

AN OPEN LETTER TO PARENTS OF TEEN-AGED GIRLS

Dear Moms and Dads,

It's embarrassing to write a note like this, but there needs to be a check-up on what some of your daughters are wearing when coming to church. To call their clothing 'inappropriate' would be kind. The height of some skirts (or skorts), combined with the extent of bare skin showing above the waist, is offensive: it shows a lack of respect for one's own body and appearance. It makes a girl look cheap, and it suggests she's available. The sad thing is that psychologists assure us these go together—lowered self-esteem especially in teen-aged girls is a major factor in their likelihood of engaging in sexual activity (either to 'win' a guy she thinks she otherwise has no chance of dating, or else because she thinks this low standard of behavior is 'what she is').

If such outfits are inappropriate for church, how much the more should they be considered inappropriate for going to a party! Here the message can easily be taken (whether the girl consciously wants to convey it or not is another matter): "For sale—discounted!" Why would anyone want to let one's daughter take such a risk?

In the Saturday edition of *The Mobile Press-Register* a couple of weeks ago an article suggested that this kind of 'more skin as fashion statement' excess was really an 80's kind of thing, and grunge was the 90's equivalent. The article went on to suggest that more dignified and modest (while still attractive) clothing is becoming the style of the 21st century's 1st decade. Why not help your daughters get on board with this style?

St. Paul told the Corinthians of the 1st century to realize that Christians' bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit: "You are not your own. You have been purchased [by Christ], and at a price. So glorify God in your body" (I Cor. 6:19-20). This is not a view that will likely be persuasive to your teen-aged daughters—it goes too against the culture of teen peer-pressure. But perhaps it can be more of an encouragement for us as adults to help and guide some choices along paths that are safer, more Faith-oriented, and more likely in the long run to engender healthy self-respect.

There is a woman I am friends with (married with three children, living in Louisiana), of whom it was said, while she was in college: "She's not the kind of girl you would want to date, but she is the kind of girl you'd want to marry." I think that would be a great sentiment to be expressed about your daughters, too, Moms and Dads.