

Topics in Practical Theology – Lesson 4 – Modesty

Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School

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For many, modesty is a topic that stirs the emotions, often to extremes: on one side we have “puritanical”, on the other “licentious”. Our society has lost the shame of sin, of immodesty. This is not new as even Judah had lost this in the time of Jeremiah.

¹⁵“Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down,” says the LORD. Jer 6:15

Definition of Modesty

Modest: having a disinclination to call attention to oneself; observing conventional proprieties in speech, behavior, or dress. Free from showiness. Having a disinclination to call attention to oneself. VBC Sermon on 1 Timothy

Dictionary.com: 1) the quality of being modest; freedom from vanity, boastfulness, etc.; 2) regard for decency of behavior, speech, dress, etc.; 3) simplicity; moderation.

⁹Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, ¹⁰but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. 1 Tim 2:9-10

proper [kosmios] – well arranged, seemly, modest; only other use in 1 Tim 3:2

¹It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. ²An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 1 Tim 3:1-7

The elder character quality concerns a well ordered and arranged life and testimony that adorns the Lord, His word, and Gospel message with honor in every respect.

A well-ordered life style that reflects biblical principles and doctrines in matters such as dress, speech, appearance of home and manner of doing business. An orderly man is honorable, decent, dignified, and modest, ... VBC website

modestly [aidōs] – a sense of shame or honor, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others, respect; only use in 1 Tim 2:9. Modesty mixed with humility.

discreetly [sōphrosynē] – 1) soundness of mind; 2) self-control, sobriety; only other uses in 1 Tim 2:15 and Acts 26:25

¹⁵But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. 1 Tim 2:15

²⁵But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. Acts 26:25

Modesty then is a quality of a well arranged life adorns the Lord, His word, and Gospel message with honor; an accurate sense of what is shameful and reverent with regard and respect for others with self-control. We see the specific application presented in 1 Tim 2:9 is how women are to present themselves in the gathering of the saints. However, the principle of modesty is relevant to both men and women.

Heart Issue

The bottom line is: our behavior on the outside is a reflection of the heart. We should be holy because we have been redeemed.

²⁰And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. ²¹"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²²deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. ²³"All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." Mark 7:20-23

³³"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵"The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. Matt 12:33-35

¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;** ¹⁶because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." ¹⁷If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; ¹⁸**knowing that you were not redeemed with** perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, **the blood of Christ.** 1 Pet 1:14-19

"How does a woman discern the sometimes fine line between proper dress and dressing to be the center of attention? The answer starts in the intent of the heart. A woman should examine her motives and goals for the way she dresses. Is her intent to show the grace and beauty of womanhood? Is it to reveal a humble heart devoted to worshipping God? Or is it to call attention to herself and flaunt her beauty? Or worse, to attempt to lure men sexually? A woman who focuses on worshipping God will consider carefully how she is dressed, because her heart will dictate her wardrobe and appearance." -John MacArthur

Where is our focus?

⁶For the **mind set on the flesh is death**, but the **mind set on the Spirit is life and peace**, ⁷because the **mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God**; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. Rom 8:6-9

¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking the things above**, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²**Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:1-3

²³But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not **setting your mind** on God's interests, but man's." Matt 16:23

¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who **set their minds on earthly things.** ²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; Phil 3:17-20

Some Principles Related to Modesty

God's Glory

³¹Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Cor 10:31

"I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images. Isa 42:8

Hindering the Gospel

¹²If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. 1 Cor 9:12

³giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, 2 Cor 6:3

Whether you are aware of it, what you allow or disallow in your behavior affects your witness for Christ—and the world is watching. It's an issue of testimony—what your life says about God. Your testimony either tells the truth about God, or it tells a lie. The choices you make in the "gray" areas should reflect your concern not to bring offense to God's reputation but to bring Him praise instead.
John MacArthur

Areas of Modesty

Speech

²⁹Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Eph 2:28

⁶And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. James 3:6

Behavior

¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." ... ¹¹Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. ¹²Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 1:14-16; 2:11-12

Some Principles Related to Female Modesty (dress)

Both under-dressing (a lack of clothing exposing nakedness) and overdressing (dressing in expensive fashions) can both be immodest. An important point to understand related to female dress and modesty is that the way women dress affects men by placing the temptation for impure thoughts before them.

¹"I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin? Job 31:1

²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; ²⁸but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matt 5:27-28

This is not an excuse for men, since everyone is responsible for their own sin.

⁴Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine The soul who sins will die. Ezekiel 18:4

Dressing in an immodest manner has the potential to place a stumbling block before the brother for whom Christ died.

¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. ... ¹⁵For if because of [food] your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love Do not destroy with your [food] him for whom Christ died. Rom 14:13-15

¹³Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never [**eat meat**] again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble. 1 Cor 8:13

Dressing in an immodest manner is selfish.

³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil 2:3-4

Dressing in an immodest manner tears down and therefore is not loving.

¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Rom 13:10

The pursuit of edification is a priority for the follower of Christ.

¹⁹So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Rom 14:19

¹Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. ²Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. Rom 15:1-2

^{1c}... but love edifies. 1 Cor 8:1c

Adornment goes back to the heart.

¹In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. ³**Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;** ⁴**but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.** ⁵For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; ⁶just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. 1 Pet 3:1-6

Excerpt from the article “THE SIN OF BATHSHEBA” by an anonymous author

Though the brethren in Christ are not wicked, yet they may be weak. And the devil does all he can do to weaken them further. They are forced to live in a world where they are continually bombarded with sights which are designed by the enemy of their souls to weaken their morals and destroy their purity of heart. And must Christian women help the devil to do his work? Must they make themselves a temptation to their brethren even in the congregation of God? O that you could understand the fierce and bitter conflict in the souls of your brethren, when you provoke them by the careless display of your body. Oh, that you could hear their pleadings with God for help and deliverance from the power of those temptations. Oh that you could see their tears of shame and repentance when the temptation has overcome them, and they have sinned with eyes and heart and mind. Never again would you plead for your right to dress as you please.

The fact is, you have no such right. You have no right to destroy, by your careless dress, the brother for whom Christ died. You are bought with a price, and are not your own. You are duty-bound to glorify God in your body —to clothe that body, not as you will, but as God wills. And a little of real love for the souls of your brethren would remove for ever from your heart the desire to dress as you please.