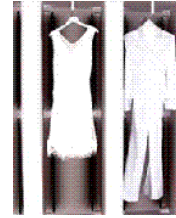




Dressing True to Your Mission

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Having taught young girls, teens and young adult women for many years as a modeling and acting instructor, I have seen and witnessed a growing insensitivity to appropriate dressing. It is my observation that we, the older generation, are not teaching you, the younger generation the art of dressing stylish, trendy AND modest.

I know that since I am part of the older generation you may think that I don't have anything useful to share. Believe it or not I still love to dress beautifully and stylish. It is such an art to figure out pieces of clothing that work together and combine them with accessories to make an outfit. The only difference between you and me, when it comes to dressing stylish, is dressing age appropriate. The younger you are the more you can play on what is trendy. I have to be much more discreet when I put bits of trendy into my outfits. Otherwise it will appear that I am trying to be an age I am not. I enjoy being the age I am and my clothing needs to say that.

In the next few pages I am going to share some fun concepts and thought provoking insights that will make you think about who you are and what you are trying to say - versus what you ARE saying with your clothes. I will also show how unique you are when it comes to "dressing true to your mission". Yes, you have a fashion signature that is uniquely yours!

Vogue Magazine – August 2003

“To Thine Own Self Dress True...always appropriate for your mission and principles over personality on any given occasion.”

Here is a secular, stylish, contemporary magazine stating that you should dress true to your mission and principles first and always. What does this really mean? Before you can understand this quote completely you need to identify what your mission and your principles are. Once you have done that we will move on to dressing to fit your personality. Then we will put all the components together and wrap it all up into a neat little package...YOU!

Let's talk about your mission first. Mission statements in the business world are essential to a businesses success but you probably have never really given much thought to your own personal mission statement. A mission statement simply put is “your purpose”. It is your reason to wake up every morning and live another day.

Start out by asking yourself these questions:

What is at the Center of my life?

What do I want the Character of my life to be?

What do I want to Contribute to others through my life?

What do I want the Communication of my life to be?

Spend some time thinking, pondering and praying about these questions. Then take out pen and paper or your laptop and write a short paragraph that looks at each part of your life and addresses it in terms of these questions. Your mission statement should not look exactly like anyone else's. You have a one-of-a-kind combination of likes, dislikes, abilities, skills, challenges and handicaps.

Here is my mission statement to use as an example: (remember I am of the older generation)

*My life mission is to have a personal walk with Christ based on being quiet before Him: “Be still my soul and know that He is God, stand quietly”. From this personal walk I will bless my husband in our marriage both personally and spiritually. In addition I will continue to uphold and *guide my children. I will be faithful to God's calling on my life. Finally...I will find a way every day to be touched by a sunset or the fragrance of a rose!*

What will be the CENTER of my life: to glorify God

What will be the CHARACTER of my life: integrity and kindness

What will be the CONTRIBUTION of my life: helping others “be all”

What will be the COMMUNICATION of my life: God is in control – relax!

** only when they ask for my advice*

Dressing true to your mission means that you must think about the message you are sending with the outfits you wear. Everything you wear makes a statement about who and what you are. Are those statements matching up with your mission statement?

If you want the contribution of your life to be find a cure for a life-threatening disease but the clothing you wear says you are all about fun and available for sex, you are not dressing true to your mission. You could find yourself in a place where you would have to defend your morality because you are sending a signal to the guys that college, a degree and working on finding a cure are not really that important.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not saying you need to be covered from head-to-toe.

What I am saying is you need to think about the message you are sending with any given outfit you choose to wear. There are hundreds of ways to dress stylish, trendy and show your personality without side-tracking your mission.

What is an easy way to explain what a principle is? It is a rule of action, conduct or belief. Do you make up the rules you are going to abide by as you go along? Most of what you hear being taught and practiced currently would lead you to believe that is the best way. “It’s ALL about YOU” is the underlying theme of most everything in our culture. Well, OK, if it’s all about you then your rules of action, conduct and belief should probably be based on what is BEST for YOU, right? What is best for you should stay constant no matter the circumstances. Principles must be based on an action, conduct or belief that is always best for you. Although, at times, what is best for you may be future tense instead of present tense; that should not deter you from following your principles.

What questions should you ask yourself to determine your principles? First of all, “will I be safe?” You need to answer this question from the standpoint of safety emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically.

We are told in the Bible to “guard our hearts” (Proverbs 4:23) and principles based on emotional safety will guarantee that happens. Waiting until you are in the heat of the moment is NOT the time to decide what your principles are! You will be acting from emotions instead of reacting from your prior thought processes.

Here is an example of what I am talking about. You are asked by a local photographer to do some test shooting for a local catalog. In the middle of the shoot the photographer tells you that you will have a better chance at getting the job if you show some skin. At first it’s just a little, but he encourages you to show more and more until you find yourself posing nude.

- *Principle in place based on emotional safety: before going to the shoot you decided that you would not compromise your morality no matter what was offered in terms of status, position or monetary reimbursement.*
- *No principle in place for emotional safety: you will be flattered and possibly act on your emotions deciding that just this once it won’t matter if you do something your really do not believe is best for you.*

Principles that will protect you mentally cover things like making a decision not to do drugs and alcohol. But mental principles also merge into making spiritual principles. Studying the Bible to help you understand God’s view of the world and the people you come into contact with every day will help you make principles that protect you mentally because you are “keeping your mind stayed on God”.

Your body is “the temple of God” (I Corinthians 6:19) . Therefore your physical principles should be based on safety for your body. It is fun to take chances and do things that push your limits physically. But a line needs to be drawn when the fun and challenge turns into fear and danger.

Notice I have not said anything about clothing choices and how they relate to determining your principles in these four areas. However, dressing true to your mission is completely tied up in your principles.

How many of you have heard of a rape case where the victim is accused of asking for the

crime based on her clothing choices and actions? This is an example of what can happen when you do not have principles in place regarding your clothing to keep you safe emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically.

Another example of how you can be in danger emotionally and mentally without principles regarding your clothing would be dressing in a suggestive way for work or school. You are likely to get a reputation for being sexually promiscuous. That can scar you emotionally and mentally. Are you prepared for that or wouldn't it be better to have principles in place to protect you?

The second question you should ask when deciding your principles is: "will it be a positive experience that will teach me or profit me in some way?" This question is as important as the first, however, it is pretty much self-explanatory so I will not expand on it.

The last question brings us back to your mission. It is simply, "will it help me fulfill my mission?" Setting your principles (remember they are rules of action, conduct and beliefs) must always be in line with your mission or you will find yourself living a double-life. In some ways it will be like Paul who said: "the very things I want to do, I do not, and the things I don't want to do, I do" (Romans 7:19 paraphrased). You will be frustrated and discouraged knowing what your mission is but constantly sabotaging it because your principles do not line up with your mission.

What's the other important component of the quote? "...over personality..."

Your personality is a very large part of dressing true to yourself. If you do not mix your mission, principles and personality you will never be comfortable in your clothing.

Each time you step into a room you make a statement whether you want to or not. What do you want your statement to be? Here are four personality types. You will identify strongly with one or more of the following personality descriptions.

The first personality type is **dramatic**. You thrive on being the show stopper and dress dramatically nearly all the time. When I wrote that you make a statement each time you enter a room, your inner response was "YES!". You are extroverted, nearly always talking and have strong opinions. Strong colors and bold patterns probably appeal to you. The latest, newest trends never slip by you. People with dramatic personalities are often the entrepreneurs of the world. Your confidence enables you to venture out more easily.

A word of caution: make certain your fashion statement is not only "high fashion trendy" but also is tastefully done. You need to dress appropriately when a situation calls for a more demure, simple look. It is not appropriate to "out-do" the bride at her wedding or to "out-dress" your boss in an important business meeting.

The second personality type is **classic**. You want to look your best, but just don't have the extroverted personality and self-confidence to try the latest things. You want to enjoy a party – but not be the "life of the party". Your reserved style is always appropriate and stylish. You rely on more practical options and mix and match pieces well. Practical and meticulous you make great businesswomen...because you "get the job done!"

Keep in mind that classic personality types need to spice things up from time to time so your look doesn't become boring. Accessories are a great way to spice up a look inexpensively and stay emotionally within your comfort zone.

Thirdly, there are those of you who are into sports. You love to workout are competitive and do not want to be bothered with fussy, finicky clothing. Your personality type is **natural**. You are drawn to natural fibers like cotton and adopt a casual, informal look as your fashion mode. Your clothing must be functional, comfortable and above all, easy to care for. Naturals

balance the fashion industry. By continuing to insist on clothing that works well from morning to evening during your busy days as personal fitness trainers, professional athletes, nutritionists and more you keep the fashion industry from spinning out of control.

Being appropriate is something natural personality types struggle with just like the dramatics. However, on the opposite end of the spectrum. Make certain you have some things in your wardrobe that are suitable when a more “dressed-up” look is what is appropriate.

Last, we have the **romantic** personality type. You thrive on getting “dressed-up”! Sheer tops with ruffles and gathers really excite you. Your feminine, beautiful look fits well with your warm and caring personalities. You generally are more fulfilled when serving others. In addition, you love surrounding yourself with beautiful things. All the rest of us look to you to take care of us when we need caregivers and someone to put in charge of programs that help our families and communities.

Caution needs to be exercised so that you do not appear overdressed for occasions. You may also be tempted to dress too sensually (see the definition of sensual below) in your daily life as a romantic. Keep the really romantic things set aside to wear for your husband in the future.

Most of you do not fit just one of these styles. You find yourself relating to and comfortable with two even three of them. That is because God in His generosity did not make us all alike. There are so many combinations when you put together body figure types with hair, eye and skin coloring. Then add in personality types and the options become nearly endless. Isn't it exciting to think about Gods delight as He fashions and creates each one of us as individuals?

The term “in style” is an interesting term and is actually improperly defined most of the time. “In” simply indicates inclusion...inclusion to style. Style has two definitions. The first is probably the way most of us think of it: conforming to a customary fashion. The second is much less restrictive: a distinctive manner or grace in appearance. So, in other words “in style” means to be included with those that are connotated with a distinctive manner or grace in appearance”.

Your style should be your personal signature on fashion. It should be unique- it shouldn't look like your friend's fashion signature. Your signature combines several elements. They are: determining your life mission and principles; knowing what clothing looks best with your figure; and allowing your personality to show through. You might want to read another booklet of mine called Your Fashion Signature to better understand what clothing looks best with your figure and why. But, for now let's move on to some very interesting words used to describe clothing.

I mentioned sensual clothing in the description of a romantic personality type. Here are three other words in addition to sensual that relate to today's styles and culture. Think about what kind of clothing comes to mind with each of the words and their definitions.

Sexy – sexually suggestive or stimulating

Sensual – having a strong sensory appeal (sight, smell and touch – in that order)

Mysterious – exciting wonder or curiosity

Modest – a special characteristic in dress, speech or conduct – not bold, or self-asserting, but instead being cautious not to offend.

Are you surprised at the definition of modest? Were the clothes that came to mind before you read the definition based on what you perceive “modest” to be OR what modest really is?

Modesty, as it relates to fashion and style, has gotten a bum rap. Read the definition again. Shouldn't that be the goal of every woman? To dress in a stylish, attractive way that does not bring undo attention to us...but instead flatters our coloring and bodies...while being careful

not to offend those around us.

This is perhaps the most important concept to share with you as it relates to “dressing true to your mission”. Read the definition of modest in the last paragraph again. Remember the words, “being cautious not to offend”? This is an extremely important concept as it relates to the guys in your life.

Guys do not respond to the words “I love you” as they do to the words “I respect you”. They are wired in such a way that they need to know they are respected. If they feel respected they will respond with love. I am not telling you this to use it as a way to scheme a guy into “falling in love” with you. I am speaking of ALL your male relationships from your father to your brother(s) to your guy friends and, yes - your boyfriends. But, the kind of love I am speaking of is not specifically a romantic love. It is a love that is kind, caring, gracious and nurturing. How can you show men respect in regards to how you dress?

Respect means to value, admire and show consideration for. We have talked about OUR life missions. What about their life mission? There are two illustrations I would like to give you to describe what I am talking about.

Guys love girl’s bodies! That’s all there is to it. God made them that way and when it is celebrated in a proper courtship and marriage it is a beautiful thing.

Now, think of your body as chocolate (or something else you absolutely love – but for sake of illustration I will use chocolate). You have tested positive for having a sensitivity to chocolate and have been told you should not eat it. That evening you head to a party and you are handed a plate of the most luscious chocolate’s you have ever seen. On another evening you might have been able to take one or two and be satisfied, but just knowing you can’t have ANY make’s you crave it more than ever before. I know it is a bit of a silly comparison, but I think you’ll get where I am going with this. When you dress in ways that show certain parts of your bodies it makes guy’s respond with a passion to see more, perhaps even try to touch and then they are preoccupied with that passion instead of their life’s mission. It’s like saying, “come and get it ...but oh no, you can’t REALLY have it...I was just dressing “in style”. Why are girls surprised when guys get turned on so easy? That’s the way they are made. You owe it to them to show them respect (in other words, be considerate of them) by dressing modestly (cautious not to offend) in regards to how you dress AND act. Their life mission’s are just as important as yours are. BOTH or your missions will mold and make you into women and men of God.

Another innate part of being male is to desire to conquer and have dominion over. Think of ancient times when it was an absolute necessity for men to go out and hunt for their family’s food. God has put that desire and drive within every man. He is to be the head of the household, not in a domineering manner, but in a strong, protective leadership role. Picture what it would be like if you went on an elk hunting trip and all the elk were laying there just waiting for you to shoot them. Think about how unsatisfying that would be. A large part of the satisfaction from hunting comes because of the challenge to out-wit the animals. In the same way; there is nothing left to the imagination and no true satisfaction when you show too much skin - be it legs, breasts or both . It truly strips a guy of some of his manhood, because he is unable to be what he was meant to be and do in a male-female relationship. Remember HE is to hunt and initiate.

As Christian young women you cannot just blindly dress the way everyone else is. You have a much higher calling and therefore and much higher standard to dress by. All fashions can be modified to be less provocative and still stylish.

1. Underwear is just that! It is supposed to be seen only after removing the outerwear.
2. Showing too much cleavage can be dealt with in a number of ways from wearing a tube underneath to placing a piece of jewelry strategically to perhaps just putting your hand over your chest when leaning over in front of a guy if the garment is not terribly low cut.
3. Showing a toned and trim stomach is very attractive, but leave this area for exhibition only when wearing beachwear.
4. Choose jeans, shorts and skirts that do not reveal your naked backside when you lean over or squat. Showing this part of your body should be strictly for the bedroom and bathroom. It can be embarrassing to onlookers to say the least. Once again that is not being modest since we are potentially offending them.

No matter what the current styles are: there will always be a balancing act to being modest and “in style”...but remember what “in style” really means. “TO BE INCLUDED WITH THOSE THAT ARE CONNOTATED WITH A DISTINCTIVE MANNER OR GRACE IN APPEARANCE.” There is no conflict with that statement and “dressing true to your mission and principles.

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