

## **Q&A: Should a Christian woman wear sexy clothing in public if her husband desires it?**

Dear Sister H.,

Thank you for writing with your encouraging words. You have asked an excellent question and I will answer it from my understanding of God's will as revealed in Scripture. You wrote:

*I just finished reading your book ("Sarah's Children") and have recently been feeling convicted to wear a covering and dress more modestly. I loved your book it has challenged me, but excited me also. I have a question, though my husband is supportive of me doing these things, I can tell he isn't comfortable and when we go clothes shopping he is always picking out "sexy" clothes. I wish that he wanted me to dress modestly and protect me, but it doesn't seem like this is what he wants. He wants to "flaunt me" when out in public. Do I obey God or my husband in this area?*

Your last sentence asks, "Do I obey God, or my husband, in this area?" This actually makes it a pretty easy decision to understand, for anytime we are commanded by God to do one thing, and man asks us to do something else, we must obey God. This is the message of the chapter "Obeying Authorities" in the book "Sarah's Children," and Ananias and Sapphira were given as examples in this issue. A woman is not called to always obey her husband, for there are times when a husband may ask her to join him in some action that is sinful.

It may not seem like a great disobedience to dress in a sensual manner, or to allow your husband to flaunt you in public, for this is the practice of most of society, and of a large portion of the church as well. Yet God has given us instruction in this matter, and I will share a few Scriptures.

I Timothy 2:8-10

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; 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, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

NKJV

In Paul's instruction to Timothy, we are reading his words of exhortation to a younger man who was an elder of the church. Paul is telling Timothy those things that he should instruct the church in, so we know that the elders of the early church did not simply leave the matter of dress to the whim or desire of the saints, but they gave them specific instructions in what was pleasing to God. In the first sentence of Paul's words above, he states that men are to pray, lifting up holy hands, and then he says "in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation."

What do the words "in like manner" refer back to? I believe they refer to the phrase where men are told to lift up "holy hands." The saints are to be holy in all they do. They are to be spiritual in all their conduct, and not fleshly, evil, or sensual. So even as the men are called to lift up holy hands, the women are also exhorted to be holy, and Paul specifically mentions that they should be holy in their dress. He describes holy dress as being marked by "modesty," "propriety," and "moderation."

It is not modest to flaunt one's body through sensual clothing, nor could it be called "propriety" (that which is proper), or moderation (that which is not excessive), for dressing to be sexually alluring is improper and running to excess. Paul speaks more about the need to be completely pure in the area of sexual conduct in his letter to the Ephesian church.

Ephesians 5:3

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.  
(New International Version)

When women dress in "sexy" clothing they end up provoking men to lust, and this leads to sexual immorality. Yahshua stated that if a man lusts after a woman, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. It would be a grievous thing for a woman who is called to godliness to be stirring up such impure thoughts in the hearts of men, especially in the hearts of her brothers in Christ, for in this way she is leading them to stumble, and Christ also spoke strongly of those who cause others to stumble.

Matthew 18:6-7

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Paul also wrote of this matter of causing others to stumble.

I Corinthians 8:13

Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Let us change this sentence to speak of the matter of dress.

I Corinthians 8:13

Therefore, if sensual dress makes my brother stumble, I will never again dress sensually, lest I make my brother stumble. (verse modified)

Let us look at this matter from a positive spiritual point of view. When people encounter us we always have an opportunity to make an impact upon them. If a woman dresses sensually she will impact men by stirring up the flesh of man, which is an evil thing. Yet a woman has an opportunity to stir up men to higher thoughts, instead of lower lusts. A woman who in her appearance is a picture of purity and holiness will stir up within others a desire to higher actions, rather than lower. In the book "Sarah's Children" I spoke of this occurring in the life of my own wife and of other women. When my wife began wearing modest dress and headcovering she began to meet with much different reactions in men. They began to hold open doors for her more frequently, and this is a positive reaction, for men were demonstrating honor because of her purity of appearance. She also began to see more men's heads turn when she entered a room, but they did not turn towards her because she was provoking them to lust, but because she stood out as an example of purity in the midst of a perverse and sensual generation.

It is an awesome opportunity that women have in this regard. It is like offering to all men a drink of pure, cool water, when all they have been able to obtain has been lukewarm, polluted water. By dressing with modesty and purity you are able to encourage men to more spiritual thoughts and to revive their weary hearts.

Of course, not all men will appreciate a woman choosing modest and pure apparel, for some are given over to the flesh and they want to satisfy the lust of the flesh. A Christian woman should never be pleased, however, that men are satisfying their carnal impulses by looking at her body in an impure way. Many women are satisfied with such things, and our society in general greatly reinforces this tendency through provocative advertising, through the media, and through common example, but it is because of such things that the wrath of God comes upon disobedient nations.

In your own case you have stated that your husband seems to desire that you dress in "sexy" clothing, but he allows you to choose more modest clothes. This will certainly make it easier for you to choose to dress modestly than if your husband were demanding that you dress in a sexually provocative manner. But even if he were demanding, and if he did disapprove of your modest apparel, you would have to choose obedience to God's command over obedience to your husband in this matter. Yet your choosing to obey God should not lead you to act with any dishonor or disrespect to your husband, but you should remain chaste and respectful as you explain to him why it would be a sinful thing for you to dress in sexy clothing and to flaunt your body in public.

Thank you again for writing and asking your excellent question. I pray that God might give you wisdom through His Spirit and that your husband might come to desire purity in your adornment. May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days,

Joseph Herrin

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*Thank you so much for responding so quickly. I appreciate your thoughtful answers. I have been feeling that perhaps one of the reasons my husband doesn't fully respect me past the physical side has been because I have dressed provocatively. I also feel God is calling me to these areas of change in dress, headcovering practice and submission because in order for the Holy Spirit to get to the heart of my husband I need to "step down". For too long now I have been trying to be the spirit to my husband by trying to correct and convict him especially when it comes to our kids and what he is watching on TV. God is showing me that my husband is not growing any closer to God and if I keep going this route I will never have the godly husband I desire. But like you said in your book, if I will die to my desire of having control (let alone other areas of my life that God is working on) then my husband can truly be face to face with God and here is where the only hope of any change can come. Being a mama bear, so to speak, it is very hard to let control over what the kids are exposed to rest with my husband, this and the TV are my biggest battle areas with my husband. But again, thanks to God's word and your book I feel I have encouragement and direction in how I am to approach these issues now.*

*Thank you and God bless you and your writing talent. I look forward to reading more of your books, especially the one on the Sabbath. I just thought I would write this in case you want to use it as an*

*example to others you come across who might be going through the same things.*

*Also, do you have any further writings on how to put 1 Peter 3:1-6 into practice? I am having a hard time doing this when my whole life (29 now) I have been taught to be dominant and take control, but I do desire fully to become the wife and mother God wants me to be.*

Sincerely,

H.

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Dear Sister H.,

It sounds like you are hearing VERY WELL from your heavenly Father. The challenge will be to walk in obedience to those things the Spirit of God is speaking to you, but God always provides sufficient grace to enable us to obey. Simply acknowledging those things the Spirit has spoken is a big first step, and many women never get that far, for they do not wish to embrace the cross that God has chosen for them. I am much encouraged that you are so open about what you are hearing.

Regarding more writings on I Peter chapter 3, I really don't have much beyond what is written in the book "Sarah's Children," but you will find similar encouragement to live a Spirit led life in the book "SABBATH." There are a couple of items on the Q&A page of the Heart4God website that were written as responses to women who had questions about headcovering, etc.. I also thank you for your thoughtfulness in thinking about how this question and response might be helpful to other women. I plan on adding it to the Q&A page.

I would like to comment on one thing you mentioned here, for there is much truth in your observation. you wrote:

*I have been feeling that perhaps one of the reasons my husband doesn't fully respect me past the physical side has been because I have dressed provocatively.*

There has been much written about Jezebel spirits in recent time, and the Spirit has shown me that a Jezebel spirit manifests in two main ways, though the church often recognizes only one. First, it is present in a domineering matriarchal spirit that seeks to control men through forcefulness, badgering, and everything that is the opposite of a gentle and quiet spirit. This manifestation is readily observable, and we do see this spirit in Jezebel the wife of King Ahab, for she reprimanded her husband and was very controlling and manipulative.

There is another less recognized way in which a Jezebel spirit manifests, and this is through seduction, sensual allure and producing lust in a man, for this also leads to a woman being able to control a man to gain that which she desires. Ahab's wife also demonstrated this characteristic, for we read that she adorned herself to appear provocative.

II Kings 9:30-31

Now when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned

her head, and looked through a window.

Also, we read of this seductive and immoral association with Jezebel in the New Testament.

Revelation 2:20-21

Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

Whereas many would recognize the brassy and bossy woman as manifesting this spirit, fewer recognize that it also manifests in what I would call the cheerleader syndrome. A girl who might choose to prance around in front of men in tempting and seductive clothing that highlights the female body is just as much manifesting a spirit of control over men as the woman who is bossy, yet one is doing it through domination while another is doing it through seduction. Both are forms of a Jezebel spirit.

The Spirit first revealed this to me when I met two sisters who at first seemed as different as night and day, who both came from a long line of dominant matriarchs with passive husbands. One of the women was very bold and brassy, having very short hair and dressing in a masculine fashion. She was the wife of a pastor and she led him to bring the wives of the church leaders into all ministry meetings that they might have equal say with their husbands. She was known to get up in the meetings and rebuke any male minister that she disagreed with.

Her sister was very feminine in her appearance with long and full blonde hair, and she dressed in a much more feminine manner. She was not bossy like her sister, but seemed meek in comparison, yet she was a cheerleader in high school and had a teenage daughter very much like her who was participating in beauty pageants. The Spirit revealed to me that both sisters were ultimately manifesting the same spirit of control over men, yet one chose a route of intimidation while another chose the pathway of allure.

A man, though he may seem to be captivated by such a wife, will in the end resent her for usurping authority over him. Your comment that your husband doesn't fully respect you for dressing provocatively is an astute observation, for honor comes from the Spirit, and the Spirit gives honor where it is due. It is the woman who accepts the headship order of God who is accorded honor in the Kingdom of God, and those who seek to usurp the authority of man are not given the same honor.

You are hearing well from the Spirit. I pray that you might quickly see the fruit of your obedience.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days,

Joseph Herrin

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*I have some more questions. I went to talk with my pastor the other day, he wanted to know why I am covering my head. I left our meeting feeling more confused and discouraged. I feel like it is impossible to really know what the Bible is telling us. He made it seem like there is so many grey*

*areas and if you start taking the bible literally past the salvation message then you are getting into legalism and are thus burdened down with all these rituals to daily living. He feels that actually using a cloth to cover my head is the beginnings of legalism. He thinks that the culture at the time gives the best reasons of why they used a headcovering and the fact that it is not mentioned to any other culture in any other book, that is why it is not for today at least not literally. He believes it is totally figurative and means only that Christ is the spiritual covering for man and man is the spiritual covering for woman (this is all that is needed). What is your take on this? I have not heard the spiritual covering idea before.*

*Also, our church is a young church (ages 35 and younger) our pastor is 32 and the congregation is mostly college kids who definitely don't dress modestly and they see nothing wrong with this. It makes it hard to be one of the older women now dressing more modestly, not following all the fashions of the world as they are, and choosing to cover my head. I feel really uncomfortable. But what bothers me more is that I have been questioning what is holiness and how are we supposed to not conform to the world? Aren't Christians supposed to stand out, be different, a light on a hill not just through heart attitudes but perhaps appearance too? If one were to see the people at our church they would not even know they were Christian, they dress the same as the world, there is nothing to distinguish them and therefore why would any even question why they are different. Doesn't the Bible say that we should always be ready to give reason for the hope inside us? I know that first and foremost our hearts need to be right with God and then our actions should follow. But if we don't appear different in our appearance then most people of the world would never even give us second thought to even ask us about our heart attitudes, unless they get to know us. This just seems that we won't be able to reach as many people because not every gets to know you. Isn't there a silent witness to many more people just by outward appearance that can be made?*

*I also question with our church being made up of gen x and gen y people if we are not more susceptible to deception because of relativism. How can we know if we are really following God's truth or just applying the world's relativistic teachings. My pastor was also saying that the bible is relative in many of its teachings, that God can be calling me to cover my head but not all women. That it is living and speaks to each person individually (I do agree with this last statement he made). But if the Bible is so relative how can we use it a foundation for our lives if it is so open to every individual person's interpretation? (Just a side note our church is now talking about having women on the elder team) both my husband and I feel uncomfortable with this. Yet my husband does not want to find a new church, I do. Any advice or biblical guidance would be greatly appreciated.*

*Do you know Greek very well? All I know is how to use a concordance and dictionary.*

*Sincerely,*

*H.*

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*Dear Sister H.,*

I will respond to this email in greater length later, but I thought to send you a note of encouragement right now. I can see how your conversation with your pastor has led to discouragement, and your

excitement that you had from receiving the witness of the Spirit and His specific direction for your life has given way to some doubt and a lack of peace.

A lack of peace in our lives often occurs when the Spirit is witnessing one thing to us while our mind is testifying something else. When you wrote to me before you had a great peace, even in thinking about taking up the cross in areas of modesty and submission, for the Spirit and your mind were in agreement. This peace only left when you received advice that is contrary to the voice of the Spirit, resulting in trouble in your soul.

I would encourage you to read back over your correspondence to me and examine your words of confidence in what you were receiving from the Spirit of God. Consider also those things written in the book "Sarah's Children" and how a great amount of Scriptures are examined that reveal the mind of God for the high calling of a godly woman. Let the peace of God rule in your heart, and by this peace you will know the will of God for you.

I have heard the arguments of your pastor before, and I have also been in churches that promoted women to roles of eldership, which is something neither Christ or the apostles did, for this is usurpation and leads to confusion and many ills. Consider that Christ had many godly women around Him, and many whose love and spiritual perception were great, yet He never appointed a single woman to be an apostle or leader of men. We read of Christ that He only did those things He saw the Father doing, and He did not see the Father appointing women to rule over men, or to be teachers of men. Society today will not accept this, and neither will an apostate church, but we have the opportunity to obey in our own lives and thereby be an example to others.

I can understand your desire to not be a participant in a church that is so evidently worldly and which calls evil good and good evil. Yet I would encourage you to submit to your husband's will in this matter. Make it a matter of prayer and intercession, but refrain from speaking to your husband with the intent of persuading him to conform to your desire. As you look to God to move upon the heart of your husband you will see great and awesome things occur, and you will find the approval of your Father in heaven.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days,

Joseph Herrin