

## **Belly Button Rings And Low-Rider Jeans**

*Jared Jackson*

It was once the case that the only time “love-handles” were exposed in public was when an overweight plumber was struggling to repair the faucet (no offense to plumbers intended). These days, every other teen-age girl at the mall is wearing her favorite pair of “I wear a size 8, but the 6’s fit so tight, I went ahead and got the 4’s” low-rider jeans that let her wiggle around in pride, showing off her new tattoo just above the caboose along with the belly-button ring she bought with last week’s allowance.

From early on, our society teaches the feminine child that body glitter and exposed cleavage are the rites of passage that will carry her to the status of “cosmopolitan womanhood.” From the time they can fantasize with the Barbie doll that has become progressively more lumpy over the years, to the day she can pick up the latest “sophisticated” women’s magazines, our daughters are slowly being pressed into a mold of destruction and ruin.

Even underwear that only a few years ago was considered “for adults only” is now in vogue for innocent girls at the tenderest age. Recently, the infamous Abercrombie & Fitch porn and clothing store began testing the limits by peddling a line of thong underwear for girls as young as 10 or 12 years old garnished with pictures of cherries, and suggestive words like “kiss me,” “wink wink,” and “eye candy.” Despite the public outcry, the hustlers know that they can pull back, wait a while, then steam on ahead. When your daughter is walking around with “kiss me” stamped on her derriere, what kind of message do you think is being advertised?

The young men in our culture are no less targets of the allure of “glamorous” living. Almost every break in any given televised sports event is peppered with seductive women and carefree young men promoting one prevailing hedonistic message. The adolescent men walk around with their underwear hanging out all over the place, with perhaps something that might be called a shirt. And when mom or dad complains about their son’s behavior, the boys reaffirm their independence and personal sovereignty – then ask for \$20 and the car keys.

What is the result of this permeation of sexual marketing and anemic parenting? The fallout is devastating. Every year, some 12 million Americans contract a sexually transmitted disease; 63% are less than 25 years old. Every year, nearly 1 million girls between the ages of 15-19 become pregnant; approximately a quarter million of these end their pregnancy by aborting the baby. The teen mother who keeps the baby will most likely not complete high school, and become a permanent dependent of her parents. Her child will probably have poorer health, fall behind in school, and is more likely to become the victim of abuse and neglect. The father is long gone on to greener pastures — frequently without a thought of the fruit of their sinful, irresponsible behavior. The new mom and her parents are left with heartache and stress, and a child that desperately needs a family as God planned for her.

There may be exceptions to the bleak picture painted above. Still, they are exceptions.

In the not-too-distant past, it was the case that if you went to a public amusement park, or even to the local shopping mall, you would expect to see the fashion sense of worldliness walking around. Now, however, it is increasingly the case that the young women and men in the Lord’s church are not only wearing immodest apparel with abandon, but they are even arriving to worship the Lord of heaven and earth dressed so inappropriately. Young women, with exposed cleavage and tight, revealing clothes sit

beside disheveled young men wearing wrinkled T-shirts and scruffy sweatpants. Occasionally, they even have the nerve to “make-out” on the church parking lot.

Preacher and elders need to lovingly, yet firmly, address this type of behavior. We ought not be intimidated by permissive parents who resist biblical teaching when it is applied to their precious offspring. Lessons from the pulpit are important. But so is courageous, personal counseling.

Parents, especially fathers, you need to exercise the authority and discipline *the* Father has bestowed upon you. If your children are dressed for success in Satan’s cause, it is your fault. If they live in your house, take a stand. They may kick and scream, but it’s up to you to set the standard in your household. Moms, please don’t make your daughter the object of your vicarious teenage rebellion. Teach your tender offspring the value of purity and honor. The greatest gift you can give her is the self-respect of not needing to rely upon her curls and curves to achieve the great milestones in life. Actively teach her that she can instead rely upon the majesty of her heavenly Father (1 Pet. 2:9), the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5), and the humility of Mary (Lk. 1:38). Those traits will last much longer, even into eternity.

Young men, tuck in your shirts and show some dignity. Act like Timothy, not like p-Daddy diddly-doo or whoever is the big-shot rapper of the day (Dude, that means, like, read 1 & 2 Timothy!). A good dose of the Proverbs is prescribed as well.

Ladies, the way you dress does matter. Please, put on some decent clothes. You may not contract an STD or get pregnant, but avoiding those results are pretty good reasons to live pure and wholesome lives. If those aren’t good enough reasons, at least dress modestly for the sake of those around you. There are men who will be weakened by your display. And if you don’t care about them, at least have the dignity and self-respect to not advertise yourself as a cheap sex object. Ultimately, you ought to comport yourself as the temple of the Holy Spirit, for such you are (1 Cor. 6:19). Instead of trying to turn the heads, try turning the hearts with a beauty of holiness and depth of character possessed by the great women in the Bible.

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).*