

DRESSING AND THE IMPLICATIONS

Sylvester Onyemalechi

A dress is that which is used as the covering or adornment of the body. A dress is clothes or garments worn to cover one's nakedness, and appear decent and presentable to a person or group of people. To dress is to put the body in order, or in a suitable condition. It is to put on clothes.

To dress gorgeously is to put on rich garments; to adorn; to deck; to beautify one to appear in a classy manner (elegantly) and well decorated for an occasion.

Origin of clothes

(1.) Materials used: Aprons of fig leaves were our first parents' earliest attempt at dress to clothe their shame (Gen 3:7,21); "God made coats of skin and clothed them." Elijah's dress was probably the skin of a sheep (2 Kings 1:8). The Hebrews were early acquainted with the art of weaving hair into cloth (Ex 26:7; 35:6), which formed the sackcloth of mourners. This was the material of John the Baptist's robe (Matt 3:4). Wool was also woven into garments (Lev 13:47; Deut 22:11; Ezek 34:3; Job 31:20; Prov 27:26). The Israelites probably learned the art of weaving linen when they were in Egypt (1 Chron 4:21). Fine linen was used in the vestments of the high priest (Ex 28:5), as well as by the rich (Gen 41:42; Prov 31:22; Luke 16:19). The use of mixed material, as wool and flax, was forbidden (Lev 19:19; Deut 22:11).

(2.) Colour: The prevailing colour was the natural white of the material used, which was sometimes rendered purer by the fuller's art (Ps 104:1,2; Isa 63:3; Mark 9:3). The Hebrews were acquainted with the art of dyeing (Gen 37:3,23). Various modes of ornamentation were adopted in the process of weaving (Ex 28:6; 26:1,31; 35:25), and by needle-work (Judg 5:30; Ps 45:13). Dyed robes were imported from foreign countries, particularly from Phoenicia (Zeph 1:8). Purple and scarlet robes were the marks of the wealthy (Luke 16:19; 2 Sam 1:24).

(3.) Form: The robes of men and women were not very much different in form from each other.

(a) The "coat" (*kethoneth*), of wool, cotton, or linen, was worn by both sexes. It was a closely-fitting garment, resembling in use and form our shirt (John 19:23). It was kept close to the body by a girdle (John 21:7). A person wearing this "coat" alone was described as naked (1 Sam 19:24; Isa 20:2; 2 Kings 6:30; John 21:7); deprived of it he would be absolutely naked.

(b) A linen cloth or wrapper (*sadin*) of fine linen, used somewhat as a night-shirt (Mark 14:51). It is mentioned in Judg 14:12,13, and rendered there "sheets."

(c) An upper tunic (*meil*), longer than the "coat" (1 Sam 2:19; 24:4; 28:14). In 1 Sam 28:14 it is the mantle in which Samuel was enveloped; in 1 Sam 24:4 it is the "robe" under which Saul slept. The disciples were forbidden to wear two "coats" (Matt 10:10; Luke 9:3).

(d) The usual outer garment consisted of a piece of woollen cloth like a Scotch plaid, either wrapped round the body or thrown over the shoulders like a shawl, with the ends hanging down in front, or it might be thrown over the head so as to conceal the face (2 Sam 15:30; Est 6:12). It was confined to the

waist by a girdle, and the fold formed by the overlapping of the robe served as a pocket (2 Kings 4:39; Ps 79:12; Hag 2:12; Prov 17:23; 21:14).

Female dress: The "coat" was common to both sexes (Song 5:3). But peculiar to females were (1) the "veil" or "wimple," a kind of shawl (Ruth 3:15; rendered "mantle," R.V., Isa 3:22); (2) the "mantle," also a species of shawl (Isa 3:22); (3) a "veil," probably a light summer dress (Gen 24:65); (4) a "stomacher," a holiday dress (Isa 3:24). The outer garment terminated in an ample fringe or border, which concealed the feet (Isa 47:2; Jer 13:22).

The dress of the Persians is described in Dan 3:21.

The reference to the art of sewing are few, inasmuch as the garments generally came forth from the loom ready for being worn, and all that was required in the making of clothes devolved on the women of a family (Prov 31:22; Acts 9:39)

(From Easton's Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible)

Purpose of clothes

Clothes generally are for covering and presentation. It is also won to keep one warm in times of cold, hence, clothes made of wool and leather skin. Today we have light and thick clothes for all kinds of weather. Clothes have evolved over the years. It has gone through many processes, that we have dresses made of different materials ranging from natural to synthetic materials, won through the four seasons of the year. All are for proper covering and protection of the skin. Some clothes are won to protect from fire burn, chemical burn, serve as wind breakers and protect from cold wind. Some clothes are won for only musical and art shows. Some are won for seduction and sex appeal. Some are won for specific work or as uniforms as required by their employers. There are different kinds of dresses (uniforms) for different professions, organizations, institutions and schools for identification and effective discharge of their duties. Some are won to show their wealth. Whatever be the purpose of each individual, organization or profession for wearing clothes, the main purpose of dresses still remains for proper covering of the nakedness of man and decent presentation of himself to the public.

Clothes as a means of identification

People dressed the way they want to be addressed. Clothes identify people with certain tribes, cultures and class. It is easy to identify an American from an African, an Ibo man from a Yoruba or Hausa man by their dressing. It is easy to tell a rich folk from a poor one by their dressing. It is easy to tell a "homely" person from a "go go" type of person. It is easy to identify a godly and humane person from a ruffian and way-ward person. You know those who are mourning by the dress they wear. As soon as the mourning period is over, they change their clothes. All these go to prove that clothes are a means of identification.

Men and women were asked to dress differently so the identities will be clear though their clothes may be identical in colour, material and design.

Deut 22:5

5 A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.

NIV

The Priests wore different clothes from the other Israelites. The clothes of the kings and their children were different from the ones worn by the commoners. This is for easy identification. The Pharisees and the leaders of the Jews dressed differently from the rest of the people. The prophets wore clothes made from sheep skin. This also made it easy for identification, and for imposters to deceive the people and make themselves look like prophets of God.

Matt 7:15

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

NIV

Pretenders abound by the dress they wear because dress identifies and connects you to a certain group, or tells the story of who you are. Your dress can link you with a group that you don't belong to. You can be looked upon as a criminal though you are not by your appearance and dressing. You can be looked upon as an ungodly man by your appearance and dressing though you are not. You can be looked upon as a prostitute by your dressing when you are not.

Prov 7:10

10 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.

NIV

Gen 38:13-16

13 When Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep," 14 she took off her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife. 15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. 16 Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, "Come now, let me sleep with you." "And what will you give me to sleep with you?" she asked.

NIV

Judah was deceived to believe Tamar was a prostitute by her dressing. Dressing speaks a lot about you. Dressings tell a story. What story do you want what you wear to tell about you. People read you by what you wear. Have you ever wondered what story your dressing has been telling about you all these years? Check what you are fond of wearing and you can tell what people think about you.

What you wear appeals to a certain audience or class of people. What you wear speaks a lot about you and your desires and it attracts people of like mind. Wearing transparent clothes that expose your inner wears tell a lot about the desires of your heart. Dresses that expose your breast for all to see, or "notice me," "sex appeal," "I am for grabs" type of dresses does not speak good of a Christian lady. It gives the impression that you are a "Delilah", "a fire extinguisher," and a "seducer" of godly men. It will scare off some decent godly men who are prospective good husbands. It creates the fear of a fall into fornication before marriage and unfaithfulness on your part after marriage. You do not need to expose your body to be beautiful and attractive. I am not advocating that you dress to look like your grandmother, I am simply asking you to wear what will portray you in good light as a godly lady who is worthy of a good and God fearing husband. Wrong dressing will attract the wrong people to you who will become a source of distraction and trap to immoral sins.

Dress the way you want to be addressed. Dressing speaks and attracts people of like mind, depending on what you are wearing.

Dressing for occasions

There are dressings for different occasions. It is proper that you wear appropriate dressing for work, seminars, church services, dinner appointments and meetings, sports, picnics, weddings, and other special occasions. Jesus told the story of a man who attended a wedding but was not properly dressed so he was bundled out of the wedding. There is need for appropriate dressing. Always find out what the dress code is for a function so you will not be humiliated or look awkward in the congregation.

Matt 22:11-13

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

NIV

Live your life in such a way that you will be given the wedding garment for the marriage in heaven.

Fashion, you, and your faith

Fashion has changed so much from the first time Adam and Eve made for themselves clothes of leaves. It has evolved from leaves to animal skins to cotton, wool, and synthetic, materials. Originally, the emphasis used to be for proper covering of the body, but today, it is for sex appeal. Fashion has not changed much in the last one forty years. Old designs keep coming back with little variations. The only problem now is that it is shifting more towards exposing the parts of the body which clothes was originally designed to cover.

The irony of life is that when you see something continuously for a long time, you become adjusted and used to it that it does not bother you anymore. When this type of dressing started up in the developed countries, people fought against it, now they have become so used to it that they don't fight it anymore. The devil is inspiring more wicked designs to continue to stir the people into immorality. Check out these (advanced) countries and see their security report on rape and sex related violence and statistics on divorce. What is the cause? "Sex appeal" dresses, shows, music and movies that reveal so much and stir strong desire for sex in onlookers. Never get used to seeing evil that you embrace it. What is not good is not good no matter the generation you are in. The purpose of clothes is certain – to cover man's nakedness. Let your dress be such that will cover your nakedness and not expose it. You have no right to complain of sexual harassment when you are stirring sexual desires in people who see you. You dress to be seen and attract attention, so when you are seen, something turns within the attracted and he comes to get what you are offering. So, why complain. Who is harassing who? The answer is with you.

Be more conscious of who you are inside than being fashionable. Do not dress to identify with the world and be like others who do not know God, but dress to portray who you are inside – a child of God through Christ Jesus. Let the world know you value your salvation and relationship with Jesus Christ, and you have got something you are proud of. Do not be fashion crazy. Go for fashion that covers and not fashion that exposes and seduces the opposite sex.

When you want to buy T shirts, look at the write up on it. There are some that wear shirts and "tops" with very seductive and inviting captions. "I am sexy", "Come grab me", "Available", "Burning with

desire”, etc are some of the things written on shirts worn by Christians. It is disgusting for a Christian to wear such things.

What you wear is not all that is required to attract a good mate. Your character is the most important thing. Develop good character and dress well and decently. Package yourself well. Dress the way you want to be addressed. Tell a good story of yourself by the way you dress.

1 Tim 2:9-10

9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.
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