



The Good News

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What do we communicate by how we dress?

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It is an accepted fact that around 90% of all communication is non-verbal communication. Everything from the expressions on our face and how we cross our arms to even the clothes we wear can be interpreted as communication. According to experts, much of this communication is processed sub-consciously and is rarely realized. In addition, many studies have been done that suggest that one of the keys to success in most endeavors starts with how we choose to dress. In most prison systems there is a dress code for those who meet with inmates, and particularly when it comes to preachers. Any preacher who wishes to speak to inmates must wear a white shirt and tie. The purpose for this is that it has been proven that inmates will be more likely to take the message seriously if they perceive that the messenger is serious in delivering the message. One way they determine this is how the preacher is dressed. We say all of this to ask the question, “What does our dress say about us?”

What message do we communicate in our dress for worship services? There is no rule or by-law in the Bible that commands that we “dress-up” for worship services. In fact, the New Testament Christians did not have Armani togas or \$500 sandals. However, how we dress can send a message, both to others and to God, about our feelings and thoughts regarding the worship service. The service of God is not casual, nor should it be treated casually. However, sometimes Christians may dress for church as they would dress for a day at the park. Is this appropriate?

Is there anything in the Bible to suggest this is wrong? In **1 Tim. 2:9-10** Paul tells the women that they are to dress modestly, with shamefastness and sobriety, befitting a person professing

godliness. The term “modest” means “*appropriate, well arranged*”. The term “shamefastness” is defined by one Greek commentator as “*shrinking back from the line of impropriety*” and it has a direct relationship to “reverence”. “Sobriety” is defined as “*soundness of mind, good judgment*”. If we put all of this together, we see a picture forming in which God desires the heart of the person to dictate what they wear. If they see the worship service as a special and honorable occasion, then they will dress appropriately. I have known of a brother in Christ who owned only overalls, as he was a farmer. Every Sunday he would wear his overalls to church, but they were cleaned and pressed, showing that he made a distinction with the worship services. I have also known of brethren who would come to church dirty and smelly because they came straight from work, but they took the time to comb their hair and wash their face and hands, making a distinction with the worship service of God.

In the end, there is no rule of thumb to determine if a brother or sister is “dressed-up enough”, nor should there be. However, God does have certain expectations from those who wish to worship Him. Our clothes are to be modest, covering us as is proper. It is not to be ostentatious or distracting, acknowledging that worship is about God, not us. And finally, it should express how we feel about the honor and privilege of the special occasion that is the worship service of our God. Let us always consider the message we communicate with our dress, not only in worship services, but also every day...choosing to dress modestly and appropriately as is befitting those who seek to “profess godliness”.