

Modesty

This is a **touchy topic** because it has to do with the physical/carnal, even the sensual.

I'm a man – you may have noticed – but this sermon is *for men and women*.

It's for *teaching you how to dress*, and if you're already dressing modestly, maybe it'll help you *teach others how to dress*. {:-)

I'll try to "get it down where the goats can eat it" without being inappropriate.

3 main points, plus the invitation:

**What to Wear...What to Wear...
"Shame on You!"
Overcoming Immodesty
Be Clothed with Christ**

What to Wear... What to Wear...

It would be easy to know what to wear in order to be modest if the Bible showed us where to draw a line – at the ankles, at the knees, at the neck, at the wrists... or if our Bibles came with a one-size-fits-all pop-up pattern book, a replica from the Dead Sea Scrolls. *Just cut it out and sew yourself something to wear!*

But it doesn't, so we're left exploring **three avenues to learn "what to wear."**

1. How did people dress in the Bible? The 6-page ISBE article on "dress" concludes with the point that **the dress of even orthodox Jews has changed over time and varies widely today**. In fact, only two articles of clothing are universally worn by modern orthodox Jews, and one of those didn't even exist in the time of Christ!

But the more basic point is that **the Old Testament is not our standard in such matters!**

And neither are the New Testament peoples.

And neither is the United States of 1850 (or whatever year).

So, we must look for a different avenue to learn "what to wear."

2. The meanings of original words.

Word study: <katastole8 is only used in 1 Timothy 2:9

Arnt & Gingrich: Deportment, outward, as it expresses itself in clothing, as well as inward

Strong's: Costume; apparel

Thayer: 1) a lowering, letting down; 2) a garment let down, dress, attire

Vine: connected with <katastello>, to send or let down, to lower... was primarily a garment let down; hence, dress, attire, in general

cf. <katastello> – to appease, to quieten, to calm (Acts 19:35) (from <stello>, "avoid," 2 Cor. 8:20; "withdraw oneself," 2 Thess. 3:6, per Young's)

cf. <stole> = **long robe** (for men of high rank or priestly order) [scribes - Mk 12:38/Lk. 20:46; "young man" (angel) Mk 16:5; prodigal son - Lk. 15:22; martyrs - Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13, 14; in the LXX, of the priests' robes]

The ISBE comments, "The words used in the originals are often greatly obscured through the inconsistent variations of the translators. Besides there are few indications even in the original Hebrew or Greek of the exact shape or specific materials of the various articles of dress named, and so their identification is made doubly difficult."

What articles of clothing are “long, loose, flowing, and let down”?

Only the modern long dress? What about a shirt? A jacket? My (baggy) pants? *How far* does it have to let down? Where does it have to be anchored before it starts hanging again? *How long* is “long”?

You see the problem. The Bible does not come with a tape measure, and the words used in the Bible are fairly general. So we are still left seeking another avenue to know what to wear.

The Bible does, however, provide general principles:

3. Two key passages: 1 Timothy 2:9-10 & 1 Peter 3:3-4

That the women adorn themselves in **modest** apparel, with **propriety** and **moderation**, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰ but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. – 1 Timothy 2:9-10 (NKJV)

... in **respectable** apparel, with **modesty** and **self-control**... (ESV)

Do not let the adornment be *merely* outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine apparel* – ⁴ 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. – 1 Peter 3:3-4 (NKJV)

Do not let your adorning be external – the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the *clothing* you wear – ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. – 1 Peter 3:3-4 (ESV)

A note about the word, “clothing” [“apparel” (KJV; NKJV)] – The Greek word is plural <himatiōn> (Gen. pl.), meaning “clothing,” generally. (The singular <himation> refers to the outer cloak. Vine)

This is NOT prohibiting braids and gold and pearls.

Notice the same “not... but...” (grammatical) construction in 9 clear Bible examples:

Matt. 10:34 – I did **not** come to bring peace **but** a sword.

Matt. 20:28 – The Son of Man came **not** to be served **but** to serve.

Mark 9:37 – Whoever receives me, receives **not** me **but** him who sent me.

John 12:44 – Whoever believes in me, believes **not** in me **but** in him who sent me.

John 1:13 – Who were born, **not** of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, **but** of God.

John 6:27 – Do **not** labor for the food that perishes, **but** for the food that endures to eternal life.

John 11:4 – This sickness is **not** unto death, **but** for the glory of God.

Acts 5:4 – You have **not** lied to men **but** to God.

Romans 8:9 – You are **not** in the flesh **but** in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

These are *not prohibiting or denying* the first item; they are emphasizing or prioritizing the *second*!

Summary of the Bible's general principles about "modesty":

1. **Cover up.** The particulars of modesty is somewhat influenced by culture, but the Bible is clear on one point --- *Cover up!* "Respectable, modest"; not attracting attention.
2. **Make a difference.** There should be a difference between men and women's attire. The Jews could (Deuteronomy 22:5) even in a culture in which "the garments ordinarily used indoors were worn alike by men and women" (ISBE, "Dress"). In our culture, too, men and women should look like, well, men and women. (See 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 regarding what "nature teaches" about differences in the appearance of men and women.)

Women and pants: Some say, "It's a sin!" However ...

- a) The meaning of <katastole> ("long/flowing/let down") allows some pants, skirts, etc. (At the same time, the meaning of that word *prohibits* the use of some dresses and skirts!)
- b) The need to maintain a distinction between the sexes allows for men's pants and women's pants.
- c) Dresses don't ensure modesty!
- d) Pants are sometimes MORE MODEST than dresses, for some activities.
- e) NT apparel is not our standard. If that were the case, even our men could not wear pants, as everyone would be running around pretty much in robes!
- f) Modern items of clothing are allowable, as long as they meet the general principles here.

Sadly, some people – and for that matter, some *churches* – dictate what to wear, or how to fix your hair. ("Church rules and traditions of men" is a separate topic.) Ironically, many of the things they deal with are modern inventions.

The origins of pants are hard to trace, but pants were first seen, perhaps, in the horse people of the ancient Eurasians, such as Iranian Scythians and Achaemenid Persians, and ancient Chinese cavalry and soldiers wore pants. In western culture, pants only gained their current prominence in the 16th century. (See Wikipedia article, "Trousers," downloaded 8/23/08.)

In **Daniel 3:21**, the KJV uses "coats, hosen, and hats"; the NKJV uses "coats, trousers, and turbans"; the ESV uses "cloaks, tunics, and hats".

Recall the quote from the ISBE (above): "The words used in the originals are often greatly obscured through the inconsistent variations of the translators."

You have heard it said, "Men must wear neckties, women must wear bras, and everyone must wear underwear,"

but I say to you that ***you won't find any of these modern items in Scripture!***

3. **Create no stumbling blocks!** While "modesty" is in the eye of the beholder, ***lust is in the heart!*** (Matthew 5:27-28; cf. 15:18-20) A lustful person will lust no matter the clothing – modest blouse, long dress, or gunny sack. But we're not to give a cause for stumbling.

“Shame on You!”

Shame springs from the conscience, which God gave us from the beginning. **Genesis 3:8-10** (cf. **2:25**)

Shame has its benefits.

Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the LORD. – **Jeremiah 8:13** (also **6:15**)

Our culture has lots of sources from which you can *expect* to see immodest people – TV shows (MTV, travel channel); commercials; etc.

But there are also some *unexpected places*: G-rated movies; kids’ computer games; Olympics/sports; the mall; Kohl’s flyers; weddings (the bride!); “art” class; museums; church; etc.

Overcoming Immodesty (*In a nutshell, be smart, and pay attention!*)

1. **Get your heart right.** In other words, “Gird up the loins of your mind.” (1 Peter 1:13, NKJV, pun intended!)

From our passages above, “propriety, moderation, godliness, the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.”

Perhaps it’s like barbershop music: “I can’t really tell you what it IS, but I can sure tell you what it ISN’T!!”

“...Application in our times and culture is a matter of the heart before God. It's one of those things that can sidetrack us and shipwreck us if we aren't careful.” – Karleen E. Page (*Is it a sin for a woman to wear pants?*, <http://209.239.56.130/theopenheart/askoldtimer/womenpants.htm>, downloaded 8/23/08.)

The writer of Proverbs observes that some people have “the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart.” (Proverbs 7:10)

By contrast, the godly person has a *godly* heart, so **goes to the store – and then to the closet – with godliness in mind.**

The harlot has “the oldest profession known to man”; but the Christian has the best!

2. **Pay attention. Dressing immodestly sometimes happens because of carelessness.**

- **Do the “acrobatic mirror check.”** ANY article of clothing can *become* immodest. Something may cover you up just fine while you’re standing up, but what about when you lean forward? (say, to pick up your Bible? Ironic, huh?) *Check the front and the back of your clothes!*

What about when you sit down? *If my pants legs ride up and show the skin above my socks when I sit down, then don’t you imagine that skirts will have a similar problem?*

Or, what about when you raise your arm?

Or, what about when you’re *sitting* near someone who’s *standing*?

- If you start **tugging** at the clothes **or covering up more** when someone else (esp. of the opposite sex) comes around, you know there's a problem.
- If they're **tight**, revealing every contour and shape, there's a problem.

Illustration: Ever heard someone who doesn't want to cuss (like on the radio, because of FCC rules)? They'll start a phrase and leave a blank. Or, they'll call it the name of the first letter. Example: Bacon and _____. You know, the "e" word. That's the way you're dressing: **You're technically covered up, but you're not hiding anything!**

- If the clothes are **smaller than the part of your body** they're intended to cover – i.e., *they re-shape the body part!* – there's a major problem.
- Never underestimate a man's tendency to lust. Jesus has strong warnings for men, and "window shopping" is a work of the flesh.

Matthew 5:28 I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

For other sermons: Dressing immodestly may come from a **lack of self-esteem**.

It may come from a **need for attention**. (Compare to some kids who misbehave, because *negative* attention is better than *no attention!*)

It may come from having a **carnal, fleshly way of thinking**.

- Beware abusing your blessings (of a healthy attractive body)
- Wait to fulfill natural desires till the right time, with the right person, in the right context. If not, would you trade some passing pleasures of sin ("the treasures of Egypt" – Hebrews 11:26) for your soul? Sex, companionship, intimacy... are NOT salvation!

The writer of Proverbs observes that some people have "**the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart.**" (Proverbs 7:10) The harlot, in her way of dressing, is advertising for ... what? For what are YOU advertising in your way of dressing? There is also "the attire of..." a football player, a Goth, a business (wo)man, and the attire of a *godly (wo)man*.

(It doesn't take the wisest Bible writer who ever lived to see these differences!)

- If others look/whistle/comment in a suggestive way.

Be Clothed with Christ

Galatians 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have **put on** Christ.

Colossians 3:10 You "have **put on the new man** who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him..." ¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **put on** tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also... ¹⁴ But above all these things **put on** love....

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." – **Ephesians 6:11-18** (cp. 1 Thessalonians 5) ... *All with prayer*

Truth	Preparation of the gospel of peace	Salvation
Righteousness	Faith	The word of God

Don't be caught without the right clothes! **Matthew 22:1-14**