

Modesty: Godly Clothing

(2023 Revision)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Over the past couple of weeks, I have addressed the lifestyle God expects of His people.
 - A. First, we considered how we live as “aliens and strangers” in this world, or as those whose home is elsewhere, whose lifestyle and culture are very different from those around us.
 - B. Next, we considered how different God expects us to be. We saw how God desires...
 - i. That we be the **light** and **salt** of this world, indicating that our lives must be truly distinct and affect others by that distinctiveness!
 - ii. That our lives **imitate Him** by living in love and purity and holiness, **refusing to participate in the ways of darkness**.
 - iii. His people to **come out of the world and be separate**, resisting worldliness and uncleanness because **we are the temple of the holy God** and He dwells with us.
2. With those things in mind, I would like to address a subject that has to do with holiness in a very public aspect of our lives.
 - A. Addressing this subject is important because...
 - i. God’s word addresses this subject, which means we cannot ignore it. Yet, it has been four years since I last addressed it in any detail, which is a bit of negligence on my part.
 - ii. We live in a society that has very little if any understanding or conscience in this area, which can often adversely influence Christians.
 - iii. Christians need to be sure that what we choose to do is (1) in line with God’s desire that we be distinct, or different, from this world, (2) in line with our goal of perfecting holiness in the sight of God, and (3) is not detracting from, but instead pointing people to, God’s glory.
 - B. What I want to address has to do with godliness and how it is expressed in *modest clothing*.
3. I want to candidly address this subject in hopes of helping each one of us reach conclusions that are both scripturally valid and that motivate us to clothe ourselves acceptably.

BODY:

I. Clothing Speaks

- A. What we wear says something about who we are, what we are doing, etc.
 1. It says to others...
 - a. “I am a woman.”
 - b. “I am a man.”
 - c. “I want to be noticed!”
 - d. “I have a job.”
 - e. “I care about modesty.”
 - f. “I want to show off my body.”
 - i. This can be expressed whether one does so intentionally or not.
 - ii. That is because it is expressed when clothing is molded to one’s figure, shows a lot of skin, shows cleavage, etc.
 - g. “I am **promiscuous**” (Prov. 7:10 – “And behold, a woman comes to meet him, **dressed as a harlot** and cunning of heart.”).
 2. We might reject this, but the world freely admits that clothing talks.
 - a. Clothing designers and advertisers key on the message of clothing, often speaking of its empowering effect, how it says “I am smart and in charge,” or its alluring nature.
 - b. Consider a quote from an article by *woman* who is not a member of the church.
 - i. **That Day I Wore Yoga Pants – 5 Myths About Modesty**, by Phylicia Masonheimer, found on phyliciadelta.com (**Quote 1** – on slide)
 - ii. Note the very telling points she makes concerning the message of one’s clothing.
 - c. So, the world freely admits that clothing sends a message. And, in moments of clarity the religious world will admit how it speaks even about one’s relationship with God.
 - d. We, of course, need to have that clarity of mind and spirit **always**.

- B. God cares about our message (1 Tim. 2:8-10 – ESV – “I desire then that **in every place** the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in **respectable apparel**, with **modesty** and **self-control**, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with **what is proper for women who profess godliness**—with good works.”).
1. Here God is concerned about what our life says to the world no matter where we might be.
 2. God wants men to live a prayerful life that approaches Him with *holy hands*, while showing self-control and love in relationship to others (i.e., “without wrath and quarreling” – 2:8).
 3. Likewise, God demands women show proper devotion to Him and holiness in how they present themselves to the world (2:9-10).
 - a. Her clothing/demeanor must respectable: orderly, decent, honorable, appropriate, admirable (*Strong’s, Vine’s, Thayer, Trench; BDAG*).
 - i. This adorning, like God’s desire for the men, addresses a right attitude as much as it does the right clothing.
 - ii. So, how a woman presents herself in demeanor and clothing must be with the goal of evoking respect and honor in the name of God and godliness.
 - b. Her clothing/demeanor must be modest: being **rooted in shame** (not in a bad way); (2) bashfulness towards men (3) to have a sense of honor, reverence (*Vine, Strong, Thayer*)
 - i. A godly woman’s clothing will never express irreverence toward God or show a lack of restraint in presenting herself before the opposite sex.
 - ii. I feel for you godly women and mothers today in this because so little clothing in our stores, especially with summer coming on, express these qualities in any way!
 - c. Her clothing must show self-control: soundness of mind/judgment, soberness, decency, chastity (*Strong’s, Vine’s, Thayer, BDAG*).
 - i. The popular clothing today that clings to the body’s form, that exposes much skin, or that reveals or accentuates portions of one’s sexual anatomy does not do this.
 - ii. Ladies, self-control, or sound judgment, in dress is needed because men, even godly men, struggle not to look or stare at what women are willing to show. So, you never know whose attention you might be attracting or heart you might be affecting by your dress!
 - d. Her clothing must be “**proper for women professing godliness**, with good works” (2:10).
 - i. Women of faith want the world to see them as godly and their works as good.
 - ii. This will help ward off being viewed as an object, which is what so much of women’s clothing does today.
 - iii. This will help ensure that the attention a woman gets will be tempered by **respect**, at least **from anyone that matters!** For, there are wicked people that can lust and think evil no matter what you wear.

II. Nakedness versus holiness

A. Nakedness:

1. Jesus’ rebuke of the church at Laodicea shows **public nakedness is shameful** (Rev. 3:18 – “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may **clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed**; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.”).
 - a. Our *natural response* is to *cover our nakedness*, like Adam and Eve did when they were naked (Gen. 3:6-10). People show this to be true (i.e., someone’s pant fall down).
 - b. Even children develop a sense of modesty without necessarily being taught.
 - c. We must be trained, or our conscience seared, to accept public nakedness as normal.
2. What is nakedness?

- a. Nudity is nakedness (Mark 14:51-52 – “A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked (*gymnos*) body; and they seized him.⁵² But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked (*gymnos*).”).
- b. Christians *should* know that revealing any part of one’s sexual anatomy is nakedness, even though society pushed past that boundary long ago.
- c. Being under-*clothed*, or not having on enough *clothes*, is also nakedness.
 - i. Peter was “*gymnos*,” or “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** (*gymnos*) for work, and threw himself into the sea.”).
 - 1) Naked/stripped (*gymnos*) – clad in the undergarment only, naked (*Vine, Thayer*); (2) without an outer garment, **without which a decent person did not appear in public** (*BDAG*).
 - 2) **www.jewishencyclopedia.com** – This Jewish undergarment (that Peter would have been wearing) was covered in public by a cloak that reached at least to the knees. Every *respectable person* wore an outer garment, because appearing in a undergarment was considered nakedness.
 - ii. Since the Holy Spirit as well as Peter considered himself to be naked, or not respectably covered, while wearing his **undergarment**, how would Holy Spirit describe people wearing the popular low-cut, very short “shorts” or dresses, or what passes as an acceptable bathing suit (often far less than undergarments)?

B. Holiness:

1. A Christian must be holy!
 - a. We must imitate God’s holiness (1 Pet. 1:14-16 – “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;¹⁶ because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”)
 - b. This holiness is vital (Heb. 12:14 – “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”).
2. God expressed the holiness of something by **covering it up!**
 - a. The Most Holy Place, which contained the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat, was covered by a veil, as was the entrance to the tabernacle/temple (Ex. 26:31-33).
 - b. All the holy objects of the tabernacle were to be completely covered when transporting (Num. 4:5-15).
 - c. The holy priests of God were given tunics and undergarments to “cover their nakedness” (Ex. 28:40-43) and the altars of God could not have stairs so the priests’ “nakedness will not be exposed on it” (Num. 20:26).
3. Since we are God’s priests today (1 Pet. 2:9) and our “body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you” (1 Cor. 6:19), we need to cover up in godly fashion.

III. Three 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. 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.). In such a culture Christians would have to abide by these norms.
 - c. For, Christians are not to give cause to reject Christ (1 Cor. 10:31-33 – “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.³² Give no offense either to Jews or to 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 the many, so that they may be saved.”).
 2. Yet, culture can never water down or negate God’s rules of modesty. For, the Christian should always obey God over people, trends, etc. (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

B. **Myth 2:** Lust is the other person's problem.

1. It is a **myth** that lust is **solely a woman's problem** caused by what she wears, seeing **men** are not to look to lust (Matt. 5:27-28 – "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery';²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.").
2. It is also 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 (1 Tim. 2:9-10).
 - b. So, although you cannot control what a man thinks or imagines, you can control what he sees from you and at what point his imagination becomes necessary!
3. So, **men must be holy and not lust**, and **women must dress modestly so as not to provoke lust**, and vice versa! Consider another quote from "Yoga Pants" article on this. (**Quote 2**)

C. **Myth 3:** Biblical modesty only condemns **over dressing**.

1. Women are told to dress "...not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments,¹⁰ but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness" (1 Tim. 2:9-10).
 - a. Because overdressing is the *specific* application, some say it is the *only* application.
 - b. This ignores the "not/but" nature of this passage, where the first is downplayed (but not fully rejected) in leu of emphasizing the second (like John 6:27 – "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life...").
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).
 - i. The specific answer is to work in quiet fashion so that one can pay for and eat their own bread" (3:7-8, 12) and not choose to live off the work of others, seeing if one will not work they should not eat (3:10).
 - c. Yet, the tradition, or teaching, these brethren had received from the apostles also taught against sexual immorality, defrauding one's brother, lusting, etc. (1 Thess. 4:3-8). So, to disobey these commands was to walk disorderly and be subject to withdrawal.
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), both of which do not profess godliness.

IV. The power of biblical modesty

A. Modesty *empowers* us to make a positive impact.

1. Modesty does not detract from womanhood or manhood but enhances it.
2. A modestly adorned person expresses godliness and honor which is always good.

B. Modesty empowers us to control our bodies' allurements.

1. The world claims that people are empowered, especially women, by showing off their bodies and using their sex appeal, but that is Satan's lie.
 - a. Showing off your body cheapens you.
 - b. It causes others to look at you for the wrong reasons and gives them cheap thrills at your expense!
2. Choosing biblical modesty gives you control over how others see you.
 - a. Of course, I know quite well that men and women are different in this area.
 - b. So, you may think, especially you ladies, that "no one will look at **me**," but that is false.
 - i. We all hold power to command the attention of others for good or evil!
 - ii. This is especially true of women, seeing God made you, including your bodies, as the perfect match for men (Gen. 2:18), and men are visual beings!
 - iii. A woman's body's natural allurements is why God commands women to dress modestly. It truly affects men. (**Quote 3**)

- C. Modesty helps empower us to use our bodies for godly purposes.
1. Our bodies, whether men or women, must be used for God's glory (1 Cor. 6:19-20 – "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.>").
 - a. The world perverts this purpose, making our bodies into sexual objects, rather than a means of glorifying God and being respected.
 - b. When we understand this we will care about how we dress, giving others no opportunity to objectify us or reason to disrespect us!
 2. God desires men and women to save their bodies and their sexual allurements for marriage (Prov. 5:18-19ff.).
 - a. Christians need to remember this.
 - b. Christian parents need to instill this in their children from an early age, training them in modesty!
 - c. A **good rule for modest dress** is the "**touch rule**." It says if you are exposing a part of your body that would cause you to feel *sexually* violated, or *sexually* uncomfortable, if someone not your mate touched, then you are revealing what the world, the public, is not supposed to see!

CONCLUSION:

1. God demands that we dress differently, even significantly different, in many cases.
 - A. So much concerning our godliness, our influence for Christ, and our glorifying God rides on our willingness to accept this.
 - B. And I hope you see biblical modesty not as a heavy burden, but as a means of empowering you and your children to command respect, honor, and dignity in this wicked world, while also glorifying of God.
2. The choice is yours and must be made...every day...by what your clothing says to the world.
3. Have you brought reproach upon God through uncovering your bodies, by dressing immodestly before the world? If so, you need to confess this sin, repent, and seek God's forgiveness. And, after doing so, you need to cover up!
4. If you are outside of Christ, will you come today in F-R-C-B?