

Plain Words about Dress (Or Lack Thereof)

Few bulletin articles begin with a warning, but I feel compelled to provide advance notice that this article will contain some quite explicit, though not vulgar, language. One would not be far off the mark if he said that the Bible begins and ends with references to the shame of nakedness (Genesis 3:7-10; Revelation 3:18), yet few today seem to have a sense of shame or modesty when it comes to the display of their bodies. No, complete public nakedness is still uncommon, but when Adam hid because he was naked, could his fig leaves have covered much less than the swim-suits of some Christians as they lounge by the pool, lay out at the beach, or hang out at the water park?

The description of Jeremiah seems appropriate for our generation and, sadly, an increasing number of Christians. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush" (Jeremiah 6:15, NKJV). Rather than being ashamed, our generation celebrates the unclothed as sex symbols and makes entertainment icons of them. But you don't have to go to the movies or read People magazine to see those who should be ashamed unashamedly revealing far more than should be seen publicly. Sadly, you can log on to social networking sites such as Facebook and view Christians who post pictures of themselves in bikinis and scanty prom dresses. And rather than blushing at the exposure of their bodies, some Christians have taken to posting their swimsuit pictures on their blogs.

Do you remember the surprise, even perhaps shock, the first time you read the following passages?

"Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother. They committed harlotry in Egypt, they committed harlotry in their youth; their breasts *were there embraced, their virgin bosom was there pressed....She has never given up her harlotry brought from Egypt, for in her youth they had lain with her, pressed her virgin bosom, and poured out their immorality upon her....Thus you called to remembrance the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians pressed your bosom because of your youthful breasts*" (Ezekiel 23:2, 3, 8, 21, NKJV).

"*Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress?*" (Proverbs 5:18-20, NKJV)

Though I have simply quoted seven verses from the inspired word of God, I am uncomfortable including such plain language in this article, and I suspect many will be uncomfortable reading it, but I believe it is time we deal frankly with this. Both Ezekiel and Solomon are acknowledging that the female breasts are objects of sexual attraction and as such should not be for the viewing pleasure of anyone other than a woman's lawful husband (Hebrews 13:4). I have written articles and mentioned in sermons that we need to avoid clothing that is too low, too tight, and too sheer, but let's be blunt. Ladies, cover your breasts and cover them with clothing that is not so sheer or so tight as to still draw attention to that which should be off-limits to the general public.

There may be little we can do about the degradation of our society and its inability to blush, but as Christians we can heed the words of 1 Peter 1:13-16 and again be the holy people God wants us to be. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'" (NKJV)

Rather than following along with a generation that lacks a sense of shame, we can renew our minds so as to be transformed, rather than conformed. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2, NKJV).

-by John R. Gibson

Which Way?

Most of us have seen the little ditty below. It was told to me as an epitaph once read on a certain tombstone:

*“Remember, friend, as you pass by,
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you shall be.
Prepare for death and follow me.”*

Pretty good, huh? Not too long ago I read it again but with a different twist. When a passerby read it he scratched out a little note and hung it below the verse:

*“My friend, I’ve read what you did write,
But I feel I need a little light:
To follow you I’ll not content,
Until I know which way you went!”*

- by Robert Hines

Carnal Appeals

Free pizza, clowns, hot air balloon rides . . . you name it, and some religious group has tried it as a scheme to draw folks to their services. These things are **FUN!** Who wouldn't like to play ball, eat good food, and be entertained?

But, here's the problem -- these things all appeal to the carnal man, and seek to satisfy his earthly desires. Instead of these, the Lord has made the church the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), and has designed its work and authorized its activities "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body" (Ephesians 4:12). The church, if it is following God's plan, is working to build stronger spiritual men, not better softball players.

When we challenge the 'fun, food, and games' crowd to justify their practices from the Scriptures, they usually refer to Jesus feeding the multitudes with loaves and fishes. They conclude that these examples demonstrate how Jesus fed the physical man to make an opportunity to feed the spiritual man (John 6:5-14). Sorry, that won't work! Keep reading. When the people came to Jesus the next day, He perceived that they came for more free food. He rebuked them and told them they ought to be seeking spiritual things rather than carnal ones (vs. 22-27). He **DID NOT** feed them! As a result many stopped following Him (vs. 66), but no food was offered to draw them back again.

Carnal appeals do not lead to true conversion and they are not authorized. The gospel is the "power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). Let's use **IT!**

- by Greg Gwin