

MODESTY

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The topic of modesty is one of great importance that has far reaching effect into the lives of all today. It effects the thoughts of those around us and has an effect in the spiritual well being of all.

In a Merit Report the question was asked as to why people went to the beach. 60% of males said that they go to the beach to watch women and 30% of females said that they go to be watched.

It is necessary to define some words before we begin our search of God's Word on the subject of modesty. The Greek word translated modest is used twice in the New Testament. Once in 1 Timothy 2:9 where it refers to modest dress and once in 1 Timothy 3:2 where it is translated "good behaviour" and is in reference to the quality of life that an elder of the Lords church is to possess. Thayer's defines the word as, "well arranged, seemly, modest." Webster's defines the word modest as, "placing a moderate estimate on ones abilities or worth; neither bold nor self assertive; tending toward diffidence. Observing the proprieties of dress and behaviour; decent."

The word "shamefacedness" is also found twice in the New Testament. Once in 1 Timothy 2:9 and once in Hebrews 12:28 where it is translated "reverence." In this passage it refers to the respect with which we are to serve God. Thayer's defines the word as, "a sense of shame or honor, modesty, bashfulness, reverence; decent. Webster's defines "shamefacedness" as, "Showing modesty, bashful. Showing shame, ashamed."

One more word should be defined in relation to the subject, "sobriety." This word is used several times in the New Testament and is defined by Thayer's as, "Soundness of mind, self-control, sobriety." Webster's defines it as, "The quality or state of being sober."

In discussing the subject of modesty it is necessary to consider some biblical principles in relation to the subject. One is the result of improper dress. We can see this in the life of King David in 2 Samuel 11:1-5. He observed Bathsheba as she was bathing. This excited lust in his heart which caused him to send for her. The result was catastrophic as we see the events unfold. We may strive to place all of the blame on David, but it is obvious that an improperly dressed woman had an ill effect on the thoughts and lusts of others. When people are improperly dressed it causes the mind of others to be led in a certain direction. We are clearly affected by what we see. James stated in James 1:14,15, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Again in Genesis we read of the account of Adam and Eve. When they ate of the forbidden fruit their eyes were opened and they realized that they were naked. In trying to cover up their nakedness they made for themselves "aprons" of fig leaves. (Genesis 3:7) The word used here refers to an article of clothing like a loin cloth. When God came onto the scene he fashioned for them clothing that was appropriate. In verse 21 this clothing was referred to as a "coat." Brown-Driver and Briggs defines this word as a "tunic, a long shirt like garment." Webster's defines tunic as "sleeves or sleeveless, usually knee length or longer." Thus we can see that God set the

example for modest dress. Scanty clothing is not proper. Proper clothing should at the least cover from the shoulders to the knees.

Under the old law God prescribed proper clothing for the priests. In Exodus 28:40-42 the coat was to be worn. (The same Hebrew word for coat in Genesis 3:21) and under that there was to be "linen breeches." These were to cover "from the loins unto the thigh."

Again in Isaiah 47:2,3 the term nakedness is used by God in referring to "make bare the leg, uncover the thigh." The thigh is the part of the leg above the knee." So according to God when one has the thigh uncovered they are in his estimation "naked."

In Galatians 5:19 in the works of the flesh God uses a word that unfortunately few people know the meaning of today. If they did it may change the way they dress. The word in "lasciviousness." Lasciviousness is lewd and lustful behavior. The context teaches plainly that those who do such things will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Obviously, when we dress in a provocative way it is lewd and lustful. Therefore the one who dresses that way will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

This lewd and lustful behavior leads to mental adultery. Matthew 5:28 says, "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Therefore the one who lusts is guilty of adultery. Adultery is also in the list in Galatians 5:19-21. Then in Matthew 18:6 we learn that whoever "offends" or causes another to stumble, it were better that they were drowned. So the one who dresses in a provocative manner would also be guilty of sin.

Along the line of lust it is necessary to mention that as a result of lusting after the body of another it paves the way to get involved in sins as fornication, adultery, rape, incest, and etc.

Turning our thoughts from the biblical principles, we should make some applications to our way of dealing with modesty. From what we have learned thus far it should be needless to call attention so some specifics but of course we will. The clothing that we see today like indecent shorts (refer to the biblical principles), low cut clothing that shows the breasts. On men this would apply also to those who leave their shirt unbuttoned down several to show their chest. See thru clothing. The midriff revealing shirts or blouses. The tight fitting clothing that reveals the curves of the body, and accentuates the sexual or private parts. Low cut pants, etc. Also in this category would be clothing that advertises ungodly messages, alcohol, cigarettes, sensual slang or filthy words, etc.

You may find this amazing, the world understands the idea of modest. If we were to try to visit in a federal prison in this type of clothing you would be turned away. If you were to show up to work at Sears and Roebuck the same way that many show up for worship you would be sent home to change or be dismissed from your employment.

Along this line we so often see children dressed in provocative clothing. Isn't it so cute?" Knowing the way children think it does not show common sense to dress a young boy or girl in provocative clothing until they are the age of 12 or so and then all of a sudden make them change their manner of dress. It is important that we dress our children in proper clothing from when they are young and then they will not see us as inconsistent when we make them change.

The only reason for provocative clothing is to attract sexual attention. In an interview with a top model Kim Alexis, she said that "many women are playing with fire in the way they dress." She continues: 'Dressing like a floozy tells the world: " Look at me, want me, lust after me. I'm easy and you can have me.' " Displaying intimate parts of the body is a form of advertising for sex -- so if you dress to attract sexual attention, you can hardly blame anyone else if that kind of attention comes your way.' "Dressing modestly tells the world, ' I respect myself and I insist on being treated with respect,' " Says the mother of five. " It's possible to be stylish and attractive without wearing something that is too short, low-cut, or see through." (The New American, June 16, 2003, p.28)

Turning to the commands that God has given us to live by in the New Testament, we learn that Christians are to be different from the world. 2 Corinthians 6:17 states, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Yes, the world dresses in a provocative way. And quite frankly we are not to expect the world to live as Christians. They should, but often do not. Our responsibility is to live different from them. We are to be separate. We cannot do this if we act as they do. We are not to be influenced by their immorality but to influence them by our chaste behavior.

Romans 12:1,2 teaches us that we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. This means that we do the things God would have us do, and act the way God would have us to act, instead of going along with the world. Then in verse two we are taught that we are to change our minds to think as Christ would think. It is obvious that Christ would not dress in such a way as to provoke lust in another. Thereby causing them to sin.

God says that we are to dress in modest apparel. 2 Timothy 3:8-10 and Titus 2:4,5 teach this plainly. There should be no argument as to what modest is because God makes it very clear. The word shamefacedness clearly shows that when one dresses they are to have a sense of shame. Striving to properly cover their bodies so as not to draw undue attention to the private parts of the body. In this shamefacedness is a reverence for God and his holiness. Recognizing that we are to be holy as God is Holy. (1 Peter 1:16) Having a regard and respect for others and their purity and one's own. Unfortunately many have lost the ability to blush. We have been desensitized to the naked bodies we see around us. We have become a nation that has a desire to be chased and not chaste (pure). Rape is a crime that is heard of on a regular basis. Those who wear revealing clothing certainly are guilty of a large share of the responsibility for this crime.

Jesus taught in Matthew 5:13-16 that we are to be a seasoning influence to the world around us. If we dress in an ungodly way that is enticing and provocative are we seasoning the world around us for Christ, or are we allowing them to season us? If we dress in ungodly clothing, are we being a shining light of hope to those around us. Showing a better way that leads to a great life and helps to provide protection from many of the evils and dead ends that creep into peoples lives.