

# Adorned in Modesty

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## The Issue of Immodesty

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Some will say that I'm just an old fogey, out of touch with the times. That is probably true, but that isn't the real issue here.

Some will say that I was just raised in a different time and culture – and that is certainly true. But a different culture and a different time isn't the real issue here either.

The issue is, in a word, modesty. Or more specifically, what seems to be a growing lack of modesty – and especially among those who say they believe and follow the Word of God.

And while modesty should be a standard met by all people of all cultures of all times – sinners and saints alike – I guess that when a sinner acts like a sinner (even when it relates to immodesty), that is not so surprising. But when one bearing the name of Christian acts this way, that is especially disappointing.

I assure you that I am no prude (although no doubt some are already questioning that). God made our bodies, and God made us to be able to experience the excitements related to it. Within the confines and privacy of marriage, God's design and intentions are for us to give enjoyment to one another to the fullest. The world should have *nothing* on us when it comes to enjoying what God has made for us to enjoy!

The problem is that immodesty begins to erode that design.

## A Special Application to Women

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Let's look at something Paul wrote on modesty:

*...Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control.... (1Timothy 2:9)*

First, notice that this admonition is addressed to women. For those familiar with the Bible, this should seem a bit unusual. The Greek language of that day, like many languages even now, routinely used masculine terms when addressing a mixed-gender audience. "Brothers" (or something similar) was the term typically used when the target audience was made up of both male and female. But when "sisters" or "women" was the subject it really stands out because of its rarity. And when it was used it was to focus particularly on the ladies.

Does this mean that only women are to be modest? No, of course not. But it does imply that there is an underlying difference between the impact of women being immodest and men being immodest.

I've about decided that too few mothers know or too few fathers are willing to explain to their adolescent daughters that there is just a difference in the way that guys are (typically) impacted by immodesty and the way that girls are. And that difference is why the women are specifically addressed here.

## Clothing, but More than Just Clothing

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Second, notice that Paul here speaks in terms of clothing (“respectable apparel”), and then moves from that specific to general character qualities (“modest and self-control”). In other words, modesty here includes what a gal wears, but it’s so much more than that. Modesty impacts the amount of skin she shows; it also involves the amount of her figure that is revealed in clothes which are tight enough that her shape is seen even though skin isn’t. Modesty will govern what is shown, as well as what is suggested by the low neckline or the slit up the side of a skirt.

It’s important to note that modesty is not about body shaming – and in fact, is quite the opposite. We should each learn a level of acceptance and satisfaction with the body we are given. But satisfaction does not mean revealing it for all to see. One does not bring out their finest clothes to work the cattle or muck out the stables, but reserves them for the special occasions they were meant for. Similarly, modesty is about the heart that is not willing to reveal or to hint at what should be reserved. A modest woman is far more concerned about what is right than what are her rights.

## The Meaning of Modesty

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So, what exactly is modesty? The Greek term Paul uses here is a compound word, literally translated as “not” and “to see/notice.” The English term isn’t used this way so much today, but some years ago a bashful person might be called

“modest” (i.e., someone who didn’t want to be noticed). A person who is down-playing his or her role in something might have someone comment, “Oh, he’s just being modest.” A “modest home” is possibly one that is comfortable and accommodating, but simply doesn’t have things that are flashy or reason for someone to take special notice of. In essence, modesty means to not draw attention to something or someone.

So, when the Bible speaks of women and modesty, it involves presenting themselves in such a way that will not draw any undue attention (and especially sexual attention) to themselves. This obviously includes exposing portions of her body that should be covered. And as already mentioned, it can also include what is covered in a way that still reveals or draws attention to what is underneath (e.g., by tight clothes), or what is partially shown that will draw interest towards what is still covered. It also includes words and images strategically printed over or near private areas to draw others’ attention to that region (e.g., a brand name across the rear of gym shorts or sweat pants).

And let me add one more thing to the mix that seems to have slipped the attention of many: Posts and comments in social media. Sometimes I sit and wonder if some of these gals online would sit in a large room of all ages of both men and women (and boys and girls) and say aloud some of the topics and questions and memes that they post for everyone to view. Sure, sometimes there are questions that do need to be asked – but modesty calls for it to be done within the appropriate

audience. I dare to think that more often than they realize or intend the lines of immodesty are crossed.

In short, when Paul says “don’t draw attention,” that attention also includes what is written as well as what can be seen.

## Conclusion

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The bottom line is that if what is being worn or said or done draws undue attention – and especially sexual attention – to a gal’s body (and especially the parts that should be kept private), then it likely isn’t passing the modesty test.

Of course there are some guys that are going to look at women that way no matter what they wear or do – I get that. But this isn’t about what those guys choose to do. Modesty is about having the character quality that strives to refrain from anything that will draw undue sexual attention. And according to the scriptures, a godly woman should be focused on being clothed in that character quality of modesty.

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