



A Sure Sign of Summer

By Keith Greer

When I lived in Las Vegas, I really missed the changing seasons. Each season has something that makes it different. In the winter, it's the snow on the big evergreen trees. In the fall, it's the beautiful colors of the leaves changing on the trees. In the spring, it's the cool weather and the flowers awakening after their winter naps. The summer has those hot days when the sun keeps it light until 9:30 p.m. It is also the time when the children are out of school!

In Las Vegas, the warm weather lasted year-round (really about ten months). Yet, in March, when the sun would begin to get warmer -- off came the clothes, and more as the sun became hotter. The west coast is not the only place where we have to deal with the modesty problem. It's also a problem in Beavercreek, Ohio -- for people in the world, and for many of my brethren. Each of us needs continually to be reminded of the importance of the example we set before, and the influence we have on, the world. This is especially true in the area of how we dress -- especially in the summer.

Since I began preaching, and have spoken about this subject with different brethren, I've heard a number of "excuses" for why immodest clothing is not really immodest. For example, "It's just too hot to wear a lot of clothes." "The stores just don't have anything decent." One preacher said one of the members told him "the dress shrunk after she washed it." "How short is too short." "We all have our opinions." Many more could be listed, but this gives us a place to begin.

Is hot weather a good reason for dressing immodestly? In July and August in Las Vegas, the temperature averages about 110! Believe me, it gets hot! Does my need to be a good influence and example of Christianity diminish as the thermometer rises? Are there alternatives? There's lightweight clothing that keeps us cool and, at the same time,

modest. Is the heat a reason for me, by my appearance, to cause others to have impure thoughts? "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." {Matthew 5:16} Notice that God says my works -- not my physical appearance -- are to shine! Doesn't it just come down to what I want to wear? One would have to take the position that God's standards change depending on the weather. Who can believe that?

What about there being nothing decent in the stores? Where do you shop? If the stores in which you regularly shop don't have decent clothes, try another store! Could it be that, instead of keeping your example for Christ intact, you are trying to follow the world's latest fashion trends? The majority of the world may not consider what we buy stylish, but if it pleases God, isn't that more important?

The problem of wanting "to be like everyone else and fit in" is not new. Following the last judge, Samuel, wanting to fit in caused Israel to desire a king (1 Samuel 8:1-20). God never has wanted His people to be "like the nations around them." We are special, peculiar people who are to set the example -- not follow the world's example! (1 Peter 2:9-13) We choose whether to live according to God's standards or according to the world's. Our choices impact many things in our lives -- including how we look and what we wear!

If I grow, should I continue wearing clothes that, when they were first purchased, may not have been immodest but now are? On many occasions, I've told my daughters their legs were getting longer, so also must their dresses! If a piece of clothing shrinks, do not continue to wear it -- even if you like that piece of clothing! Personally speaking, I have seen a limited amount of clothing shrink to the point of being immodest -- most of it started out being immodest! When you outgrow clothes, purchase new ones, or lose weight so you can wear them again.

Has God taught concerning modesty? Is it my duty to consider how my dress affects others? Despite popular belief, absolutely yes! "Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way." {Romans 14:13} If my brother or sister is offended by certain clothing I

choose to wear, shouldn't that be enough to cause me to refrain from wearing that clothing? An elder in Las Vegas commented "one could lust after a woman in a full-length dress just as much as after one in a bathing suit." While this may be true, the lady in the dress is not held accountable for the impure thoughts of the one who lusts. Why? Her dress is modest. Can we say the same for the one in the bathing suit? Honesty compels us to say "no." This same elder saw nothing wrong with having swimming parties at his home, with men and women swimming together! Does the fact that they were all Christians ensure their freedom from lustful thoughts? While I am to guard my heart from impure thoughts, God does not condone my placing before my eyes temptations that can cause me to sin!

One of the most baffling things I deal with is the mindset that if someone has a problem with my conduct, dress, speech, or anything else, it's his problem. Wrong! Long ago, Cain asked: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). Yes, I am my brother's keeper. If I love my brother, would I do anything to cause him to weaken and fall into sin and encounter God's displeasure? How can we claim we truly love our brethren if, by our dress, we incite lust in their hearts? How can I love the souls of those who are lost and dying in sin if my dress causes them to sin in their hearts? To ask either question is to answer it -- we don't! What would you do if a brother or sister came to you and told you your clothes were making it difficult for him or her to keep a pure mind? Offended? I know of situations where brethren were told the problem was their dirty minds! The Bible does teach that we are duty-bound to keep our hearts pure. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." {Proverbs 4:23} "Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other's people's sins; keep thyself pure." {1 Timothy 5:22} Are we obligated to dress in a way that makes it easier for others when they are in our presence? I know a brother who, while serving the Lord's Supper, had to turn his head because a sister's dress was exposing too much of her! What are we thinking?

How short is too short? This is certainly a valid question. Does the Bible give a measurement? Why do people ask this question? In most cases in my experience, it is when they are considering wearing (or have worn and were questioned) something and believe someone might think it is too short. This should be enough reason not to wear that item. If it could lead someone's mind down the wrong path -- why take the risk? Could it be that we are trying to get as close as possible to the "safe line," without falling

over? God tells us to flee from sin -- not straddle the line! "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." {1 Thessalonians 5:21,22} My desire must always be to set, by my dress, and by my life, the highest godly standards.

Indecent clothing has no place in the Christian's life -- no matter what the weather may be! God's people can only distinguish themselves from the world when they avoid the world's standards and mindset. If there is a choice between encouraging others to live godly, pure lives or causing them to have thoughts that could cause them to lose their souls -- what choice must I make? True, the world may not consider us fashionable, but we can be fashionable in God's eyes. I prefer to be fashionable in the eyes of My Maker. We can make our fashion statements in heaven. What say ye brethren?