

The Problem of *Immodesty*

Contributed by numerous older members of the Church of God

Edited by Carol Taylor

*Parents: This material may not be appropriate for young teens.
Please read carefully and then decide what you wish to share with your teens.*

The Problem of *Immodesty*

IN COED SPORTS, when male players accuse female players of trying to distract them with their skimpy outfits, it's usually not taken seriously. But did you know that the same sort of feminine distractions are the cause of thousands of car accidents every day? A study done in August 2022 revealed that in Britain alone nearly a million accidents a year are caused by drivers—mostly men—*being distracted by attractive pedestrians and billboards!*¹

And given the way most women dress today, it's highly unlikely that any of these women were dressed *modestly*. And you can be certain that the beautiful women on the billboards—which many of the men said they “couldn't tear their eyes away from”—were scantily clothed and posing seductively.

We older women remember how fun it was to “turn heads” and feel attractive to the opposite sex. And like most young women, we really didn't understand what turned a guy on. We were often surprised that something as innocent as a strap of a sundress falling off our shoulder could do it, or the wind accidentally blowing our skirt up.

But we now have a far better understanding of how the male mind works. Of course, this paper includes comments *from men*, as we thought it best to “go to the horse's mouth,” so to speak!

In our youth, clothing like mini-skirts, short-shorts, and thigh-high boots were introduced by the fashion industry and made popular by musicians and movie stars. They were banned by most parents, schools, and colleges—but girls nonetheless bought them. Nowadays, the mini-skirt is considered normal and is even accepted as *part of the uniform* for some high schools, both private and public.

But God's Word commands women to be modest in every way, and for good reason! Paul wrote: “And I want women to be *modest in their appearance*. They should *wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves* by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes. For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do” (I Tim. 2:9-10, NLT).

“Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a *gentle and quiet spirit*, which is so precious to God” (I Pet. 3:3-4, NLT). In his letter to Titus, Paul added that the older women are to teach the younger women to be *discreet* and *chaste* (Titus 2:5, KJV). *Chaste* means pure, modest, innocent; *discreet* means sober-minded, modest, self-controlled.

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Acting or dressing in a sexy manner creates *lust* in men.

Modesty, femininity, and sweetness create a desire in men to *care for* and *protect* a woman.

Decaying Morals

The Western world's morals are in a downward spiral—with many music and movie stars taking provocative clothing and seductiveness to a whole new low. Compared to the outrageous outfits of idolized female pop stars, it likely makes most young women today feel quite modest in their strapless crop-tops and mini-skirts.

But merely dressing *less* immodestly than pop stars is not what a godly woman should be striving for. As one church of God minister wrote in a magazine article concerning pop star Britney Spears: “Parading through videos in cropped-tops and bikinis, she has incredible appeal to girls as young as eight or nine. Young teenagers are increasingly immersed in an erotic world. The results are quite evident ... many, barely into their teens, look and act like *prostitutes!*” ¹¹

Do you really want your teen to be mistaken for a *prostitute*? But do you *know* what you are saying by the clothes you are wearing?

This principle applies to any outfit that shows cleavage, is too short, or shows any part of your body that is meant to be kept private. A godly woman does not *show off* her body in any way. (If you're not sure whether something is provocative, ask someone you trust—like your parents, a brother, or your husband.)

This same magazine article adds: “Skirts that are too short and tight, plunging necklines, high slits, and other similar styles are *designed* to send a *sexually seductive message* to men. While many young women would deny this is their intention and say that it is just the style, their parents need to help them grasp that, *regardless of their motive for doing so, they are projecting an image that is seductive and sexually arousing to men.*” ¹¹

Immodesty is Self-Defeating

While it isn't wrong for women to try to be attractive, to *purposely* dress or act in any way that tempts a man sexually (other than her husband in private) is absolutely wrong, foolish, and counterproductive. Of course, most women in the Western world dress in skimpy clothing because it is the fashion of the day, but they are nonetheless following Satan's way—and *it is self-defeating!*

A survey in the *Daily Mail* called men's attention to attractive females *lust*. Lust often begins with just *looking*, which can very quickly create sexual arousal in men. Men are wired that way—they are most easily aroused *visually*. While it is not wrong for any of us to look at the opposite sex with admiration, *lusting after anyone is a sin*.

But do you really know what lust is? Lust is not just sexual desire. A man and a woman in love will have sexual desire for each other, which is God-given, beautiful, natural, and normal. Sexual desire can and should be a part of every marriage based on love. *But lust has nothing to do with love!* It is *selfishly desiring immediate sexual gratification* and involves no lasting feelings for the person desired. Lust is an *illicit desire* for what one has no right to.

Women must understand that most men will be attracted to and look at sexy women—even if they are happily married. But, as strong as their sex drive is, the majority *still value true love*, a lasting relationship, and a family above *all* else. Women who dress as sex objects are usually not taken seriously, whereas the modest, girl-next-door type are looked up to and valued. For a woman to mix sweet and innocent with sexy and alluring confuses men, to say the least. *Always dress for the type of woman you are!*

One of the biggest mistakes women make with men is believing that when a man desires them sexually it means he likes and cares for them. The old saying is true: Women give sex to get love, and men give “love” to get sex. Of course, men are *not* giving love when they are “in lust”—they are only doing and saying whatever will get a woman to have sex with them!

Lust causes men to objectify and use women and even despise them because it is focused solely on satisfying the *self*. This is exactly what happened between Amnon and Tamar (II Sam. 13). And it’s why ungodly men can have sex with any number of women with no feelings or concern for them whatsoever.

Job said, “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman” (Job 31:1, NIV). And Christ said, “Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has *already committed adultery with her* in his heart” (Matt. 5:28, NLT).

Don’t blame men because their thoughts can so often turn to sex—because they are much more easily aroused, particularly through the eyes. *It’s the way God made them*. Whether a woman shows sexy body parts purposely or accidentally makes no difference in how it can affect men. It is up to you to wear clothes that don’t even *accidentally* show off your body! As one minister said, “I really appreciate it when a woman keeps her top from gaping open as she bends over, to prevent me seeing something that might tempt me to sin.”

A woman who truly understands the nature of lust would *never desire* to have men be “in lust” with her. It is one of the most misunderstood aspects of male-female relationships—and why so many women are hurt when what they thought was a relationship built on love turns out to only have been built on *lust*.

Women need to understand that, to a man, a woman acting or looking “sexy” is *offering herself to every man around*. So he assumes it’s just a matter of which man she’ll choose. And when a woman dresses to inspire lust, that’s usually all she’s going to get!

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**Dear Girls: Dressing immodestly is like rolling around in manure.
Yes, you’ll get attention, but mostly from *pigs!*—Sincerely, Real Men**

Modesty and True Love

Here is God’s way, in a nutshell, from a man who has been in God’s church for over 50 years and was happily married for over 40 years: “You have a perfectly loving heavenly Father, and His way is the *only way* that works. Unfortunately, many people settle for something that can look and feel like love, but is not! Lust—and being lusted after—is Satan’s way and his way *never works!* It might feel like love and be exciting for a time, but Satan’s way always ends in pain. The way for you to have the very best that God created for you—the love you need and deserve—is to save every aspect of your sexuality for a man who will treasure you, protect you, provide for you, and truly love you. So don’t dress or act in any way that might attract *fake* “love”! God truly loves you and wants the very best for you!”

Too many women know firsthand how aggressive and persistent men can be when they are crazy for sex. The emotional pain and bodily injury that can occur in rape are so disastrous that most women

can never get past it. However, while a woman should never attempt to arouse sexual desire in a man other than her husband, she is *never* responsible for rape or abuse *no matter how she acts or dresses!* But if you aren't offering sex, don't send wrong messages by dressing or acting in a sexy manner!

And don't think a man's need for sexual release is somehow shameful—God *made* men that way. However, He does not condone men fulfilling their needs with any woman except his wife. The Bible addresses this need in marriage quite clearly: “Do not deprive each other of sexual relations unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (I Cor. 7:5, NLT).

Most women can go weeks, months, and even years without the need for any kind of sex. *Men aren't made that way!* That's why there are *far more* men indulging in pornography, strip shows, and sex for hire than women. But it is not the desire itself that is evil, it is the way men or women seek to fulfill that desire. That need is meant to be satisfied and shared in marriage *only*, and wives who deprive their husbands of sex are causing their husbands to be tempted to find sex elsewhere—and thus *damaging* their marriage. Just as food is not much of a temptation when your stomach is *full*, so a man who is satisfied sexually will be *far less likely* to be tempted than one who is deprived.

Women Need to Control Their Wrong Desires Too!

If you protest that men should *just control themselves*, you're absolutely right. But women must also control their own wrong desires—*because it isn't just men who are guilty of lust!*

While some few women may be sex driven, most women just want *attention* and *admiration*. This is why so many women “compete” with other women, resorting to immodest clothing as a common strategy. Even when they know they're getting the wrong kind of attention—and even if they are happily married—many women still want to dress in a provocative manner. Lust for attention can be as addictive as a drug. And yes, it is *lust* if a woman's desire to be admired leads her in wrong ways—like showing off her body or behaving immorally. That is Satan's way, it is sinful, and it does not lead to any kind of lasting happiness. God tells us plainly that all forms of sexual immorality result in *sin against one's own body* (see I Cor. 6:18).

The temptation to dress like the world is very strong, but it cheapens a woman in a man's eyes by making her appear as a sex object—not the result most women are striving for. Like setting a diamond in a worthless plastic ring, it can be difficult for a man to believe there is a woman of great value under a cheap sexy exterior: “Like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a beautiful woman who is without discretion” (Prov. 11:22, paraphrased).

Virtually *any* woman can get a man's attention by acting or dressing immorally, so don't think it's any great accomplishment if you get lots of looks. Instead, seek respect and true love by presenting yourself as decent, moral, and modest. A woman who does not demean herself by pandering to men's lust may not get much attention, but the attention she does get will be respectful—and for *her as a person* rather than as a sex object.

A modest, upright woman shows that she respects herself and is saving herself for one special man. That makes her of far more value than those who flaunt themselves. But we humans are complex and devious, and don't always know why we do what we do! This is why King David asked God to cleanse him from *secret* sins (Psa. 19:12).

“But Immodest Clothing is the Norm!”

Because immodest clothing has been prevalent for so long, you might be tempted to think that men aren't really affected by it anymore. But look at these recent survey questions (given to 200 men) and the responses: ²

“Despite rampant immodesty all around us, girls who choose to dress modestly *do* make a difference.” 92% of the guys *agreed*.

“Can a girl tempt a boy by the way she dresses?” 98% said *yes*.

“Does fashion use sex appeal?” 96% said *yes*.

“Do you believe that boys are stimulated by sight more than girls?” 92% said *yes*.

“Do you feel that girls really understand the problem of immodest apparel?” 50% said *no*.

“Which part of the female body as seen in public most quickly arouses your emotions?” 60% said *legs*.

“If you were married, would you want other men to lust after your wife?” 96% said *no*.

“Are most boys tempted to lust after a girl who dresses the way girls dress today?” 77% said *yes*.

In summarizing comments from the survey, many of the guys made this point: “When a woman dresses modestly, I can get to know *her*. I can ask her about her life, and we can develop a relationship. It goes so much better when the other ‘thing’ is not there, kind of ‘beating me up.’”

Jesus said: “Temptation to do wrong is inevitable, but how terrible it will be *for the person who does the tempting*” (Matt. 18:7, paraphrased).

This is not saying we are responsible for anyone else's sins. “The devil made me do it” doesn't work with God. God *commands* men to keep their thoughts pure, and they must not put the blame on *any* woman—no matter how she dresses or acts. But the fact is, lust is something all decent men *fight* all their lives, and we women are either *helping* or *hindering* them by what we wear and how we act!

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If you are hindering your brother in Christ by how you dress or act, you are sinning!

This insightful comment was from a college-age man: “The thing that women do not seem to fully grasp is that the *temptation towards lust does not stop for us as men*. It is continual. It is aggressive. It does all it can to lead men down to death. They [women] have a choice to help or deter its goal. Consider this message my appeal on behalf of men for you to help us deter the goal of lust in our lives. To the girls who are ignorant, please serve your brother, and have your dad screen your wardrobe. Ask him how you can better choose holiness over worldliness. *To the girls who don't follow the pattern of the world, thank you a million times over!* You are following Scripture's commands and helping your brothers in the process.” ⁵

The author of *Modesty Never Goes Out of Style* said this: “I heard a story of one of the ladies ... who went shopping and really liked the shirt she was trying on; but then she thought, ‘No, I can't do this to the guys.’ That was the first time I'd ever heard of anything like that, and it made me so grateful. It is such a blessing to have friends who care for me enough to be selfless and sacrifice what might look

attractive in order to help me and other guys with sexual lust. When ladies dress modestly, it's attractive. Oh, yes, it is! *There is nothing more attractive than a godly woman dressed modestly, and it makes me want to hang out with them more.* I think modesty is so attractive and helpful in a friendship because it makes it easier for a friendship to be centered around God and for fellowship to be unhindered.”⁵

And here is a quote from a college student on *Family Life*: “Sometimes when I see a girl provocatively dressed, I'll say to myself, ‘She probably doesn't even know that 101 guys are going to devour her in their minds today.’ Then, again, maybe she does. To be honest, I don't know the truth: the truth of why she chooses to dress the way she does, the way she chooses to walk, the way she chooses to act. I don't know because I've never sat down with a girl and asked her ‘Why?’ All I need to know is that the way she presents herself to the world is bait for my sinful mind to latch on to, and I need to avoid it at all costs.”⁵

Here's a comment from a man, aged 30: “They distinguish themselves—the very thing the immodest girls are *trying* to do. All girls have curves. To a guy, showing more than that ... doesn't tell him anything new. He *knows* you're a girl; *he wants a lady!*”²

Another from a guy, age 16: “Yes, they (modestly dressed women) make me think! *That's the kind of girl I want to marry!* Not only that, but their courage inspires *me* to be pure!”²

A man, age 21, said: “They make a difference to me because they show me there's *something out there to save myself for.* They give me hope and prove they are a princess worth valuing.”²

Good Men Don't Want You to Dress Immodestly!

One church of God minister summed up *immodesty* in a sermon: “The fellows who have a proper mind-set—who want to be Christians in every way—very much want to get to know the ladies around them. But if they are approached by a lady who is dressed so provocatively that every moment he's with her he's got to guard his thoughts about the obvious way she's coming across—as a sexual object—*he can't think about her personality*; he can't think about a conversation he might have with her. He's too busy—as a Christian—trying to block out all those things that are slapping him in the face wanting to get his attention in the wrong way.

“One of our young men said in a sermonette that he had gone to a warm-weather Feast site and the ladies in the church were wearing bikinis. Now I would submit to you—in a public setting—how would a bikini *ever* be proper? A church setting at the Feast of Tabernacles and *our* ladies in *our* church are wearing bikinis? How is that *ever* justifiable? And the people this man was talking about were not teenagers. They were in their twenties and past, so this is *not* just for our teens.”²

Look at this excerpt from a church bulletin: “Dear sisters: On behalf of and for the benefit of men who are seeking to live in accordance with the will of God and to keep themselves pure and holy, to the end that you not encourage them to lust, and for your own eternal welfare, *please do not call undue attention to yourself or expose yourself by wearing immodest apparel.* Godly men do *not* want to see your thighs—or more—in clothing that is too short, your cleavage in tops that are too low, your navels in tops that are too short, your undergarments in clothing that is too thin, nor the curves and characteristics of your bodies in clothing that is too tight. Please look in the mirror at yourself—front and back—and ask yourself if your attire is becoming of one professing godliness. You may need to make some changes. A brother in Christ.”²

As one long-time church elder put it: “Personally, when I see things like this [ladies in immodest clothing], it is with disgust, it’s a turn off—and I think many men feel the same way!”

Did you know that the late Queen Elizabeth of England did not allow any of the women in her family to appear in any official photographs in anything immodest? At the very least, we should be dressing as modestly as the Royal Family; after all, we are *always* dressing for the very King of the universe! And His laws are *always* for our benefit!

This was stated on a recent church blog for teens: “Are we dressing to *impress* the guys, or are we dressing in a way that *shows them respect*? You want a guy to respect you for you, and not for what you wear. When we dress in inappropriate clothing, we can be creating a stumbling block for the men around us. Wearing short-shorts and low-cut shirts will only attract the wrong kind of guy and send the wrong message to a Christian man.

“How are we supposed to become friends with a guy when his mind is everywhere but on what we are saying? We can dress attractively while still staying modest and respecting everyone around us. Yes, it can sometimes be very challenging to find appropriate clothing at the mall. Still, a pure woman chooses to dress and act in a way that makes her an object of respect rather than an object of lust.”⁸

Modest attire is also important on job interviews and in the workplace. Betsy Olinger, founder of Marketing-U (www.marketing-u.com), an executive coaching firm, said this about work attire: “If it’s something you think you look ‘hot’ in, it’s *wrong*. Women who dress in a manner that arouses men’s sexual senses are usually not taken seriously when it comes to promotions in the workplace. They are seen as just wanting a ‘good time,’ and studies show that a woman whose work attire is too provocative can be sabotaging her career.”⁹

Secure women have no compulsion to flaunt themselves. These women value their worth and show it in their dress and are far more likely to inspire men to *also* value and honor them!

What Men Think Women Are Saying When They Wear Seductive Clothing

Men can’t read women’s minds and they don’t understand women any better than women understand men. Most men believe women who wear provocative clothing are showing that *they want sex*. And is that not a logical conclusion? As they say in the business world: “Dress for the position you want!” Haworth-Hoepfner (1998) reported that men “believed women’s clothing choice was actually used to signal sexual intent.”⁷

“[Researchers] had male and female Israeli students view a photo of a woman wearing low cut tight jeans with a short top that exposed her breasts and midriff. Participants were asked to explain why the woman was so dressed. Men indicated women’s primary intentions for wearing sexy dress were temptation and seduction. Women indicated the woman dressed that way to gain affection. Over half the women shared that they sometimes dressed in body-revealing clothing; of those, nearly three-fourths indicated that they did so to look attractive, not to indicate their sexual intent.”⁷

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Would you think it’s ok for men to make sexually suggestive remarks to the women in church? I think not! But do you not realize that wearing sexy, suggestive outfits is inappropriate in the same way?

The bottom line is this: If you don't want men to treat you as a sex object, do not dress like one! Godly men neither need nor want a woman to *cheapen* herself by wearing immodest clothing. They *greatly* value modesty and mystery. Be different from the herd and choose to be modest. The devil tries every way he can to besmirch sex, which God made to be beautiful, bonding, and *private* between a husband and wife. So dressing in any kind of provocative, sexy way in public *fits right in with his evil plans*. Remember who rules this present world—including the fashion industry—Satan the devil!

As author Jeff Pollard states: “The fashion industry does not believe that the principal purpose of clothing is to cover the body; it believes that the principal purpose of clothing is sexual attraction.”³

The *Chicago Sun Post* had this to say: “Year after year, a handful of suspicious-looking characters who call themselves clothing designers issue their commands: ‘Wear your dresses short and wear boots and look like a hooker. Now dress like a gypsy fortune-teller. Now look like a farm wife. Now wear spiked heels. Now show your thighs.’ And every time the pimps of fashion give word, all these ‘enlightened’ females obediently trudge to the clothing store.”¹⁰

But women must *not* be slaves to fashion! It may take a little more work, more hunting for the right clothes, and maybe some modifications, but to be modest is part of godliness and godly men *appreciate* it more than you know. It *is* worth it!

Don't Feed Your Vanity

A great many women flaunt their bodies shamelessly and not only don't care if men are affected but do it *on purpose* to tease, get attention, manipulate men, or *feed their own vanity*. This *is not* a godly woman's attitude. Hopefully this article is helping you understand how a man's mind works, so you will make better choices in your clothes.

Here is what one man said: “[If] I could say anything to the women in the church, it would be this: first, *there is not a man I know that doesn't struggle in some way with lust*. If they had any idea what went through guys' minds, it would probably vastly change the way they dress. Secondly, and I think most importantly, God has created his church to be a resting place for Christians, to be a place where people encounter God without all the distractions [of this society].... *It is disappointing when I walk into the church or an event with the church and have to deal with the same temptations that I face in the world*, but I rejoice whenever I see a girl or woman who is attempting to serve the Lord (and us guys) by dressing modestly. You have no idea how sweet it is when I see a woman who has decided *not* to flaunt her body—*like culture shouts for her to do*—but has decided that serving the Lord and her brothers is more important.”

Another single man put it this way: “The one place where I might think I wouldn't have to face temptation is at church. But this is not always the case! *When ladies that I'm friends with dress immodestly, it definitely has a negative effect on our friendship*. When she dresses immodestly, it doesn't make it easy to see her as a sister in Christ. There is a constant battle going on as I'm talking with her. Communication becomes more difficult—because as I'm trying to listen to her, I am also trying to fight temptation. I think some ladies just aren't aware.”⁵

If you don't want other women showing off their bodies in such a way that might tempt your boyfriend or husband to lust, then why would you dress that way yourself?

This excerpt from a 1962 *Good News* magazine may be old, but the advice is timeless: “God made the female body to be attractive to the male. This attraction may be, and should be, one of sheer beauty. But it also may be a stimulation of *lust*. Especially when certain parts of the female figure are emphasized, such as the hips and buttocks by tight skirts, the low neckline exposing portions of breasts, or too-short skirts exposing more than is modest of the female leg.

“When I see a female with a skirt tight enough to call attention to her hips, she is either careless or else she is wearing it deliberately to attract male eyes and arouse lust toward her. Wearing skirts which completely expose the knees when sitting, is an *abomination* in God's eyes. Are you deliberately trying to tempt men into breaking the spirit of God's law against adultery? Are you not breaking the very spirit of that law, *yourselves*? God's church encourages women to dress neatly, pleasingly, attractively within the bounds of proper modesty and good taste. It is the *over-emphasis* of lust-arousing portions of the female body that must be corrected.” ⁶

This is from a church of God minister: “Virtually every man between the ages of 12 and 112 who has a normal set of male hormones responds to any female immodesty, overt sensuality, or suggestiveness! The response may be lust and sexual arousal... But he may have another negative response, such as embarrassment, a compulsive curiosity to see more, or annoyance at the distraction. If the man is trying to obey God, he may lament or resent the visual temptation that has provoked a mental battle within him. A man often has mixed feelings, being turned on and turned off at the same time.” ¹²

A church pastor said this: “Ladies, please don't forget to apply these principles of modesty to formal events and weddings. In recent years, I have become increasingly grieved by the immodest dresses of both brides and bridesmaids at the weddings that I officiate. I have observed a number of young ladies in our fellowship who have dressed modestly all their lives, but then appearing on their wedding day in extremely provocative dresses, exposing more of themselves than on any other day of their lives.

“Here are a couple of questions to ask yourself when shopping for a wedding or bridesmaid's dress: Does this dress reflect the fact that a wedding ceremony is a holy service of worship and not a fashion show? Can I picture myself standing in this dress, for an extended period of time, just a few feet from my pastor as he opens the Word of God and leads me in my solemn vows?

“Here are some criteria: 1) Find a wedding dress with a neckline that completely conceals any cleavage; 2) Avoid dresses without sufficient covering in the back; 3) Strapless gowns or dresses with only spaghetti straps are too revealing; and 4) A modest gown should not be excessively tight and draw unnecessary attention to your figure.” ⁵

Buying Into the World's Deception

When you attend a pop or rock concert featuring many of the popular female singers with their extremely provocative performances, do you have any idea how it is affecting virtually *every* man there, including your date, boyfriend, or husband? There is no way any normal man can watch those indecent women gyrate around a stage with almost nothing on and not be tempted to lust!

There are also some women who take their husbands to lingerie stores in order to pick out something sexy for themselves. Really? Unless he is blind, he can't help but notice the posters and ads with larger-than-life perfect bodies in sexy underwear and lingerie, guaranteed to arouse sexual desire. And that desire won't be for his wife!

So if you wish to marry a man who is striving to keep himself sexually pure, does it make sense for you dress in a way that tempts him to be impure?

What Can I Wear Then?

Is the answer to wear clothing that covers every inch of our bodies? Of course not. There is no need for women to look weird or like you belong to some cult. There are websites that sell modest clothing for women and there are plenty of outfits that are not revealing. You can wear a camisole under a low-cut top; sew up a slit in a skirt; wear something modest under anything see-through; put a long loose top over hip-hugging skirts, tight leggings, and yoga pants; etc. (Some women think that because tight leggings or yoga pants “cover” them they aren't being immodest. But even though skin may not be showing, revealing the cracks and dimples of a woman's private parts through clothing can also be a huge turn-on for men.)

You may have to buy clothing a size bigger to give you room because a lot of clothing that is “your” size will be purposely made to tightly outline your figure. But there are plenty of very modest, yet very pretty, clothes for all sizes.

Women can dress very attractively and still be modest. There really is *no* excuse for immodesty!

Many women who wouldn't wear tight or revealing clothing out shopping or to work somehow think the gym is different. But immodesty in public *at any time* is a sin. This means there are some hobbies and professions a godly woman cannot take part in. If it *requires* immodest clothing, it is not suitable for a woman of God.

But what about the apostle Peter's instructions against expensive clothing or jewelry, or fancy hairdos? (I Pet. 3:3). One minister explains: “These verses are talking about *giving the wrong impression*.... If God has blessed us and we have sufficient income to buy nice clothing and jewelry—buy the nice clothing! But not to show off or ‘one-up’ somebody else! Is there something wrong with women taking care of their hair? Absolutely not! The whole concept ... is that we are not to do anything for the wrong reason and not to overdo things from a vanity point of view—but to do the very best with what God gives us. Godly women should want to take care of what God has given them and look the very best they can—but *modestly*. To be modest doesn't mean to be ugly.... The idea here is to adorn yourself with a meek and quiet spirit, and this is a big part of what *modesty* is. It's not just what we put on our bodies; it's what we have in our minds in terms of an *attitude*.”⁴

Referring back to the above survey, the statement was made: “Girls can dress attractively *without* being immodest”—and 97% of the men agreed!

Here are two comments from men, both age 19: “Girls can be beautiful, *noticeably* beautiful, and guys can notice it without there being immodesty or lust involved—and this is a good design of God! Jacob, for example, clearly thought Rachel was beautiful in Genesis. But there is no hint that Rachel dressed immodestly or that Jacob lusted after her. Don't allow the devil to make us think that the enemy is beauty! The enemy is *manipulation*—the very ugly forces of lust and vanity in our hearts.”

“When your views on beauty have been aligned with the Bible, you’ll be attracted to modesty. For example: Now I’m much more attracted to girls in full-length dresses than a girl in ‘Daisy-dukes.’ Obviously, the girl in shorts is *not* the kind of girl I’d want to raise my children. She’s wearing clothes I wouldn’t allow my daughter to wear! To me, that’s not attractive. It may ‘turn me on’ but it’s not attractive—and there’s a difference.”²

Having to fight ungodly impulses may cause many men to just stay away from women who dress or act in any manner that compromises their walk with God, including any such women in church. And a man who is looking for a wife will likely feel some aversion to a woman who is willing to show off her body for *all* other men. *Men are not as shallow as some women think*, especially men who are striving to be godly! They greatly prize a woman who keeps her body hidden in respect for herself and others.

A female writer for one of the churches of God asked a male college-age friend why he thought modesty was important. He said: “Due to the sheer volume and accessibility of these themes and [provocative] images ... I feel like I’m bombarded with it almost constantly, and it’s exhausting. *Seeing girls in modest states of dress is almost comforting because it’s like a breath of fresh air; a relief....* Girls fail to consider the impact that seeing a girl undress[ed] has on a guy. When a guy sees a girl like that, he can never *unsee* it. When I go to beach [Feast] sites and see all these [girls] in bikinis, it really bothers me ... because it’s like, ‘*Come on, you should know better.*’ ”¹³

Immodesty is Embarrassing

Some older men even feel obliged to turn down requests to speak to the teens in their congregation because the young girls dress so provocatively. Parents need to make sure their teenage daughters are taught how to be modest and—as long as they are living at home—that the *parent’s rules* are followed. A minister should never have to correct teenagers on this point. That is the *parents’* job! (No one said raising children was *easy*!) Remember, your children are *also holy*, so see that they dress as becomes holy people! (I Cor. 7:14).

From a church of God minister: “Many people, especially men, have complained about *immodesty* in the clothing of some women and girls in the church. They have been embarrassed by such things as plunging necklines that expose the cleavage and exposure of the midriff area, especially the rolls of fat just above hip-hugger pants.... [This includes] thin bras that show everything, as well as tight blouses. Who would come before God dressed like this to worship Him?... Not being able to find something modest to wear is no excuse for buying something immodest and wearing it.

“Job made a covenant with both his conscience and his eyes [Job 31:1]. God is the Judge. And we are therefore bound to *not look on anything* with a lustful or covetous eye, by which our conscience may be defiled—or God is dishonored by our thoughts or actions. It is hard for men not to look at such things. *Women have a responsibility to help us not to look.*”¹⁴

Tempting anyone to sin is a sin itself! Christ said: “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to *cause one of these little ones to stumble*” (Luke 17:1-2, NIV).

Remember, when you come before God in a worship service your clothing should be *especially modest* and not distracting. If a woman is going to be on a stage—such as for special music—her skirt will appear several inches shorter because the audience is looking up at her. And do you really think a

woman who is dressed immodestly should be teaching our children, playing for hymns, providing special music, signing for the deaf, or any other such service in church?

Here's another perspective from a minister in God's church: "I cannot help wondering where the husbands in the church are when their wives come to Sabbath services with thin tops and bras, leaving nothing to the imagination of the men in the congregation. Ladies, if you do not have a husband attending with you, or you are single, please check your clothing by looking in a mirror before you come. Is your blouse too tight and gaping open? When you sit down, are you well covered? Whatever you see in that mirror, *we see!* Do you fathers monitor your teenagers' clothing?" ¹⁴

Besides sitting in front of a mirror, lean over to see what is revealed if your blouse gapes open. Look at yourself from the back and sides. Your bottom and thighs should not be visible through your clothing, nor should they be outlined by tight clothing. If they are, your clothes are immodest.

We would also add that accessories that bring attention to specific body parts, like fishnet or patterned stockings, platform or overly high heels, body jewelry or 'bling,' can also cause men to focus on your body instead of you. Another minister adds this: "Clothes considered stylish by this world are often lacking in modesty. They are often overly revealing of the female body. Double entendre slogans on sweatshirts and T-shirts are also suggestive and inappropriate." ¹⁵

And what about swimsuits? The youth camp instructions from one church of God reads: "Girls must bring a modest one-piece or 'tankini' style suit... The camp facility permits no bikini swimsuits ... with no exceptions. Please make sure you plan accordingly. All swimsuits must be full coverage on the bottoms and tops." ¹⁸

Bikinis are not suitable for any woman of God in public at any time, and many Christian camps for teens ban them. Our standards should be *at least as high* as a teen camp!

Making a Parent's Job Difficult

Godly mothers don't want their teenage sons lusting after girls, nor their daughters dressing like sex objects. They know how easy it is for men to become sexually aroused and how that powerful urge can cause them to say almost *anything* to get a girl into bed. And teens and young women are especially vulnerable to flattery and empty promises, not understanding that men can profess all kinds of endearing emotions just to get sex and then never call again.

The teen years are some of the most difficult times for parents who are striving to keep their daughters safe, innocent, and modest. But how much more difficult is their job if these girls see *older women in church* dressing in provocative clothing? Women who should know better and should be shining examples! What a dreadful thing to be the *bad example* a young girl points to as "proof" that she should also be allowed to wear provocative clothes. And not only should the older women be setting the *right* example, they should also be *teaching* the younger women. Unfortunately, even little girls as young as eight and nine are getting into racy clothing because the world promotes it so much. And young mothers are letting them. Is your example helping or hindering their choices?

As editor of the pre-teen magazine *Cookie*, Pilar Guzman writes: "You get this idea that there is a kind of lost innocence when racy adult fashions are being worn by ever-younger girls. In a world where media marketers seek to introduce adult fashions to younger-and-younger clients, *it is more important than ever that mothers, older sisters, teens, and adult female friends ... set a good example for the younger girls.*"

It can also be difficult for women (even godly women) not to be *angry* with immodest women and girls for tempting their husbands, boyfriends, or sons to sin—or for setting a bad example for their daughters. It should be obvious that when a woman dresses or acts immodestly, it is wrong on *so many levels*. Paul puts it very plainly: “Decide *never* to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother” (Rom. 14:13, ESV).

A Light to the World

Being a light to the world definitely includes how we dress—and that includes not following the immodest fashions of the day. Paul writes: “*Don’t be conformed to this world’s ways*, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you might prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2, paraphrased).

In his talk to women and girls, one church of God minister had this to say about women’s clothing: “Advertisers know that a split-second sexy image can have as great an impact as a longer scene.... High slits in skirts are like flashing lights—now you see thigh, now you don’t. Also, sheer clothes, loose blouses when a woman leans forward, and sleeveless tops with loose armholes offer titillating peeks of skin and underwear.

“Total nudity is less erotic than sexy packaging. A woman in skimpy or tight clothes is more exciting because she is tantalizing and teasing to a man ... *similar to a striptease show.*”¹²

What a terrible example for any woman professing to be a Christian to be a *walking striptease show! Hardly a light to the world*. This minister further clarified: “Many psychological factors are involved in how one’s dress and appearance affect others, not just the amount of skin showing. A short skirt is more provocative than shorts of the same length because of the obvious possibility of seeing up the skirt. A top with straps is less provocative than a strapless top. Décolletage without showing cleavage is not nearly as erotic as seeing the same neckline with cleavage showing. Outerwear that looks like underwear is risqué.”¹²

Some Guidelines for Godly Modesty

The following tips will help you as you strive for modesty in your attire:

- Tight, form-fitting clothes of any kind should be avoided, as should any outfit that reveals the back below the bra line.
- No cleavage should be showing—wear a camisole or an undershirt if necessary. Don’t wear thin tops without a bra.
- Armholes should not reveal the bust or the under-arm area.
- The midriff should never show; check when you raise your arms.
- Hems on skirts should be below the knees (test them sitting down).

- Slits should not go above the knee (test when sitting down).
- Skirts and pants should not hug the hips and thighs.
- Shorts should not be form-fitting and must completely cover the bum, including when you bend over.
- Jeans should not be form-fitting and should have no tears or slits above the knee.
- T-shirts and tops should not be form-fitting and should not have words, bling, or other décor across the chest.
- Leggings should never be worn without a long top covering the hips and thighs
- Two-piece swimsuits are not acceptable at any time (except tankini type). All swimsuits should cover cleavage and the bum and torso completely.
- Lace or patterned stockings should be avoided.
- Very high heels or high platform shoes should be avoided.
- Overdone hair and makeup should be avoided. Makeup should be minimal and should not completely change your looks. (No man wants to marry a woman he doesn't recognize in the morning!) False eyelashes are just that—false. *Be real!*

The overall principle is to be *modest*. Choose *feminine* clothing rather than sexy. But your clothes, shoes, accessories, and hair are just the start. Modesty also includes your *walk*, your look, makeup—and what you *talk* about. Innuendos, sex talk, sexy flirting, and sexual joking are unsuitable for a godly woman. God's people are to “come out” of this world (Rev. 18:4). We are not to just be more conservative than the world, but we should always strive to exemplify godly principles—no matter what the world does. In a sermon about the declining morals of this world, the president of a church of God made the point that not only should we not let our morals slide with the world, but we shouldn't even stay on a straight line. Our morals should constantly be on an *upward* slope aiming towards the perfection of Christ! ¹⁷

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The disconnect of a godly woman dressing or acting immodestly is summed up in this quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson: “What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying.”

If you *look* or *act* just like the world, why would anyone suspect you are a Christian? “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: *Live as children of light*” (Eph. 5:8, NIV). As stated in a sermon: “*It is a Christian duty—a requirement, not a suggestion—that we dress modestly. We have a Christian responsibility to wear modest apparel that begins in the context of our reverential*

worship [of God] and that extends from there to our daily living.... God wills that we wear clothes as a matter of decorum and propriety in consideration of others and to avoid temptation that could lead to sinful wrong use. The reason for avoiding indecent or lewd exposure is that this type of exposure of the female body is lust-arousing to the carnal male mind.”¹⁶

Indeed, “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10, KJV).

Your Body is a Temple to God

Modesty involves more than clothing. It includes your *demeanor*—the way you talk and walk and your body language—all must be modest and pleasing to God. Another question from the above survey was this: “Could a modestly-dressed girl still be a stumbling block because of her attitude and behavior?” 94% of the men said *yes*.²

Here is a comment from a young man, age 18: “A modestly dressed girl can still be a stumbling block when she is moving and acting in ways that make it clear she is not modest *at heart*. This can inspire thoughts in my mind that tempt me to sin even though her body is covered.”²

Another question from the survey was this: “If you could say one thing to your sisters in Christ about modesty, what would it be?” One participant, age 16, said: “Please don’t take modesty lightly. As your brother in Christ, I value the relationship I will have with my wife someday. When I am tempted because of you, I lose a part of myself I’m trying to save for her. When I’m tempted because of you, I become that much more accepting of the perversions in the world. When you remain pure and modest, my life is made so much easier! Instead of watching to ensure I don’t sin, I can focus on you as a person and fellow follower of Christ. I appreciate modesty more than you’ll ever know! Please show respect for yourself and me and be modest!”²

Paul wrote: “Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body” (I Cor. 6:18-20, NLT).

This world is held captive by Satan. Don’t let the world with its seductive ways lead you down destructive paths! Instead, “*Glorify God* in your body and in your spirit” (I Cor. 6:20, KJV). How? By saving *all* seductiveness, sensuality, and sexuality for *marriage*—when your lovely body will help to enrapture just one special man (Prov. 5:19). There is no greater gift you can give to your husband than your purity—in thought, action, and dress.

Finally, Paul reminds us: “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to *present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God*; this is your true worship” (Rom. 12:1, CSB).

“

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Proverbs 31:30, ESV

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