

God Cares About How We Dress

Introduction:

- A. Text: Isa.5:20,21.
 - 1. We need to study the subject of modesty so we will know we aren't calling something good that is evil before God.
- B. Many Christians have a difficulty deciding what to wear and thus answering these questions:
 - 1. How tight is too tight?
 - 2. How short is too short?
 - 3. How low-cut is too low-cut?
 - 4. How high should the slit go?
 - 5. How sheer is too sheer?
 - 6. Is it okay to wear a bikini?
 - 7. Is it okay for me to mow the lawn or play sports bare chested?
- C. And to these we would add these related questions:
 - 1. Can I attend the dance?
 - 2. Can I go swimming with members of the opposite sex?
 - 3. Is it okay to look at pornography or watch movies filled with nudity?
 - 4. Understanding modesty will help to answer ALL of these questions.
- D. I believe the reason many Christians have such a problem answering these questions is because they want to follow as closely as possible perverted social standards (so they won't appear to be different from the world) while at the same time trying to serve the Lord (which by nature demands we be different from the world).
 - 1. The only way for the Christian to deal with these questions is to ignore the pressures and standards of the world and focus only on what will be pleasing to our Lord.
 - 2. The fact is that where I draw the line and where you draw the line or where our society draws the line on this subject doesn't matter – What matters is where God draws the line.
- E. It is NOT just a female problem – men are often seen in indecent attire as well.
 - 1. We need to understand the biological fact of life, that there is a natural sexual appeal of the female form to the male.
 - 2. Survey of why men and women go to the beach: 69% of men go to see women in swim suits, whereas only 7% of women said they went to see men (“Beach Motives,” Psychology Today, Dec. 1982, p.10).
 - 3. Sadly, designers and manufacturers have learned the most profitable way for them to sell their goods is to appeal to man's baser lusts.
 - a. Thus, everything from hardware to underwear is shown to have sex appeal.
 - 4. This has made it difficult for a woman professing godliness to purchase her cloths because she has to select from what worldly minded people have designed to appeal to man's baser lusts.
- F. In this lesson we want to discuss that God **does** care how we dress.
 - 1. Hopefully we'll see some things we need to avoid and also some things which will help us to make decisions which will reflect the Lord we follow.
 - 2. This is an important subject – it needs to be preached on from the pulpit regularly.

I. Can Be Seen in the Garden of Eden.

- A. Gen.3:7-11.
- B. Notice the word “*naked*” in verse 10.
 - 1. In this context it does not mean totally nude, but it suggests *nakedness in the sense or degree of a lack of sufficient clothing*.
 - a. cf.2:25– “*And they were both **naked**, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*”
 - 1) A different Hebrew word which means totally bare.
 - 2) [The word in 2:25 is #6174 (‘arowm) whereas the one in 3:10 is #5903 (‘eyrom).]

2. 3:7– They had made for themselves aprons from fig-leaves but they still recognized they were naked – what they had created was not sufficient to cover their nakedness.
 - a. One thus may be wearing a certain amount of clothing but still be naked in the sight of God.
- C. One ancient translation suggests Adam’s apron was designed to cover the *“life giving parts.”*
 1. Most scholars agree these fig leaf coverings were skimpy at best and covered the equivalent of modern underwear.
- D. Gen.3:21– *“And Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins, and clothed them.”*
 1. Strongs– 3801– “from an unused root meaning to cover . . . 1) tunic, under-garment; 1a) a long shirt-like garment usually of linen.”
 2. Wilson’s O.T. Word Studies, page 81, “a tunic, worn next the skin . . . generally with sleeves, to the knees, but seldom to the ankles, Gen.3:21.”
 3. Davis Dictionary of the Bible, page 148, “It usually had short sleeves and reached nearly to the knees, though a longer form with sleeves of full length was in use.”
 4. So it clearly is suggested God created for man a garment which covered much more than just his *“life giving parts.”*
- E. We see from the story of Adam and Eve that God does care about what we wear.
 1. And we see He wants us to wear more than just what covers the bare minimum.

II. Can Be Seen in God’s Design of Garments for Priests.

- A. Ex.20:26; Ex.28:40-43.
 1. He prepared breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness.
- B. “1) underwear, drawers, trousers; 1a) a priestly undergarment of linen” – BDB/Thayers.
- C. The ISBE tells us these *“breeches”* were, “A garment, extending from the waist to or just below the knee or to the ankle, and covering each leg separately” – page 518.
- D. In order to cover their nakedness they were to cover from the waist to the knees.
- E. Why?
 1. Because to expose the thigh was to expose your nakedness – cf. Isa.47:2,3.
- F. We see garments designed by God which unquestionably covered their nakedness.

III. Can Be Seen in Paul’s Instructions in 1 Tim.2:9,10.

A. Modest.

1. “Orderly, well-arranged, decent, modest” – Vine.
2. “That which is well-ordered, decorous, becoming...that which is ... appropriate” – Barnes.
3. It carries more than just the idea of an outward coordination of clothing, but it suggests an inward coordination as well.
4. The modest woman shows by the way she dresses she has her act together.
 - a. Inwardly she professes godliness and it can be seen in everything she does, including in the very way she dresses.
 - b. Her clothing is decent with no suggestion of sexual impurity – since that is not in her heart.

B. Shamefacedness.

1. “A sense of shame, modesty” – Vine.
2. “Shamefastness is that modesty which is fast or rooted in character” – Davies.
3. This is the word which more closely corresponds to our English word “Modest.”
4. It is the ability to feel a sense of shame when the body is not clothed properly.
5. If a woman exposes herself in some bold forward manner (by clothing which is insufficient to cover her body or which exposes some portion of it in a lustful, lascivious way), her attire is void of modesty and godliness.
 - a. Even if her body *is* covered but the pattern printed on it calls attention to her sexuality, it is void of modesty and she has obviously adorned herself with a lack of shamefacedness.

6. cf. Jer. 6:15– “...they were not at all ashamed, **neither could they blush**: ...”
 - a. Obvious we too live in a society which has lost its sense of shame – its ability to blush.
 - 1) When French designer Louis Reard introduced the bikini in 1946, Parisian models refused to model it.
 - a) He had to hire a nude dancer to unveil it!
 - b) Today little is frowned upon in society.
 - i) Thong bathing suits, speedos, bikinis, tankinis, hot pants, mini-skirts, halter tops ...
 - b. Brethren, have we allowed ourselves to lose our sense of shame as well?
 - c. Let us study our scriptures thoroughly to restore in our heart a sense of shame when exposing more of our bodies than God would have us expose.

C. **Sobriety.**

1. “Denotes soundness of mind, soberness, sound judgment” – Vine.
2. Her attire must reflect soundness of mind, sound judgment and self-control.
3. We should use self-control in choosing our attire by not allowing vanity or the desire to get lustful looks from the opposite sex to govern what we wear.
4. Sound judgment demands we wear what we know to be unquestionably right and that we refuse to wear anything where there may be a doubt.

D. **Not with Braided Hair, or Gold, or Pearls, or Costly Array.**

1. Paul illustrates the lack of judgment one would use if they overdressed.
 - a. So his concern is not just in under-dressing.
2. For one to spend large amounts of their time getting themselves all decorated up for others to see shows a lack of sobriety – a lack of self-government.

E. **With Good Works, As One Professing Godliness.**

1. The emphasis is not upon what you look like, but upon what you are.
2. Our clothing and our actions reflect our inner person – they are to be a reflection of our heart.
3. If our inner-person is thinking on those things which are above, then we must make certain nothing we wear and nothing we do says otherwise.
4. So let us all not only profess godliness, but show godliness by the way in which we dress.

IV. Can be seen in Peter’s instructions in 1 Pet.3:1-6.

- A. Again, women are not to place emphasis on outward appearances but on the heart.
- B. Her spirit is to be meek and quiet.
- C. Her behavior is to be chaste – meaning “pure from every fault, immaculate” – Vine.
 1. She is to live a life of purity.
- D. If a Christian woman obeys Peter and adorns herself with the ornament of the meek and quiet spirit, will her dress be modest or immodest?
 1. Will her dress be bold and daring and expose portions of her body?
 2. If her life is chaste & pure will she dress so as to leave the impression she isn’t chaste & pure?
- E. We must understand immodesty is diametrically opposed to chastity and the meek and quiet spirit.

V. Can Be Seen in the Word Lasciviousness.

- A. Definition: (Also translated by licentiousness, wantonness, lewdness and lustful desires.)
 1. Lasciviousness means, “wanton (acts or) manners as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females” – Thayer.
 2. “Denotes excess, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness” – Vine.
- B. Another word for lasciviousness is “lewdness” which Webster defines as “tendency to excite lust.”
 1. When we talk about lasciviousness we are talking about trying to entice lust in other people.
- C. Such is condemned as one of the works of the flesh in Gal.5:19-21.

- D. Eph.4:19– *“who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”*
1. Many have past the point of feeling shame and thus they don't even hide the fact that they are trying to excite lust in those who see them.
 2. What body parts incite lust?
 - a. The woman's body:
 - 1) The bosom (including cleavage).
 - 2) The midriff.
 - 3) The loins.
 - 4) The thigh.
 - 5) The tush.
 - b. The man's body:
 - 1) The chest.
 - 2) The abdomen.
 - 3) The loins.
 - 4) The thigh.
 - 5) The tush.
 - c. NOTE: These are the very things God sought to cover!
 - d. Common sense tells us that outside of marriage, these should be covered!
- E. Dress based on sex-appeal, designed to produce lewd emotions or excite lust, would be “lasciviousness.”
1. Women professing godliness will refuse to parade in public in such apparel.

VI. What Cloths Are Decent Apparel?

- A. We are talking about what is going to be seen by others.
1. What is decent in private is not necessarily decent in public.
 2. What is decent in the presence of others of the same sex is not necessarily decent when in the presence of one or more of the opposite sex.
- B. Now, having said that, **If you are a modest thinking person you don't need to be told what you can wear or where you can wear it.**
1. When you stand before your mirror do you ask, is this decent for me to wear?
 - a. Is it decent (does it cover my nakedness) and will it remain that way when sitting or bending?
 2. When dressing, ask yourself the question, does this garment reflect my true thinking, what I am and what I want others to think of me?
 - a. Does it make me look like I have something impure on my mind?
 3. When you are in public do you find yourself constantly tugging on your dress to keep yourself covered or using something extra to cover your legs while sitting (such as a newspaper, magazine, coat, cushion, etc..)?
 4. Ask yourself, when your garment reveals your shapely form, or exposes or calls attention to your private parts, or reflects seduction, is that really how I ought to dress?
 5. Many modern day fashions – such as the mini-skirt, slit-skirts (like a strip-tease), see-through blouses – are **designed** to be seductive.
 - a. Mary Quant, "the fashion queen of Britain's 1960's", and the inventor of the miniskirt, made public boastings of how she intended the clothes she designed to seduce men.
 - 1) She declared that her creation was for the purpose of making sex (illicit sex) more available in the afternoon.
 - 2) In an interview she was asked what kind of person today's woman wants to be, and she answered, "A sexual creature. She displays her sexuality instead of this coy business of hiding it. Today she dresses to say, 'I am sexy. I like men. I enjoy life.'"

- 3) Then she made this bold statement: **"Mini-clothes are symbolic of those women who want to seduce a man."**
 - 4) Later in the interview, she was asked where this line of clothing was headed.
 - a) She responded in one word: "Sex." (November 13, 1967)
 - b. Clearly they are lascivious and should not be worn by those professing godliness.
- C. Consider a comparison.**
1. Prov.7:10– "... **the attire of a harlot**" (one looking for sex).
 2. 1 Tim.2:9,10– speaks of proper clothing which *"becometh women professing godliness."*
 3. Under which category would you place the following???
 - a. Bikini.
 - b. Short-shorts / Short-skirts.
 - c. No shirt.
 - d. Halter tops.
 - e. Low-cut / See-thru blouses.
 - f. Slit skirts.
- D. What modest dress does:**
1. Covers nakedness – Gen.3.
 - a. Not just *our* sense of nakedness, but what **GOD** calls nakedness.
 2. Reflects shamefacedness, sobriety, godliness and good works – 1 Tim.2:9,10.
 3. Reflects purity, reverence and a quiet spirit – 1 Pet.3:2-4.

VII. Justifications For Wearing "Questionable" Clothing.

- A. Some will lust regardless of what I wear.**
1. That may be true, but at least you won't be the cause.
- B. If someone lusts after me, that's their problem not mine. They ought to learn to control their minds.**
1. No, it **IS** your problem – Matt.18:6,7.
 2. If you dress in revealing and suggestive clothing you are guilty of lasciviousness (Gal.5:19).
- C. It's hot & I dress for comfort in the summer. If that means shorter shorts, lower cut dresses & blouses, shorter skirts, and swim suits that barely cover what underwear covers then so be it – I gotta' keep cool.**
1. Nothing wrong with keeping cool as long as we observe God's desires for our clothing standard.
 2. Are you willing to risk burning in Hell for all eternity for the sake of keeping cool on earth?
- D. Some suggest that there are places, such as swimming pools & beaches, where skimpy clothing (even bikinis or french cut swim suits) would be permissible and decent, particularly if there are other people there dressed in similar garments.**
1. How far will one take this kind of reasoning?
 - a. Would you argue drunkenness is permissible as long as there are other people around who are also drinking and some who are drunker than you?
 - b. Would you argue that fornication is alright as long as you do it in a whore house?
 2. The presence of water doesn't reduce a young man's eyesight or hormone levels!
- E. The object is not to see how little we can get by with wearing.**
1. We are not to see how close we can get to immodesty without crossing the line.
 2. If that's your attitude or approach to dress than you have some serious spiritual problems!

Conclusion:

- A. If you are a modest thinking person you don't need to be told what you can wear.
- B. Let's be sure our outward appearance shows our inward love for and devotion to the Lord.