

Is This Fast-Growing Church Trend Completely Unbiblical?

My wife recently attended a memorial service for a longtime friend, who was in her 90s and had been known and loved by our mutual families for many decades.

The officiating pastor dressed as he normally does for public worship services, in casual pants and an untucked shirt.

I'm not his judge (1 Cor. 4:5), but I do continue to question what has become of a common sense of decorum and discerning appropriate dress for public worship or solemn gatherings.

Paul calls us to show "honor to whom honor" is due (Rom. 13:7). There are occasions where our own casual convenience or cultural preferences should not be the focus but, rather, a holy obligation to show respect and honor for the occasion, for other worshippers, or—most importantly—what is pleasing to the Holy One of heaven.

The great "love chapter" (1 Cor. 13:4-6) teaches that love "is kind ... [and] does not behave itself improperly, seeks not its own." Often, it seems we have forgotten that we come together not for our own purposes or pleasure but to worship God and to edify, encourage or comfort each other.

I would be the first to admit that this specific topic is not a moral issue, where God has already ruled on its acceptability (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Paul said that, as a believer, "all things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable" (v. 12, NASB)." That could also be expressed as "not all things are helpful" (MEV), or maybe, as may relate to appropriate dress, "not all things are appropriate, respectful or positive."

Rather, how to dress appropriately for certain settings or

circumstances (like a memorial service for a member of the family of God) might be considered as an ethical issue, where we have to discern biblical principles and examples to apply in pleasing the Lord.

I have written elsewhere about Jesus' example in dressing for the first Communion service. (He dressed "up" and not "down." See John 19:23-24). How should we dress for this holy observance?

Also, you and I can consider these practical categories and ethical questions for contemporary Christian living:

1. Profit (1 Cor. 6:12): Is it good for me? Will it add a plus quality to my life?
2. Control (1 Cor. 6:12): Will it get control of me, or will it lessen Christ's control of me?
3. Ownership (1 Cor. 6:19-20): As God's property, can I justify this activity?
4. Influence (1 Cor. 8:9, 12-13): Could this action negatively influence any of my believing friends?
5. Testimony (Col. 4:5): How will my testimony be affected if I participate in this activity?
6. Thanksgiving (1 Thess. 5:18): When I come home from this activity, can I thank God for it with a clear conscience?

Based on your prayerful consideration of these practical categories and ethical questions, you can develop personal convictions for a discerning lifestyle that will be pleasing to God. {eoa}

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