

A VISITING COWBOY

By Dr. Hoyt W. Allen, Jr.

The following article came to me recently and I contended that I should pass it on. It has been slightly edited and a conclusion added.

One Sunday morning an old cowboy entered a church just before services began. Although the old man and his clothes were spotlessly clean, he wore jeans, a denim shirt and boots that were very worn and ragged. In his hand he carried a worn out old hat and an equally worn out old Bible.

The church he entered was in a very upscale and exclusive part of the city. It was the largest and most beautiful church the old cowboy had ever seen. It had high cathedral ceilings, ornate statues, beautiful murals and stained glass windows, plush carpet, and velvet like cushioned pews. The building must have cost many millions of dollars to build and maintain.

The men, women and children of the congregation were all dressed in the finest and most expensive suits, dresses, shoes, and jewelry the old cowboy had ever witnessed.

As the poorly dressed cowboy took a seat the others moved away from him. No one greeted him. No one welcomed him. No one offered a handshake or even a smile. No one spoke to him. They were all horrified at his appearance and did not attempt to hide the fact.

There were many glances in his direction as the others frowned and commented among themselves about his shabby attire. A few chuckles and giggles came from some of the younger members.

The preacher gave a long sermon about Hellfire and brimstone and a stern lecture on how much money the church needed to do God's work. When the offering plate was passed thousands of dollars came pouring forth.

As soon as the service was over the congregation hurried out. Once again no one spoke or even nodded to the stranger in the ragged clothes and boots.

As the old cowboy was leaving the church the preacher approached him. Instead of welcoming him, the preacher asked the cowboy to do him a favor. "Before you come back in here again, have

(Continued)

(Continued)

a talk with God and ask him what He thinks would be appropriate attire for worshipping in this church". The old cowboy assured the preacher he would do that and left.

The next Sunday morning the old cowboy showed back up for the services wearing the same ragged jeans, shirt, boots, and hat. Once again the congregation was appalled at his appearance. He was completely shunned and ignored again.

The preacher noticed the man was still wearing his ragged clothes and boots, and instead of beginning his sermon, he stepped down from the pulpit and walked over to where the man sat alone. He said, "I thought I asked you to speak to God before you came back to our church." "I did," replied the old cowboy.

"If you spoke to God, what did he tell you the proper attire should be for worshipping in here?" asked the preacher.

"Well sir", said the old cowboy, "God told me that He wouldn't have the slightest idea what was appropriate attire for worshipping in your church. He says He's never even been in here."

Many people would answer the question today about "church clothes" by saying, "If we were going to a wedding, funeral, or to meet the Governor or President - we would dress in our finest clothes, wouldn't we? Well, we are going to meet the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords - so we should want to dress the very best we can - right?" **To this, I will have to agree.** But this is only an **opinion.** Now if one chooses to wear something different, like John the Baptist (Matthew 3:4), can we scripturally criticize him/her?

Now - one area that a certain amount of criticism may surface is in the area of immodesty (1 Timothy. 2:9). When females begin revealing "too much flesh" and that is an area of opinion - it can lead to problems. It has always been a good practice to encourage females to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in all manners of dress. If even for a second, one questions the modesty of her attire, she should avoid wearing it. In most congregations this is all that is needed. However, the Holy Spirit works through the Word - so one must be "into the Word" to be guided properly.

*KYOWVA Evangelistic Association * 1541 S. 7th Street * Ironton, OH 45638*

*Web Page: www.kyowva.com * Free Bible Course Upon Request*