

## ON YEARBOOKS AND MODESTY

By: Cody Westbrook

**R**ecently a Florida high school caused quite a stir when the yearbook coordinator digitally edited 80 yearbook photos. The edited photos were only of females and were altered to add more clothing to chests and shoulders. The School District's chief of Community Relations reported "The yearbook coordinator made the decision to edit the photos based on her assessment that the females were not in dress code."<sup>1</sup>

Many students and parents were appalled that the changes were made without their knowledge or consent. Some described the dress code as antiquated and discriminatory. Some even suggested that the act of editing the yearbook photos and the underlying dress code promoted shame and emotional problems for the young ladies whose images were digitally altered. One parent said,

You're telling my daughter that she should be ashamed of that part of her body, that she should be covering it up. I think that's the completely wrong message to give to young teenage girls who are already going through the body shaming era and trying to understand themselves and then be comfortable with themselves. She continued, I do worry about some of these other kids who might not be handling it as well... and how this could be really damaging for their mental health long term.<sup>2</sup>

Another parent argued that the yearbook fiasco is part of a larger problem. In the parent's mind there is an unfair and unequal standard for males and females regarding dress. She remarked, "It comes on the heels of a much bigger issue of gender discrimination and these girls being targeted and sexualized for being told that their clothes are wrong. There's inequality within their dress code."<sup>3</sup>

The parent is correct that the situation is part of a larger problem, but she is mistaken as to the nature of the problem. The real issue here is the societal rejection of God's standard for modesty and human sexuality. Our culture has promoted self-actualization for so long that for many people, the only real standard of appropriate dress and behavior is their own feeling and personal preference. Ours is a world of sensuality and gratification and anathema to anyone who would discourage such thinking. Individuals regularly display themselves inappropriately in the name of freedom and fulfillment. In this culture of individualism and the tireless chase to be unhinged and free to say or do whatever one desires, without consequence, in the name of choice, freedom, or identity; there is a desperate need to point people back to God and His will for how we view and clothe our bodies.

Modesty is first a mindset. Paul defined modesty as "that which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (1 Tim. 2:10). Peter said, "Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the

incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Pet. 3:3-4). Both passages indicate that modesty is foremost a condition of the heart. The state of our heart determines the modesty of our actions. “As in water face reflects face, so a man’s heart reveals the man” (Pro. 27:19). One whose heart is determined to glorify God and conform to His will has no trouble submitting to dress and behavior which God deems appropriate (cf. Rom. 8:5; 29; 12:1-2). We tend to think that modesty is an issue of hemlines and tight pants, but it is much more than that. What we wear reflects who we are. Hemlines and tight pants are a symptom, not the problem.

Modesty also has to do with humility and restraint. Rich women in the ancient world dressed immodestly to declare their high status (cf. 1 Tim. 2:9-10). In contrast, modesty does not boast in or promote self (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3-4). We live in an identity addicted and identity driven time. Everyone wants you to know about them—their accomplishments, ideas, opinions, etc. The immodest world says, “look at me!” but the modest Christian says, “Look at Christ!” Similarly, the world is overwhelmed with excess and the inability to control urges and ideas. Modesty demands restraint and self-control (Ps. 141:3; Jas. 1:26).

As it pertains to modest dress, it is helpful to first understand the purpose. What is accomplished by dressing modestly and why does God define it in the way He does? God commands modest dress because it is inappropriate to dress in such a way as to draw attention to areas of the body that should not be available for public viewing. The goal of our clothing is to cover our nakedness. The bible defines nakedness as shameful. In speaking to Babylon Jehovah said, “Your nakedness shall be uncovered, yes your shame shall be seen” (Isa. 47:1-3; cf. Jer. 13:26; Nahum 3:5). God covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3) and the nakedness of the priests was to be covered when they served (Ex. 28:42). The combined thought of these passages emphasizes that God wants us covered from shoulder to knee, and to leave that space uncovered constitutes nakedness which is shameful.

A sociologist offered her view on the yearbook situation and perfectly described the societal problem at hand. She remarked, “There’s just so much ambivalence. On the one hand you’re giving the message to pretty young girls that

women need to be sexualized to have value in this world and then on the other hand we’re punishing them for participating in this. You can’t win.”<sup>4</sup> Her description of the problem is correct. Our society does sexualize women and promote an impossible and ungodly standard for them to follow. But the answer is not to encourage further immodesty, the answer is to stop sexualizing young women and making them think that their value is wrapped up in sexuality. Our value is seen in the fact that we are created in the image of God, not that people find our bodies attractive. Our purpose is to glorify Him in all that we do, including our dress.

1. Zdanowicz, Christina. “Parents, Students Angered after 80 Yearbook Photos of Female Students Are Altered to Mask Cleavage.” CNN. Cable News Network, May 26, 2021. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/25/us/florida-yearbook-photos-altered-trnd/index.html>.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Dastagir, Alia E. “Those Infamous Edited Yearbook Photos and Society’s Obsession with Girls’ Bodies: ‘You Can’t Win’ ”. USA Today. Gannett Satellite Information Network, May 26, 2021. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/health-wellness/2021/05/25/sexist-dress-codes-and-altered-yearbook-photos-teach-girls-body-shame/7429562002/>.

*Cody Westbrook serves as the minister for the Southwest Church of Christ*

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Upcoming Events

Friday May 27: Family fellowship night at 6:30pm at the building. Please bring food and games.

Wed. June 1: Midtown Summer Series Bible Classes begin!

Sunday, June 5: Fellowship meal after morning worship with a 12:45pm service to follow. Please bring a potluck dish to share.

Sunday, June 12: Youth Devo hosted by the FitzSimmons after evening worship. Girls bring deserts, boys bring chips.

Area Events (More info on the bulletin board in the hallway):

Aug. 5-7: Discipleship University

Prayer List

Prayer Requests:

Clifton Rutherford who has started radiation therapy.

Cynthia Sneeringer, Angela Sneeringer’s mother, who is in the hospital in San Antonio. She is facing a lot of health challenges.

Ashlee and Caleb Garrison are excited to announce the birth of their son Uriah Allen Garrison last Saturday at 5:45am weighing 2.14 lbs. and 15 inches long. He will be staying in the NICU at DeTar North for about a month to continue to grow and gain weight.

Guadalupe Rodriguez’s mother who is in the hospital with heart problems.

LeRoy Torres , member of the church in Fort Worth, TX who is recovering from open heart surgery.

Members

Jeff Cannady, Les Dalttry, Kin and Sandra Marie, Ann Pantel, Veronica Serenil, Clark Withers, Dee Gilpatrick, Faye Henderson.

Service Roster

Week of May 15, 2022

Sunday Morning  
Scripture Reading..... Will Burleson  
Song Leader ..... Doug Jobes

Opening Prayer..... Steve Randle  
Closing Prayer..... Will Burleson

Lord’s Supper & Offering  
Bread..... Lupe Escojido  
Cup..... Bryant Siegel  
Offering.....James Cammock  
Assist.....Kirk FitzSimmons  
Assist..... Will Burleson  
Assist.....Mike Atkinson

Sunday Evening  
Song Leader ..... Isaac Jobes

Opening Prayer..... Ron White  
Closing Prayer..... Rick Bass

Lord’s Supper & Offering..... Will Burleson,  
Kirk FitzSimmons

Wednesday Evening  
Adult Class ..... Ron White  
Song Leader ..... Kirk FitzSimmons  
Devotional ..... Ron White

Other  
Usher.....Allen Clifton  
Prepare Communion .....

Congregational News

Birthdays  
Summer Siegel.....May 21

Food Helpers for the month of May - Team A.

If you have any prayer requests or upcoming events to be announced, please contact our secretary, Nina Siegel, at (361) 573-0030.

## Our Elders

Mark FitzSimmons  
Ronnie Scherffius  
Ron White

## Our Deacons

James Cammock—Evangelism  
Lupe Escojido— Benevolence  
Bryant Siegel—Education and Finance

## Our Preacher

Ronnie Scherffius

## Weekly Reading

*“And looking at Jesus as He walked, he  
said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”  
John 1:36*

## Service Times

Sunday Morning Bible Class.....9:00 A.M.  
Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 A.M.  
Sunday Evening Worship.....5:00 P.M.  
Wednesday Bible Class.....7:00 P.M.

## Attendance Records

Week of May 8, 2022

A.M. Bible Class.....55  
A.M. Worship.....76  
P.M. Worship.....48  
Wednesday Bible Class.....54  
Offering week of May 8, 2022.....\$3,411

## Supported Works

Mani Pagidipalli *India*  
John & Carla Moore *Bible Land Passages*  
Anthony Scherffius *Southwest School of Bible Studies*

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