

## DRESS CODE FOR IDEAL CITIZENS

### Titus 2:15-3:2

"If John's supposed to be a Christian, I don't want anything to do with it!

"So you're a 'born again' Christian. I once had a 'born again' employee. He ripped off a bunch of my equipment!"

"I used to have a friend at school who was a Christian. She told my friends a bunch of lies about me; now none of them will speak to me. *SOME FRIEND!*"

It's sad that such impressions are the only ones some people ever get of the gospel, and of God's people.

**How do WE appear to people watching us?**

*"We are the only Bible some of our neighbors will ever read!"*

*One song puts it: "You are the only Jesus, some people will ever see!"*

That's why it's important that authentic Christians—people who have "the real thing"—live in a way that shows God has changed our lives.

Christians citizens—people to whom *the grace of God has appeared*—in 21<sup>st</sup> C., pagan society, ought to live in a way that demonstrates that **God has transformed us**—that can be explained no other way.

**2:15-3:2** summarizes what godly living looks like in our community:

**AUTHORITY OF OUR MESSAGE 2:15** *"Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you."*

Our message is authoritative, . . .

—not because of the messenger who proclaims it,

—not because of the brilliance with which we present it.

**Our message is our final authority because of its source!**

Our Statement of Faith reminds us: *“We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged.”*

**The Bible is the last word because it's God's Word!**

Paul urges Titus: declare this as often as you have opportunity.

Sound doctrine and good conduct go together.

*“Take advantage of every possible means to focus on this theme.”*

Paul urges Titus: don't give anyone cause to look down on you.

1 Tim. 4:12 gives same advice to Timothy.

Some look down on Timothy because he's young

In SLC, I was frequently oldest member of Elder Board—25 yrs ago!

Here we talk about having been married for nearly 50 years; people smile. *“Why, you're just kids!!!”*

Our focus isn't on messenger—

Our authority isn't based on age of messenger, nor on his position.

Our authority is based on the fact that *God has spoken!*

It's *HIS* message, not the preacher's!

***WE're not the focus!***

We proclaim *God's* Word.

We don't have to worry what people think about it.

WE aren't commissioned to have the last word,  
but we're commissioned to speak GOD'S Word as FINAL  
authority.

God's Word isn't optional; It isn't up for a vote.

*He doesn't even ask if we like it!*

God has spoken!

Our role is to *believe* His Word and *do* what *He* says!

Difference between authority of God's Word and *MY* opinion

I give you permission to disagree with *MY* views about  
anything.

Look at God's Word.

If what I say is there, you'd better pay attention to what HE  
says.

***Taking GOD'S WORD lightly may be dangerous to your  
health!***

***What HAS God said, that we need to pay attention to?***

We should be known for model citizenship & "good neighbor"  
policy.

It's not easy to live as a good citizen in a pagan society.

Paul points out how to live as God's children in a pagan society.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE OUR GOVERNMENT 3:1a "Remind  
them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient..."**

**WE SHOULD BE IDEAL CITIZENS!**

What is attitude of a pagan society toward those who rule over  
us?

Teach God's people **to submit and to obey authorities**

This isn't just an option to be considered! **GOD HAS SPOKEN!**

Society: "Respect leaders as long as *they* respect *our* rights."

When govt doesn't do what WE think, we have right to rebel.

Our attitude should be different. => Rom 13

God establishes kings; He removes them when He thinks best

*Every* authority is there because God places them there

**SUBMIT to authority**

God's children acknowledge authority God established and submit.

Submission and obedience are similar; but they aren't synonyms.

To submit: to place yourself under authority God established.

–*Attitude, willingness* to do what those in authority ask

**Submission is voluntary.**

We submit *ourselves*. *No one can impose submission.*

Husbands, have you been kidding yourself with the delusion that you can *force* your wife into submission?

*Dream on!!!*

Submission is a heart-response. It's always voluntary.

It only comes when we *decide* to submit.

**Submission isn't conditional!**

We say, I'll submit when *they* do what God tells *them* to do!  
 Dream on!!! This is **Rome!!!** Rome didn't do it. Neither will  
 U.S.!

God says submit to your leaders.

*God* put them there. He'll remove, or control them, in HIS  
 time!

### **Submit to those in authority over you!**

It's possible to *obey without submitting*, like child who  
 sat down "on the outside" but was "still standing up on the  
 inside!" That isn't submission.

It's possible to *submit without obeying*.

Submission places me "under orders" to those in authority.  
 Sometimes person in submission is *unable* to obey an  
 order.

If I ask Helen to lift 500 pounds, she *can't* obey,  
 –she may be totally submissive and *desire* to do my will.

Submissive person may not violate moral/biblical  
 principles.

Leaders told apostles to stop talking about Jesus;  
 they obey God, but accept punishment *with*  
*thanksgiving!*

Some jump at excuse to disobey; reject consequences.

If you choose disobedience,

–be sure basis is biblical principle,

–be sure you're willing to accept consequences, with  
 praise "*for having been counted worthy to suffer for*  
*His name.*"

Rome was *far* from perfect; those who caused Paul to suffer were *not* just.

Paul urges people to submit anyway; show their trust in God.

**OBEY those in authority**—testimony as good citizens includes reputation for obeying law

God sometimes calls people to *disobey* govt (Acts 5) that *isn't* norm

Paul obeys rulers, and submits to them, even when they hold him unjustly for 5 years!

Soldiers realize he isn't in jail for crime; he remains without protest.

**God's people should be outstanding citizens.**

If we must disobey, it's based on biblical principle; an exception.

We're *not* revolutionaries, fighting to overthrow authority.

**God's people should NOT be rebellious.**

We're to *submit* to those God places in authority.

Thus God uses us to fulfill His purposes and He receives glory.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE OUR NEIGHBORS 3:1b-2** [*Remind people*] ...*to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup>to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*"

**BE IDEAL NEIGHBORS!**

I'm glad Paul introduces this with words: "*Remind people ...*"

It's "child's stuff!" There's nothing new or profound here.

We just need to be *reminded*:

***Christian people should make good neighbors!***

## **FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD NEIGHBORS:**

### **1. Be ready to do whatever's good**—summary exhortation

Importance of doing what is good:

5X in Tit: “be *eager* to do what is good”

Christian neighbors should be influence for good in community in *everyway*—not *just* issues Christians usually crusade for!

Participate in projects that contribute to well being of community.

God's people have been at front, launching movements that improve society: hospitals, schools, welfare, social reform.

***When God reveals Himself through His people, society benefits.***

Returning missionary, asked about New Guinea, explained: life looked more hopeless than in a jungle of tigers.' People lacked moral sense.

If a mother's carrying her baby and it cries, she throws it into a ditch.

If a man sees his father break a leg, he leaves him by the road.

'What did you do?'

'When I saw a baby crying, I picked it up and loved it.

When I saw a man with a broken leg, I tried to mend it.

When I found people hungry, I fed them.

Finally they asked, “Why are you doing this?”

I explained the gospel! When I returned home, I left a church!'"

***Do people who watch us see eagerness to do whatever is good?***

*Are we good neighbors, good citizens in our community?*

*Do people just see crusaders for issues we're committed to?*

*Do we care about things neighbors care about?*

We should be known as good neighbors, people who care!

This lifestyle is result of understanding the extent of God's grace.

We should remember what we used to be, thank God for His mercy.

**2 specific NEGATIVE characteristics**—*"We should not . . ."*

**1. Don't criticize others** [*"speak evil of no one"*]

Don't malign others—gossip, criticism

Earl Wilson: "Gossip is when you hear something you like about someone you don't."

If you're one of those Christians whose favorite hymn is "I Love to Tell the Story," Paul says, "Cut it out!"

**Tongue does more harm than any other member in our body.**

It won't help our reputation if we're always putting others down.

Godly people model what a transformed tongue looks like.

We concentrate on building up, rather than tearing down.

**2. Don't fight**—*non-contentious*, refuse to engage in quarrels

Root: describes people who enjoy a good fight, who have a fighting spirit. Adds negative, **"NOT!"**

It refers more to *attitude*, than *actions*.

Some people *never fight physically*; go after others with tongue!

People who pick fights don't make friends and aren't effective at attracting people to Christ.

We shouldn't have a reputation for stirring up trouble.  
While we *are* people of conviction, don't insist everyone agree— even *with our Christian* view.

Allow others same freedom to disagree *with us* that we want  
Christians should be known as peacemakers,  
—*solving* conflicts, NOT *creating* them.

## 2 POSITIVE characteristics—We should . . .

1. **Be kind to others** —Opposite of negative characteristics  
Lit., describes a person who 'goes beyond letter of the law  
Pharisees insisted on the letter, and were satisfied with that.  
Jesus insists godliness goes beyond letter; seeks people's  
welfare

### 2. **Be considerate**

Show consideration—Attitude of humility and gentleness  
It's hard to fight kind people who don't respond in kind to  
attacks!

It's easier to love people without Christ when we remember  
what our life *used to* look like.

If it weren't for God's grace, we'd still be acting like that!  
Starting point: if it's true that "We're only Bible some people ever  
read!" *we should ask ourselves, **what do people learn from  
watching US?***

### **Can they see how God has changed OUR life?**

Do they see something that can *only* be explained by fact that  
Jesus died to free us from slavery to sin and His Spirit lives in  
us?

Are we known for submissive attitude toward government, or for  
criticizing those in authority over us?

Are we law-abiding citizens, supporting local government, contributing to well-being of community, or do we try to get our own way, to get away with something?

Are we known as people who attempt to do whatever is good?

Do we build people up, make people feel good about others, or do we criticize and tear down?

Do we attempt to live in harmony, or do we prefer a good fight?

Are we kind to others, esp. to neighbors who haven't trusted Christ?

Do people see consideration, courtesy, humility, gentleness, or are they turned off by our antagonistic, critical attitudes?

Cretans live in society where these attitudes aren't popular.

WE live in a society where these attitudes aren't popular.

Evangelical sub-culture has explanation why we *shouldn't* live this way.

We rationalize our negative attitudes toward government.

We have reasons why we *should* criticize and attack public officials, and unsaved neighbors.

*So could the Cretans. This was Rome!*

But **Paul says, "STOP IT!"**

We should be known as **ideal citizens, ideal neighbors,**

who submit to those God has placed in authority,

and are ready to do whatever is good for our neighbors!

***Does our conduct attract people to our Savior?***

1 Pet 2:12, in oppressive society, when pagans see our good deeds,... they will glorify God because of what they see in us.

Are we provoking that response in *our* neighborhood?

***What will God have to change in our lives to make that happen?***