

Modesty

By Michael S. Hatley

Beauty vs. Immodesty

A woman who strives to be so, is more beautiful to a man than a rainbow, snow capped mountains, or the smile of a little child. An extremely attractive woman, modestly attired, is a feast for his eyes that can be enjoyed with a pure conscience. She is a wonderful creation of God, and her appearance a gift bringing great pleasure to the beholder.

The woman described above can wear the same hairdo, makeup and jewelry, changing nothing but her clothing from modest to immodest, and she is immediately cheapened, no longer an exquisite display of God's handiwork, but now a sexual object and temptation to sin. Men's eyes are drawn to her even more than before, but instead of gazing in awe at her splendor, they now perceives her body a magnet to their eyes, which, if he is a Christian, will bother his conscience, and if he is a faithful Christian will be overcome by looking elsewhere, anywhere but at her.

Is There Any Definite Standard of Modesty?

If the only sermons you've heard on modesty had the vague message, "Be sure you dress modestly so you don't make anyone lust," which of course, doesn't offend anyone or convict anyone of sin, or if you are a member of a congregation in which those wearing mini skirts and low cut tops are just as likely to be chosen to teach Bible class as the more conservative dressers, then you may be surprised to learn that God's Word is actually not vague on this subject. Those wearing the mini skirts and low cut tops have somewhat to learn about modesty and need to be students themselves a while longer, before becoming teachers.

The All Time Greatest Clothing Designer, God

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). A study of this passage in the original Hebrew reveals that the garments God made covered the shoulders and went all the way to the knees. If our clothing today covers our shoulders and goes all the way to our knees, then we can know we are modest in God's eyes, based on this example. Of course clothing that covers from shoulders to knees but is either see through or skin tight still won't be modest since both of these characteristics partially defeat the purpose of clothing in the first place.

God designed man to adore the beauty of woman. This design ensures man "replenishes the earth" as God desires (Genesis 1:28 and 9:1). He made the human male to be very visually oriented and to see woman as the most beautiful of all God's creation. God designed man to be attracted by the

female body and certain parts of her body to have a greater effect on him than other parts. God knows very well which body parts have which effect, because he created both the male mind and the female body. God covered those parts that are sexually stimulating with the clothing he made for Eve.

The physical attraction between a man and a woman is a blessing in marriage. But this physical attraction occurs outside of marriage as well, and God expects us to control it rather than to lust (Matthew 5:28). Christian males should have at least one refuge from the ever present view of women who make this so difficult by advertising their sexuality for anyone who wants to look. We should be assured that when we are in the presence of our spiritual sisters, they will never dress in ways that steer our minds toward sex. We all want to reach heaven, so it makes no sense for us to encourage one another to sin. Immodest clothing tempts and encourages others to lust. Men will answer for yielding to that temptation, but women will answer for providing that temptation.

God Says Those in Mini Skirts Are Shamefully Showing Their Nakedness.

We know from both Revelation 3:18 and Isaiah 47:3 that God views nakedness as shame. We read in Exodus 28:42 and Isaiah 47:2-3 that God views uncovered thighs as nakedness. It is, therefore, easy to see that clothing that uncovers the thighs reveals our nakedness and is shameful in God's eyes.

God's Standard of Modesty

When we look at Genesis 3:21, Exodus 28:42, Isaiah 47:2-3 and Revelation 3:18 together, we understand that God expects Christians to wear clothing that covers our bodies from shoulders to knees. Knowing this principle enables us to better understand passages such as Titus 2:4-5, in which we find that young women are to be chaste. Chaste means pure and free from carnality. A young woman involved in fornication or adultery is not chaste, and neither is a woman chaste who dresses in a way that tempts men to lust after her. How does a woman dress in a way that tempts men to lust after her? By wearing clothing that uncovers the parts of the body that God covered when he clothed Eve. She tempts men to lust after her by wearing clothing that uncovers the shoulders, back, belly, thighs or is low cut.

This standard does not change just because one is a cheerleader, baton twirler, majorette, gymnast, figure skater, tennis player, homecoming royalty, part of a wedding party, a bride or on the swim team, track team, basketball team or volleyball team. The style or purpose of the clothing is irrelevant. Clothing that uncovers a woman's shoulders, thighs or anything in between will have the same effect on the men who see her, whether it is the trashy attire of a prostitute, a classy business suit or glamorous evening wear. The woman's intent does not matter, either. She may be purposely trying to attract male attention or just keep cool, but the result on the men who see her

will be the same.

A rather humorous story recently in the news demonstrates how some in our society treat clothing as modest or immodest based on the intent of the wearer or the style of the clothing. According to the story, a college cheerleader was kicked off the squad because she took a job working for a Hooter's restaurant. What a joke. Hooter's girls and cheerleaders both wear clothing that is unchaste and immodest. Neither has any right to look down on the other.

Is God's Standard Different for Men?

"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matthew 18:7). This verse along with 1 Corinthians 8:13 and 1 John 2:10 teach that if we draw others into sin, that it is a sin on our part. Immodest apparel draws others into the sin of lust. Titus 2:4-5 spoke to young women, but these three passages apply to all Christians.

Men, listen to this caption found under a picture in *National Geographic Magazine*. The picture shows two men standing on a public beach in New Jersey. Both are tan, muscular, and neither is wearing a shirt. The caption reads, "Get a load of those pecs. It's enough to give a Jersey girl palpitations." It is sometimes acceptable in our society for men to go publicly shirtless, but the principles in God's Word say differently. Think about the clothing God made in Genesis 3:21. He dressed Eve in clothing that covered her shoulders and went all the way to her knees. He dressed Adam the same way. Isaiah 47:2-3 shows that bare thighs are nakedness for women, but Exodus 28:42 shows that bare thighs are also nakedness for men. His standard of modesty is the same for both genders.

Still Not Convinced?

Probably the number one reason we won't accept that God expects us to be covered from shoulders to knees is that we love our sin. Dressing immodestly certainly does give some advantages in this life. Women know that revealing a little nakedness results in more attention and more favorable treatment from men. Some women use immodest apparel to get ahead in business or attract prospective dates. But what does it say about a woman's character who dresses in ways that sexually stimulate in order to make a favorable impression?

It may also be hard to accept that God's standard of modesty is that we be covered from shoulders to knees because very few people in modern day America dress according to that standard, and many in the church don't either. Sometimes even elders, deacons and preachers don't adhere to it. Elders, deacons and preachers are just men, some of whom live sinful lives. When Jesus returns, our deeds will be judged by comparison to the Word of

God (John 12:47-48), not compared to the actions of other humans. If you are relying on the examples set by fellow Christians to be certain you are modest, consider the fact that no matter what the sin, you can find some in Christ's church who practice it and will say it's okay for you to do the same, whether it be dancing condemned in Galatians 5:19-21, cursing condemned in James 3:10, gossiping condemned in 1 Timothy 5:13 or fornication condemned in 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

Our love of fashion, fitting in with friends and activities such as beauty pageants and going to the beach also clouds our judgment, enabling us to justify in our own minds clothing that doesn't meet the biblical standards of modesty. How meaningful will fads, friendships, swimming or admiration of our beauty be five seconds after leaving this world and finding ourselves tormented in the flame of which we read in Luke 16:24? "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Parents, Protect Their Purity

Virginity is a precious present given to us by God so that we in turn may give it to the one special person who promises to forsake all others and "love only us until death do us part." How many of our beautiful, previously innocent children have bestowed this gift, so special that it can only be given once in a lifetime, on someone who is promiscuous and cares nothing about God or the well being of our children? We must teach our children to protect this priceless treasure, because although they can be forgiven of the fornication, virginity, once given, is gone forever; a baby, once conceived is a responsibility as long as we live; and some sexually transmitted diseases, once contracted, cannot be cured.

Our kids are growing up in a society that treats fornication very frivolously. Some movies center on fornication and adultery, depicting these sins as being absolutely hilarious. Television shows treat premarital sex as an expected, normal part of modern dating. Our teens probably know people their age who are sexually active and appear to have normal, successful lives despite their participation in this "forbidden fun." Our high schools now accommodate the unmarried teen mothers, who in times past were banished from public schools due to their shameful conduct and example. Such a multifaceted assault on sexual morality impacts our children and can lessen in their minds the negativity of sex outside of marriage.

Sometimes parents hear the Word of God preached on the subjects of modesty and dancing, and ignore these sermons altogether. Our kids pick up on this selective obedience to God's Word and will very likely grow up to pick and choose the parts they obey, too. Combine parents' disobedience to sermons that condemn immodesty and dancing (both of which our children know encourage sexual lust) with society's influence, and the fornication, promiscuity and premarital pregnancies that result should come as no surprise.

How much better is it to adhere to Romans 12:9 and be certain that our children never view the television shows and movies that use humorous scenes of sinful sex to entertain? How much better is it to put the latest immodest fashions aside and make our children dress in Godly ways as taught in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, and to be certain those they date are also dressing appropriately so as to avoid the corruption warned against in 1 Corinthians 15:33? How much better is it to keep our children from the dances condemned in Galatians 5:19-21, and teach them instead, the value of sexual purity?

Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All

Satan has sold us the lie that in order to be beautiful we have to be sexy. But look around, and you will see men who are modest and look just fine. And you will see women who are modest and yet very beautiful. In the end, you will stand before Jesus having taken it upon yourself to determine what clothing is acceptable, or you will stand before him having dressed according to the principles in God's Word. Which do you prefer?

SOURCE: <http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/2006/may/page17.htm>

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On Immodesty: Too Much Skin (At Church and Elsewhere)?

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