

Spiritual Formation

SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE AND IMPLICATION

IMMODEST DRESSING, MAKEUP, TATTOO AND OTHERS

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INTRODUCTION

We can't over-emphasize the importance of leading a well-balanced life. Leading a well-balanced life applies to both the physical life and the spiritual life. Let's consider some cases to highlight this importance.

In **2 Thessalonians 3:10 and 4:11**, we see the goodness of work and the commandment that physically and mentally capable people (including Christians) must engage in practical **(which can be done)** and productive work - ***If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat; ...mind your own business, nor to work with your own hands....***

Regardless of how good work is, we find some who are extremely engaged in their work to a degree that affects their health and make them unable to have healthy connection or interaction with their families, friends. In a sense they become isolated from other people, mentally and socially.

Others in an effort to avoid being a workaholic, carry their strong interests in holidaying, parties, clubbing, movies, sports etc., to excess that other areas of their lives suffer.

Within the church circle, we find some brethren who strive earnestly to please God by attending all church services or programs but neglect their assigned duties in their paid jobs, academic and family responsibilities.

Other brethren in attempt to be committed to their paid jobs, academic and family responsibilities, neglect home fellowships, singing classes, evangelism

programs, Bible classes and main worship services.

There is *imbalance* in these cases and the persons in the cases, suffers. Physical or spiritual imbalance does 'no good' to anyone in the long run.

Everyone needs to be encouraged to live a well-balanced life.

SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

In our study of *Spiritual Formation*, we have learnt the need - to grow, to be mature, to demonstrate God's love to others, to be transformed consistently into the image of Christ, to ensure that Christ's image, personality and sacrifice is not seen in a negative sense.

Romans 2:24 states that ...*"the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you...."* In the first century the Gentiles would look at the Jew. The Jew had the Word of God in his hand and was teaching others, but he broke the law. Through the breaking of the law, he dishonored God, and the Gentiles would see him living as a lawbreaker and blaspheme the name of God. The Gentiles turned away from God because of the activity of the religious man (Lockhart, 1986, 2004).

Hebrews 6:6 states ...*since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.* According to Roper (2008), a continuing sin makes the sinner (erring Christian) to continue to crucify Jesus Christ. As long as people continue to sin and choose not to repent, they cannot be brought to repentance.

These needs represent the principles of Christianity – we are to meet these needs.

According to Roper (2008), **spiritual imbalance** occurs when a Christian become focused on one or two principles of Christianity, to the neglect of others.

Matthew 23:23 states that *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*

Heflin (1989, 2003) maintains that the scribes and Pharisees failed to prioritize properly when they paid tithes of garden herbs, but omitted judgment, mercy, and faith. **Their imbalance resulted in a warped, perverted, and hypocritical religion.**

James 2:10-11 states that *for whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.*

Roper (1982, 2004) maintains that what James is saying is that we cannot pick and choose our sins, thinking of some as big, important sins and others as little, and unimportant sins. James wants us to know that sin is sin and the committing of any sin makes us a sinner, the breaking of any law makes us a lawbreaker.

A neglect of a principle of Christianity affects the validity of one’s practice of the other principles.

Some members of the church are eager to promote truth and to speak out against error or are concerned about purity and constantly warn against immoral practices, but they may neglect love, forgiveness, reconciliation, and grace. Some brethren are enthusiastic about the subject of worship, but they may neglect benevolence or evangelism. A few may want to be involved only in evangelism or

mission work, other areas are not their concerned (Roper, 2008).

Other brethren believe in attending only Sunday worship service or at most weekly Bible classes but are not interested in the church home fellowship programs or visitation (sometimes they do not believe in visitation but wants to be visited) or singing practice class.

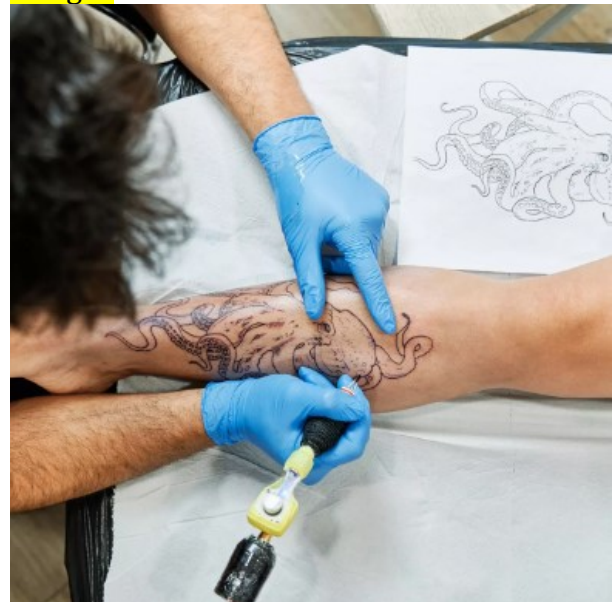
We have those brethren who may practice most of the principles of Christianity but when it comes to the issue of understanding and applying the concept of portraying the image of Christ through their dress style and appearance – *count them out!*

Let us consider immodest dressing, make-up, tattoo and others as they relate to spiritual imbalance.

TATTOO AND PIERCINGS

The present day passion for **tattoo** makes it an important subject for the Christian.

From Wikipedia, a **tattoo** is a form of body modification made by inserting tattoo ink, dyes, and/or pigments, either indelible or temporary, into the dermis layer of the skin to form a design.





Tattoos may be decorative (with no specific meaning), symbolic (with a specific meaning to the wearer), pictorial (a depiction of a specific person or item), or textual (words or pictographs from written languages). Many tattoos serve as rites of passage, marks of status and rank, symbols of religious and spiritual devotion,

decorations for bravery, marks of fertility, pledges of love, amulets and talismans, protection, and as punishment, like the marks of outcasts, slaves and convicts.

In the 20th century, tattoo art throughout most of the world was associated with a limited selection of specific "rugged" lifestyles, notably sailors and prisoners. Today, people choose to be tattooed for artistic, cosmetic, sentimental/memorial, religious, and spiritual reasons, or to symbolize their belonging to or identification with particular groups, including criminal gangs (see criminal tattoos) or a particular ethnic group or law-abiding subculture.

We see **tattoo** mentioned in the Old Testament. **Leviticus 19:28** *You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD.*

According to Smith (2022), under the word, "tattoo," we find, "a permanent mark or design fixed upon the body by a process of pricking the skin and inserting an indelible color under the skin."

Any kind of self-laceration (cutting) or marking of the body (tattoo) was prohibited among the Hebrew people.

Such cuttings were associated with pagan cults that tattooed their followers while they mourned the dead." (*From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*).

This definition, and the context of the verses in which these terms are used, help us to define the PURPOSE of this prohibition against tattooing and body piercing.

The context (**i.e., Leviticus 19**) in which these terms are used seems to reinforce this, because it is concerned with the removal of pagan influences from among the Jews.

This context makes it clear that the prohibition against "cuttings" and "tattoos" (**v.28**) was connected with pagan rituals.

The "tattoos" were given as marks of loyalty to some pagan god, and the "cuttings" were in honor of the dead.

There is a reference to *marks* in **Galatians 6:17** *From now on let no one*

trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Here Paul spoke of bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus. The word translated, "marks," is from the word "stigmata," and it "denotes 'a tattooed mark' or 'a mark burnt in, a brand'" (Vine).

This stood in contrast to the Jewish "mark" of circumcision (**Galatians 6:12-15**). The marks mentioned by Paul refers to the marks of persecution inflicted upon him because of his service to Jesus.

The purpose was to keep God's people from showing any kind of loyalty to a false religion or a false god. To mark oneself as loyal to a false god signified rebellion to the true God!

Some tattoos are of **obscene pictures or words**.

Many people have gotten a tattoo just to "show the world" that they "live on the wild side," and they "don't answer to anyone" (parent, spouse, etc.).

A pierced ear in Israelite culture was a statement that the person was a permanent slave (**Exodus 21:6; Deuteronomy 15:17**) (La Vista Church of Christ, 2020).

In addition, some body piercings are nothing more than "**advertisements**" of **sexual promiscuity**. Smith once heard of a young lady who got her tongue pierced. Her brother severely rebuked her, saying that she was advertising promiscuity. Of course, she denied it vehemently – until she started getting all kinds of propositions!

Piercing your tongue, nipples, and "private parts" is NOT something that Christians should do! It serves no worthwhile purpose!

Someone asked a question in La Vista Church of Christ, U.S.A.

Is having a tattoo a sin? In Exodus, God says not to mark our skin with tattoos. However, I recently came across a video that said God only told them not to have tattoos because they did not have the tools that we have today to be able to do it safely and sanitarily, and I've seen a few Christians with tattoos.

The answer given was *under the Old Law, the Israelites were forbidden to imitate*

the idolatrous religions around them. One practice was to make marks on the body, either by tattoos or by scarring to show which god (or ancestor) you served (Leviticus 19:28). This law had nothing to do with health reasons. The video you were watching featured someone's imagination and not expressing what the Bible taught.

The key questions to ask are **what's your motive of having a tattoo? What image are you projecting – yours or Christ? What message do you think your tattoo or piercing send to others? Do they give immoral ideas? Do you know that most tattoos are permanent?**

Christian, should think long and hard before you go down this road of tattoo and piercings (Smith, 2022).

IMMODEST DRESSING AND MAKE-UP

1 Timothy 2:9-10

Roper (1985, 2005) says that one can hardly look at any program on TV, even sports events, without being aware that some females wear a minimum of clothing. Or look at magazines, movies, the covers of books - the female human form is used to sell everything from toothpaste to lawnmowers. But it is really not necessary to look that far afield. One cannot drive down the street or go into a shopping mall without realizing that the society in general no longer has a sense of modesty.

It is part and parcel of the general decline in moral standards. But what concerns us most is that many members of the church are going along with the trend. It is not uncommon to hear members of Christ's body use the oldest of cliches about it all being a matter of the attitudes of the times, that there are no standards to go by indicating that they have not given the matter any serious thought. So, within the church circle, immodest dressing has become a present reality.

Argument: Society decrees that shorts are acceptable clothing.

Logical conclusion: If society decreed that nudity was acceptable, it would be.

Argument: It is cooler to wear shorts. (I really doubt that shorts are the

coolest type of clothing, but let us assume for the moment that the statement is true.)

Logical conclusion: It would be even cooler to wear nothing.

Argument: It saves a lot of time to just put on shorts and a brief top.

Logical conclusion: It would save even more time to wear nothing at all.

First, under usual circumstances, nakedness is shameful, and, if self-imposed, is sinful. God clothed Adam and Eve. Noah's nakedness brought severe implications to the daughters.

Second, inadequate clothing, in God's sight, is the same as nakedness.

In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing (1 Timothy 2:9).

Malone (1983, 2001) explains that the **word** for adorn is a form of **kosmio**. This word means "to beautify, embellish, add luster to."

A form of this word is used in **Titus 2:10**, *not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.*

So the women are to adorn, to beautify themselves in modest apparel. The English word *modest* means chaste, discreet, observing the proprieties of sex and evincing a lack of display.

Since the beginning of time, God expected a distinction to be made between the sexes. For example, God said, "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" (**Deuteronomy 22:5**). Articles of clothing, is one of the most distinctive difference between men and women (La Vista Church of Christ, 2020).

We might take the time to look at **Exodus 28:42, 43**, which is typical of these passages. As Moses was telling how the priests should conduct themselves, especially when they were offering sacrifices, Moses said, *And you shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs. They shall be on Aaron*

and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place, that they do not incur iniquity and die. It shall be a statute forever to him and his descendants after him.

If there is modest apparel, there must also be immodest apparel. The next thing that should be noted is that the phrase immodest dress can take in a variety of dress styles.

Immodest clothing can be too tight . . . or too low . . . or too thin . . . or too revealing . . . or too short . . . or too little . . . or too anything that calls attention to oneself in the wrong way (Roper, 1985, 2005).

Scanty and abbreviated apparel would violate every point in that definition.





In this context, however, Paul is thinking of Christians coming together to worship. Men are to fulfill the leadership

role, and the women are to adorn themselves in modest apparel.

In this context, Christians should try to avoid that which is suggestive and lust-producing any time they appear in public - **Matthew 5:27, 28** - "*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

The problem here would be the gaudy, extravagant, showy, or ostentatious dress. There were some rich people in Ephesus (1 Timothy 6:17-19). The wealthy women are being told to dress themselves in such a way that when they come into the assembly of worship they would not distract or divert.

With *propriety and moderation - shamefastness and sobriety*. The words here are **aidous** and **sophrosunas**. These words suggest a sense of propriety, a wholesome sense of shame, an awareness of what is fit and what would be inappropriate.

Not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment. A similar passage is **1 Peter 3:3- 5** *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. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands....*

Peter's language does not constitute an absolute prohibition. He is rather talking about her main concern. She is concerned about the dress of the inner person, the hidden person of the heart.

When that part of the individual is properly clothed, then the outer dress will take care of itself.

The wealthier women among the Greeks and Romans would sometimes braid their hair and then intertwine in it strands of gold, silver, or pearls to form a sensational and striking coiffure (hairstyle).

It is with this in mind that Paul and Peter make reference to the braiding of the

hair. When the Christian woman comes into the assembly of worship, she is not to divert or distract by gaudy and showy apparel.

But, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works (1 Timothy 2:10).

The Christian woman is to clothe herself in good works.

CONCLUSION

We need to be constantly re-examining our attitude toward God and His word!

Young sisters and brothers, and their mothers and fathers, need to concentrate on accumulating a Christian wardrobe and be dressed to be chaste, wearing what reflects Christian values.

When we neglect the principle of modesty and proper appearances that promote Christ's image, the result is spiritual imbalance. The implications includes mockery on the sacrifice of Jesus, hindrance to preaching of the gospel and condemning of our lives to hell if not repented of.

We need encouragement to lead well-balanced spiritual lives.

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