

## **Display and Adornment**

### *Church Manual*

The basic philosophy of Christian standards as understood by Seventh-day Adventists is set forth on pages 149 to 151 of the *Church Manual* (1995 edition):

#### **Dress**

As Seventh-day Adventists we have been called out from the world. We are reformers. True religion which enters into every phase of life must have a molding influence on all our activities. Our habits of life must stem from principle and not from the example of the world about us. Customs and fashions may change with the years, but principles of right conduct are always the same. Dress is an important factor in Christian character. Early in our history instruction was given as to the way Christians should dress, the purpose of which was "to protect the people of God from the corrupting influence of the world, as well as to promote physical and moral health. . . ."-*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 634. Truly a comprehensive purpose! There is no virtue in dressing differently from those about us just to be different, but where the principles of refinement or morality are involved the conscientious Christian will be true to his or her convictions rather than follow the prevailing customs.

Christians should avoid gaudy display and "profuse ornamentation." Clothing should be, when possible, "of good quality, of becoming colors, and suited for service. It should be chosen for durability rather than display." Our attire should be characterized by "modesty," "beauty," "grace," and "appropriateness of natural simplicity."-*Messages to Young People*, pp. 351, 352. That it may not be conspicuous, it should follow the conservative and most sensible styles of the time.

The adoption of fads and extreme fashions in men's or women's dress indicates a lack of

attention to serious matters. Regardless of how sensibly people generally may dress, there are always extremes in style that transgress the laws of modesty, and thus have a direct bearing on the prevalence of immoral conditions. Many who blindly follow the styles are at least partly unconscious of these effects, but the results are no less disastrous. The people of God should always be found among the conservatives in dress, and will not let "the dress question fill the mind."-*Evangelism*, p. 273. They will not be the first to adopt the new styles of dress or the last to lay the old aside.

"To dress plainly, abstaining from display of jewelry and ornaments of every kind, is in keeping with our faith."-*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 366. It is clearly taught in the Scriptures that the wearing of jewelry is contrary to the will of God. ". . . not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" is the admonition of the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 2:9). The wearing of ornaments of jewelry is a bid for attention which is not in keeping with Christian self-forgetfulness.

In some countries the custom of wearing the wedding ring is considered imperative, having become, in the minds of the people, a criterion of virtue, and hence it is not regarded as an ornament. Under such circumstances we have no disposition to condemn the practice.

Let us remember that it is not the "outward adorning" which expresses true Christian character, but "the hidden man of the heart . . . a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3, 4). Cleanliness and Christlike deportment should be observed in the care and grooming of the individual who is seeking at all times to please and rightly represent Christ our Lord.

Christian parents should bring to bear the weight of their example, instruction, and authority to lead their sons and daughters to attire themselves modestly, and thus win the respect and confidence of those who know them. Let our people consider themselves well dressed only when the demands of modesty are met in the wearing of tasteful, conservative clothing.

## **Simplicity**

Simplicity has been a fundamental feature of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its foundation. We must continue to be a plain people. Increase of pomp in religion always parallels a decline in spiritual power. As "the life of Jesus presented a marked contrast" to the display and ostentation of His time (*Education*, p. 77), so the simplicity and power of the Advent message must be in marked contrast to the worldly display of our day. The Lord condemns "needless, extravagant expenditure of money to gratify pride and love of display."- *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 179. In harmony with these principles, simplicity and economy should characterize our graduating exercises, the weddings in our churches, and all other church services.