

MODEST CLOTHING

(2019 Revision)

INTRODUCTION:

1. God's expectations:
 - A. 2 Cor. 7:1 – "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness** in the fear of God."
 - B. Matt. 5:16 – "Let your light so shine before men, that they may **see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**"
 - C. These are lofty demands require much thought and attention on our part.
2. I would like to address a very public part of our lives that concerns holiness and how the world sees us. That subject is the **clothing** we wear. This subject is important because...
 - A. God's word addresses it and we are expected to follow its teaching.
 - B. Society has lost its moral compass in this area, which can adversely influence Christians.
 - C. We must be sure our choice of clothing is (1) in line with our required goal of perfecting holiness, and (2) can be worn to the glory to God.
 - D. People, even among God's people, will be lost if we ignore God's teaching on this subject.
3. I want to candidly address the subject of modest clothing hoping to help each of us reach conclusions that are scripturally valid, and which motivate us to clothe ourselves in godly fashion.

BODY:

I. Clothing Speaks

- A. What we wear makes an impression on the world as to who we are, etc.
 1. We might want to buck at this, but if I preached in dirty T-shirt and tattered shorts, etc., you would be wondering what was wrong with me and if I still respected the position I hold!
 2. So, clothing speaks. And, there are clothes that say...
 - a. "I am a woman," and that say, "I am a man."
 - b. "I have a job."
 - c. "I care about modesty, about properly covering my body."
 3. There are clothes that say you want *to show off your body*, whether intentionally or not, or that "I just don't care how I present my body."
 - a. It says this by being molded to one's figure, showing a lot of skin, cleavage, etc.
 - b. This invites ungodly attention and does not present an acceptable example to the world.
 - c. There are clothes that say you are **sexually promiscuous** (Prov. 7:10 – "And there a woman met him, with the **attire of a harlot**, and a crafty heart.").
 4. The world admits that clothing speaks to others of our interests, goals, and moral values.
 - a. Advertisers continually key on the message one's clothing sends, often encouraging women to be "bold" in showing off their bodies.
 - b. On the other side, consider a quote from **That Day I Wore Yoga Pants – 5 Myths About Modesty**, by Phylicia Masonheimer, found on phyliciadelta.com (**Quote 1**)
 - i. Understand, this woman is not a member of the church, but one who believed she could wear certain immodest clothes, even to the defiance of her husband.
 - c. So, the world freely admits that clothing sends out a message. And, in moments of clarity the religious world can see how it speaks even of our relationship to God.
- B. *God says clothing sends out a message* (1 Tim. 2:9-10 – "in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰ **but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.**").
 1. God says clothing has something to say about what we profess as Christians!
 2. That clothing must express modesty: orderly, decent; 2. respectable, honorable; appropriate, well arranged, that which evokes admiration (*Strong's, Vine's, Thayer, Trench; BDAG*).
 - a. This same word is translated an elder being "of good behavior" (1 Tim. 3:2).

- b. So, God demands that you wear **good-behavior clothing**, decent clothing that evokes admiration, respect, and honor. You don't want to be seen in bad-behavior clothing evokes impure thoughts, that detracts from the fact that you must glorify God!
3. That clothing must express propriety: a sense of shame, modesty **rooted in shame** (*Vine*); (2) bashfulness towards men (*Strong*) (3) a sense of honor, reverence (*Thayer*)
 - a. A godly woman's clothing shows her heart to be *harnessed* to godly shame, bashfulness toward men, and reverence before God.
 - b. I feel for you women because so little clothing out there expresses these qualities!
4. That clothing must express moderation: soundness of mind/judgment, self-control, soberness, decency, chastity (*Strong's, Vine's, Thayer, BDAG*).
 - a. I don't know how clothing that forms to the body, that exposes most of one's skin, or that reveals a portion of one's sexual anatomy can show soundness, soberness, or chastity.
 - b. Self-control and sound judgment in your dress is so needed because you don't know whose attention you might attract!
5. To sum it up, God says that clothing must be that "...which is **proper for women professing godliness**, with good works" (1 Tim. 2:10).
 - a. A faithful woman's decoration is to be dominated by godliness.
 - b. And, brethren, so much of the clothing we see today screams of anything but this, saying that a woman is to be brash, liberated from sexual restraints—that sexy = powerful!
6. If we learn anything from this, it is that women/girls must learn to empower themselves by dressing honorably, showing a sense of shame, soundness of mind, self-control, and their profession of godliness, **which will evoke respect from anyone that matters!**

II. Nakedness is condemned

- A. Public nakedness is shameful (Rev. 3:18 – "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.".)
 1. Yet, you don't find bible commands that say, "Don't run around naked!"
 2. But I think that is because it is a given that the natural response of decency is to cover our nakedness (i.e., Adam and Eve hid themselves because they were naked – cite Gen. 3:6-10).
 - a. We must be trained to accept open nudity, to treat it as normal.
 - b. Unfortunately, a lot of Christian parents' girls and boys are being trained to accept nakedness from their youth up by what they are allowed, or encouraged, to wear.
- B. What is nakedness.
 1. Christians *should* know that revealing any part of one's sexual anatomy is nakedness.
 - a. Society has pushed that envelope with its fascination with cleavage and its continual shrinking of the modern bathing suit, exposing far too much skin and anatomy.
 - b. The result? Christians are often affected and violate God's will.
 2. It can mean nudity, as was the youth that fled at Jesus' arrest (Mark 14:51-52).
 3. But, nakedness can mean being under-clothed.
 - a. Peter was said to be "naked" (KJV/ASV), "stripped" (NASV, RSV) while fishing (John 21:7 – ESV – "That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was **stripped** (gumnos) for work, and threw himself into the sea.").
 - b. Naked/stripped (*gumnos*) – clad in the undergarment only, naked (*Vine, Thayer*); (2) without an outer garment, **without which a decent person did not appear in public** (*BDAG*).
 - c. I found that this Jewish undergarment (that Peter would have been wearing) was covered by a cloak that reached at least to the knees. Every respectable person wore an outer garment, because appearing in a ketonet (undergarment) was considered nakedness (www.jewishencyclopedia.com)

4. If the Holy Spirit said Peter was naked, improperly covered, while wearing his **undergarment** (possibly showed half his thigh), how do you think the Holy Spirit would describe people clothed in public in the modern bathing suit, short shorts?

III. Modesty myths:

- A. **Myth 1:** Modesty is fully determined by culture. So, if culture accepts it, it is modest!
 1. Culture does play a role and can even *exceed* God's code of modesty.
 - a. It plays a role in that certain styles of clothing can be determined, harmlessly, by culture.
 - b. Culture may set stricter standards than what God specifies (i.e., immodest to show the ankle, neck, etc.), and in that culture Christians would have to respect these norms.
 - c. Christians are not to give cause to reject Christ (1 Cor. 10:31-33 – "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³² Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, ³³ just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.").
 2. Otherwise, culture can never water down, or negate, God's law of modesty, seeing God's will always trumps man's will.
 3. So, *popular fashion* is an unacceptable standard of modesty.
 - a. Most people do not want to look silly or be completely out of touch with current fashion.
 - b. Our final standard must be to please God, not to conform to the world (Rom. 12:1-2 – "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies** a living sacrifice, holy, **acceptable to God**, *which is* your reasonable service. **And do not be conformed to this world**, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, **that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**").
- B. **Myth 2:** Lust is the other person's problem.
 1. It is a **myth** that lust is **solely a woman's problem** caused solely by what she wears.
 - a. Men are told to be **holy** right before women are told to dress modestly (1 Tim. 2:8 – "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, **lifting up holy hands**, without wrath and doubting")
 - b. **Men** are forbidden to lust (Matt. 5:28 – "But I say to you that whoever **looks at a woman to lust for her** has already **committed adultery** with her in **his** heart.").
 - c. So, men have the responsibility to be holy and honor women with their eyes and minds.
 2. It is a **myth** that lust is **solely a man's problem** and women can dress with impunity.
 - a. Women are commanded to dress modestly to profess godliness (cite 1 Tim. 2:9-10).
 - b. For, you cannot control what a man may think or imagine, but you can control what he sees and at what point his imagination becomes necessary!
 - c. So, contrary to modern thinking, God will hold women accountable for how they dress.
 3. So, **men must be holy and not lust**, and **women must dress modestly, not provoking lust**, and vice versa! Consider the blog, again, for a good thought on this. (**Quote 2**)
- C. **Myth 3:** Biblical modesty is only about **over dressing**, seeing a woman is told to dress "**not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing**" (1 Tim. 2:9).
 1. Because overdressing is the *specific* application, many think it is the *only* application.
 2. God's word often gives a specific application alongside a much broader command.
 - a. In 2 Thess. 3:6 it is commanded that we "withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the **tradition**" taught by the apostles.
 - b. The specific application of being disorderly in the context was that some "walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies" (2 Thess. 3:11).
 - c. This tradition, or teaching, from the apostles also taught against sexual immorality, defrauding one's brother, lusting, etc., and anyone who disobeyed these commands would be walking disorderly and subject to withdrawal (1 Thess. 4:3-8).
 3. In this same way, 1 Tim. 2:9-10 gives a specific application of modesty (overdressing) without negating its application against other forms of immodesty (underdressing).

IV. The positive power of biblical modesty

- A. Modesty *empowers* women and girls to make a positive impact on their world.
 - 1. Modesty doesn't detract from womanhood or girlhood but enhances them.
 - 2. A modestly adorned woman expresses godliness and honor which is always good.
- B. Women are empowered by acknowledging and understanding the allurements of their bodies to men.
 - 1. The world claims that women/girls are empowered by showing off their bodies and using their sex appeal however they desire, but that is a lie of Satan.
 - a. Ladies, showing off your bodies only cheapens you to men, allowing men to have cheap thrills at your expense!
 - b. Men will look while also thinking about you in ways you would not appreciate!
 - 2. You may think that "no man will look at **me**," but that is false. Men will look!
 - a. You hold great power to command the attention of men around you for good or evil!
 - b. You hold this power because God made women, including your bodies, as the perfect match for men (and men are visual beings) (Gen. 2:18 – "And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper **comparable to him**."")!
 - 3. That is why God commands women to dress modestly, seeing what you wear (or do not wear) matters to men (**Quote 3**).
 - 4. So, you must dress modestly, or sensibly cover your body, so that you do not use the power of your allurements in an ungodly way and invite lust.
- C. Women are empowered when they understand the purpose of their bodies.
 - 1. Your bodies, like men's bodies, must be used for the glory of God (1 Cor. 6:19-20 – "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."").
 - a. The purpose of glorifying God with our bodies must dominate our minds.
 - b. When this is true, women will avoid dressing to cause lust, and men will not look to lust!
 - 2. A woman's sexual allurements are rightfully purposed for her husband, as a man's is for His wife (Gen. 2:24-25 – "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."").
 - a. It is by God's design that in this relationship nakedness is not shameful.
 - b. As Christians, we need to understand this and keep it within these confines!

CONCLUSION:

- 1. God demands that we dress differently, even significantly different in many cases.
- 2. So much rides on our willingness to show in dress the godliness we profess in heart.
- 3. A **good rule for modest dress** is the "**touch rule**" which says if you are exposing parts of your body that you would feel *sexually* violated, or *sexually* uncomfortable, if a man not your husband touched you there, then you are revealing what others aren't supposed to see!
- 4. So, I hope that you will see God's instructions about modest dress not as an heavy burden to bear, but a means of empowering ourselves and our young people to dress so as to command honor, admiration, and dignified treatment by others, while expressing holiness and glorifying of God.
- 5. The choice is yours to make and must be made...every day...by what you wear.
- 6. Do you need to repent because you have brought reproach upon God through uncovering your bodies, by dressing immodestly before the world? If so, you need to make public confession of this sin, repent, and seek God's forgiveness. And, after doing so, you need to cover up!