required." When the package is taken home, the assembly may be very simple, or it may be complex. There are two approaches: start with reading the instructions or toss the instructions aside and start putting it together. Many times, the mechanically-minded can perform the task just fine with little or no reference to the instructions. However, when it comes to building a life that glorifies God, His instructions are indispensable!

God has provided His infallible word (Psa. 19:8; 111:7b) to illuminate, restrain and guide man (Psa. 119:130, 11, 133). He has provided His Son as the perfect pattern for man to follow (1 Pet. 2:21; cf. 1 Cor. 11:1). We are to "walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12), and Jesus Christ shows us how to "walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light" (1 John 1:7). God has provided His enlightening instructions in the Bible. Man cannot afford to toss it aside and strike out on his own in putting together a righteous life!

When the Israelites returned to their homeland following Babylonian exile and captivity, their great unified desire was to restore worship and service to the Lord their God. They began and proceeded by following every command as "written in the law of Moses, the man of God" (Ezra 3:2). They never, at this point, foolishly nor recklessly discarded the instructions that God had given them! Ezra 7:10 records, "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel." Toss the instructions aside? Never!

May we all realize that God has given man "everything that pertains to life and godliness" in His inspired word (2 Pet. 1:3; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). May we never toss it aside on any point to follow our own way. With great determination, may we never stop short (cf. 2 Tim. 1:13; Gal. 1:6-9), never go beyond (2 John 9-11), never veer to the right, nor veer to the left (Josh. 1:7; 23:6), never add to, nor take from (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19) the divine

instructions given to us by Almighty God! May the God of heaven strengthen us to perform His will in our lives!

- Gary Smalley

- "An offense against your neighbor builds a fence between you and God!"
 - "God isn't interested in my service, or my treasure, or my sacrifice, if He doesn't - above all else - have my heart!"
 - "Humility is to the Christian what ballast is to the ship; it keeps him in his proper position and regulates all his thoughts and feelings!"
 - "Swallowing of pride seldom leads to indigestion!"
 - "'Ambition' - You may get to the very top of the ladder and find it has not been leaning against the right wall!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Lifestyles of the Poor and Nameless!"* (Text: Matt. 5:1-5); Sunday evening: *"The Challenge of a Gospel Meeting!"* (1 Cor. 1:18-21).