**Professional Appearance: The ABCs—Attitude, Bearing, and Clothing**

**INTRODUCTION**

Congratulations, you’ve been called to lead! The mantle of leadership brings with it a sacred responsibility, an opportunity for spiritual and personal growth, and the possibility to be a pacesetter for God!

In this course we will be focusing on the ABCs of a leader’s appearance--Attitude, Bearing, and Clothing. So let’s begin looking at these three ABCs of a Christian Leader!

### attitude of a servant

Do you often feel that other women are smarter or better looking than you? As Christian women, we don’t want to focus attention on ourselves, yet it is foolish to be held back by an inferiority complex that keeps us from tackling challenges and believing in our God-given talents.

The great commandment is that we love God with all our heart. The second commandment is an extension of the first—that we love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We do not have two considerations here but three--to love God, to love ourselves, and to love others. We really could put self-second, because Jesus plainly made proper self-love the basis of a proper love for our neighbor. Whether we call it self-esteem or self-worth, it is an important component of Christian love for others. Yet many Christian women consider themselves inferior, of little worth.

“The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, or else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them.” Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 657

When we accept Jesus, He adopts us into His family, and we become “just a little lower than the angels.” We are His royal priesthood; we are the temple of His Holy Spirit; and we know that when He comes again we will be like Him. We are children of the King, yet many of us don’t fully grasp how valuable we are. A Christian lecturer, Florence Littauer, says, “It’s difficult to be above average when our self-worth is on zero!”

Remind yourself daily that you are God’s chosen heritage, paid for by a great price! He desires that we experience healthy self-esteem as we recognize how He values each one of us. And we all have inner beauty. It is a gift from God. Some of us may not have taken the time to unwrap the gift, but here’s our chance to begin the process.

Let’s consider some abilities that will be important to your success as a leader.

1. **Receiving a compliment gracefully**

None of us enjoys being criticized, yet we seem equally uncomfortable with praise. How does a woman of God accept a compliment? Let’s look at some typical compliments to illustrate how to accept compliments graciously.

“That’s a lovely linen suit you’re wearing today!”

Some possible responses you may have heard:

“What, this old thing?”

“This isn’t linen; it’s rayon.”

“It’s a hand-me-down from my sister.”

Any one of these comments suggests that the person giving the compliment has no taste and invites that person not to give you another compliment.

When accepting a compliment, a simple thank you is sufficient, but if you wish to add a positive comment, that’s even better.

*Examples:*

“Your hair always looks attractive!”

“Thank you. I’m really pleased with my hairdresser.”

“I really like your black dress!”

“Thank you. My husband picked it out especially for this occasion.”

Your new outfit is a very nice style on you.”

“Thank you. Coming from someone with your taste, I especially appreciate your comment.”

“You play the piano beautifully!”

“Thank you! My years of practice are finally paying off.”

Accept each compliment as you would a gift, words wrapped in a box with a bow on top!

It may take some practice to feel comfortable with compliments. But your efforts will be rewarded, and in the process you will be demonstrating this art to other women who look up to you as a role model.

1. **Accepting “Constructive Criticism” graciously**

When we become leaders, we all wish that people would show us unconditional love, but we’ve lived long enough to know that some will feel it their duty to offer “constructive criticism.”

Leaders do well to remember Proverbs 12:16: “A fool is quick-tempered; but a wise man [woman] stays cool when insulted.”

As a leader, be prepared to receive some criticism. When someone gives you unsolicited advice, remember that you are a leader and respond like one.

**Here are some possible responses to criticism:**

1. “Thank you for sharing that thought with me.”
2. “Thank you for your analysis.”
3. “Thank you for caring enough to point this out to me personally.”
4. “I appreciate your comments, and I’ll give them some thought.”

If you are faithful in following this way of dealing with criticism, rather than becoming defensive when challenged, you will see that your defensiveness will begin to fade as you recognize that a certain amount of criticism comes with being a leader. However, if you receive frequent criticism, seek counsel from a trusted friend to see what you may be doing that draws criticism. “Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.” Ecclesiastes 4:13

**Occasionally check up on yourself by asking these three questions:**

1. Am I willing to take criticism?
2. Am I willing to take it cheerfully?
3. Am I willing to ask for it?

The next time you are criticized, swallow hard, smile, and instead of defending yourself, thank the person for caring enough to share their thoughts with you. Then run their comments through the “fact filter.” If what they say is wise and true and applicable, act on it. If it’s foolish, false, or ridiculous, forget it and move on. If you can accept and profit from criticism, you have a priceless ability possessed by few.

1. **Attitude Shows**

There will always be some who will judge us by the externals long before they get to know us. Before we open our mouth, people can sense our attitude. If we are haughty, critical, or too busy to be bothered, it shows. If instead we are open and gracious, that will come through as well.

When King Rehoboam asked his advisers what he needed to do to be an effective leader, they gave him the following advice:

###### “If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them,

###### and speak to them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.”

###### 1Kings 12:7

**Notice his advice, which is good for today’s leaders:**

1. Answer all that ask of you.
2. Speak kindly to all.
3. Have the attitude of a servant.

Ask God to help you develop your skills and personality, and to help mold your natural temperament into assets. We can learn by observing successful leaders and through active listening. It’s a lifelong process, but along the way you can be moving closer and closer to being the woman God created you to be.

1. **Part of a Team**

In Women’s Ministries, leaders are well served when they view themselves as part of a larger team. Opening new doors often requires a lot of prayer, thorough preparation, and confidence blended with a humble spirit. Remember, the Church is lead primarily by men. Fortunately there are many men who are willing to assist us in our goals if we work in harmony as a team.

1. **Important traits of a Servant-Leader**

As we work to develop our abilities as leaders, let’s look at seven important habits we can cultivate. Each of these will help us to become better servant-leaders.

1. **Flexibility:** Do you have the capacity to accept the unpleasant graciously? It is often true that the more you focus on others the easier it becomes to adjust to life’s changes.
2. **Attitude:** Your attitudes are your habitual way of feeling about people and events. Learn to judge yourself—not others. Trust those who have earned your respect. Look inward and outward with respect and trust. Be optimistic; spread encouragement.
3. **Emotional control:** We all have both constructive and destructive emotions. Worry is an example of a negative emotion that can sap energy and distort one’s thinking. Live above worry by cultivating the positive emotions of faith and hope.
4. **Impartiality:** Having the attitude of a servant keeps us mindful of the importance of treating all persons as equals. Exceptional leaders treat each person with dignity. They make it a point to greet everyone, calling them by name when possible.
5. **Impulse control:** Think before you act or speak. Planning, self-control, and self-discipline allow you to accomplish much more than you could otherwise. This saves time and energy, and enables you to accomplish those things that are really worthwhile.
6. **Sensitivity:** Intentionally develop your ability to recognize the feelings, needs, and wishes of others. This will prepare you to become a source of strength and encouragement as a leader. Give your time and your smile; share your talents with those whose lives you touch.
7. **Courtesy:** Your manners are like a silver thread running throughout your personality, making it beautiful. Good manners are an important characteristic of a Christian leader. They are not reserved for special people, but practiced every minute of every day. The mail man, the store clerk, the janitor—everyone you meet each day is accepted and respected as important. Be courteous at all times. A lady is always a lady, regardless of the situation. Rudeness on the part of others is no justification for a lack of courtesy.

―Modified from *It Takes so Little to be Above Average*, Florence Littauer.

As you pray for the Holy Spirit to shape your attitudes so that they truly represent our Heavenly Father, your life will take on a richer meaning. You will be rewarded by the success that you experience as a leader when you have achieved the attitude of a servant leader.

1. **the bearing of a leader**

Women are of inestimable value to our heavenly Father. We are daughters of the King. As you develop your leadership skills, don’t let Christian humility keep you hovering in a corner. Stand up straight, walk with confidence, speak with conviction. Believe in the gifts God has given YOU.

Sometimes women consider it virtuous to be plain and frumpy. As leaders we know this is not true. To look professional doesn’t require an expensive wardrobe, but rather clothing that is planned, coordinated, and well-cared-for. Good grooming and good posture will help convey the attitude of a servant and the bearing of a Christian leader.

In the morning when you stand before the mirror readying yourself for the day, pretend there’s a string on the top of your head being pulled up to heaven. Keep your elbows back and your tummy tucked. Be sure before presenting yourself to the world that you’re well put together and can stand tall as a leader.

**Showing confidence**

1. Your bearing expresses your degree of self-confidence.
2. People believe what they see, and you can control what they see. Have good posture and a pleasant, relaxed facial expression. Be sure your clothing is appropriate and you are well groomed.
3. Act in a slow and deliberate, purposeful manner. Whether you adjust your eyeglasses, straighten your scarf, or search for an item in your folder, do it with purpose. If you move rapidly or abruptly, you will appear nervous, flustered, or unprepared. Remember that 85 percent of what you communicate will be transmitted non-verbally.
4. Don’t respond to distractions. Don’t let furniture, the air-conditioning fan, sirens outside, or traffic noise distract you.
5. When entering someone’s office, pause. Wait to be noticed and invited to have a seat. Cross the room, maintaining good posture. Extend your right hand and offer a firm handshake and sincere smile.
6. When sitting around a conference table, sit back in your chair with relaxed open arms.
7. While seated, keep your knees and feet together. If you wish to cross your legs, cross them at the ankles.

―Modified from D. A. Benton, *Lions Don’t Need to Roar*.

**After a flub**

There will be times when you prepare well, dress well, put your energy into the event and yet you feel that you didn’t measure up. Take courage; the best and most capable leaders have shared these same feelings. Take a look at what happened. What can you learn? Take time to have a good talk with God. He’s interested in every aspect of our lives, and He will lift you out of your discouragement.

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So, we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’”Hebrews 13:5-6, ESV

Look to Christ as your model, and He will help you to have that beautiful bearing. Do your part to learn and grow. Lean on Him to guide and encourage you each day.

1. CLOTHES OF a leader

Throughout this segment of the course, you will learn tips on dressing and grooming for your role as a leader.

Remember, when you act like a leader, walk like a leader, and look like a leader, others will want to follow you.

The Bible reminds us that true beauty does not depend upon outward adornment. Yet the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 was clothed in tapestry and scarlet and in purple silks. She had the look and bearing of a woman of elegance befitting a queen—or a leader.

In most areas of the world, there is no set uniform for Women’s Ministries leaders. Generally it is up to the leaders to express their own tastes, always striving to present a good appearance. Women look to us as mentors and role models. Women watch their leaders. So strive to be above average in every area of your life, including what you wear. Then you will find that others will follow your example, endeavoring to become the best they can be too!

Our aim should be to look well-put-together, in clean, appropriate clothing. If we succeed, those following our leadership will see us and not our clothes.

Do clothes really make the person? At the very least, they make an important impression. Others are influenced by our clothes—their modesty, fit, style, and appropriateness. Are you judged by your clothes? Yes, because they say something about you. So it is important for each of us to make a positive statement through our appearance.

―Ruth Budd, *Do It the Right Way*.

By the time we reach our twenties, our personality, likes and dislikes are fairly well defined. Don’t be afraid to cultivate your own taste and individuality. It will add to the unique person that God has made you. However, it is important to dress professionally and in harmony with the rules of good taste.

The fashion industry has as their primary purpose to sell us clothes. Don’t be taken in by fads; be a smart shopper. Become acquainted with brand names that are good quality, and always buy clothing that fits well. Be sure to try on items before buying them.

You should aim to have a unified or “put together” look. If you do, the viewer will see YOU and not your clothes.

**Choosing to look good**

Get organized! Take all your clothes out of the closet and lay them on the bed, matching colors, putting suits together, etc. Get your shoes out too. Now try on your clothes, and while standing in front of a mirror ask yourself, “Is this outfit modest and well-fitting? Does it complement my natural skin and hair color? Is it appropriate to my age and weight? Do the shoes blend in with the total look?” If in doubt, don’t wear it!

Before you go shopping, have a plan. Consider what’s already in your closet. Determine your main color scheme. Buy items that are interchangeable so you can mix and match outfits. Be sure to read the care labels. Dry cleaning can become expensive. And don’t waste money on cheap fabrics or poorly made garments.

Treat your clothes well and they will serve you well!

Look at your shoes. Polish them if they need it. Now take the time to write down combinations of your clothes that looked well on you. Tack this on your closet wall and you will be able dress quickly in a well-coordinated outfit.

Treat your clothes well and they’ll serve you well. If you select new purchases wisely, in time you’ll build a complementary wardrobe, and you’ll have the right outfit for most occasions. You will look your best from top to toe.

#### Time Savers!

To save time, and look well groomed, keep a clothes brush or lint brush, shoe polish, spot remover, and a small repair kit in your clothes closet.

**Colors and care**

Learn what colors complement your natural skin and hair colors. Ideally, shoes should be the same color as or darker than your hemline. Keep clothes clean and ready to wear. Keep buttons and zippers closed while on the hanger to prevent wrinkling or sagging.

**My personal grooming check list:**

* Is my skin fresh and clean?
* Am I wearing deodorant?
* Are my teeth freshly brushed?
* Is my hair clean and well groomed?
* Are my hands and nails clean and smooth?

**My appearance check list:**

* Are my clothes appropriate for the occasion?
* Do my clothes fit me properly?
* Are my clothes clean, neatly pressed, and in good repair?
* Are my shoes polished and in good repair?

###### If I’m wearing a fragrance, is it light?

Florence Littauer has this to say about leaving the house unprepared, “What happens when you leave home with a button missing from your left sleeve? All day long you keep your left hand behind your back or out of sight. What if you have a run in your hose and you leave home in a rush hoping no one will notice? All day long you keep standing in corners, and when you leave a room you attempt to back out.

**Keep Learning**

You should not be discouraged if you are just becoming aware of the importance of looking like a leader. Women's Ministries exists to help women be all they can be. Everyone needs to start somewhere. With each new purchase of a garment, make sure that they fit into your plan for a coordinated wardrobe that is modest and complements your size, coloring, and age.

#### Face, Hair and Hands

#### Good grooming includes a healthy complexion and well-cared-for hair and hands.

**For a good complexion, remember:**

1. Eat a balanced diet
2. Drink plenty of water (6 to 8 eight-ounce glasses daily)
3. Get regular exercise (30 minutes three times a week)
4. Get plenty of fresh air (Try sleeping with your windows open.)
5. Have adequate sleep (6 to 8 hours a night)
6. Avoid frowning and squinting

If you have severe problems with your complexion, consult your physician. There are products on the market that can be very helpful.

Your hair is an important part of your appearance. Is your current style well- suited to your face, age, and type of hair? If you are ready for a fresh look, select a style that looks professional but does not require too much time to maintain.

**For Healthy, Attractive Hair**

1. Shampoo often. You know how often you need to shampoo your hair in order to keep it looking clean, fragrant, healthy and attractive. Stay on schedule.
2. Stick with a hairdresser who cuts your hair well. Consult your hairdresser if you want to change your hair style.
3. Keep your hairstyle attractive, but always modest and in good taste. If you are comfortable with your hair, you will be able to forget it and focus on the tasks at hand.

―Modified from Emily Hunter, *Christian Charm*.

**For Healthy, Attractive Hands**

1. Lovely hands are clean, smooth, and well-manicured.
2. Pamper your hands with a good moisturizing lotion regularly. Wear gloves to protect your hands from harsh jobs and cold weather.
3. Learn to shape your nails using an emery board or file. Begin at the sides and file toward the center. Strive for a graceful oval contour. Avoid short stubby fingernails or long claws.
4. Soak your fingers in warm, soapy water for about five minutes. Clean your knuckles and cuticles with a soft brush. Don’t forget to scrub underneath your nails too.
5. Push back the cuticle after moistening with cuticle remover or oil. Remove any hangnails with clippers.
6. Lovely hands are poised. Nervous and other quick movements destroy your poise. Avoid twisting, rapid movements and other nervous motions. To release tension, squeeze your hands into a tight fist, then release.
7. Train your hands to assume graceful postures, such as crossing your hands with open palms together.

**CONCLUSION**

Let’s review the ABCs that we have been exploring—Attitude, Bearing and Clothing. Take a few moments to complete Exercise #3. As you do, reflect on the points that you want to incorporate in your leadership.

Remember, when you act like a leader, walk like a leader, and look like a leader, people will want to follow you.

Look at this course as an opportunity to create a better you, to improve your own personal image. You will be rewarded with a new self-confidence and self-assurance, knowing that you have the attitude, bearing, and appearance of a Christian leader. Watch as your personality becomes more refined as you reach out to others in sincere friendliness and genuine interest. Your own Christian experience will blossom too. There’s lasting joy in doing our best, especially as we lead out in ministries that will bless the women in our church and community.

**About the author**

**Rose Otis** began her ministry as the Public Relations Director of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, after fifteen years as a stay-at-home Mom. In the late 1980s, she and her husband Harold represented the General Conference in the former Soviet Union. In 1990, Rose was elected the first director of the General Conference Office of Women's Ministries. In 1997, she became a vice-president of the North American Division and spent the last two years of her denominational employment as Vice President of the Texas Conference of SDA.

Currently she is involved in her "Palms Up" Ministry that includes public speaking and writing. Rose edited the first six women's devotional books and has published two books entitled "Soviet Sunrise" and "Almost Perfect Angels."