

Modesty

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Modest can apply to one's salary, house, or any number of things in the sense of that which is moderate, appropriate, humble, or unostentatious. However, there is another important implication of the word having to do with one's moral convictions and the respect one has for his or her own body. In this sense, Paul commanded women to "adorn themselves in modest apparel" (1 Tim. 2:9). The *Arndt-Gingrich* lexicon says that *modest* here means "honorable," "respectable." We understand Paul to be talking about wearing clothing that indicates the moral chastity, purity, and sense of decency that Christians must have.

While both men and women ought to dress modestly, it is noteworthy that Paul addressed this instruction peculiarly to women. He did not do so accidentally. Biologically and psychologically, men and women differ greatly. While admitting to some exceptions, men are more easily aroused and aggressive sexually than women. The Lord understood this and thus especially warned **men** against looking at and lusting after a woman (Mat. 5:28). Dressing (or undressing) in such a manner as to invite sexual stimulation is a problem pertaining primarily to women and the way they dress.

Only a lack of modesty will cause a physically mature female to be more undressed than dressed in public places. Women (young or old) who wear scanty swimming attire, shorts and halter tops, mid-thigh length skirts, low cut and see-through blouses, skin-tight pants, and such like in public places are advertising their immodesty. It is baffling and heartbreaking to see the shameless display of skin exhibited at public functions (the super market, public beaches/pools, school activities, etc.) by so many women. It is especially perplexing and disheartening to see Christian women and girls so behave. It is even sadder to see such things as "spaghetti strap" sun dresses, see through blouses, and very short skirts worn to worship assemblies.

I fail to comprehend how otherwise right-thinking girls and women can think that it is in keeping with Christian purity to so expose their bodies. Neither can I understand how Christian fathers and/or husbands can permit or encourage it. A wife's physical charms must be reserved for her husband alone. Something is wrong with the husband who wants his wife to share even visually her charms with any other man. Further, how can a Christian father or mother allow a teen-aged daughter to dress in such a way as to invite the wrong kind of attention? Christian parents could stop such immodesty at once if they would. Immodesty is

expected in people of the world, but for the sake of Christ, ought not His people to be modest and decent in the way that they dress (Rom. 12:1-2)?

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, March 26, 1981, of which I was editor.]

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