

A Catechism on Christian Attire

by Mike Avery

Mike Avery's sermon emphasizes the biblical principles of modesty in Christian attire and the importance of understanding the moral implications of how we dress.

Duration: 54:37

Scripture: Deuteronomy 23:5, Matthew 6:33, 1 Timothy 2:9-10, 1 Timothy 6:7-8, James 4:4, 1 Peter 3:3-4, 1 John 2:15-17

Topics: "Christian Attire"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of adhering to biblical principles when it comes to dressing. He mentions that while preaching on standards is necessary, teaching biblical principles for dress is equally important. The fallen world understands the power of clothing to send a message, and they have cultivated principles to guide the fashion industry. The preacher encourages listeners to consider what message their clothing choices are sending and to embrace the basic principles outlined in the Bible for modesty and covering.

Transcript

...come to me and talk to me about this in an inquisitive sense, older people come and talk to me about it in a sense of burden. I'm going to speak to you this afternoon on a catechism on Christian attire. A catechism on Christian attire.

Just selecting this one passage in Timothy, I'll be referring to many others. Paul wrote Timothy, saying, "...I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. And like men are also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broided hair or gold or pearls, a costly array.

But which becometh women professing godliness with good works." Father, bless our words this afternoon. May they be your words. Let the Holy Spirit of God grant the anointing and grant a sense of balance.

And what I want to say today, help us in Jesus' name. Amen. I don't know how many of you have seen Wendell Taylor's book on a theology of adornment.

I had not seen it. I was in a camp meeting with him. Someone mentioned the book.

I bought a copy. I stayed up into the night to read the book right through, hoping it would be something I could just heartily recommend to everybody. Well, I heartily recommend it.

The only problem is I just don't recommend it to everybody because it is extremely weighty. It's difficult to read. The average gum-chewing Janet Oak reader is not going to read this book.

You're going to lay it aside. It's too heavy. He wades into it deeply.

And so I don't think I can just recommend it broadly. You're welcome to try to get a copy. You ought to try to wade through it.

But I do want to read something from the front, the introduction that he says that I think is extremely important for you and I to hear. He contends that, and rightly so, that modesty, sobriety, and holy adornment has been in keeping with historical Methodism. Our good Methodist brother, Brother Smith, would concur that it is the people called Methodists that, from the word of God, have created a form, a system, a catechism to promote a holy attire.

We've not always understood that. He goes on to say, This position and practice had its source in dynamic revival light. Many of the issues that we embrace today were not formulated by men and women who were spiritually dead and half blind.

They were born out of dynamic revival light, vibrant holiness, growth, and victory. It appears, however, that Christian bodies can sometimes be practically correct while failing to be doctrinally clear, and that the Church may sometimes spontaneously do what is right, but in some measure fail in scripturally supporting that right. Positions and practices that are not adequately supported in the childhood of the Church will not suffice for the day of its manhood.

And I think we would all agree we're out of our childhood as a movement. We've grown up. So there must be someone to comprehensively cultivate and communicate the doctrine of adornment.

In the midst of the winds of change regarding adornment, God has been teaching me that mere resistance to change and contending for customary practice will not meet the need of questioning pressured and confused hearts. Some may think that the question of adornment which this book addresses lies in the unbiblical traditions of our founding fathers and mothers. If that is true, in the unbiblical conditions, did you catch that? If they lie in the unbiblical traditions of our founding mothers and fathers, then they ought to be respectively dropped.

However, the truth seems rather to be that the foundations of adornment have existed eternally in the nature and in the mind of God and deserve to be carefully explored and faithfully expounded. So if you're one of those that basically believes the things that you and I embrace and we refer to as holiness standards or standards of dress were just somehow created in the board meeting in the early part of this century, you're just only testifying to your shallowness and your ignorance of not only the Bible but of good historical theology as well. In these days, we have allowed the world to set the agenda for how we talk about dress.

We allow the world to literally take pages in the newspaper and in catalogs to set the agenda for dress. But as soon as a man of God would dare rise and raise his voice on the subject of how the children of God should attire themselves, we become terribly offensive, we sharpen our sword, we cry legalism, we cry foul play, and we just get all bent out of shape about it. And we've almost found it customary to lay to the

root of biblical lifestyles the problems for everything we've got.

We've somehow made that the chore boy or the whipping post of all of our problems. On the other hand, the truth is that our society's false and distorted messages on clothing and appearance have left a devastating effect on the Church that's become silent about the matter. It is also clear that the feelings held by the previous generation of holiness people are not being passed on and shared by today's generation.

And a generation without clear beliefs and values about these particular issues will be a generation that will crumble under the pressure of a secular society's imposing views, and it will embrace theirs and not ours. History teaches us that when a generation fails to know why they believe what they believe, their basic convictions are in danger of being totally lost. That's why they say it only takes one generation to go from a holiness church to a non-holiness church.

It only takes one generation. And more than ever, we lack a clear, sound, believable, apologetic for what we believe to be a biblical statement on how a Christian ought to dress. This would enable us to teach these disciplines instead of just taking pop shots at them.

Now, I want to put some of you on notice. I embrace the basic values of the biblical lifestyles of the holiness movement. I do my best to intellectually and hopefully anointedly defend them.

But I try to do it with some sanity and sense. It wearies me with people who just want to take an empty-minded pop shot about them. They want to stand up somewhere and testify and take a pop shot at somebody sitting over here.

Or they get in the pulpit and they run down through their retinue of hair and hose and T-shirts and toeless heels and TV and never give any basis for their machine-gun tactics. It's those sort of things that have turned people off. While we are lacking a clear statement on dress, we've moved into a generation that no longer feel loyalty to denominations.

I don't know of a single conservative holiness denomination that's growing. Every one of them are declining in their membership. Every pastor is wringing his hands and telling you this.

He says, It's not that I can't get people to church. I can't bring them to the place of full membership. Many have drawn the false conclusion that the reason we can't bring people from conversion to basic membership is because of some antiquated, old, worn-out, hoagie standards that have been passed down that nobody in his right mind would ever believe.

I don't think that's true. I think the reason we can't bring them from here to here is that we do not have an intellectual, believable, apologetic for what we say we believe. I've yet to meet a group of people, when you clearly explain and intelligently explain why you believe what you say you believe, that did not at least give you the time to listen to you, and many of them say, Why, that's right.

But instead of presenting a strong apologetic, most have just hunkered down, shot from the hip, pitched out a few ill-advised statements, and when people don't swallow it up, they say something like this. They say, Well, if it really got saved and sanctified, they would agree with the old-fashioned standards. Or they'll shoot something out like this, Well, they're just a compromiser looking for an easy way.

Well, that's probably true in some people's cases. But in many of the cases I meet, they're not a bunch of half-hearted summertime saints. They do want to serve the Lord and give God everything in their lives, but they're not about to embrace something they cannot understand as biblical any more than you're going to embrace speaking in tongues.

They want to know why. They want to let it rest on the Word of God. And it's true that why shouldn't they want it any other way? I'm not about to swallow some of your pet ideas and toys if I can't anchor them to truth.

Truth isn't going in this direction, or truth isn't going in that direction. You don't get any closer to truth by being more to the right or more to the left. Truth's right here.

And going in an extreme position either way will never get you closer to truth. To make this worse, we have tended to compensate for our lack of outreach by declaring it's our standards. Parting a standard isn't the problem, but it's our manner of emphasizing them and implementing them.

Furthermore, we've erred greatly by inadvertently placing standards on the same level of doctrines like the atonement and the deity of Christ. Let me tell you something. Any man who puts biblical standards, and I'm using that term simply because that's the way we know them, on the same doctrinal level as the atonement and the deity of Christ is committing heresy.

You cannot place them there. On the other hand, we've also taken the Bible principles for outward attire and encircled them with so many rules that we've forgotten what the original principle was. That's what you call legalism.

Then on the other hand, there's a group of people saying, Well, it doesn't matter at all. It's all of grace. It's all of freedom.

It's all of just what's ever important to you. They don't matter at all. That's licentiousness.

And it will land you in hell. I weep. I weep this afternoon that we've made standards the ultimate test of true Christianity.

We've made it the point upon which fellowship is extended or withheld. We've become so caught up in it that in some places we have actually created subcultures that unless you share our point of view, you can't exist. And part of the unfortunate baggage that comes along with a subculture is intellectual polarization.

You shut out everything, almost. Furthermore, our isolation has tended to attract those that are almost nonfunctional in society, and hence they feel comfortable in retreating into our ranks in order to have a place to minister. This has often meant attracting those with inferior minds and skills, which has clearly brought about a demeaning to the professional aspect of the ministry of our people.

Yet on the other side, for those who have thrown overboard and done so on the grounds of intellectualism as unimportant and useless scriptural disciplines for dress, it is wrong, it is unscriptural, and it will be their undoing. To say it doesn't matter what I wear and I can wear what I want, again I say, is licentiousness. We must articulate a philosophy, a principle that comes from the Word of God on this matter of dress.

I want to speak three words to you this afternoon. First of all, I want to give you a word of caution on how we approach it. First of all, a word of caution on how we approach the Bible as to the standards of dress.

I know there are a lot of well-meaning preachers who really don't think what they're saying sometimes. But I want to warn you how you approach this book. This is God's book.

This is the revealed Word of God. And when we come to this book, there are some preachers, when they come to this book as far as standards are concerned, they stand over it to manipulate it. They get on top of the Bible and just twist it and manipulate it to make it say whatever they want it to say, totally disregarding the truth of what it does say.

I gave you an illustration of that about the holiness preacher. He said, Well, I know the book doesn't say it, but it sounds good and it works, and I'm going to preach it anyway. I pray God that man finds mercy before he stands in judgment.

On the other hand, there are some who stand alongside the Bible. In other words, their opinion or their view is equal to the Bible. No, I can't rest it on the Bible, but it's my opinion there, and it's just as why they preach it just like it was the Bible.

I had a preacher sometime ago in a camp meeting refer to his church manual. He said, Oh, you could get to heaven without believing this church manual, but you can also swim the Atlantic Ocean, too. Did you hear what I said? He put his church manual right up there alongside the revealed Word of God.

He said, Oh, you could get to heaven, I suppose, without going by this manual, but you can also swim the Atlantic Ocean in life. Brother Smith, that sounds like heresy. And then you can take a position underneath the Bible, and that's where every one of us better be.

When you come to the Word of God, you better take a position beneath it. This book is the ultimate rule of my life. This is the final answer.

This is God's Word. And I'm coming under it. I'm going to stand beneath it and by the grace of God try to articulate what it says.

Secondly, not only how we approach the Bible, but how we interpret the Bible. E.R. Troughton said the new cult of our day is proof texting. He said that's the most recent cult that we have now in the Holiness Movement, is trying to proof text everything.

When we come to the Word of God, we better come to the Word of God understanding not only it speaks directly, but we better come to the Word of God realizing that we better discern its intentionality, what it is inferring, rather than its coming from a sense of autonomy, or do I seek to know what it says, or am I just trying to look at a few words to find out something that I want it to say? Do I earnestly want to know what it says? We also need to come to it and interpret it in the proper cultural, historical, and contextual basis, rather than just picking and choosing. One of the greatest dangers in preaching is this pick-and-choose stuff. Third, a word of caution.

Am I willing to let Scripture impact my life? It just amazes me how we pick and choose. We Holiness people, many who have held to the conservative position, we will, with all defiance and fervency, depend a position on biblical modesty. But somehow we totally shut our eyes to the words that are right next to it, with the words simplicity and frugality and economy.

They're all there, too. So we'll dress very simple, very modest, and then we'll get a BMW or a Mercedes-Benz or the latest Cadillac, build the biggest house we can, cover it with interior decorator that if you sold it, you could build two or three churches on a mission field. The Bible, those are just as important as one.

We love to pick and choose. We love to pick out the ones on the left, not the world. But somehow we forgot about those that all whisperers and God-haters and back-biters are going to have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

I'm illustrating what you can't pick and choose. There's got to be a consistency when you come to the Word of God. A word of caution.

But next let me speak a word of counsel by giving you some significant propositions concerning dress. I believe one of the strongest arguments that flows out of the Word of God, and quite frankly this afternoon I'm not going to take the time to go through a long exegesis of those passages, but I can rest on a strong exegesis of those passages. And I know great scholars who can take us to those passages and give us a strong scholarly exegesis, and it's going to come out on the side that I'm comfortable with.

We don't have to hang our head about anything, friend. We don't. We don't.

But let me give you some significant propositions about this matter of dress. You know, some people believe it's just all in proof-texting. And that's why you run and find a little verse of Scripture in the Bible, you hand it to your teenager and say, Well, here it is.

And then they explain it away right in your presence and you don't know what to do about it. This biblical doctrine for adornment in dress doesn't rest on a few isolated verses of Scripture. You can go there if need be to anchor it, but out of the revealed revelation from the Word of God from the very beginning to the very end, there is a flow of biblical logic that rises to say this.

It says, The clothes you wear communicate the message of your soul. Clothes are not only given for a covering, they reveal holy character. Now, if you won't misunderstand me, that's as important as covering up your nakedness.

Not only do they cover our nakedness, they're to reveal our character. I don't know why we can't see it. The business world sees it.

Some of you people think it's only the holiness conservative movements that are a bunch of wacko nuts that talk about this sort of stuff. Do you realize that companies like IBM spend millions of dollars to train their people on how to dress? Big companies send their people all over the world to teach them how to dress. They ought to send them to a holiness class meeting on Christian adornment and they'd end up with the same results.

It would be a whole lot cheaper. Dr. Litfin, the president of Wheaton College, said this. He said, Contrary to the popular notion that clothes don't matter, research indicates that most people form an opinion based on appearance, and that opinion usually turns out to be morally right.

Bob Jones had a woman come into their school. This is what she said to those student girls. She said, A man's eye travels from the floor up.

A Christian woman wants to do everything she can to draw his attention to her face because that is where character is revealed. That's exactly what the Bible says. To be modest comes from the Greek word, open-facedness, which means that you and I should never wear anything that distracts from our face because in our face and through our eyes are the windows of our soul and our character is revealed.

So I should not put anything on my body that makes people look there before they look here. And I should not wear anything on my face that points to my lips, to my ears, to my eyes. I shouldn't wear my hair down in my face like this or like this or like this.

I should have an open face in this so they may see my character. Dress is a symbol of moral character. If modesty is absent in one's dress, it indicates a similar absence in the heart.

If in our dress we should demonstrate the modesty of our soul, Vance Havner said this, Paul saw the practice of dress not just as customs that merited obedience and respect, but customs that had moral significance. John T. Malloy, in the book *The Woman's Dress for Success*, he said, Everything a woman wears sends a message. The fallen world knows this.

Somehow while we sit around and slap one another and fight with one another and excommunicate one another and bicker at one another over these matters, the fallen world is in high gear promoting it. They know that dress sends a message. And so they have cultivated basic principles to guide the fashion industry.

Now, I'm not going to give you all of those principles, but I can sum them up in four very quickly. The utility principle, by what they call the hierarchical principle or the principle of pride. In other words, the tendency in whatever you wear, they try to cultivate a style of clothing that makes you have a sense of pride in yourself.

Have you ever seen a little girl when you put on that Easter dress with all of its ruffles, how she walks so haughtily and sometimes turns her neck so stiffly? As soon as she gets out of that thing, she goes and jumps in a mud hole. I remember buying up, my wife found a pair of those duck head pants at the thrift store for one of our boys. It was just a good pair of pants.

Brought it home. He was just about three years old. She put those on him one Sunday morning.

She put his belt on in that kind of trouble and he slipped up to me and he said, can you still see that duck back there? A sense of pride. Oh, it's, I'm not saying it's malicious or intentional in children. I'm not saying dress them in Easter dresses.

I'm saying clothing will tend toward pride and you know it. They know it and they cut it that way. Then the autonomy principle.

They will cut garments in order to have a sense of self-expression. They want something that is rebellious and radical within mainstream society. They want something that literally is an expression of a radical autonomy.

And they cut clothes to design. That's why you see some of the wildest garbs you could ever imagine and wonder why anybody in his right mind would put one on. And then the seduction principle, which is the most powerful principle the fashion industry has.

They want people seduced by clothing. Now, I don't have to give you a lesson in biology 101. I think we all know that the male species is stimulated by sight.

You see, they know that too. And it's the woman that stimulates them. Hence, they build things into fashions to stimulate the opposite sex.

Some of you think I fell off planet Mars, but I didn't. I'm just talking to you from the fashion world right now. I go shopping with my wife.

She's a real Vernon. They came up on the poor side. Daddy Vernon didn't waste any money.

A lot of her dresses came out of a missionary barrel or hand-me-downs. So after we got married, she just wouldn't go out and buy things. And I had to push her to do it.

I'd go out and I'd say, here's a beautiful dress. Plenty of cloth here and plenty long enough. Let's buy this one.

She'd walk around to the back and have a split in it that long. Anybody put a big long split in the back of a dress? The fashion industry calls it establishing an erotic zone. Because if a woman walking down the street with a split up the back of her dress, exposing her leg and thigh, and a man coming behind her, if he's a man at all, and if his eyes move in that direction, he's starting to have a split and works his way up.

And that's what they want. They also call it a catcher. An eye catcher.

Well, after everybody gets tired of looking at the back of a leg, the next year you go out to buy a dress. It's plenty of cloth in the front and the back, but on the side, lo and behold, both sides are split. Or it's the front is split.

Well, when everybody gets tired of splits, they shift it. And they make long A-frame dresses, long ones with plenty of material. And I say, Honey, here's a beautiful dress, plenty of A-frame, plenty of material down here, and loose.

And then you go up to the top, and I found out where they got the material to go down here. They got it from up here. Establishing an erotic zone.

And when they don't have it there or down there, the miniskirt comes back in. And then when the miniskirt fades out and they don't have it here and they don't have it in the splits, they make them so tight they look like they've been wrapped in glad wrap so you can see every varicose vein in them. I'm telling you, the fashion industry knows that.

And we act so air-headed about it and quibble and fuss around about it. I don't have any girls, but I can assure you if I had any girls, they would not be strutting across these grounds or any other grounds or anywhere else in this world with big slits in their skirts. I'm not about to have my daughter parade around creating erotic zones and catchers to portions of her body for some man.

It's not right. It's not right. I was in an airport.

I was in an airport waiting for a plane and the news was on and I was watching the news. And all of a sudden a commercial flashed. And it was a scene in a grammar school.

There was a teacher. She was teaching a group of children. I looked at her and I thought to myself, that's the epitome of modesty.

I wish she taught my boys. She had long hair and it was done up like this with a little bone through it in the top. You know how women wear.

She had on a long wool skirt, appeared to be. She had on a business jacket. She had on a nice blouse right up to the neck.

She was the epitome of modesty. She had on little pair of round glasses, no jewelry, no earrings, nothing. So the bell rang and all the little kiddies ran out the door.

She reached over, picked up her briefcase, started towards the door. I thought to myself, that woman could fit in any hole in this church in the country. She got to the door and then all of a sudden you saw a picture.

There was a man driving up in a little red Ferrari. Top was off. You could read his face.

He looked up the steps to where she was. When she saw him, she sat down in the briefcase. She took off her jacket.

There was a sleeveless blouse. She took that little thing out of the top of her head and shook her hair. Pulled off her glasses and in two seconds she went from giving you the image of absolute modesty to giving you the image of absolute seduction.

Your clothes send out a message. The way you wear them, what you wear, the way you adorn yourself, the way you fix your hair, everything sends out a message. It does.

The fallen world knows it and they pick up on it. Now let me tell you something. You can't run around proof texting everything I said this afternoon.

You can't. But I want to tell you what you can do. If you've got any spiritual sense at all, you can go to the Word of God and it just flows out of it.

There's a spiritual logic and a sensibility that flows from the Word of God. It does. And it's there.

Let me give you, secondly, some scriptural principles concerning dress. What does the Bible say? Well, first of all, the Bible gives us a group of principles that deal with covering. In other words, covering up the nakedness of your body.

I'm not going to get into a long exegesis. If you don't want to take my word for it, I'll give you the exegesis on a piece of paper. But the Bible talks about covering our nakedness.

Everywhere nakedness is used in the Word of God, it's always used in a negative connotation except when it's used in a neutral sense. As in the case of Job, naked came I into this world and naked shall I depart. It's neutral.

That has no connotation whatsoever. Every place else in the Scriptures, it's negative. It's never looked upon by God in a positive sense.

It's always in a negative sense. Always. Something He doesn't like is exposing our nakedness.

Well, what is nakedness, preacher? The Hebrew concept for nakedness that comes from the Hebrew words taken from the book of Genesis when He made them coats and also from the book of Job and other books in the Old Testament. And by the way, anybody who thinks you can throw out the Old Testament, oh, that's just the Old Testament. That doesn't matter anymore.

Let me tell you something. If that is true, then the Old Testament contains no truth because truth is eternal and never passes away. Truth is eternal and never passes away.

So before you pitch it out, you'd better remember that. God revealed Himself in the Old Testament. He revealed Himself, His character, and that is truth.

And it's always applicable. But the Hebrew concept of nakedness is any exposure from my neck to my knee. That's what it means.

It means any exposure of my upper torso from my neck to my knee, making sure the thigh, which runs from the hip to the knee, is covered. God says if your nakedness is exposed, it is a shameful thing. He abhors nakedness.

When Adam and Eve tried to make a covering, a fig leaf covering, and the word literally is an apron, sort of like a G-string, God stripped it away and made them a coat. And that coat comes from the Hebrew word which means a covering, which means covering from here to here. So how do I know when I'm covered? How do I know when I'm modestly attired? When I am appropriately covered from my neck to my knee.

And I assume that means my knee is covered and my thigh is covered in all positions that I may find myself. You say, well, that leaves these two arms over here. What do you do about them? It may come as a shock to some of you, but the Bible doesn't say where the material ought to stop.

I challenge anybody here who wants to argue that point, just show me. What it does say, though, if I am to be covered in the upper torso from here to here, and the exposure of that body is wrong in the sight of God, the length of my sleeve has to be adequately long enough that in lifting and moving or whatever I do, I do not expose myself. That's right.

It's got to be long enough not to expose myself. Now, where are we going to draw the line on sleeve length? Well, that's up to you and your denomination. That's just up to you.

All I'm telling you the Bible draws the line is it's got to be long enough to cover the upper body when you move around or lift or whatever you're doing, your upper body is not to be exposed. You say, well, preacher, that gives me grounds then. That, I like that.

I'm going to go back. My church manual says three-quarter length sleeve. I'm going to go back and tell them that's not biblical.

Number one, check your attitude. Number two, check your ethics. If, perchance, the way I explain it, and I think it's the only truthful way and the ethical way to explain it, I try to be honest as I understand the Bible where it says the line ought to be drawn.

And I just explained that to you. Then I go on and say, now, if you've joined a denomination, which most of them do, say it's a three-quarter length sleeve, you cannot retreat and say, ha-ha, the Bible doesn't say three-quarter length sleeves. No, and the Bible doesn't say thou shalt not wear bikinis either.

The Bible doesn't say thou shalt not smoke marijuana either. But there's biblical principle against all of those things, clearly. You say, well, it still doesn't say you ought to wear a three-quarter length sleeve.

Well, no. But Asbury himself said, there are some things in our Methodist teachings that may not completely rest on Scripture. He said, but however it has been proven that these particular issues do help us to maintain piety, hence I will embrace them.

Secondly, if you join a group that has that, it doesn't matter if you believe it or not. You told them you would keep it and you're ethically obligated to do it, and if you don't do it, you're a liar. Now, I told you we weren't too hot on ethics around here.

We're not. Hello? If you don't want to keep it, disjoin. Disjoin.

Don't tear up the past. Just disjoin. You say, if you're promoting backdoors.

Well, no. I'm just trying to be ethical. I'm not saying you've got to believe it.

I'm saying you've got to stand underneath this book. And this book teaches covering our nakedness. And then it teaches obeying those in authority over you.

It teaches being truthful. You give your word, you keep it. Oh, Brother Smith, I thought everybody would be shouting, having a great time this afternoon.

Then there are the group of principles that deal with economy. There are those that talk about we are not to wear costly attire. What does that mean? We don't even like to talk about that.

And when we rant and rave and I got so tickled, well, it's not funny. It's funny now, but it wasn't then. I graduated from college.

My wife and I were married. We were as poor as Job's turkey. I needed some clothes.

Didn't have a lot of clothes. So when I graduated, my dad came up and took me to a fancy men's store suit and bought me a Botany 500. That's a nice set of threads.

Then my sister came up and bought me a brand new pair of wingtips. Somebody bought me a brand new white-on-white shirt. And then somebody gave me the money or bought me a Christian Dior tie.

Boy, I was sparkling like a neon sign. I was a sharp customer. So I put together my new set of threads and go marching to my church the next Sunday morning where I had a lot of Bible school students that went to school with me.

And I got up and preached that Sunday morning on materialism and sacrifice. I mean, I made them feel awful if they had carpet on their floor and a shingle roof. When I got through raking them over the coals, my dear friend Guy Rucker jumped up out of his seat and I gave the benediction.

He marched down the aisle. Didn't even go around the altar. Stepped right over the altar.

Grabbed my tie. I said, Nice tie. What'd that cost? 20 bucks? Nice suit you got there.

What'd you pay? \$500 for that? Hey, nice set of shoes there. What'd you pay for them? 70, 80 bucks? Then he looked at me and right in the dead of the face said, Great message on sacrifice, preacher.

Nevertheless, I got the point.

Now, hold steady. I believe in being a good steward too. The other day I was able to buy a 100% worsted wool suit, a \$250 suit for \$79.

I'd have been stupid not to buy it. I could have gone to Walmart and bought a cheap one for \$89. Do you understand what I'm saying? We must be good stewards.

There's nothing wrong with buying good clothing, but I want to tell you something. When you invest in a sense of proportion more on your clothes than you are in the work of God, you're violating the biblical principles. You out there? Wesley's argument about jewelry and all the rest of that stuff, he said, How in the world can we put money in these kind of trinkets when the world needs to be converted? That's still a good argument, friend.

Principles that deal with distinctiveness. The Bible says He made man and He made a woman. And there are some poor souls who have never yet distinguished the difference between the two.

But I'm here to tell you there is a definite difference. You know what? Even these poor old sign makers out in the world for the last 500 years have discerned there's a difference in a man and a woman. Go to any bathroom door you want to and you'll see the man with the bad breeches and the woman with the little skirt.

Won't you? There must be a distinctiveness. God has made a line of demarcation. I must portray manliness in what I wear.

Not sissiness. Not patsiness. Not feminism.

I must project manliness. A lady must project femininity. You women don't march around looking like a bunch of mechanics that came out from under a car.

God said you women you ought to portray femininity. Amen. Brother Heron used to say shoddy, holy shoddy is still shoddy.

Running around looking like we cut our hair in a mixer and just mismatch. That doesn't edify God and it doesn't please your husband or anything else. You ought to portray femininity to the best of your ability.

Look like a woman. A beautiful woman. Neat, clean, well groomed as you can possibly be.

Men, you look like a man. Neat, clean, groomed and handsome, manly. Look like a man.

Distinctiveness. We are not to ever and under any circumstances cross that line of distinction. To do so brings the unmitigated wrath of God Almighty on people who blur the distinctions.

He said in Deuteronomy 23, verse 5 that is an abomination to God to cross dress. Well, I got to quit. Find out where I am.

Let me speak a word in closing. Remember a word, a word from Dr. Taylor again. He lays down four basic principles that are worth the price of the book.

He said in teaching. Let me back up. Hugo Latigin, when he came to America.

Hugo Latigin heard the whole of this movement. This is what he said. He said, you people need to teach your biblical principles for dress rather than just preaching them all the time.

Now, I know we got a few Cracker Jackson popcorn guys that hoop up and holler. We're not hearing enough preaching on standards. The pulpit has a place for that.

But it's obviously not every Sunday. On the other hand, they must be dealt with in the teaching realm, in the didactic realm, in the catechism realm. That's where we're losing the Bible anyway.

You know, I don't know of any single holiness catechism on this particular issue. Anywhere. If there's one, somebody please tell me.

Do you have one? It's the first one I've ever heard about or ever seen. A careful catechism on the doctrine of dress. I told my conference executive committee, I said, fellows, we're a sorry lot if we do not put into the hands of our preachers.

It's one thing to put yourself in a little boardroom and shut the door and expostulate about how everything's going down the tube out there. These worldly churches and these preachers that won't preach it. We're a sorry lot if we don't put something in their hand to help them defend what we want them to defend.

We are. Dr. Taylor said that for those who have no vital light on Christian adornment, we must not pronounce their wearing of it as sin like murder and adultery are sins. Secondly, he said, inadequate light, however, is not a proper basis for adequate belief.

In other words, just getting up and saying, bless God, you ought not to wear short skirts and tight breeches or whatever. That's not light. That is not light.

Just because you popped off about it doesn't make it light. The Bible says, whatever makes manifest is light. They must have some biblically based teaching on the subject in order for them to believe it.

So just because you said it, they don't have instant light. But the moment, the third thing is, the moment that they are given the Word of God in these particular areas, they have a moral responsibility to walk in the light. In closing, what do you want to communicate with your life? What do you want to say? What do you want to communicate to the world around you? Anybody who says their motive is to glorify Jesus Christ, anybody who says they want to radiate from their body the truth and the Christ-likeness of this book, they're going to be people who will embrace the basic principles that I've tried to articulate to you today.

They will be. They will be. I don't have time to do it, but I could take you through a manual given to me by a young lady that was preaching in Binghamton Camp in New York.

She came to me after the service, and she works for one of the large governmental agencies in New York. She came to me and handed me a big thick folder. She said, My company sent me to a large seminar.

She said, Andres. And I looked at her. She was the epitome of a beautiful holiness woman.

Her hair was done up. It was not hanging down in her face. It was done up in this fashion.

So her face was opened. It was an open countenance. She had on a nice business suit.

She was the epitome of a professional, decent, holy, modest woman. She said to me in this big thick manual they gave her, this secular, this secular, worldly business thing. It said, Don't do these.

Number one, no sleeveless blouses, no see-through blouses, no tight skirts, no slacks or pants. I mean, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. Then it said, No noisy jewelry.

And she said, Preferably none. Preferably long hair done up. And in the north, or universally, universally was the language, long sleeves.

But in the south, a three-quarter was acceptable. No open-toed shoes, and never a skirt with a slip or one that would come above the knee. That wasn't a requirement to join a hole in the church.

That was the standard for professional business women out in the world. A woman came to me who was a secretary in a large law firm in the state of West Virginia. She said, What you said today is exactly what our law firm makes us do.

We don't even cut our hair, and yet we bellyache about all of this stuff. Well, I said, Enough. Let's stand.

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