

Christian Lifestyle and Appearance

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While millions of humans suffer, hunger, and die, others live extravagant lives. They own the hottest gadgets, have the newest and largest houses, seek constantly new forms of entertainment, and dedicate their lives to ever-changing fashion by wearing the latest and most expensive clothes.

“The Emperor’s New Clothes” is a story by Hans Christian Andersen, dealing with a king who always needs the newest things, especially clothes. Two people offer to weave and tailor for him an incredible suit, made from extraordinary fabric that is invisible to ignorant people. When the emperor parades in his new clothes, the people pretend to admire what they do not see, while a child asks, why the emperor has no clothes on. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon comes at last to the conclusion that all pursuit of luxury, ease, and pleasure is in the end nothing else than vanity. This raises the question of the priorities in life and a Christian lifestyle.

I. Principles of a Christian’s Life According to 1 Peter

1 Peter 2:21	Redeemed persons follow Christ’s example.
1 Peter 1:15; 2:12; 3:16	They live holy lives, exhibiting excellent behavior.
1 Peter 3:13, 17, 4:19	In spite of suffering they seek what is right and good and do it.
1 Peter 1:2; 4:2	They obey God’s will.
1 Peter 2:12; 4:11	Their lives glorify God and help others to glorify the Lord too.
1 Peter 1:22; 2:13, 17; 4:8,10	They love and serve.
1 Peter 4:7; 5:8	Their lives are shaped by prayer, vigilance, and sobriety.
1 Peter 2:9; 3:1, 15	They proclaim the gospel by word of mouth and by their lifestyle, aiming at winning others to become children of God.

Peter stresses that in this world Christians are strangers (1 Pet 1:23; 2:11) and may irritate others indirectly because they do not participate in the majority’s wild life, debauchery, and licentiousness. They have committed their life to Jesus, are extremely grateful for the gift of salvation, and follow Jesus’ example. John uses the term “world” to point to that which is hostile to God (1 John 2:15-17). While Christians cannot and do not join the world’s opposition to God and its perversity (see 2 Cor 6:14-18; Jas 4:4), they are not called to turn away from the world completely. God loves the world (John 3:16), and Christians carry responsibility for it (Matt 28:19-20). Therefore, they live exemplary lives.

II. The Outward Appearance of Christians

1. Peter

While discussing foundational principles of the Christian life Peter also addresses the outward appearance of Christians.

1 Peter 3:1-5	Obviously, Peter approves of adornment; only inward, and not outward adornment. While he rejects outward adornment, inner adornment is to be manifested through reverence, purity, gentleness, submissiveness, and humility. Such adornment is winsome and may reach non-Christians.
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2. Paul

In 1 Timothy 2:9-10: Paul supports inward adornment too. Outward adornment is mentioned by listing some items of jewelry. It is inward adornment such as modesty that counts.

3. In the Old Testament

Pride was one reason for the fall in heaven. Satan wanted to be like God (Isa 14:12-14; Eze 28:14-17).

Isaiah 3:16-24

Wearing of decorative jewelry is associated with pride. God's judgment on the haughty daughters of Jerusalem brings about a reversal of circumstances, "branding instead of beauty."

Exodus 33:5-6

Although jewelry was worn during OT times, God told Israel to take it off, before He would bring them to the Promised Land, probably as a sign of repentance and returning to Him. Functional jewelry such as the one worn by high priests and kings was not forbidden. Obviously Scripture makes a difference between functional and purely decorative jewelry, allowing for the first and rejecting the second.

4. *The Example of Jesus*

Jesus' appearance was marked by simplicity and modesty. However, His garment was of good quality, because the soldiers decided not to divide it (John 19:23-24). Inward values were more important to Jesus than was outward appearance (Matt 15:18-20); yet he did not neglect the outward (Luke 7:44). Christians follow Christ's example.

III. Practical Principles

When discussing clothing and outward appearance, one should consider the following issues and principles:

- The principle of simplicity
- The concept that clothing must meet the highest moral standards
- The question of practicality
- The economical perspective (stewardship)
- The consideration of furthering vs. damaging one's health
- The principle of natural beauty

Conclusion

Christians will strive to clothe themselves in a simple, modest, and tasteful way. They will not go out in rags (if possible) nor will they show off in an extreme way. They will make a difference between what is good and what the Bible calls "worldly" in a negative way. Sometimes it is difficult to make right decisions, but believers can turn to the Lord in prayer and ask Him for wisdom to make such decisions that honor God and allow them to be effective witnesses. Then they will live their lives happily.

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