

Christian Modesty

As we consider what the Bible has to say about **Christian Modesty**, we will deal with three primary issues--with TRUTH, CUSTOM AND FASHION. For most people this subject may be "out of season" but we must do as the apostle Paul instructed young Timothy.

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, **keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” 2Tim 4:2-5**

In today's world there are many considerations involved in teaching on this vital subject. **God's truth never changes**, yet we are dealing with a subject which is in constant change. Even in my own life time I have seen many deep rooted customs and fashions change over and over again, much like the phases of the moon which gives us our seasons. This complicates it when we deal with the fact that **truth** never changes. **Truth is eternal.** Jesus said, "I am the way, **the truth** and the life." **John 8:32.** Let me say at the beginning of this presentation, if we have a humble attitude, carry out the first and second commandment, everything else will fall into place, including modesty.

Jesus replied, "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart** and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. **God**, through **His Word** speaks to our hearts. If our heart is right we will have no problem with this subject or any other. God's Word applies to every tribe, kindred, or nation because every culture has its own customs, fashions and traditions. We need to be taught what God says about modesty. Years ago in Africa I watched a young girl step into the water to be baptized. She was bare from her waist up. I looked shocked. Neither she nor the natives thought anything of it. After many years of working and teaching, there has been a significant change in their understanding and attitude about modesty. **Matt 22:37-40.**

Just making a change, for the sake of change, is not a solution. That of itself does not make us righteous. If it did then the Mennonites and the Amish are more righteousness than we. But even among them, it is reported there are some twenty groups which have different styles and customs. Change is permanent, except for God's Word.

God instituted His marriage law immediately after He created Adam and Eve. Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." And God said, "For this reason a

man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” Jesus added, “And they are no more two but one flesh. What God has joined together let no man separate.” **Mat. 19:4-6.** “**The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.**” **Gen 2:23-25.** Both disobeyed God by eating of the fruit from the tree of good and evil.” **Gen 3:6-11.** “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, **and they realized they were naked;** so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "**Who told you that you were naked?**”

God rejected the fig leaves. Considering our customs in the States, the fig leaves might cover more skin than a lot of people’s clothing today. The Lord God took care of the matter: “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.” **Gen 3:21.** As men, when modesty is the subject, we have a tendency to think it only applies to women. But looking at some Old Testament references, it doesn’t appear that God changed His mind in regards to modesty, for both men and women. Let us consider some examples: God spoke to Moses, “And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.” **Ex 20:26-21:1.** The strong inference here is that men wore robes, or coats, so that if they elevated themselves, part of the calf of their legs could be seen, which God would consider nakedness.

Next, consider Elijah on Mt. Carmel, “The power of the LORD came upon Elijah and, **tucking his cloak into his belt,** he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.” “Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all of the 450 prophets of Baal with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.” **Kings 18:46-19:1.**

Noah! Here is a very interesting story.” **Gen 9:20-23,** Noah, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Ham and his descendents were cursed.

For brevity’s sake, I will just mention Joseph’s coat of many colors, King Saul, out of Jealousy, tried for several years to kill David. While King Saul, and his men were sleeping on the ground, David, knowing that he could not kill the Lord’s anointed, went down and cut off a part of the King’s robe. A king

wearing a robe while in a battle? There are many more such stories in the Old Testament, but I will let this do for now. You get the picture. No, I do not think men have to wear coats all the time. The key word is **Modesty in Moderation**.

Ahab's wife, Jezebel did not use moderation in her appearance. "Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, **she painted her eyes, arranged her hair** and looked out of a window." **2 Kings 9:30**. Even in our present culture, it is insulting to speak of a woman as looking like "a Jezebel."

Let us go now to the New Testament. After His resurrection, our Lord Jesus stood on the shore, making breakfast, while the disciples fished. and invited them to join Him. Peter and the other disciples fished. He called out to them, "come have breakfast". John said, "It is he Lord." As soon as Peter heard John say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. Even though Peter still had on his inner garment, he didn't want His lord to see him 'naked' in his underwear. Modesty. I now wish to turn our attention to the Scriptures in reference to the dress of women under the New Law.

Paul, an inspired apostle, instructed young Timothy, "I want **men** everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to **dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not** with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, **but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. 1 Tim 2:8-10.**

Peter had something to say about modesty. "**Your beauty** should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. **Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.** For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to **make themselves beautiful**. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear." **1 Peter 3:3-6**. Our dress speaks volumes. We are first judged by our outward appearance, then our 'inner self.' We learn from these scriptures that modesty has a broad definition.

Let us take a second look at some of the above words; Decency and propriety. Good deeds appropriate for women who profess to worship God. Unfading beauty shown through one's 'inner self' includes submissive with a gentle and quiet spirit which is of great worth in God's sight. Paul wrote to the Galatians' "Am I trying to win the approval of men, or of God? If I were still trying to please men, then I would not be a servant of God." **Gal.1:10.**

I have some great granddaughters who keep their hair long, wear dresses below their knees, and I have never seen them wear make-up. Most importantly, they are beautiful because of they portray a quiet and gentle spirit, as well as a good attitude. It is evident that my granddaughters love God. Should every Christian

do the same? Well, I doubt it, but for men or women, boys or girls, the custom of our day, wearing shorts, bathing suits and scanty, revealing clothing cannot be pleasing to God. Read the above again and I think you will come up with the same conclusion. Whether we speak of dress, jewelry, or ornaments, everyone should consider modesty in moderation. May no one who calls themselves a Christian be tattooed or have their bodies defaced in any way. “You are bought at a price, therefore honor God with your body.”

Is God interested in how we wear our hair? Well, let us read what the Bible says. In Scripture we find that the word ‘prophesy or prophesies’ can mean several things. 1. To tell the future. 2. To speak publicly. 3. To speak or pray privately. Knowing this will help us to understand the following chapter which the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians. (In summary, the word ‘covering’ refers to ‘hair’)

“Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head-it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and since it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.”

“In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not the very nature of things teach you **that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering.** If anyone wants to be contentious about this, **we have no other practice-nor do the churches of God.**” **1 Cor. 11:3-16.** The conclusion is this: A woman should have long hair and a man should have short hair. Now, the age-old question is? How long is long and how short is short?

One way we can tell is that if a woman looks like a man, and a man looks like a woman we know from Scripture that is something that God detests. “Know ye not that the **unrighteous** shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, **nor effeminate**, nor abusers of themselves with mankind”. **1Cor. 6:9.** The word ‘effeminate’ refers to a man having the features of a woman or a woman having the features of a man.

Sexual Immorality

Morality is the quality in a person to know right from wrong; standards of good behavior; sexual virtuous. Just the opposite of being moral, not conforming to

the principles of right and wrong, especially in regards to sexually immorality. The violation of God's standard of moral conduct produces consequences. We must study our Bibles to get a clear picture and understanding of God's will in this matter. In the book of Deuteronomy, this is what is written, "If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shall you put away evil from Israel." **Deut 22:22.** Concerning rape, "If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, he shall pay the girl's father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the girl, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives. **Deut 22:28-29**

I admit, that is pretty harsh, The New Testament, which is God's new law, deals with this subject somewhat different, God has not changed His attitude toward sexual immorality, and the consequences are just as great. Let us read, **1 Cor. 6:9-11**, "Do you not know that **the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived: **Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers** nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were **washed**, you were **sanctified**, you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Some of the Corinthians repented. Praise God there is hope for the sinner. The **sexual immoral person** is listed here along with all of the other gross sins.

"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, **but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.** Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." **1 Cor. 6:18-20.** I mentioned that the consequences of sexual impurity under the New Law is probably worse. Even in our churches our young boys and girls are having babies out of wedlock. Let us read the following:

"He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, **the sexually immoral**, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-**their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."** **Rev 21:7-8**

The first link I pulled up on the internet for "**unwanted babies**" I was shocked. According to this report, there were 51,538 and these numbers are not even the most current numbers. Remember these are babies that neither the mother nor the father wishes to keep and take care of. What a shame! So what do they do? Read the following:

New laws in the United States have made it possible for unwanted newborns and/or infants to be dropped off at various locations, known as safe havens, no

questions asked, and without the threat of prosecution. The baby must be unharmed, and showing no signs of neglect or abuse. In most states the mother, father, or any adult who has legal custody is allowed to drop off a baby. A few states allow any adult to drop off a baby, as long as the mother approves. Check your state's law at the National Safe Haven Alliance's website, with your local welfare of child services agency, or with an attorney to determine who may drop off a baby in your state. In the United States there are many locations to choose from: Hospitals, Dr.'s office, Medical centers, welfare centers, adoption agencies, and many others or call 911. In either location there are no questions. Just leave the baby and run!

Valta and I lost our 5th child, a little boy, when he was only two weeks old. He died from an ear infection which quickly developed into meningitis. Valta nursed him for 2 years, and through medical advice, we put him into a Care Center. Through a friend we heard of a young woman in Denver, Colorado, who was 3 months pregnant, and did not want to keep the baby. We called her, and quickly made arrangements to adopt her child. She was only 3 days old when we brought her home from the hospital. We named her Jo Ann. Our family accepted her as though she entered the family the same way as all of the others. She is a real blessing. After all these years she has tried very desperately to find her biological father. All efforts have been in vain. His name is Jerry.

The moral of this story is this, there have and will be thousands of 'Jerry's' who get many women pregnant, but who do not, and will not, take the responsibility of a father. God will hold them accountable. Look at this Bible verse, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, **and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (Infidel)**" **1 Tim 5:8.** Jo Ann was not the only child fathered by Jerry. A man, like Jerry, did not violate any civil law. The woman usually does not have many options but is left with all of the responsibilities. Most single women with children have to also work full time. What else can she do? But the "Safe Haven" is one option: Drop the infant off at one of the many agencies, with no questions asked. What a shame!

The Bible does not directly address single mothers, but there are many examples of God's gentle interaction with women, mothers, widows and their children. These examples, and God's gentleness, apply whether a mother is single or married or widowed or divorced. God knows each person intimately and knows her situation completely. The Bible warns that sex outside of marriage is sinful and dangerous and will bring troubles, one of which is that a woman might have to raise a child by herself, which is undoubtedly difficult. And if it is her own sin that has resulted in single motherhood, our gracious God is still just as willing to bring help and comfort. And what's better is that He offers forgiveness for those sins through Jesus Christ and the eternal comfort of heaven for the mother who accepts Him, the children who accept Him, and even the estranged father/husband who accepts Him!