

## ALL OR NOTHING

Satan works hard at ruining the church, the family and, of course, the pastors. I have seen the incredible patience with which Satan works. He is not concerned about ruining something today; he just wants progress, as little as it may be.

One area in which Satan's patience is very obvious is in the matter of dress standards. I hear people fuss about the standard of modesty, and I would have no problem with their thinking if it were accurate.

Here is the train of thought:

Someone may say, "I do not think the Bible teaches that it is wrong for a woman to wear pants."

If someone ended the dispute on that thought alone, I would disagree, but I would respect their opinion. However, I have yet to see anyone who really believes the issue is that it is wrong for a woman to wear pants. The issue they have yet to admit is this: "I have no standard of dress that I would address in the pulpit." One either has standards, or he does not. I have never met someone with "some" standards. The issue is likened to jumping over a cliff; you may say you will jump, but not hit the bottom. Yet every time I have seen someone jump, he has made a final impact. Show me the pastor who does not believe a woman wearing pants is wrong, and I will show you a pastor whose ladies in his church wear shorts, tight jeans, and miniskirts. I have never seen an exception to this observation.

A lady in our church was active and involved in church activities. One day, she came to the conclusion that there was nothing wrong with a woman wearing pants. That was her choice. But within a few months, I saw her jogging in the neighborhood wearing a tight shirt and tight shorts. Her issue was not an issue of pants; it was an issue of standards.

The devil wanted to win her over. He used **ONE standard** to get her to drop **ALL** of her standards. One of the best-known Baptist pastors in the west says the only difference in his views is a **small** difference on the issue of women wearing pants. One of my friends was visiting his office when a lady walked through in shorts. The pastor explained it was his secretary, but that it was her "day off." The pastor had no issue with women wearing pants; he had an issue with having standards at all. Regardless of what a pastor believes about having standards, he will say nothing about them, nor will he expect his staff to observe any.

Actually, the real issue is our being a misfit, a pilgrim, or a stranger — our willingness to say, “I believe something, and it does not matter if I fit in with society, it is my belief,” or not.

My pastor and the members of my home church were wonderful people; I learned a great deal during my time attending there, but the line in dress standards was drawn at swimsuits. A gal could wear a bikini, but she also had to wear a t-shirt. Now any honest guy knows a t-shirt over a bikini is nothing close to modest, but the leadership knew somewhere, somehow, a standard had to be set — and there it was. So honestly, they had no dress standards at all. That is the direction someone is headed if he does not draw a line and plant himself firmly on his decision.

The bottom line: you do or you do not have standards. A pastor recently said, “I have no problem with women wearing MODEST pants.” My question is not “what are modest pants?” (a question which would provide an interesting answer). Whatever your definition of MODEST PANTS is, my questions remain: “Do you know anyone who has only this guideline?” and, “Will you preach on women wearing immodest pants?” Show me the pastor who does not teach his people that ladies wearing pants and shorts and swimsuits in mixed company is wrong, and I will show you a youth group with no standards, families who vacation at the beach, and a church that honestly, has no standard of dress at all. Besides all that, culturally, pants are “man’s apparel” (see the restroom door for culturally relevant proof). Our subject is modesty, so I will not belabor the fact of men and ladies apparel being different.

You see, on paper, it sounds good to draw this invisible line that women wearing pants is okay; but you have to follow up in the pulpit with the real message. I remember a friend at college whose pastor taught against miniskirts but did not teach against swimsuits in a mixed group. His standard against miniskirts became difficult to defend.

You may say, “That is silly,” and it is; but either you do or you do not have standards. The line is impossible to draw unless you draw it at a woman wearing pants and add to that standard shorts, swimsuits, low and tight blouses, bare midriffs, and slits in skirts.

You do or you do not have standards. My pastor friend of mine found this out when he discovered it was difficult to keep his teen girls’ standards right. He gave in on the length of skirts and his girls wearing pants. Not long after, his girls were wearing swimsuits with friends of both genders. He has NO STANDARDS today. He is a good man doing a good job, but he simply could not or would not draw a line and stand on it.

Satan strives to convince you to yield a little on modesty because once he gets you to move, you keep moving. The physics principle: moving a stationary object takes far more force than keeping it moving once it breaks free from its stationary position. As long as I stand firm, moving will be far more difficult. Once I begin to move, keeping me moving is easy. If the energy used to start me moving is kept constant, my progress will accelerate. This is why we have seen people begin to move in a wrong direction, and then, in sudden shock, we find ourselves saying, “How could they have gone that far?” It took less to keep them moving than it did to start them moving. When you see a pastor’s wife convince her husband to put their awkward daughter in ballet, the obvious part follows: no dress standards, no separation from worldly people, no separation from movie theaters, etc. Once Satan gets you moving, he can drag you just about anywhere.

The proposition is all or nothing, at least as far as I have seen in four decades of ministry. Either someone has standards of modesty including no pants on women, no shorts on women, no swimsuits in mixed company, etc... or he has no standards at all.

Many pastors have a personal standard, but will never preach on it; they contend it is up to their people. So, I am guessing they will not preach on booze, adultery, rebellion etc. Clearly — the fact is that they have one standard: do not offend my people.

All or nothing is my observation. The subject is not about women wearing pants, it is about a man preaching on anything that has to do with outward appearance: tattoos, piercings, snowsuits when skiing, and so much more. Most pastors just will not say anything about appearance.

Within a few months of starting our church, I mentioned modesty; this set the standard in place that I wanted for our church. Not all of our church people keep those standards, just as some people in our church might keep beer in the refrigerator or smoke cigarettes; but everyone knows the standard of acceptable behavior at Faith Baptist. Everyone is loved and cared for, regardless of their standards, but I do preach on all of these subjects; however, the leadership at our church will conform to the standards we believe the Bible teaches.

I felt that since God mentions modesty, I should, occasionally, say something as well. Mentioning modesty is uncommon to hear in my sermons, but everyone knows we have a standard that we believe the Bible teaches.

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