

Pastors Note 11/08

Does God Care what you wear to church?

That is a simple question so here is a simple answer.....YESAnd NO

Wouldn't it be nice if life were so simple that we could get simple answers to seemingly simple questions. The problem is, that this is not a simple question because we make it complicated; there are as many different views on clothing as there are people. And we all hold our position on what is proper for what occasion to be the opinion that all should hold. Clothing is something I usually give little thought to because God has blessed me with a family who always insures I am dressed properly to be presentable in public.

In order to determine if God cares what you wear to church we must examine the motives behind what we wear. The first thing we must acknowledge is that clothing is a result of sin. God created us perfectly suited to exist in a pristine, sinless environment without clothing. Since clothing is a result of sin, it would follow that we might use this to find reasons to judge, condemn, and summarily dismiss as inappropriate what other's wear, while we at the same time are violating, in ignorance, some newly developed fashion code because of what we happen to be wearing.

So the question is not does God care what we wear to church, it is, does God care what we wear? The answer to that question is yes, but not for the reasons you might think. God cares about what you wear not because he cares how you look, that is what we care about. God cares about what you wear because he cares what you are communicating with your clothing. That's right we communicate with our clothing.

What do we communicate with our clothing? Here is a list of phrases that say nothing descriptive about what a person has on but give you a clear picture in your mind of what a person is wearing. Someone dressed & equipped for a rugged and cold hike in the mountains. Someone dressed for a day at the beach. Someone dressed to kill for an evening out on the town. Someone dressed for a day of tinkering under the hood of a car. Someone dressed to make a statement at a political rally. Someone dressed reflecting grief over a recent death. Someone dressed loudly. Some one dressed for a day at the office. Some one dressed for a day of firefighting. Someone dressed in a way that sticks out. Someone dressed inappropriately for a given occasion.

I gave you no gender, or any specifics on any of these descriptions but you had a clear vision in your mind for each one. Depending what year you were born, where and how you were raised, the pictures in your minds were all very different. So the answer to the above question is also No, because God dose not care how you look, He cares about what you communicate with your clothing. What determines appropriateness of clothing? Well you have to wear something and at work we are all expected to wear some sort of uniform, I wear a clerical on days when I lead worship and a shirt with the church Logo on other days. Hiking boots, shorts and a flannel shirt aren't appropriate as the regular uniform of a pastor in most cultures but in the smokies at the right time of year it might pass as acceptable. There are other appropriate options for pastors but they are usually culturally defined. Wearing a uniform simplifies my life, so that I do not have to think about what to wear. But I don't wear a clerical collar just because it makes my life easier, there are other good reasons. It helps me remember who I represent and serve. It leaves no question in the minds of those around me about whom I represent and serve. It has actually made sharing my faith here in this community quite easy, and I have shared and invited in settings that in many cases might have otherwise been overlooked. We must all make similar considerations when we decide what to wear. What are we communicating to the world and culture around us.

Appropriateness is determined by a number of factors. In most social settings there is little question, about what is appropriate. But in recent decades what we should wear to church has become a bit blurred and many would say God has no dress code for church. While this statement may be true in the sense that God does not care how you look or whether or not you are keeping up with the passing fashions of the day. He does care; if what you are wearing is out of vain pride to lord your wealth or position over someone else, or if what your are wearing is a bit revealing and will cause those of the opposite sex to have sinful thoughts, or if what you wearing is to proudly state I can wear what ever I want because God doesn't care and neither should you. What we wear to church should be comfortable and respectable in mixed company. We should spend less time asking

do I look good in this and spend more time asking and will it not distract me or others from focusing on and receiving the Gifts that God gives us in worship.

In Christ, Pastor Portier