

# Today's Christian Woman

## Her Appearance and Dress

### I. The influence of appearance

- A. To ignore it is to be foolish. How you "get yourself together" says volumes about who you are. It is a truism that should go without saying. We can shout "Don't judge me by my appearance" all day long but those who shout it the loudest do the same every day. We do know that how we dress and how we keep our appearance is a reflection of who we are.
  - 1. Article - Don't Come As You Are; by Jo Coudert; Woman's Day; 8/10/93; p. 152.
    - i. This woman complains about how people have no regard anymore about their appearance, as if it makes no difference.
- B. It is no surprise that God, who judges not by outward appearance, but judges the heart, nonetheless addressed the matter of one's dress and demeanor on several occasions. God knew others would judge his people first on how they looked because we can't see the heart as God does.
- C. In this series on the Christian Woman of Today, it is fitting that we address this topic because the Lord addresses it, too. Our culture has greatly devalued the feminine qualities that would lead a woman to dress in a godly manner. And scripture ties these feminine traits to her manner of dress. We want to examine these traits that the Bible ties to appearance and see how critical they are. We will contrast them with today's cultural ideas on a woman's dress and demeanor. We also want to see the importance of applying these principles in the life of every Christian woman, whatever her age.

### II. Two key biblical passages.

- A. Let's look at two important passages that address this matter for the Christian so we can have them in mind throughout this lesson.
  - 1. (1 Timothy 2:8-10) I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. (NKJV)
  - 2. (1 Peter 3:1-7) Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel-- rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. (NKJV)
- B. Both of these passages speak to a manner of dress that is rooted in the individual character. It is the Lord's affirmation that one's general appearance does reflect character and the inner person. And he wants a Christian woman to understand that.

- C. Note the traits of a godly woman listed in these passages that the Bible says are reflected in her demeanor and manner of dress. They define her and help us all to understand the kind of woman that reflects godliness
1. Propriety - also translated "shamefastness." Gk. *aidos*; a sense of shame. It refers to a woman's sense of restrained behavior manifested both in demeanor and dress. Thus, she does not act and dress so as to call constant attention to herself. She wears that which is proper and fitting *and* would not cause her to blush or be ashamed.
  2. Moderation - also translated "sobriety." She is serious about life and even that is reflected in her appearance.
  3. Professing godliness - She is not ashamed of being a godly woman and her profession of her faith in God is seen in her appearance.
  4. Good works - good works accompany her profession of godliness. The woman described in 1st Timothy 2 is dedicated to good works.
  5. Chaste conduct - She is a woman of purity who conducts herself in a morally upright way.
  6. Fear - i.e. in fear of God
  7. Hidden person of the heart - the inward person reflects a...
  8. Gentle and quiet spirit - meekness. A great inner spiritual strength that comes to be manifested in the outward demeanor of the woman.
- D. These are the traits God admires in a woman. She is godly, chaste, humble, serious about life, active in good works, fears her maker and manifests womanly traits without shame. This is the true woman of God that should be admired by all. And what a wonderful portrait it is. And so much of it is summed up in this one word - Modesty.
- E. When Paul used the word "modest" he is using a word that can describe more than just clothes. Modesty is a trait naturally rooted in a woman. Feminism wants to deny that with all its power, but they can't. It is there. I believe a woman has to be trained not to be modest because she would naturally reflect a sense of shame and the ability to blush without training. (Ex. Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness without anybody telling them to be ashamed.) Modesty is something she must fight to overcome if she wants to be rid of it. And our culture is all too willing to help her try to push aside these godly traits.
- F. The Christian woman must come to appreciate the importance of modesty in her life. All the traits listed above are tied to modesty. They are traits the modern woman does not value.

### III. The Modern Woman's Viewpoint on Modesty.

- A. It is important to see the contrast between this godly woman and the attempt by modern culture, led by the feminist, to mock and remove such a woman from our world.
- B. Modern feminism wants to eliminate any differences between a man and a woman.
  1. Radicals in the movement even deny there are any biological differences in a male and a female. There may be some outward physical differences but biologically there is no distinction between the two. Some even regard it heresy to use the terms "man" and "woman." (Such absurdity just shows how far out in left field feminism will take our culture if we let it.) (See ReturnTo Modesty; pg.. 113; Cf. pg. 87.)

2. Thus, they say, women can and should act and emote just like men. To suggest that woman naturally possesses a quality of shamefastness or the ability to blush in embarrassing circumstances is to suggest woman has a weakness in her biological makeup, since, to them, shame is obviously a weakness.
  3. The result of such an attitude is women today who are as cavalier about sexual relationships as they have viewed men as being through the ages. The feminist believes she should act in a relationship just like a male. They have a right to a sexual relationship without attachment. They should feel no shame for multiple partners.
- C. The modern feminist believes she achieves true equality in relationships only when she is no longer shackled by oppressive feelings of modesty and shame - when she is free to express her sexuality however she wants - just like a man.
1. Thus the idea of "saving oneself" or having only one partner for life is considered antiquated. For a liberated woman such is a sign of repression - a Victorian attitude from a male dominated society of the past. No woman is truly liberated until she is sexually liberated.
- D. Result of such an idea
1. Obviously modesty and propriety go out the window. Modest = prude and nobody wants to be a prude. She is under constant pressure not to be a "weirdo" who doesn't want a constant string of "relationships." She becomes sexually active.
  2. And a woman is treated in this modern society like a man because men have been taught she, emotionally and inwardly, thinks and reacts just like a man. What is the result of such thinking?
    - i. Sexual harassment is at an all time high, starting in middle school.
    - ii. Date rape has skyrocketed because the male has been told that the female feels exactly the same about sex as he does. That she has the same strong urges he does and he expects her to react to them in the same way.
    - iii. STD's and AIDS among heterosexuals is epidemic as promiscuity is considered the norm.
  3. Then come the real consequences of this so-called liberated attitude of the modern woman.
    - i. A loss of a sense of shame. Nothing is sacred anymore. The more she shows the more liberated she is! Nothing is left to the imagination. There is no mystery about her anymore. There are no secrets. She is trained to go against her natural inclinations of modest behavior.
    - ii. A loss of a self-respect. Why? Because she is placed in a position of having to deny her own natural feelings of modesty, shame, and respect for her own body. This is the source of so much insecurity and confusion in young women today. These are the young girls and women who:
      - a. Become promiscuous than ever.
      - b. Psychological problems among young girls and women are commonplace. Lack of self respect has led epidemic levels of anorexia, bulimia, even self mutilation- from girls who no longer respect themselves who cannot accept who they are, because deep down inside they know what they are doing is against their natural inclinations. They know deep inside that what they are doing is WRONG! They are miserable with themselves and their lives.

- 1) Mary Pipher, well known author, psychotherapist and strict feminist, makes an interesting observation about her young female patients. She says the only girls in her practice who have escaped the litany of self-mutilation and eating disorders are the girls who are not sexually active - usually the ones who come from strict families with "paternalistic" fathers. She also observes they are usually the happiest and most well adjusted of her patients.
4. I have a question for the feminist. If feminism is the way to true liberation for woman and its views are the accepted views of our culture, why are these kinds of problems among young girls and women skyrocketing today?
- E. The Feminist view of woman is a dead end; a destructive force that will undermine all that is good in God's world; and it is destroying a generation of women who find out too late what they missed out on in their life.

#### IV. The Biblical View

- A. The Bible clearly teaches a certain self-image for a woman. that is both self-respecting and liberating. If followed a woman will learn a contentment only found in doing things as the Creator intended. And at the foundation of these Godly principles for womanhood is the Biblical teaching of Modesty.

#### V. What does modesty involve?

- A. (Genesis 24:63-65) And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming. Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; for she had said to the servant, "Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took a veil and covered herself. (NKJV)
  1. Quaint you think? She was only doing in her culture what expressed her own feelings of modesty when she met the man she would marry for the first time. It is actually a beautiful picture of a self-respecting woman.
- B. Modesty is a term that the feminist associates with sexual repression. Interestingly one dictionary definition is "damping down one's sexual allure." Ridiculous. I think some of my brethren think that is all modesty is about, too.
- C. Modesty is a term that encompasses so much more than skirt length. Two areas are usually given in definitions.
  1. One has to do with a natural reservedness in character. That which does not constantly brag but demurs. It is "having a moderate estimation of one's abilities and worth." This is humility.
    - i. It is interesting that studies have repeatedly shown that women do not boast or brag about accomplishments in public near as much as men do. In private they speak of their accomplishments but in public they modestly demur to do so.  
(Return to Modesty)
  2. The second meaning of this word has to do with that innate sense of shame that causes one to act and dress in a reserved manner. Again, that Greek word *aidos* meaning "shamefastness" - the ability to blush that comes from being ashamed. It is a trait placed in us for a reason. And the woman has it in spades. It plays a tremendous role in culture and is one of the most civilizing influences known to

mankind. Through it the woman keeps man's urges in check and exercises influence over his behavior.

- D. The second of these definitions refers to that trait mentioned in 1st Timothy 2. And it is manifested both in behavior and dress.
1. Throughout history modesty in woman's behavior has been the restraining and civilizing force in relationships and society. Her modesty is her means of exercising control in her relationships with the opposite sex. It is the most powerful tool she has at her disposal in a relationship with a man.
  2. Yet, again, understand it involves her entire demeanor and behavior. She exercises control in the relationship with a man by her reserved attitude. If the man sees her as a woman, he respects her for her reservedness and her refusal of his advances. Her modesty actually inspires respect from the male and thus protects her. (See Return To Modesty.; pg.. 112, p.1&2.
    - i. In contrast to that, if she presents herself by her appearance and behavior as an object for lust, and puts all her "wares" on public display, he will not respect her as a woman and see her only as an object of the lust she so readily arouses in him willingly. When she does that, she has no control in the relationship. In his mind she has no basis to resist his advances. The relationship has now been lowered to its lowest, basest instincts. And almost any counselor will tell you when sex begins in a dating relationship, growth in the relationship stops. It is now all about the sex, especially to the male. If a girl thinks giving into her boyfriends advances will help the relationship she is wrong - 100% of time.
  3. Modesty then clearly involves an attitude of reservedness, propriety, moderation, of one professing godliness, chaste conduct, one who fears God, whose hidden person of the heart reflects a gentle and quiet spirit - meekness. A great inner spiritual strength that comes to be manifested in the outward demeanor of the woman.
- E. So, is that reflected in how she dresses? Paul said it did in 1st Tim. 2.
1. 1st Tim. 2:9,10 - "in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works." (NKJV)
  2. Actually two things are involved here. One is the moderation in dress from the standpoint of opulence and gaudiness. In both this passage and the passage in 1 Peter 3 the scriptures are warning against a Christian woman becoming obsessed with expensive and even gaudy clothing and accessories. Her attire does not call attention to itself and its expense. Such does not reflect the modest heart of a Christian woman. In contrast she is to dress in that "*which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.*"
- F. But there is more to this word "modest" than just avoiding the opulent clothes racks at Saks or Neiman Marcus or the gaudy ones at the Dollar Store. Interestingly, historians tells us that in Greek and Roman cultures the most expensive women's clothing were also the most sensual and revealing of the fashions.
1. "Transparent fabrics so delicate as to resemble cobwebs were one of the glories of Greek couture. On festive occasions, women of fashion, looking all but naked, wore dresses of this material for erotic emphasis. For a time, male public opinion was aroused against this fashion but not on grounds of indecency. It was argued that if women displayed themselves so thoroughly in public, there would be little left for them to reveal in the bedroom." (Sexual Pleasure in Marriage: Jerome and Julia

Rainer; New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1959; p. 136. Quoted in *A Modern Look at Modesty* by Don Humphrey; Christian Pub. Co.; 1963; 2652 Brenner, Dallas TX 75220.) (Also quote from *East to Cathay* in article on modesty by Ron Halbrook).

- i. Thus, there was and is often a tie between opulence and sexuality in clothing. (Just look at what the movie starlets wear to the Academy Awards each year. I doubt that women have ever paid so much for so little.)
2. (1st Tim. 2 ch.) But modesty is also rooted in the woman's ability to feel ashamed, the ability to blush - that trait so hated and despised by the feminist is at the heart of the truly Godly woman. And it is most certainly reflected in her clothing, or lack of it.
  - i. A woman who dresses modestly is inviting a man to relate to her in a completely different way. She is inviting him to get to know her personality, her nature, her character. Whereas a woman who puts it all on display, out there for all the guys to see, is inviting a totally different kind of relationship, one that starts with and is based on the physical. (That's how the man sees it.) She gets herself together advertising her body and then she can't understand why the guy she caught with her body just wants to make out.
3. Here is where a Christian girl or a Christian woman must look at herself and her clothing and honestly ask herself what her clothes say about her character and spirituality. She must ask herself, "Do I appear to the males around me as a woman professing godliness? Would they have any doubts about my chastity and spirituality after seeing how I am dressed?"
4. Today's styles often leave little to the imagination. Clinging materials and tight fitting styles sometimes leave nothing to the imagination. I have even seen on rare occasion, in this assembly young women so dressed as to leave absolutely nothing to the imagination about her body. And I mean nothing. Now her body was covered, that wasn't the problem. The problem was the material and its fit. What are mothers thinking? What are fathers thinking?
5. Ladies remember something. Young ladies here me on this. Most fashion designers are men and design clothes for their sensual appeal.
  - i. Friday's paper had an article about the "fun, youthful, liberated look of the 70's because it is coming back in what is called the Mod look. Emphasis was on the miniskirt. There was a picture in the article of its original designer, Mary Quant. I have a quote from her from an interview several years ago in which she said that the purpose of the miniskirt's design was to "seduce a man." She frankly admitted that her purpose was to sexually arouse a man. That's pretty blunt. And the miniskirt is almost blasé' in today's culture. Women choose to reveal (expose!) their bodies in so many different ways today.
  - ii. And many will follow the fashions, no matter what. Fashion is a powerful force, especially among women. I believe some young girls have little thought to the effect their clothing has on the boys. They are just following the styles. But adult women will also do the same things.
    - a. Mike Royko article (quoted in *Return To Modesty*, p. 121-2) on women in gusty Chicago fighting their slit skirts.
    - b. Also a good example of the innate nature of modesty. Whether those women wanted to admit it or not, they still had the ability to feel ashamed about exposing too much skin.
6. But mothers must instill in their daughters the principals of modesty the world is trying to remove. Don't mothers care about the modesty of their children? Another

article, this time from former LA Times syndicated writer Paul Ciotti ("Younger children part of sexual revolution;" reprinted in B'ham News, early Oct. 1993).

- i. He writes about his shock at attending his elementary school age daughter's Christmas pageant and being absolutely shocked at little girls dressed like in skimpy outfits dancing to hot music and shaking their rear ends at the audience. And mothers were jumping up to take pictures!
  - ii. Mothers what concerns you most about your daughter: her popularity and success in the eyes of her peers, or her spirituality and godliness? How you let her dress says volumes about what you consider most important.
  - iii. Young ladies, I know the pressure to conform is great and that styles today often do not leave much room for modesty, but you must remember your Creator in the days of your youth.
- G. So, how do you judge what is modest? That's really not that tough. The problem really comes in the attitude of the heart, and following the natural inborn restraints.
1. Ladies, you know when a skirt is too short. If you constantly tug at it when you sit in the presence of your dad then it is too short, probably way too short. You know when a skirt reveals too much. When, in the presence of your dad or some other adult male you are constantly tugging at the top of your dress, you know it reveals too much. And when you stumble upon some other person you greatly respect at the mall and start trying to use your shopping bag to cover your too tight jeans or top, you know its too tight. That is, unless you have already been so hardened by the world around you that you don't listen to your heart anymore. If that is true I beg you to wake up before it is eternally too late.
  2. Florida can be a tough place to dress by God's standards and still fit in the culture. You can help deal with that by also paying attention to where you go. Some places encourage immodest dress and Florida is full of such places, especially the beaches. And the truth is, if you will admit it, you know whether your clothing reflects a woman professing godliness. And you know when it doesn't. God didn't mean for you to dress in such a way as to display your body to the world. He meant for you to dress in such a way that only the man you marry would enjoy that blessed privilege and joy. That is what God intended. Have the courage of conviction to do what you know is right!

## **VI. Conclusion - Gen. 3:7**

- A. (Genesis 3:7) "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings."
- B. Do you know when you are exposed to the world? Somewhere between Genesis 3 and today, modesty became blasé', antiquated, a trait from a bygone era. But not for the Christian woman. She knows she cannot deny this innate God-given trait if she would please her God and she will do all in her power to manifest it in her daily life.
- C. You see, modesty says you believe you are worth something. It says, "I think I am worth waiting for and worth concealing" while immodesty says "Why wait? Here it is right now. Come and get it!" What are you saying about yourself to the world?
- D. Ladies, young and old, treasure this blessing God gave to you, this powerful and needed trait of modesty that is so critically needed in our culture today. Do not be influenced by the wicked ways of our modern world. Choose God's way and be known as a modest woman who professes Godliness.

E. This series of lessons on Today's Christian Woman has been presented to people who I believe want to serve God. I hope it has helped to not only see what a Godly woman is, but also the great value she is to us and to our society. She truly to be honored, revered and supported and encouraged in every way. May God help us all to see our crying need for truly "virtuous women whose worth is far above rubies."