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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2006





*If image sells, are people  
buying into God because  
of what they see in us?*

# Image Conscious

*by Linda Condolora*

I was driving down the street recently and noticed a young woman walking along briskly. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, she tripped and immediately glanced around to make sure no one saw her. Why was she concerned about someone seeing her stumble? We know why. Chances are that in a similar situation, we would react the same way. It comes down to one word – image.

This simple example illustrates a very serious issue. In our culture, image has become big business. There are image consultants for companies, celebrities, athletes, politicians

and even governments. These consultants are paid exorbitant fees to make their clients look good and to “spin” potentially embarrassing situations in such a way as to do as little damage as possible to their images. It does not matter if something is true or not; what matters is how things look. After all, image sells.

As Christian women living in a society obsessed with appearances, we sometimes fall prey to certain attitudes. We get caught up in wearing the latest fashions and hairstyles and make snap judgments about others based on the way they look. We work at making ourselves as appealing and

acceptable as possible. We worry about what others think of us and make every effort to fit in. The question is: are we focused on the appropriate kind of image?

With what kind of image is God concerned? We know that it has nothing to do with the latest fashion, hairstyle, jewelry or any other aspect of our outward appearance, though God cares that we are modest in our appearance rather than provocative or showy (1 Timothy 2:9-10). God is not concerned with whether we fit in. Rather, He notices the way we

*(Continued on page 62)*



## Image Conscious

*(Continued from page 37)*

live, what we do, and the attitudes of our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7). When we truly live a life of devotion to Him, our faith will show itself in actions that please Him.

We need to focus upon how we appear to God. When we were baptized, we died, and consequently we no longer belong to this world. The Scriptures point out that we are aliens and strangers here (Hebrews 11:13-16). According to Ephesians 2:19-20 we are "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (NIV).

When I was growing up, my parents would periodically remind me that what I did reflected on our family. It was ingrained in me; and, as a result, I often found myself able to resist peer pressure to do things I shouldn't because I did not want to disappoint my parents or have my actions reflect poorly on my fam-

ily. Now, as a Christian, this principle has new meaning for me.

As those who are just passing through this world, our true home is with God; our true family is the family of God. What we do reflects either positively or negatively on our family and our God. Like Paul, we are Christ's ambassadors to the world (2 Corinthians 5:20). Our lives are to glorify the Lord with ever-increasing measure as we grow in our relationship with Him (3:18).

God is concerned about the image we project because people see God through us. Christ became sin for us, "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Proverbs 14:34 says, "Righteousness exalts a nation." Since we are the "righteousness of God," we must ask ourselves, "Does our manner of life exalt our nation?"

If image sells, are people buying into God because of what they see in us? Do our words, actions and atti-

tudes reflect well upon our spiritual family and our Father? First Peter 2:11-12 gives us a lofty goal to reach for - that is, that we will glorify God even when we are persecuted or experiencing trying times. People falsely accused Jesus of all kinds of things. They beat Him and crucified Him, but He never reacted in a way to bring disgrace upon the name of His Father. He even prayed for those who mistreated Him.

Image sells. The next time you check out your appearance in a mirror, make sure it is appropriate for a woman of God. More importantly, examine yourself to see that you are reflecting the glory and love of God to the world. □

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