

Does God Care What Women Wear?

Ruth E. Grosse

Changing Standards

As the standards of this world slide farther and farther away from God's standards, many Christians are not vigilant enough to realize that they, too, are "slipping and sliding" in the same direction. Quite obviously, the more wicked the world gets, the more nudity it allows. God's first act for mankind after the fall was to make them coverings for their nakedness. Our culture teaches women to be forward and aggressive, to display their bodies in such a way as to get sexual attention. The Bible tells us in 1 John 2:15-17, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*"

The Bible makes it very plain that we are to be counter-cultural—to go against the flow. It's not easy, but it is part of our high calling in Christ.

1 Peter 1:14-15 states, "*As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*" The word *conversation* in that verse means "lifestyle." We are to be holy in every area of our lives!

Romans 12:1-2 confirms this: "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*" Are we willing to believe that God's will is good, perfect, and acceptable? Are we willing to obey and make needed changes in our lives as God shows them to us? We must not make the mistake of being too proud to make changes! "*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*" (James 4:6).

Elisabeth Elliot Responds

On the radio program, *Gateway to Joy*, missionary, author, and speaker Elisabeth Elliot quoted some letters she had received. One letter, written to her by a church youth leader, said, "Lately, I have been noticing how the girls in our group are dressed. . . . the skirts are short. . . .

and a couple of the shirts are a little too tight. They're fashionably dressed, and, if I may use the term, '*tastefully sexy.*' . . . Incidentally, the women who dress in this way include the ones which I would consider spiritually maturing. Well, we guys are having problems dealing with lust. Our main youth leader . . . did address the issue once in a girls-only meeting. To sum up the talk in one statement, he informed them that when women dress in any way which arouses the guys, they no longer appear as individuals, but as objects. He encouraged them to be modest dressers."

Another man wrote Elisabeth Elliot, saying, "Why do Christian women dress to expose themselves? Even in church . . . I am very bothered by this. . . . They don't want to be treated like sex objects, but then they dress like prostitutes. I can understand why secular women dress that way, but I can't understand why Christian women do."

A young man expressed his concern about summertime: ". . . summer, too, brings bathing suits. I understand that women's different thought patterns may allow them to view the 60-70% exposure of male skin in a bathing suit without any arousal problems (at least they try to tell me that) . . . But the sight of a . . . woman in a form-fitting suit, which leaves almost nothing to the imagination, is not good for the man who knows he should not lust after the body of another than his wife." This man concluded that Christian men should just "stay away from those places." Shouldn't Christians, men and women, give this serious thought?

Does God care what women wear? 1 Timothy 2:9 states, "*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel . . .*" Yes, God *does* care. When it comes to clothing, the primary concern of a Christian woman needs to be modesty. Elisabeth Elliot defines *modesty* for us: "It means placing a low estimate on one's merits, not being forward or showing off. It means unpretentious. Modesty means to be free from undue familiarity, from indecency, from lewdness, pure in thought and conduct. Speaking of modest apparel, it means decent, seemly. The opposite of modesty is conceit, boldness, immodesty, brazenness, lewdness." She goes on to say, "What are your Christian standards? . . . The Bible says that we're supposed to shine as lights in the world. Christ lives in me. Does that make

any visible difference? Will it correct my thinking? Do I pray that God will purify my desires?"

How Men Think

Do men have a problem with their thought life? Author Beneth Jones explains, "The clothing of a redeemed woman must not give her the appearance of a reprobate woman by suggestively hugging body curves. This is a matter in which *masculine makeup* must be taken into account. In making mankind male and female, God saw fit to create the male with sexual instincts which are aroused by what he sees, while the woman is touch-oriented. Saved or unsaved, men are alike in this basic, instinctive aspect; the difference lies in their *reaction* to the stimulation of sight. The ungodly man seeks, revels in, and succumbs to it. The godly man, on the contrary, must curb and confine it. Our responsibility, therefore, as Christian women, is great: we must NOT dress in such a way as to promiscuously stimulate boys and men. The danger does not lie just in uncovering; in some ways, clothing which reveals *by suggestion* holds greater allurements than that which reveals in fact."

Some may say, "Well, they don't have to look." The Bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:6 that we must not "*defraud [our] brother in any matter.*" To "*defraud*" means to create within someone a desire that cannot be righteously satisfied. Prostitutes do this all the time. They dress so as to draw attention to their bodies, especially their private parts, meaning the breasts, hips, midriff, thighs (hip to knee), and bottom. Proverbs 7:10 speaks of a sinful woman with the "*attire of an harlot.*" Remember--clothing which "hugs" the body curves is just as suggestive as clothing that does not cover properly. As representatives of the Lord, is it not wrong for us to create temptation for others? Jesus said, "*Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*" (Matthew 5:28). We can be attractive in a gracious, godly, pure manner without drawing attention to our private parts. How important it is, that for *others'* sake we dress so that attention is drawn to our face and to our eyes, *not* to our bodies!

Meeting the Problem

Our bodies are a precious gift from God, and they are attractive because we are made in His image. He made us for His pleasure, and if we

are married, to please our mates as well. He never intended, however, for us to flaunt ourselves or exhibit our bodies in an immodest way.

Summer is particularly a time when we have the opportunity to be a testimony for Christ by the way we dress, and it is also a time when our consecration to Christ is tested. We as women have a responsibility not to put ourselves in situations where we will be tempting the lustful thoughts of men. We must not use rationalization that "it's hot" or "I'm swimming" to excuse immodesty. There is no excuse.

What about weddings? Is it a time to throw modesty out the window? Is it a time to expose and reveal, when all the wedding guests are *gazing* at the bride (and her bridesmaids)? Surely not! A bride can be glowing and beautiful, without drawing attention to her figure. Saving her body for her husband alone should certainly be the desire of every *Christian* bride. Girls, determine that you will be able to look at your wedding pictures with happiness, knowing that you did not flaunt your body in any way but that you pleased Jesus Christ by wearing what is pleasing to Him—a modest wedding gown.

If we are going to follow the commands of Scripture concerning modesty, we need to seriously consider what we will choose to wear and what we will choose *not* to wear. Certain trends and garments will automatically be bypassed. Author and speaker Nancy Leigh DeMoss has said, "The right way will always be the narrow way. But it's so important that we, as women, represent the heart and the spirit and the gospel of Christ by the way that our lives are different than the norm, different than the culture, whenever the culture is contrary to the Word of God."

Specifically . . .

Let us consider some specific questions for you to ask about each outfit in your wardrobe:

(1) Does it expose? (2) Does it emphasize?

The following are characteristics of clothing that will in fact or in effect *expose* or *emphasize* a woman's private parts:

- ~ low necklines (Any neckline that exposes the beginning swell of the breasts or the beginning of cleavage between the breasts is too low.)
- ~ gapping necklines (revealing when you bend over or when viewed from above and beside)
- ~ midriff tops that show skin at the midsection

- ~ gapping armholes (allow a view of the breasts from the side)
- ~ transparent tops
- ~ tight tops (Fabric that "cups under" the breasts defines them, and horizontal pulling of fabric between the breasts also draws attention to them.)
- ~ knit fabric, as in T-shirt material, that not only defines the breasts but also reveals the nipples
- ~ writing (or pictures) on clothing that draws peoples' eyes to the private parts
- ~ white or light-colored skirts that become transparent when light shines through them
- ~ above-the-knee pants or skirts
- ~ low-cut shorts, pants, or skirts
- ~ tight skirts, culottes, or pants that hug the pubic area or cup under the buttocks (You should be able to take a hold of at least one inch of fabric on each side at the hips' broadest point.)
- ~ clinging fabric that reveals body details or the lines of undergarments
- ~ anything provocative (Recently, undergarments and pajamas have become outerwear. To expose undergarments or sleeping garments is to tease, or tempt, men.)
- ~ any garment that draws attention towards breasts, hips, thighs, etc., when you sit, move, stretch, or bend over

Blessings of Modesty

By Nancy Leigh DeMoss

- ~ Peace -- You'll know that you are obedient to God.
 - ~ Power -- You'll be free from enslavement to fashion, fads, and others' opinions.
 - ~ Protection -- You'll be guarded from the wrong kind of attention from the wrong kind of men. (Dressing modestly doesn't guarantee that the "wrong kind of men" will never give you unwanted attention, but it sure helps!)
 - ~ Purity -- You'll attract the right kind of attention from the right kind of guys.
 - ~ Privilege -- You'll experience greater freedom in marriage as your body is reserved only for your husband.
 - ~ Praise -- You'll be valued for spiritual and heart qualities more than physical characteristics.
- " . . . a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." ~ Proverbs 31:30**
- Clothing guidelines were adapted from *In the Best Possible Light and Beauty and the Best*, by Beneth Jones, and *The Look: Does God Really Care What I Wear?* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss.