

Does the Bible Forbid Women to Wear Pants?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

“Would you explain Deuteronomy 22:5. ‘The woman shall not wear that which pertains unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment for all who do so are an abomination unto the Lord your God.’ Does this passage forbid a woman to wear slacks or a pant-suit?”

A careful consideration of Deuteronomy, chapter 22, reveals a number of commands that are strange to the modern mind.

Here are some examples. If a man discovered a bird sitting upon eggs, he could take the eggs but not the bird (Deut. 22:6-7). A man couldn’t plant different kinds of seeds in his vineyard (Deut. 22:9).

Also, the Hebrew farmer wasn’t permitted to yoke an ox and donkey together for plowing (Deut. 22:10).

The Jews were also forbidden to wear garments that contained two types of cloth (e.g., wool and linen; Deut. 22:11).

Among these regulations, then, is the admonition that men were not permitted to wear feminine apparel and vice versa.

We certainly recognize that the Mosaic code **as a legal system** is not binding in the Christian age (Gal. 3:24-25; Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-17). But the present-day student is curious to know the purpose underlying these regulations.

What application do they have today, if any?

Why Were These Laws Given?

The reasons behind some of these Old Testament laws are not stated explicitly. By virtue of time, they have become shrouded in obscurity.

So it is impossible to speak definitely and confidently about some of these laws.

However, these sacred Scriptures were divinely inspired. So we must assume that there was some **religious, moral** or **practical** reasons for the requirements.

We offer the following suggestions for reflection.

Neighborly Concerns

Some of these commands appear to have been given to instill the principle of neighborly concern.

For example, the Hebrew was to **respect the property of others**.

If a neighbor’s ox strayed and someone found the lost animal, he wasn’t to act as if: “It’s none of my business.” He was required to be helpful and make a legitimate attempt to return the animal to its owner.

This ordinance reinforces the concepts of **property rights**, respect for the **welfare of animals** and **community benevolence**. It is at variance with the modern notion: “Every man for himself.”

Conservation of Resources

The prohibition against taking the mother bird with her eggs may be designed to help maintain the **nature’s balance**.

It was probably an ancient conservation measure to preserve the wildlife necessary for the welfare of society in those ancient days when men depended on the land and wildlife for their food.

Though modern environmentalists have adopted radical extremes regarding the environment, the principle of wise stewardship concerning God's creation is valid.

Visual Teaching Aids

Some of the commands may have been designed as visual teaching aids to reinforce the principle of **separation** (e.g., recognizing the distinction between the **sacred** and the **secular**).

They could have served as an **educational and disciplinary** function.

The several ordinances that forbid the mixing of heterogeneous objects (e.g., plowing the ox with the donkey, wearing garments of different substances) may have been directed to this end.

Male and Female Distinctions

With reference to the clothing regulations, several ideas have been advanced by careful Bible students.

Verse 5 may be an indictment of paganism in which cross-dressing in certain heathen ceremonies was deemed to be a **cure for infertility**.

In later history, both Lucian of Samosata and Eusebius speak of transvestism in the worship of Astarte (Thompson, 234).

Professor Earl Kalland also thinks there may be a warning here against the sort of dress that accommodates homosexual activity (173).

We should recall, however, that in biblical times, clothing for males and females was different only in **styles** and **details**, not in **kind**. Men did not wear trousers and women did not adorn themselves with skirts and blouses.

While it undoubtedly is true that God wants some sexual distinction apparent in men's and women's garments, it is not legitimate to say that all women's pants are wrong or, for that matter, that Scottish kilts are sinful for the men of that culture.

A woman can be feminine in a **modest** pant-suit (cf. 1 Tim. 2:9-10) and men can still be masculine in a robe-like garment as in some Near Eastern countries today.











Conclusion

Two principles should be borne in mind.

First, the Christian should **dress appropriately to his gender**. This distinction, incidentally, is apparent in **all** cultures. The concept of transgender cross-dressing is an abomination in any age.

Second, the godly man or woman should **dress modestly** in a manner that does not solicit illicit sexual interest.

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Thompson, J. A. 1974. *Deuteronomy*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

Scripture References

Deuteronomy 22:5; Deuteronomy 22:6-7; Deuteronomy 22:9; Deuteronomy 22:10; Deuteronomy 22:11; Galatians 3:24-25; Ephesians 2:14-15; Colossians 2:14-17

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