

Modesty

by Geneva Brown Smith

“In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly array; but which becometh women professing godliness, with good works” (I Timothy 2:9-10). This word “modest” is taken from the Greek word *kosmios* and means orderly, well arranged, decent, or harmonious arrangement.

Standards of modesty have undergone many changes throughout the years. During the 1800’s women wore long dresses down to the floor. Our great grandmothers were considered immodest if their ankles were shown in public. In our day, people of the world wear just about anything. Consider how the movie stars dress (undress). In order to understand “modesty,” It might be helpful to look at “immodesty.”

The Heart

Immodesty begins in the heart and manifests itself in a woman’s dress. It is right and proper for a woman to be well groomed. She should make herself beautiful for her husband. She should avoid dressing to attract someone other than her husband, however.

Immodesty manifests itself in a woman’s speech. Have you ever been in the presence of someone who constantly wants to tell off color jokes, or make some suggestive comment? Some women always have a cute (flirty) remark on the tip of their tongues for other men while they ignore their own husbands and the other women.

Immodesty manifests itself in a woman’s body language. Some women wear skirts that are too short to sit down in. They sit and try to pull the skirt down in essence announcing to everyone, “my skirt is too short.” Others sit and cross their legs in a seductive manner while looking to see which men are watching. These kinds of things come from troubled hearts.

The Bathing Suit

Some Christians have suggested that the modern bathing suit is modest if worn only on the beach where other people are dressed in that fashion. This argument can be brought to an absurd conclusion. Would a Christian woman be considered modest if she went to a nude beach and wore no clothing (like everyone else)? I think not.

Shorts and Halter

With the advent of summer, it might be advantageous to consider a very popular item of clothing among all different ages. Shorts: ...not modest if they are patterned after their name. I suppose there might be modest ones if they are long enough and loose enough. I cannot imagine a modest halter, however.

What does the Bible Say?

When Adam and Eve learned good from evil, they desired to be clothed. They made themselves aprons out of fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). In verse 21 God made clothes for them out of animal skins. May we infer that fig leaf aprons were not enough?

In Deuteronomy 22:5 a distinction was made between the clothing of men and women. "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth to the man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment. For all that do so are abomination unto the Lord. thy God."

In I Peter 3:3-5, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart"

An Attitude

Modesty is more than a high neckline, a long skirt, or any particular item of clothing. If a woman's possesses a modest attitude, the proper behavior and dress will follow. Christian women should strive to keep their hearts pure, knowing that all sins begin there (Proverbs 23:7). If she does this, you will not find her wearing plunging necklines, very short skirts or skin-tight clothing. Neither will she behave herself as we suggested in the above paragraphs.

Influence

The good influence of a Christian woman is an asset that can not be over emphasized. Someone is watching, especially if you are fortunate enough to be the mother of daughters. Often, you hear or read how daughters imitate their mothers in things they do and say. I said things to my daughters that were said to me by my mother, and was very surprised. We also influence other people. All women should dress and act modestly. If something is doubtful or questionable, it is best to avoid it.