

Does God Care What I Wear?

Introduction. Christians are called to a higher standard whether they reside in 1st century Corinth or 21st century America -- and both genders are challenged. When it comes to immodesty, we live in a "war zone" where each day is a battle to control and conquer the mind. Women are confronted with their need to clothe themselves in a way that does not invite the lust of men (Proverbs 7:10); while men are told to avoid the lust that causes sin (Matthew 5:28).

So neither gender is excused. Some might say, "A woman can be dressed in a Muslim burqa and some men will lust." Oh, come on! We need to dispense with the absurd. Males are stimulated sexually by the visual and when a woman dresses in a revealing way, it creates a problem. Can a man discipline himself and turn away (Job 31:1; Proverbs 4:25)? Yes! Lust gives birth to sin and sin brings consequences that you do not want (James 1:14-16).

By the way, James concludes with, "Do not be deceived ..." There is a lot of deception going on in the area of immodesty -- and it is evenly spread between the sexes. Both the men who look to "look" and the women who make it easy are at fault. It is time for Christians to take a stronger stand on this subject -- for moms and dads to "engage" parenting disciplines for dress with themselves and their children, and for elders and gospel preachers to challenge people with straight talk. Apparently some are not "connecting the dots" (or don't want to).

I. ***Temptation Is A Call To Battle***

A. Wendy Shalt, in her book *Return To Modesty*, wrote, "Today, men treat women like prostitutes. Why not? Look at the way we dress!"

B. Three points to consider.

1. First, the Bible issues a plain call when it comes to sexual purity. God sets a standard for purity and it is a high standard (Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).
2. Second, some women have little understanding of the intensity of the male sex drive -- because they do not have it. That is why women fail to understand how the mere visual (often in passing) can trigger a male response. We live in a seductive world and it is difficult for men to keep themselves pure.
3. Third, we keep tripping over our maleness. Men tend to be: (1) natural aggressors (90% of all crimes are committed by men); (2) are easily bored and seek sexual excitement; (3) have a strong sex drive; and, (4) receive sexual gratification through the eyes. In other words, it does not take much of the visual for the male chemicals to kick in. Frankly, this is how God made us and He did

so for a reason (Genesis 1:28). God had procreation in mind which requires one gender to be more of the aggressor-pursuer. With much given, however, much is required. God requires the male to be highly disciplined in the control of his sexual response.

II. **Winning The Battle (Males)**

- A. How do we win? Like the brave soldiers who landed on the beaches of Normandy, each day we storm the beach of sexual purity (2 Samuel 23:9-10). We need a battle strategy!
1. You have to decide to win. Holiness of thought is not nebulous, but involves a series of choices. It is God who will give you the power to make good ones (2 Peter 1:3).
 2. Bounce your eyes. It is not the first look that gets us into trouble, but the lingering look. Like "junk food" we find ourselves feasting on "junk sex." Force your eyes to look elsewhere. Furthermore, teach your sons to be respectful of women by setting the example of discipline yourself. If you gawk at women, so will he.
 3. Flee! Do whatever it takes to retreat. Joseph ran. "Flee!" is a strong word of action (1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22; James 4:7).
 4. Turn off sources you can control. That means the TV, computer, or anything that causes you trouble. Be proactive. You know your weak spots (Satan does, too). The consequences of sin call for extreme measures.
 5. Fight daily. Just because you win today is no guarantee that you will win tomorrow (or even this afternoon). Additionally, fathers and husbands should know what men are thinking, and should not want other men thinking it about their wives and daughters. Fathers and husbands can guard the door.
- B. Men, God made us who we are and calls upon us to become men of discipline and wisdom. "Guard your hearts ..." Why? Because what the mind feeds on, the body acts on. Remember that in the church, even when we have taught modesty for women, we have ignored or justified it for men. You are under the same guidelines!

III. **Words To The Wise (Females)**

- A. Stop making it too easy for us to sin! While men have a role in this deal, so do you. Proverbs 5:18-19 means to stop exposing yourself to men who are not your husband. This is not about dressing attractively and fashionably.
1. This is about dressing modestly and in a way that does not call undue attention to self. If you wear sexually stimulating clothing, it will create a sexually stimulated response. Remember the four

- “too’s”: Too low, too short, too tight, and too sheer (1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:1-5). Let’s examine the words in 1 Timothy 2:9.
- a) Proper or modest clothing -- the word here used in the original denotes orderliness, to be neatly arranged. It does not mean modest in the sense of being opposed to that which is immodest, or which tends to excite improper desires, but that which is becoming or appropriate. This means that the appearance of a woman will not be offensive to anybody.
 - b) Modestly or shamefacedness -- the word means a demeanor of respect and reverence toward others. It is best reflected in a discussion of godly character (Jeremiah 8:10-12). The reason that these questions are today so serious is that we have forgotten how to blush. We feel no sense of shame. We do not feel what Adam felt when he sinned. Our defenses are brought down due to the abundance of the exposure accepted in the society in which we live. Christians even get bogged down in discussions of what is and what is not proper. If you have to ask, it probably is not.
 - c) Discreetly or sobriety -- the word means sober-mindedness or moderation of the desires of the flesh. Immodest apparel of today suggest clothing that is designed to expose the body to the view of others. Such an exposure would have been disgraceful and disrespectful. One sign of worldliness is the devotion of excessive time and money to the outward adornment of the body. When you think of a godly woman, how is she dressed?
2. Low-cut blouses, short skirts, shorts that start rising above the knee, tight jeans, etc., are specific areas of dress (or undress) that need to be addressed! Come on, ladies! We see enough of that from people in the world. Give us an oasis at the assembly, or wherever God’s people are found, where we can catch a break.
- B. Women, save yourself for your husband; and, while so doing, save yourself for the Lord. He is the only one to see you in that manner. Women, teach your daughters to dress in a way that will earn respect and then set the standard yourself.
- C. God has called us out of the world and instructed us to be distinct. We need some “women professing godliness” in their dress (1 Timothy 2:10). All of which means, the next time you are in your prayer-closet, you may want to first look around at some changes you need to make in your wardrobe.

Conclusion. Neither gender is exempt from responsibility, but both are challenged. Is it not sad that Muslims are having to show Christians how

to dress modestly? The gospel contains explicit instructions about modesty, but American Christians ignore these instructions to wear shorts way too short, low-cut blouses that expose the chest, tight-fitting jeans, etc. Perhaps part of the problem is that we have less preachers preaching out of conviction and more preaching for the money, therefore they cannot step on too many toes or the money stops coming in. Another reason could also be the "mega" church movement filling our congregations that says that we must "nice" people in, because if we tell them what they are doing wrong they will not want to come back. So we preach tolerance (and "come as you are") rather than compliance with biblical teaching and hope that some of the other stuff will rub off; it is rubbing off less and less, thus we are drifting further and further toward the world.

Usually preaching on subjects like this can cause a lot of people discomfort, and I have heard from several preachers about the specious arguments they hear from people to justify wearing practically nothing. But it is encouraging that there are still some brethren out there upholding biblical standards. Sometimes the analogy of WWII pilots bombing Germans holds true: "When you are getting flak, that means you are on target!" More preachers speaking out on issues of dress and lust will help to minimize some of it.

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