

It Is Written

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To Display or Not To Display?

By Alan Jones

They both were women. They both were royalty. They both were fair to look upon. They both were called upon to display themselves before reveling men on feast days. But, that's where the similarities end.

One woman refused to display herself and lost her position as queen. The other danced and "pleased" the king, causing him to cut off the head of a righteous man. One woman has served through the centuries as an example of purity and modesty; the other as an example of lasciviousness.

Queen Vashti, wife of the Persian King Ahasuerus, was commanded to show off her beauty in front of the nobles and princes of the Medo-Persian Empire--all of which were drunken. She refused to come and was deposed from her throne (Esther 1:9-12, 19).

The daughter of Herodias danced before King Herod, his lords, the high captains, and the chief men of Galilee. Herod was so "pleased" with her lasciviousness, he swore that she could have anything she wanted, up to half the kingdom. After a conference with her mother, she asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herod reluctantly and sorrowfully kept his oath (Mk. 6:21-29).

Today, all women have the same choice - to display or not to display.

"Daughters of Herodias" are all around us in the world - especially now that it's summertime. More than tans are being flashed. Bodies are being placed on public display. Where are the "Vashti's"? Surely they can be found among those professing to be God's children. But, alas, so many times, this is not the case!

Christians, both women and men, should dress "modestly, with shamefacedness and sobriety" (1 Tim. 2:9). Ask yourself just one question, "If in a pinch, with no time to change clothes, would I be ashamed to wear the clothes that I wear in other public places to worship services?" If the answer is yes - soul searching is in order.

To display or not to display? To be a "Vashti" or a "Daughter of Herodias"? Only YOU can decide!

Self Control

By Bill Hall

What is the value of self-control? Self-control is that which enables us to hold our tongues when we are tempted to viciously put someone in his place once and for all; or when we know a juicy bit of gossip that would be entertaining to the group and would turn us into the "life of the party"; or when an occasion almost demands that we betray a confidence that must not be betrayed under any circumstances.

Self-control is that which enables us to control our passions when another is provoking us to anger; that keeps the clinched fists in the pockets when the agitator is only half our size; that keeps the lips sealed when another is railing and swearing at us. Self-control is that which enables us to be like our Lord "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

Self-control is that which enables us to maintain purity of heart and to thrust out evil thoughts before they can take root; that enables us to place the best possible construction on another person's actions when unproven rumors could easily destroy our confidence in him; that helps us to maintain a cheerful disposition when everything around us has turned sour. Self-control is that which enables us to love the unlovable and to hate that which the world loves.

Self-control is that which enables us to rule our appetites; to say "no" when our lusts would lead us to sin or when that which is harmful to our health is placed before us. Self-control is that which enables the smoker to

put down his cigarettes and the alcoholic to put down his drink and never return to it. Self-control is that which enables us to rule rather than to be enslaved.

The Bible does not glorify the indifferent and impassive. It is not our goal to be uncaring. To be like Paul, we must be able to have our spirit stirred within us when we are surrounded by evil (Acts 17:16).

To be like our Lord, we must sometimes feel anger when surrounded by hypocritical self-righteousness (Mark 3:5); we must even react with occasional outbursts of goodness on occasions, as when the Lord cleansed the temple (John 2:13-17). But, all such outbursts must be tempered with self-control, that in our anger we "do not sin"

(Ephesians 4:26).

God does not view our uncontrolled actions with amusement. Our temper tantrums and harsh, unbridled words are soul threatening, a potential bar to the abundant entrance into the Lord's everlasting kingdom (II Peter 1:5-11). We must not minimize the danger. We must not surrender to this evil.

What is the value of self-control? It is one of the qualities that enable us to go to heaven. The possessor of it is rich indeed.

He's Hard To Like

By Greg Gwin

Selfish and self-centered—that's what people say about him. I must admit that my impressions of him are very similar. He really seems to be interested only in himself. Whenever you engage him in a conversation, it always ends up being about him and his interests. I can't remember very many occasions when he ever expressed much interest in me, my family, my work, etc. To tell you the truth, he's pretty hard to like!

Do you know someone like this? Most of us do. I actually intended to be describing a specific individual, but I realize that the description I've given fits far too many people - and the numbers are growing. We live in a selfish, self-centered society. This presents a real challenge for Christians.

Here's how Jesus said we should be:

— "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark 9:44).

— "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11).

Our goal should be to serve, not be served. We need to look for opportunities to serve one another, using our own unique abilities to help and encourage. The world tempts us to be just the opposite. Even the best 'counseling' that worldly advisors can give urges us to "make ourselves happy", and "look out for #1."

Spend some time in careful self-examination. Are you guilty of putting yourself first? Honestly evaluate your case. Are you doing all you can to help others - even when it isn't easy to do so? Do you show a genuine interest in your friends and brethren? Are you more concerned with what you can do for them - or what they can do for you? Think!