

A Plain Distinction

Part Two

*“Who Determines Gender Distinctions,
God or Man?”*



“God designed that there should be *a plain distinction* between the dress of men and women . . .” {CG 427}

A Plain Distinction

Part Two

In this presentation we will be looking at the 2 types of gender distinctions, man-made and God ordained. If we do not understand the difference between these two distinctions, then when culture changes, we become confused as to how we are to make a plain distinction between the sexes, and God has commanded.



Would any random distinction qualify as a fulfillment of this command, as long as it is relatively visible? Or are there biblical principles that can help us define what is feminine and masculine?



Various cultures and eras have made distinctions between men's and women's clothing by things like embroidery, embellishments, colors, textures, material, and style of the garment. But many of these distinctions are neither intrinsically masculine nor feminine, but are rather arbitrary.



Since our culture has embraced the unbiblical idea that it is fashionable to wear androgynous clothing, we cannot depend on our culture to inform us of appropriate distinctions. If we could discover biblical principles to define God-approved distinctions, even though culture may change drastically, we could have confidence that God approves of our distinction.



Many popular clothing items in our day have no obvious universal distinction that would define gender. T-shirts, hoodies, jeans, sneakers can all be unisex. God knew what would be the result of adopting interchangeable fashions. Ellen White said that “the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion and great increase of crime.” {1T 460.1 }



God gave us principles in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy to protect us from falling into Satan's androgyny trap. He doesn't want His people to see how close they can come to the trap without being snared. Next, we will share the principles that we have discovered that show what are to be the specific distinctions that set women's clothing apart from men's.



Women should
“adorn
themselves in
modest
apparel, with
shamefacedness
and sobriety.” 1
Timothy 2:9

Going back to 1 Timothy 2:9, the Greek word for “apparel” is “katastolé” which, according to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon means properly, “a lowering, letting down,” so it is literally “a garment let down.” The term “katastolé” could describe a long dress, skirt, robe, or coat, but *would exclude* pants worn with a waist length shirt as being acceptable outer garments for a woman.

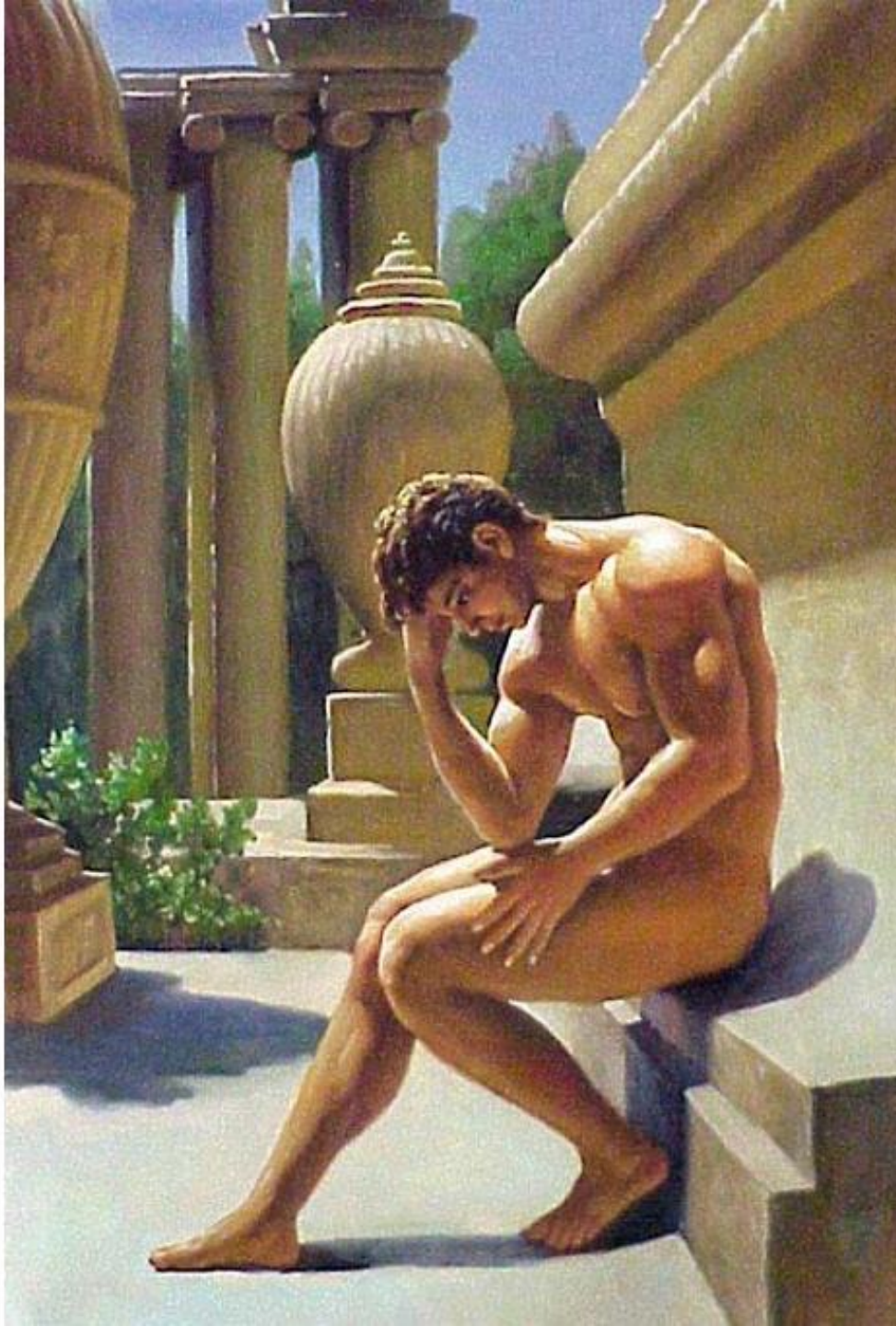


It is possible that this term specifically referred to a woman's garment, because it is a different word than is normally translated as gender neutral clothing or apparel. Used only this once in the Bible, it is a feminine noun derived from the verb *katastelló*, which means "to appease, restrain, keep down, lower, or pacify." This special term, "*katastolé*" could be a reference to the fact that women's clothing was designed to restrain a woman's own desires for attention, and the desires of men observing her.



We all know that men are prone to being tempted to fantasize about a beautiful woman in revealing clothes. A man's lust is triggered just at the sight of a woman's body, apart from any reciprocated feelings on her part. This is why it is men, not women, to whom Jesus spoke when he said "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:28

”



God created women differently. The sight of an attractive man's body does not automatically trigger a physical reaction in a woman. A woman may admire an attractive man's body, but if she lusts after him, it is not for his body, it is for his reciprocated admiration, his affections and his sexual desire of her. A woman does not become aroused unless she is desired in return.

When a woman even thinks about being physically desired by a man, then a woman's body begins to respond in a physical way. Because a woman has such a strong carnal desire to gain admiration from men, she is tempted to dress in such a way that draws attention to her body in order to entice him.

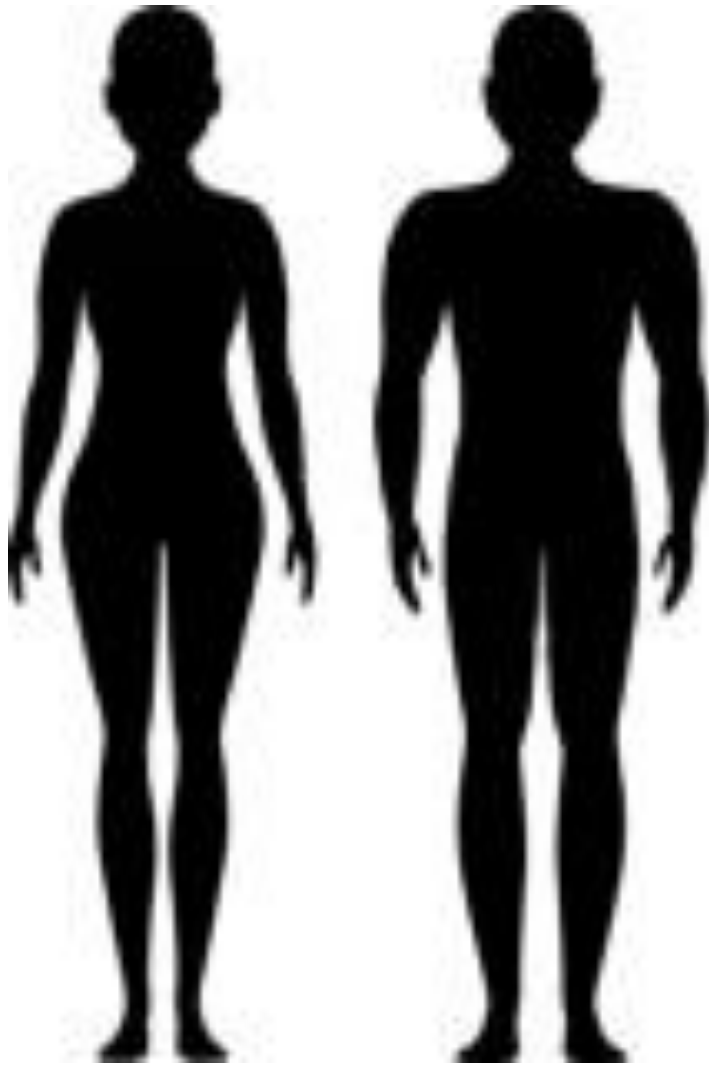


This is the reason the Bible highlights the importance of women dressing with modesty, while men are not thus enjoined. It is also the reason for the great number of warnings specifically for men against being enticed by a seductress.





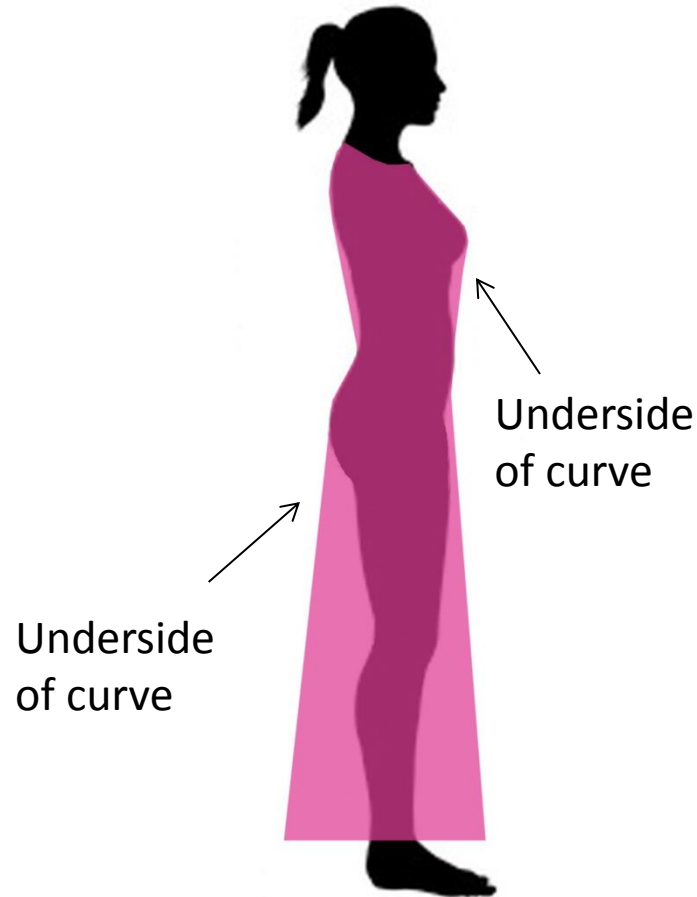
Men are capable of dressing immodestly, but this does not carry the heavy moral responsibility that a woman's immodesty does. A woman's desire to elicit attraction and gain affection is why she must use self-control. She must submit to God the sinful desire to enhance her appearance or reveal her body in order to gain sexual attention from men.



Not only did God create men and woman to respond sexually in different ways, He also designed their bodies differently. With a woman's rounded breasts, smaller waists, wider hips, and fuller buttocks, woman have curves that are visually stimulating for men.



With this knowledge of her feminine form and the distinct nature of men's temptations, a woman's modesty and self-control will lead her to adequately cover the areas of her body that attract men's gaze and lead them to desire her body.



Immodest clothing reveals the sensual aspects of a woman's body, the rounded curve of a woman's breast, hips, and buttocks.

Modest clothing is designed to loosely conform to her shape, while not revealing the *underside of the curve of her breast, hips, and buttocks.*

Q- Queen



The world's definition of feminine clothing is that which conveys that the wearer is a female, by the purposeful revealing of a woman's form. Immodest is a synonym of feminine by worldly standards.



In contrast, appropriately adequate covering is the biblical definition of respectable apparel for a woman. A feminine article of clothing has ample fabric to conceal a woman's figure. It is also a garment let down. It doesn't cling, it flows. It doesn't reveal, it conceals.



Men are never admonished to wear respectable let down garments, with a sense of shame and self-control, as women are counseled to do. This combined set of words applies only to women's clothing, revealing what is appropriate clothing for them: an appropriately modest, long, flowing garment that conceals the sensual aspect of her curves, so as not to arouse sensuality or pride in her heart, or lust or covetousness in her observer's heart.



If a long, flowing, figure-concealing garment is feminine, then it is by definition, not masculine. The tucks, pleats and folds that make a woman's dress flare and flow make women's apparel both distinct and modest. We could conclude that men shouldn't wear an outer garment that swishes and swirls around them.



We relied on the accuracy of this well cited article for this information.

<http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/D/DRESS/>

In an Assyrian sculpture depicting male and female Jewish captives, both are dressed in a moderately tight garment, fitting close to the neck and reaching almost to the ankles. The female captives wore over their tunics an upper garment, which covers the forehead and falls down over the shoulders to the ankles. It could be that this was the mantle, worn as a veil. Because there seems to be no clear distinction between the veil and the mantle in the Bible, it is likely that the "veil" with which Rebekah and Tamar "covered themselves" (Gen 24:65; 38:14) was a large mantle which covered the whole body.



The Assyrian sculpture shows that a women's relatively tight fitting robe was indistinguishable from a man's. In this narrow dress, when a woman bent over or squatted down to work, the robe would have stretched tightly over her body, indecently drawing attention to the form of her hips and buttocks.



This would have necessitated a woman to wear a large mantle to wrap around her narrow robe to conceal her body. It is quite possible the significantly larger dimensions of a woman's mantle was one of the distinguishing features of this distinctive garment in the Bible.



Despite the many paintings that picture men's attire this way, it is unlikely that men wore full, swishing robes with excess fabric that dragged on the ground and a long mantle that was flung around them with no apparent function. The previously mentioned Assyrian sculpture indicates that men and women's inner tunics were likely narrow long robes, not full flowing robes as we often imagine.

Some have imagined full robes, because they assumed the girdle often mentioned for men was used to keep the folds of a full flowing robe contained. However, men's girdles were used for many functions, from hanging a pouch or sword from, or tying up a long robe for activity, as when men "girded up their loins" (1 Kings 18:46) in order to run or perform strenuous labor.





Religious leaders all wore long robes down to their feet, as Jesus is described as wearing in Revelation 1:13. His robe is not described as full and flowing. He is pictured as wearing a golden sash around his chest, possibly used to hold the sword, that was coming out of his mouth.



A narrow inner robe, an optional narrow coat, and a small, practical mantle were all that was necessary for modesty and warmth for a man.



A man's garment could have been long for formal occasions, or shorter for strenuous labor.



Apparently it is appropriate for men to reveal the lower leg, because Exodus 28:42 defines nakedness on a man as the exposed area between the pelvis and the knees. The priests were not to exposed this area and therefore were to wear linen breeches.

“And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach”. These breeches covered the thigh and crotch from the sight of the congregation and other ministering priests in case of exposure during the strenuous labor of preparing sacrifices.





However, a woman's robe needed to be long enough to cover her legs from the thigh down, because simply showing the bare leg from the ankle up to her thigh is nakedness in God's eyes, according to the following verse. Isaiah 47:2-3 says, "Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, **make bare the leg** [the lower leg] uncover the thigh [the upper leg], pass over the rivers. Thy **nakedness** shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man."

Youngs Literal Translation reads like this: “Take millstones, and grind flour, **Remove thy veil**, draw up the skirt, Uncover the leg, pass over the floods.” Removing the veil, which was likely another word used for the mantle that covered a woman from the head down to her feet, would have left a woman in her inner robe, essentially her undergarment. Uncovering the leg up to the thigh would have been a humiliating disgrace for a woman in those days. Most women have no such shame today.





We do not know how this female version of the mantle was worn, but it may have been similar in style as this simple garment, wrapped about the waist with a girdle. We could not find any paintings depicting this kind of distinction, with men in narrower, more functional “simlahs” and women in fuller, more figure concealing “simlahs”. Yet, this is what we propose, based on inspired principles, to be the very difference commanded in Deuteronomy 22:5.



What can we learn from inspired counsel regarding the appropriate length of a skirt? Is a knee length skirt long enough to be considered modest and feminine in God's eyes?

The length of this dress over pants is the same as the American Costume, of which Ellen White said, “God would not have His people adopt the so-called reform dress. It is immodest apparel, wholly unfitted for the modest, humble followers of Christ.” {1T 421.2}



“I saw that God's order has been reversed, and His special directions disregarded, by those who adopt the American costume. I was referred to Deuteronomy 22:5: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." {1T 421.2}

"There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination." {CG 427.2}



God gave Ellen White a vision that gives us His standard of modesty in regards to the length of the skirt, which is to be a woman's outer garment. He showed her three women in very different lengths of skirts. Two were displeasing to Him, and one was pleasing to Him.

"But three companies of females passed before me, with their dresses as follows with respect to length:" {3SM 277.5}

Wrong



Long, dragging

Wrong



Above Knee length

Right



Few inches from floor

“The dress of the second class which passed before me was in many respects as it should be. The limbs were well clad. They were free from the burdens which the tyrant, Fashion, had imposed upon the first class; but had gone to that extreme in the short dress as to disgust and prejudice good people, and destroy in a great measure their own influence. This is the style and influence of the "American Costume," taught and worn by many at "Our Home," Dansville N. Y. It does not reach to the knee. I need not say that this style of dress was shown me to be too short.” {RH, October 8, 1867 par. 7}



God didn't give her the exact length of the dress that He wanted women to wear, but we do know that it didn't drag on the ground, and the length wasn't "about to the knee." Both of these lengths were proclaimed to be "extreme."



To avoid either extreme, Ellen White recommended a length from 8-10 inches from the floor. This lower-calf length dress, when the legs were also covered, was in harmony with God's requirement for women to wear a long garment that sufficiently conceals the curves, as revealed in 1 Timothy 2:9.





This was the length of skirt of the reform dress, which was advocated from 1867 to 1881. This length of skirt over covered legs is the shortest length ever specifically recommended to be in accordance with inspired revelation.



Regarding this dress, Ellen White writes, "My views were calculated to correct the present fashion, the extreme long dress, trailing upon the ground, and also to correct the extreme short dress, reaching about to the knees, which is worn by a certain class. I was shown that we should shun both extremes. By wearing the dress reaching about to the top of a woman's gaiter boot we shall escape the evils of the extreme long dress, and shall also shun the evils and notoriety of the extreme short dress." {1T 464. 1}



Ellen White makes a surprising statement about the exposure of the “almost unclad ankle” being immodest. Here is the paragraph: “We cannot, if we would, conceal the fact that women have feet and limbs that were made for use. But in regard to the exposure, this is on the other side of the question. We have traveled extensively the past twenty-five years, and have been eye-witnesses to many **indecent exposures of the limbs**. But the most common exposure is seen upon the streets in light snow, or wet and mud.”



“Both hands are required to elevate the dress, that it may clear the wet and filth. It is a common thing to see the dress raised one-half of a yard, [18 inches, or about knee-length] exposing an almost unclad ankle to the sight of gentlemen, but no one seems to blush at this **immodest exposure**. No one's sensitive modesty seems shocked for the reason that this is customary. It is fashion, and for this reason it is endured. No outcry of immodesty is heard, although **it is so in the fullest sense.**” {HR, May 1, 1872}



Consider what Ellen White said:

1) It was a “common thing” for gentleman to see a woman’s “almost unclad ankle.”

2) No one seemed to think it was immodest anymore, as evidenced by her observation that “no one seems to blush at this immodest exposure. No one's sensitive modesty seems shocked.”



THE PADDED CALF—TRAL A LA MODE.

Don't stuff your calves with brass, lest you should re-veal the real state of your understanding.

- 3) The reason for the lack of shame was the fact that it was “customary” and “fashion”.
- 4) Despite the fact that “no outcry of immodesty is heard” it was immodest nevertheless “in the fullest sense.”



The Adventist reform dress (8-10 inches from the floor) was designed to be short enough to avoid the need to lift the skirts under any circumstance, such as climbing stairs and getting in carriages, which necessitated the long skirt to be lifted, revealing a woman's lower leg. It also clothed the feet and limbs "modestly and sensibly, making exposure impossible." She declares, "We have decided that **health and modesty** require that women clothe their limbs as thoroughly as they do other parts of the body." {HR, March 1, 1874, par. 13}

The Reform Dress.



The fact that this dress was short enough for the pants to show made this length unpopular even though it was more convenient than longer dresses. This outstanding feature of pants showing underneath the dress caused such contention that, after several years, God removed that which should have been a blessing.

The dress that was approved by God after 1881 was the less practical, but more fashionable ankle-length dresses that came to the top of the short boots women wore at the time.





After 1881, no one was to advocate a uniform adoption of the “short dress and pants,” which referred to the specific Reform Dress pattern, unless they have the “Word of the Lord for it.”
{SpM 92.2}



Wearing a flowing lower-calf length skirt with adequate leg coverings, such as pants or boots, could still qualify as modest apparel.



However, the Spirit of Prophecy seems to imply that God would be pleased if Seventh-day Adventist women practiced uniformity in the length of their dresses.



“If all our sisters would adopt a simple, unadorned dress of modest length, the uniformity thus established would be far more pleasing to God, and would exert a more salutary influence on the world, than the diversity presented four years ago.*

*Note: Some were wearing knee length and some were wearing floor length.



“As our sisters would not generally accept the reform dress as it should be worn, another, less objectionable style is now presented. It is free from needless trimmings, free from the looped-up, tied back overskirts.”



“It consists of a plain sack or loose-fitting basque, and skirt, the latter short enough to avoid the mud and filth of the streets. The material should be free from large plaids and figures, and plain in color. **The same attention should be given to the clothing of the limbs as with the short dress.**” {4T 640.1}



Notice, when this longer, ankle length dress was adopted, which would require being raised in certain circumstances, such as climbing stairs and getting in carriages, the limbs were to be covered for “health **and modesty**” and “**to make exposure impossible**”.



The mothers of young girls were instructed that their daughters' dress, even with their legs adequately covered "should reach below the knee." {2SM 471.2} This was shorter than was acceptable for adult women.



She asked these mothers, “Is it reasonable, **or even modest**, to see the limbs of your daughters exposed, to the bend of the knee, without any covering, except a cotton stocking in summer, and flannel, in winter? Why should not mothers clothe their daughters sensibly, modestly, and healthfully, irrespective of prevailing fashions?” {Heath Reformer, Nov 1, 1870}



Artificial Gender Distinctions in Fashion

In 2010, the popular store, H & M started carrying “man skirts.” If we have been using a faulty standard of distinction, the wearing of skirts by men will be strongly opposed at first, and then eventually accepted by using the same argument which allows for the acceptance of uncovered pants by women. It will be declared that both men and women wore robes in the Bible, and therefore it can’t be wrong for both men and women to wear skirts.

Masculine fashions



Laying aside biblical distinctions leaves us open to accepting androgynous, indistinguishable fashions. Skirts, or robes, in themselves, don't pertain to a woman any more than pants, in themselves, pertain to a man. Both can be worn in a distinctly feminine or masculine way.



Masculine Skirt

This length is too short to be modest on a woman.

Just as Satan worked on the women's fashions to masculinize their clothing, he has been working on the men's side to feminize their clothing. However, some of the styles being introduced are not actually feminine. People can't tell anymore whether women are wearing men's clothes or men are wearing women's clothes, because society has left us with no clear idea of what characteristics are masculine or feminine.



That is why is it so important for us to understand what is acceptable for a man to wear and what is acceptable for a woman to wear based on biblical principles, not on societies contrived and arbitrary gender distinctions.

Feminine skirts

There are many artificial, contrived gender distinctions that fashion designers created that they are now doing away with. Many people associate tight, flashy, sensual, and prideful fashion with femininity. However, they are not feminine, they are gender neutral, inappropriate for men or women.



Proverbs 6:16 and 17 tell us that a proud look is an abomination to the Lord. Any fashions that encourage pride of appearance in men or women are not to be seen on the Christian.



Spring/Summer presented by Max.



Tight pants that draws attention to the form, such as spandex leggings or skinny jeans are not modest on a man or a woman.





Neither are tight tops on men or women appropriate clothing for modest Christians.



Unnatural, obvious cosmetics are not intrinsically feminine, even though we are only used to seeing women use them. Biblically, they are inappropriate for Christian men or women because they feed pride of appearance, and distract from the inner beauty of character.



These would also include such things as high heels, jewelry, fake nails, unnatural nail polish, flashy accessories, tattoos, and extravagant or unusual hairstyles that serve to elicit attention, take unnecessarily time and money, are impractical, or may be detrimental to health.



Durable fabrics



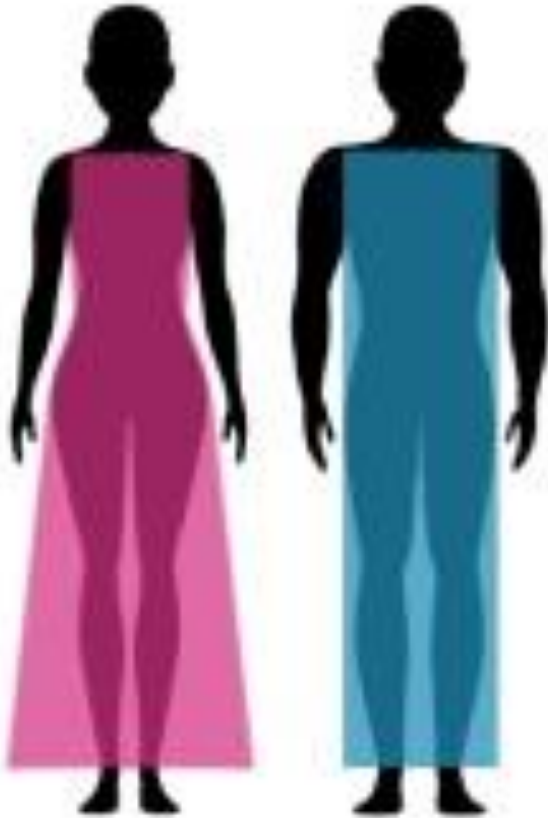
Gaudy colors & patterns

We could not find evidence that any fabrics, such as denim or pinstripes, are intrinsically masculine. Durable fabrics, simple patterns and plain colors are appropriate for men and women, while slinky fabrics, gaudy colors and bold patterns are inappropriate for either sex because they are designed to draw undue attention.



Neither could we find any reason to suggest that certain colors or patterns are intrinsically feminine. These are artificial constructs of gender distinctions that are slowly disappearing. If the time should come when things like pastels and florals are accepted in mainstream as appropriate for men, we believe they can be worn without violating any Biblical standards of distinction, as long as they are not gaudy or eye-catching.

Genuine Gender Distinctions in Fashion



A man's wider shoulders, wider waist, and narrower hips gives men a more rectangular silhouette. In contrast, a woman's narrower shoulders, full breasts, narrow waist, and wide hips gives women a curvier silhouette.



Below the waist, this is a masculine silhouette.

A narrow straight garment, would not hide a woman's hips and buttocks, when bending or squatting and therefore is fitting man's attire.



Masculine skirt suit

Any garment on the lower half of a woman's body that **clings to it or skims over it**, instead of flowing around it should not be considered modest or appropriate for a Christian woman.



While relaxed fit pants or straight skirts may disguise the figure more than leggings or mini skirts, they do not have ample fabric to conceal a woman's curves in all circumstances. In some positions, they are pulled tight over areas of a woman's body that still draw some men's attention.





Relaxed fit pants may be appropriate for men, but would show too much of a woman's form for a man who is not desensitized to view without temptation, especially when she bends over or squats.



Pants worn without a long, flowing garment over the top cannot qualify as modest apparel, and therefore are masculine, not feminine, even if they were made for a woman's body.



The cut of a garment, which creates ample fabric to flow around the woman, concealing the form of her lower body when she bends and squats, makes it distinctly feminine.



Straight up and down fashions such the jumper on the left disguise the waistline and creates a narrow hemline which will not be full enough to conceal a woman's form in many circumstances.

The jumper on the right with a waistline keeps the feminine profile and flares to create a full, modest skirt.





Jackets that hang straight on a woman disguise a woman's feminine waist, making her look straight up and down like a man.



Baggy tops, without any tucks and pleats tailoring the garment specifically for a woman leave them hanging on her body, nearly disguising her feminine profile. These are a style purposely designed to look masculine, called boyfriend sweaters and shirts. Men's shirts have straight lines to reflect their straight physique. A feminine waistline could be created with a belt.

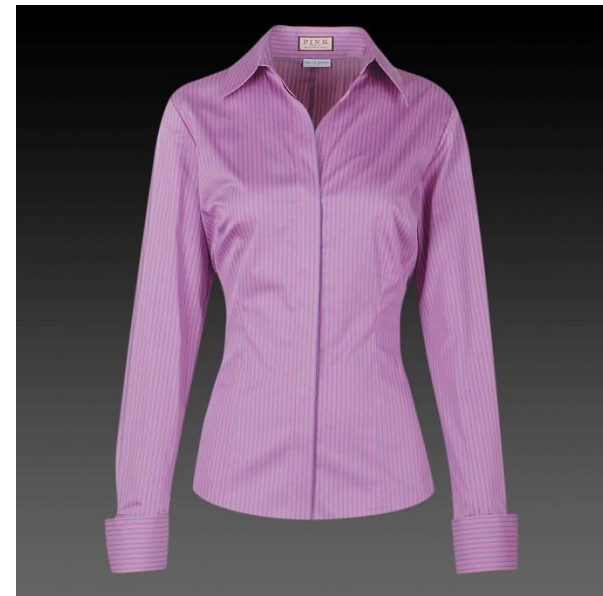
Anything that is tailored for a woman's body, with a tucked in waist to give the illusion of an hourglass shape is intrinsically feminine. Any other tailoring that visually simulates a woman's curvy body, using ruffles, pleats, bunches, or undergarments, such as corsets that may become popular for men in the future, would also blur the distinctions between the forms of men and women.





Store No: 107173

Feminine tops and jackets have tucks and pleats around the chest and waist to allow the garment to be loose enough to not be revealing, but yet not hang on her form in an ill-fitting manner. The necklines also do not reveal the chest.





The Spirit of Prophecy supports these standards. Ellen White counseled that women's clothing should be "tidy and well fitting." {BTS, May 1, 1908 par. 2} That doesn't mean that women's tops should be tight.



These dress bodices were not shapeless and baggy, nor were they tight. They were tailored with darts to loosely conform to the shape of the upper body, without being tight in a sensual way. And the skirts were fitted in the waist and flared with ample fabric to conceal the buttocks and crotch when squatting or bending. This would acknowledge the God-designed differences in the male and female body and their respective sexual responses. Women have curves that need to be concealed from a man's eye; therefore a woman's garment should flow around her, not cling to her figure.



If a symbol for public restrooms were created in Bible times, perhaps this is what it would look like.



If this symbol had been created any time from when our country was established until the early 1900s, according to what the majority of society wore, it would have looked like this.



This symbol was made official by the US Department of Health and Human Services in 1972. This was a representation of what the majority of society wore at that time, men in pants and women in approximately knee length dresses.



If this symbol were recreated today according to what the majority of society wears, it would look like this, as the vast majority of men and women wear pants.



In this part of the presentation, we have discussed what is God's definition of modesty for women, which we have discovered includes covering the shape of the woman's body so that it is not seductively revealed. Also discussed has been the length of the dress and man-made vs. God ordained distinctions. In Part Three we will cover some objections to dress reform.