

What Not To Wear

by Paul Barker | Mar 31, 2014 | Featured, Temple | 41 comments



Have you ever seen the TV show “What Not To Wear” on TLC? In case you haven’t, it’s a reality-based show starring two fashion experts, Clinton and Stacy, who help people in desperate need of fashion makeovers (these people are nominated by their friends and/or family). The show is great. Clinton and Stacy ambush the nominees in some clever way and then in front of their friends and family – not to mention all the video cameras – they have to commit to take their entire wardrobe to New York (usually for complete disposal) and shop for a new wardrobe following Clinton and Stacy’s fashion rules. If they agree they receive \$5,000 to spend on that new wardrobe. To kick off the process, Clinton, Stacy, and the nominee sit down together and watch video footage showcasing all of the nominee’s fashion disasters

that was secretly filmed weeks in advance. They do this so the nominees can see how they look like from someone else's perspective. During this segment of the show Clinton and Stacy try to find out why the nominee makes the clothing choices that they do – what is his/her motivation (or lack of motivation in some cases)? The most commonly heard justifications include comfort, time constraints, and indifference. A lot of times the nominees don't want to draw attention to themselves due to an underlying issue such as lack of confidence or low self worth.

Clinton and Stacy are truly gifted at helping people. Each fashion rule is tailored specifically for the individual nominees. They work with all body types and their most important rule is finding clothes that correctly fit each body type. Often nominees wear baggy clothing to try to hide their trouble areas, or sometimes they wear clothes that are two sizes too small simply because they want to "fit" in those clothes so badly. As mentioned, Clinton and Stacy's number one rule is wearing clothes that truly fit the body. The shopping rules are designed to highlight the best features in each person and downplay areas that nominees find troublesome: V-neck shirts are suggested to elongate the neck, pointed shoes are recommended to lengthen the legs, a higher waist is used to conceal the tummy area and give more shape, etc.

After the nominee's wardrobe has been trashed and the shopping rules have been presented, the nominee is turned loose in New York City to spend their \$5,000 alone. Things usually don't go very well for the nominees. It's a frustrating process. Then on day two of shopping, Clinton and Stacy help the nominees spend whatever money they have left on a wardrobe that actually follows the rules (they probably return a bunch of stuff from the day before too!). It's usually around this point of the process that an amazing transformation begins. The nominees start to see themselves in a different light. With the right cut, the right pants, and the right shoes, nominees begin to see their best selves – what was hidden before in the baggy and "comfy" clothes. And they start to feel good about themselves, sometimes for the first time in a really long time.

After shopping, the nominees also get new hairstyles and make-up instructions from professionals. The new make-up and hairstyles, like the new clothes, are tailored to emphasize the nominees' strengths. The before and after shots are always unbelievable.

At the end of the show there is big reveal, where the nominees get to see themselves for the first time with all of the new elements put together. The hosts and the nominees are always overwhelmed with joy at the outcome. Clinton and Stacy, of course, knew beforehand that with the right clothes, the nominees would look and feel amazing. The nominees leave the experience feeling more confident, attractive,

empowered, and they value themselves more than before. No surgical changes are involved in the process. Clinton and Stacy work with what each person has. Finding clothes that fit the body correctly helps bring out a person's natural beauty – who they really are.

So what does this have to do with Mormonism? Good question. I have written numerous posts about the LDS garment. In some of these posts, I listed troubles with the garment:

Women:

- Short/petite women, due to the length of their garments, have to wear longer shorts compared to taller women.
- While wearing a shirt that has a wider neckline, the garment is often exposed by the collarbone.
- Petite women can't wear cap sleeves without exposure of the garment because it is wide and slips down on the arm.
- Any time a woman bends down, sits, or squats, the top waistband of the garment, if not more, is exposed.
- Any time a woman reaches for something high, her garment is exposed.
- Pregnant women, whose shirts are more fitting around the middle, unintentionally expose the navel marking in the garment.
- Bigger women will have a bigger waist, and therefore a longer garment length.
- Any form-fitting shirt will reveal the back embroidery of the garment through the shirt.
- Any form-fitting pants will reveal the embroidery of the hemline of the garment (or just the hemline if there is no embroidery).
- Any white dress shirt will reveal the embroidery around the neck and back.
- The garment waistline is so skinny it digs into your skin.
- When a woman wears a knee-length skirt that is not tight fitting she will have garment exposure when she walks.
- Some tops have bigger arm openings causing exposure of the garment.
- The garment waist is so uncomfortably high it has to be pushed and bunched down (or pulled up to the armpits).
- Nursing a baby while wearing garments can be a HUGE pain *new addition to the list
- Nursing garments are one size fits all in the breast area. *new addition to the list

Men:

- Bottoms will crawl up having to pull the garment down almost every time you sit down.
- The garment crawling up can make things uncomfy around the wedding tackle area.
- In wearing a white dress shirt, you can see the markings through the shirt.
- If you are wearing a thin shirt like a golf shirt, you can see the markings through the shirt.
- Short men are left to wear longer shorts or their garments will be exposed at the bottom.
- Bigger men will have a bigger waist and therefore longer length in the garment, usually resulting in exposure.
- The garment bottom hemline appears when wearing most pants, especially when sitting with suit pants.
- Sometimes the sleeve can be exposed when wearing a short sleeve.

Universal complaints:

- Garments do not fit correctly.
- Garments are not comfortable.
- Garments are hot during summer months and in tropical locations.
- Garments are not attractive.

I want to focus this post on a couple of the universal complaints: they do not fit correctly and they are not attractive. When the garment does not fit correctly, some must choose a style of clothing that covers up the garment instead of choosing a style of clothing that fits them correctly.

Some common fashion advice is that proper-fitting underwear helps you feel more confident and is essential for allowing your clothing to hang properly. Confidence is affected by what you wear. If you are self-conscious, then you end up tugging and pulling at your clothing, which conveys discomfort and lack of confidence. In business settings, body language can undermine your credibility and impair your ability to negotiate and collaborate. This is one area in particular that my friend Rachael struggles with because the garment line is so incompatible with most clothing styles, particularly the neckline for females. For men, the neckline in most shirts is pretty standard, and if the garment does happen to show, it just looks like a

t-shirt – no big deal. However, for women, necklines are extremely varied and it can be difficult to find shirts that completely cover the garment. Additionally, the neckline is considered an important factor in style and fashion because it contributes to the overall display of the face, and there are specific fashion rules and guidelines for the type of neckline that should be worn by particular body shapes. Even the standard V-neck, which is flattering for most shapes and sizes, often requires a tank top underneath because the neckline of the garment is so high. This results in more layers of clothing, which bulks up the waistline and often results in both discomfort and unflattering clothing lines.

Short women have to buy extra-long shorts while taller women can get away with wearing shorter shorts. The issue here isn't the tall woman getting away with wearing shorter shorts, it's the shorter woman having to deal with wearing longer shorts. When shorter women wear longer shorts, it gives the illusion of being even shorter. Usually capris are not recommended for shorter women because it makes them look even shorter. Also, shorter women that have narrow shoulders and a smaller breast size usually end up with ill-fitting tops. They have to wear tops with high necklines and longer sleeves to cover up the garment. This is unfortunate because scoop necks and V-necks elongate the neck resulting in a taller appearance.

After my posts on the LDS garment, I heard a recurring comment: garments don't make me feel attractive. Can you honestly say that you look or feel attractive when you wear your garments? From what I have gathered, I would say most don't. Is this a problem? I think it is. Any time your true beauty or true self isn't expressed or displayed, you are shortchanging yourself and your confidence will be lacking. Some will argue that the purpose of the garment is not to make you feel attractive or sexy. EXACTLY! This is one of the main issues with the garment.

Now, there are suggestion boxes where you purchase garments, so the Church is making an effort. But to what end? Because the Church is operating within a certain budget, it just isn't possible to get a good fit for every body type and comfort level. There's just no way the Church can accommodate so many different bodies. It is an impossible task. I remain hopeful that the Church will foresee all of this and eventually use the garment only for temple worship. Did you know that at one point the Quorum of Twelve actually discussed doing away with the garment all together except when inside the temple? The idea originated with Apostle Melvin J. Ballard. According to sources, his wife found the garments uncomfortable. So ladies, even the Apostle's wife finds them uncomfortable! (Conversation with George T. Boyd, July 3, 1986, Buerger Papers)

An alternate solution could be to iron-on or silk-screen the markings to your choice

of undergarments. This would allow a person to choose a good fit out of the thousands of different undergarment companies that are out there. "You crazy apostate!" is usually what I hear after I present this idea. But get this – the military already uses the silk-screening solution for their garments! In fact, two years ago, in response to a lengthy letter to Pres. Uchtdorf about modesty and garments, a close, trusted friend of mine received a response from him in which he expressed interest in pursuing the idea of silk-screening the marks of the Priesthood in garments for all members, not just the military.

The silk screening option would do a couple of things. For one the church would no longer have any issues with finding the right fit for so many different body types. Second, the commitments you made in the temple now become private because no one can see your garments. There is something strange about being able to tell who a person is by the underwear they are wearing. There is one company that provides iron-ons, if you are not in the military and can't wait for the official approval. It is hard enough to find clothes that fit you correctly, why are we making it harder for ourselves?

When discussing various garment improvements, keep this in mind: "It may be observed that no fixed pattern of the temple garment has ever been given, and that the present style of garment differs very materially from that in use in the early history of the Church" (Letter to Presidents of Stakes and of Temples June 12, 1923, The New and Everlasting Covenant). Remember that one time when the garment used to come down to the wrists and ankles? Some will say, "My garments fit me fine and I can wear very stylish clothes." And I would respond, "Good for you, but there are many, many others that don't feel the same way." Just because it might work for you doesn't mean it works for every other LDS person in the world. We should always remember that whole bit about mourning with those that mourn. Don't dismiss other people's suffering just because you don't find yourself in the same situation.



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