

Moral Issues

Modesty

Warning

When you dress to gain other's attention,
You lose God's.

A common excuse for immodest apparel is “God does not care about what I look like, He cares about my heart.” While God’s main focus is on the heart of man, the outer man can often be a physical insight into one’s spiritual barometer. While immodest apparel may just seem like a matter of poor judgment, it is actually an issue of morality.

God’s Word lays down principles for appropriate dress and the Christian should be careful to discern and apply these principles in their daily lives (not just “at church”). Two New Testament passages give us instruction on what God expects in this area. If the heart is right with God, we will allow God’s Word to guide us in what we put on our exterior.

1 Timothy 2:9-10 says, “...the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works” (NKJV).

A second text is found in 1 Peter 3:3-4, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”

Notice the CEV’s modern paraphrase of this same passage, “Don’t depend on things like fancy hairdos or gold jewelry or expensive clothes to make you look beautiful. Be beautiful in your heart by being gentle and quiet.

This kind of beauty will last, and God considers it very special.”

There are five key words found in these two texts which will help us decipher whether our dress is in line with God’s standards—modest, propriety, moderation, gentle and quiet. As the Christian takes one last look in the mirror, ask yourself...

Would my look be considered “gentle?” This is a word meaning “mild” or “meek.” Therefore, dress intended to make one look rough, mean, rude, crude or arrogant is the opposite of this principle. Face it, some people look flat-out scary in the world today with their black eye make-up, leather-studded wear and crude T-shirts and bumper stickers. We can display such by our dress and in our attitudes as well.

Does my dress reflect a “quiet spirit?” Vine’s defines the word “quiet” here as “causing no disturbance to others.” Any type of dress intended to “get a reaction” by its lusty appeal, extravagance or rebellion defies this principle. If your goal is to get a double-take from men on the street or to “defy the norm” you are dressing immorally.

Is my outfit “modest?” The term “modest” means “orderly, well-arranged, decent and respectable.” In the 1st century, the term “modest” was used as an opposite to revealing clothes that were too tight, too short, etc. If your outfit could fit into an egg, it might just not be “modest.” If your jeans look like

they have been spray-painted on your legs, you might want to move up a size or two or three. On the other hand, if your underwear’s showing because your pants are down at your knees this is not generally considered “respectable.” Likewise, jeans that have been attacked by an army of moths do not fit God’s definition of modesty here. Before Joseph came from the dungeon to see Pharaoh he respectably “shaved” and “changed his clothing” (Genesis 41:14).

Does my apparel display a sense of “propriety?” The term “propriety” is also translated as “shamefaced” (KJV). Another synonym is “bashfulness.” God does not want us arrogantly flaunting our body to the world. Instead, we should have a sense of shame and a humble opinion of our figures. Why do women want to wear short shorts, tight jeans and bikinis? Why do men like to walk around shirtless flexing? They fail to have the proper perspective on their bodies. It displays pride instead of shame.

Do my clothes reflect a sense of “moderation.” Think “moderate” as you read this word. God does not expect you to turn your collar backwards and walk around with Jesus T-shirts so you are known as a right-wing, religious radical (see Matthew 23:5). Yet, nor does God want us to be worldly, lust-driven liberals always pushing the envelope in the realm of our appearance.

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