

# The Old Paths

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## “Dressing In A Modest Way”

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**I**mmodesty, it seems, has become a year-round problem with people. In the past, issues such as modest and immodest dress were reserved primarily for the summer. Yet, I have noticed that some do not stop dressing immodestly even in the wintertime! As Christians, we need to be on our guard against dressing immodestly, and make sure that we dress properly and modestly before all. In this issue, we wish to deal with the subject of modest and immodest dress. May we examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5), and make sure all that we do and say is based upon the will and authority of God (Col. 3:17).

### **Why Study About Dressing Immodestly?**

We need to study on this subject because it is a Bible subject! After Adam and Eve sinned, they tried to hide from God, and made “coverings” or “aprons” from fig leaves (Gen. 3:7). Yet, God “clothed them” when He gave them “coats” or “tunics” of skin to wear (Gen. 3:21). From that time until the present, God has been concerned about men and women covering their bodies appropriately. We see this throughout the Old and New Testaments. For example, we find God expecting His priests to dress appropriately (Ex. 20:26, 28:42). In the New Testament, we see that He demands women dress with “shamefacedness and sobriety” (I Tim. 2:9). God’s word also describes some as wearing the

“attire of a harlot” (Prov. 7:10). (I wonder if a harlot and a Christian might wear the same thing?)

### **What Should A Christian’s Attitude Be Toward Immodesty?**

One thing we need to understand is that Christians are a people of action, not reaction! God has told us what to do in His word, and therefore we do it! We do not wait until the world does something, and then make our decisions. Our thoughts, words, and actions must be based upon what is: true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). We need to focus our attention on “things above” (Col. 3:1-2). While this is not always the easiest thing to do, it is the best thing to do! Christians are a purchased people, special, and zealous of good works (Titus 2:14). Since this is true, Christians are not to be worried about thinking, dressing, and acting like the world. Instead, we want to think like God thinks (Rom. 12:1-2).

What must be understood is that our dress is but a reflection of our heart! Notice that in both Paul and Peter’s letters, they stress sobriety, godliness, and a “meek and quiet spirit” (I Tim. 2:9-10; I Pet. 3:3-4). Modest dress is characteristic of “holy women” who trust in God (I Pet. 3:5). Do such passages describe you? The way one thinks is exhibited in how one dresses!

Therefore, we do not want to be “conformed to this world” but “transformed!” Be honest friend, have YOU been guilty of trying to conform to the will and ways of the world? Have you been reacting to the

world, rather than acting upon the principles of Scripture? If so, you need to repent!

### **Men And Women Are Different.**

While you allow this “bombshell” to sink in, let us acknowledge that we are living in a society which tries to blur, and even erase the lines of gender. Yet, this cannot be done. God made man and woman at the beginning (Gen. 2; Matt. 19:4), and so doing, He made them unique, and distinct sexes/genders. It is true that some things tempt a man which would not be tempting to a woman, and some things tempt a woman which would not be tempting to a man. This is because we are unique creatures in God’s sight.

Yet, in the case of immodesty, one thing is true: Each gender has a responsibility not to entice the other one to sin. The Bible plainly declares that women must dress in a way that is modest (I Tim. 2:9-10; I Pet. 3:3-5). Men then have the responsibility not to look and lust (Job 31:1; Matt. 5:27-28)! (Don’t forget that each of these rules applies to the other gender, too! Men must also dress modestly, and women must not lust.)

Yes, it is true that some men would lust after a woman covered in a burka! But, this does not diminish a woman’s responsibility to clothe herself in a godly way. At the same time, it is true that some women deliberately dress in a way which entices a man by wearing revealing, and/or tight clothing, leaving little to the imagination. Immodest dress, and the temptations which come from such actions, are a two-way street, and we need to understand that!

### **Some Sins Associated With Immodesty.**

Perhaps some are ignorant of this fact, but we need to understand that

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there are sins associated with dressing in an immodest way. Perhaps we haven't thought of this before, but it is true. Just like there are several sins associated with the sin of forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25), so also there are several sins associated with immodesty.

One sin is the sin of pride in flaunting God's will. God expects His people to dress in a certain way, but many refuse (I Tim. 2:9-10; I Pet. 3:3-5). This is a sin. Another sin involved here is the undue attention focused on our bodies. Remember, we are to point people toward God, not self (Matt. 5:16). Our manner of dress ought to reflect godliness, not worldliness (I Tim. 2:10; I Pet. 3:4). How can this be done when our dress causes people to lust after us (under-dressing, Matt. 5:27-28) or causes people to give undue attention to us rather than the Father (over-dressing, I Tim. 2:9; I Pet. 3:3)? A third sin to consider is the sin of selfishness. Some might say, "This is my body, and I'll dress or not dress as I please." Let us remember that our bodies do not belong to us, but God (I Cor. 6:19-20). Seeing this is true, let us humbly submit ourselves to His will (Col. 3:17), and forsake our own will!

While considering these things, let us realize that sometimes husbands encourage their wives to dress inappropriately. Men, why not be an influence for good instead of evil? Encourage your wives to act and dress in a godly manner. Love her like you would yourself (Eph. 5:25, 28), and do not encourage her to attract the attention of strange men.

### ***A Danger In Over-Dressing***

Sometimes this problem is not discussed like it ought, but both Paul and Peter dealt with it in their writings (I Tim. 2:9; I Pet. 3:3). Yet, it seems that from time to

time, we find people guilty of such things. To over-dress is as much a sin as to under-dress. Both actions call people's attention to the wrong things!

Unfortunately, we have a society which emphasizes over-dressing from time to time. If you're not sure when this happens, then you must not watch the "awards" shows which take place at various times of the year. People go out of their way to find out what the "stars" are wearing this year. Such actions are prime examples of what Paul and Peter were warning about.

Therefore, both extremes (over-dressing and under-dressing) are condemned by God. Our focus ought to be on what is godly, what reflects a "meek and quiet spirit," and not on such things that direct people's attention toward us. When our minds are on godly things, being conscious of the message our clothes send, then we'll be on our way to dressing in a modest way. Let us make sure our dress is modest, and in line with God's will.

### ***Common Excuses Associated With Immodest Dress.***

At times, we find people who might have good intentions, but they offer various excuses for their immodesty. Let us compare some common excuses with the Scriptures.

1) ***"The Fashion Industry is responsible for the problem. Women can only buy the clothes that are out***

***there.***" Who made a law that said clothes you purchase cannot be altered? (People still sell sewing machines.) I know of some women who buy dresses, and then buy some fabric which matches in order to cover the plunging neckline. Others have had to basically wear two dresses in order to get the "coverage" of one. Friends, we can alter our clothing to conform to God's standard and still be "stylish" if we will just do a little work, being conscious of God's standard!

2) ***"Everyone dresses this way, so it has no effect on people. If it were one or two, that would be different, but since so many dress immodestly, then it goes unnoticed these days."*** Really? I guess this is why advertisers use so many barely-clothed women in ads — because "no one notices," right? Further, if the reasoning above were true, then what about those places in the world where the population wears no clothes? Would we go for that, too, since "all" are doing it? Read Romans 12:1-2 again, and see what God wants us to do and not to do.

[\* Lord willing, this study will conclude next week. In the meantime, have you considered how you are dressing, and what this reflects? Have you truly considered if what you are wearing will cause the opposite sex to lust, or if we are focusing undue attention on our bodies? Are we encouraging people to go to Heaven when we dress like the world?]

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