

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

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SWD:SWB April 16, 2018

This is in reply to your letter postmarked March 22, 2018. You ask about the propriety of a Christian man's wearing a beard in view of what is published in paragraph 17 of the article "Does Your Style of Dress Glorify God?" in the September 2016 study edition of *The Watchtower*. You also ask if doing so might affect whether or not he would qualify for special privileges in the congregation.

Of course, the Bible does not set forth specific rules to govern how a person grooms himself. Whether or not a man decides to wear a beard is something he must decide personally. Nevertheless, God's Word does provide many principles that Christians should seek to apply in all aspects of their lives, including that of appearance. One such principle is that Christian women should "adorn themselves in appropriate dress, with modesty and soundness of mind, . . . in the way that is proper for women professing devotion to God." (1 Timothy 2:9, 10) That principle applies also to Christian men who 'profess devotion to God.' The book *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education* explains on page 132: "A person who is modest is concerned about not needlessly offending others and not drawing undue attention to himself." Also, page 56 of the book *"Keep Yourselves in God's Love"* shows that modesty includes "the thought of reverence, awe, and respect for the feelings or opinion of others."

In view of the above-mentioned Scriptural principles, many brothers in certain regions, and particularly in the United States, have made the personal decision not to wear a beard. However, if one chose to wear a neatly-trimmed beard, this in itself would not prevent him from enrolling as a student in the midweek meeting, sharing in the field ministry, or getting baptized.

We realize, though, that your reason for wanting to wear a beard is not because you prefer this style of grooming but is due to the severe skin condition that does not allow for regular shaving. We certainly regret to learn of your facial condition, and we are in no way insensitive to what you describe.

Thus, it may be that the sensitivity of your skin is so great that you have no other choice but to wear a beard at various times. If this becomes necessary, surely it will become apparent to others in the congregation that your motive for doing so is simply to correct a skin problem. If you choose to do this for a time, keeping a neat and well-trimmed beard would show others your desire to be presentable. Others, including the elders, of course, would not attempt to decide this matter for you, as the wearing of a beard is a personal matter.

As to whether he could be given special privileges in the congregation, the elders, guided by Bible principles, would have to decide whether the brother is truly viewed as exemplary. (1 Timothy 3:1-10, 12, 13; Titus 1:5-9) Therefore, when considering styles of dress and grooming, as stated on page 23 of the September 15, 2005, issue of *The Watchtower*, "the elders refrain from making arbitrary rules or insisting on their personal viewpoints." At the same time, though, it is not to be expected that the elders would ignore the dictates of their own collective conscience. (See paragraph 24 on page 219 of the April 1, 1975, issue of *The Watchtower*.) Likewise, the elders cannot ignore the sensitivities and conscientious conclusions of others in the congregation when it comes to dress and grooming. Thus, if a brother's wearing a beard is a cause of disturbance or distraction in his community or congregation, the elders probably would decide that the brother would not qualify for special privileges in the congregation.

We trust the above comments will be helpful. Since this is a matter that you have discussed with the elders, we are sending them a copy of our reply so that they will know how we have answered. We encourage you to continue faithfully serving Jehovah, doing all that your circumstances allow in his worship, knowing that such labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58) Be assured of our prayers in your behalf that you will not allow this condition to cause you to stumble from your faithfulness to Jehovah.—Psalm 119:165.

We send our warm love and Christian greetings.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*