



Uncovering The Truth About Modesty

By Melody Green

*"Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with **proper** clothing, **modestly** and **discreetly**, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women **making a claim to godliness.**" (I Tim 2:940)*

This simple little Scripture certainly covers a lot of ground if we look at it closely. It especially becomes more clear when we consider the dictionary definitions of some of the key words (see box) that Paul uses. How many of us can say we are really living up to the light of this passage in I Timothy? The purpose of this article is to put a searchlight on our hearts and on our motives for the way that we choose to dress - and why. This is a subject that gets whispered or giggled about a lot, but rarely is someone directly confronted about their lack of modesty. It is a very delicate subject. . . but that's all the more reason to talk about it openly and honestly.

Are You Making A Claim To Godliness?

Essentially, the Scripture in I Timothy says that it's all right to dress however you want to, unless you are **making a claim to godliness**. In that case, the way that you dress (along with the rest of your life) must be subject to the guidelines and control of the Holy Spirit.

Our bodies **are** precious because they are a gift from God. They are attractive because God made us in His image for His pleasure (and if we are married, to please our mates as well). But God never intended us to flaunt ourselves or exhibit our bodies in an immodest way. He wants our bodies consecrated to him. *"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."* (Rom. 12:1) It surely must grieve the Lord to see the thoughtless way so many "modern" Christians dress. It's true that their bodies may be a living sacrifice-**but to which god?**

Modest-Having a regard for decencies of behavior or dress; quiet and humble in appearance, style, etc.; not displaying one's body; not boastful or vain; unassuming; virtuous; shy or reserved; chaste.

Proper-Specially adapted or suitable; appropriate; conforming to an accepted standard; correct; fitting; right; decent.

Discreet-Lacking ostentation or pretension; "showing good judgment"; prudent; cautious; careful about what one says or does.

TRANSFORMED NOT CONFORMED

It might seem to many of us that modesty is a thing of the past. I know before I became a Christian I didn't have the slightest idea of what it meant to dress properly. Looking back, it's hard to believe I even left the house in some of the things I used to wear (**and not wear!**), let alone that I wore them without even a blush! (Jer. 6:15)

The Bible in very clear terms tells us not to be conformed to the world, but instead, to be **transformed**. (Rom. 12:2) Webster's Dictionary tells us that to be transformed means a change of outward appearance or inner nature. I guess that's why it amazes me to see young Christian girls (and even more mature women) in church or at outdoor gatherings, hands uplifted in praise to God, while dressed in clothes that definitely do not give **Him** the glory.

In the summertime especially, we have our biggest opportunity to test our consecration to Jesus. Sheer blouses, halter-tops, "**short**" shorts, and skimpy bathing-suits are the norm for many careless Christian women. They use the rationalization that "it's hot" or "I'm swimming" to excuse their lack of modesty. Clothes that fit too tightly, tops that are cut too low, and skirts that are cut too short are not only a distraction to those around us-but the wearers show an unloving lack of concern for their responsibility as a representative of Jesus.

Unfortunately, it seems that many Christians are lost in their own selfish little world-either oblivious or uncaring about the affect they have on others. They may even appear to have a real excitement and love for the Lord-however, their body is sending out a totally different message. I know, because as I

said before, I have done it-partly in ignorance, but mostly in rebellion. I can remember thinking, "Well, it's not **my** fault if they can't keep their eyes off of me and on the Lord. **They** just aren't spiritual enough. Why should I have to change just because **they** are weak?"

But the Lord showed me that it **was** my fault. I was responsible for causing my brother to stumble and it had to change. Once I really saw the damage my selfishness was doing to others and to the Lord, I was really ashamed of myself and embarrassed that I had been representing Jesus in such an unbecoming way. *"It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble."* (Luke 17:1-2)

The Fashion Queen

Worldly dress is quite revealing. First and foremost it reveals a **worldly heart**. It also reveals wrong priorities and areas that are not yielded to God. Being dressed in a worldly manner does not always mean that you are dressed immodestly. It may simply mean that your style is flashy or overdone-generally speaking, just "too much." If your perfume arrives at church five minutes before you do, who are you trying to kid? Did you put it on for **Jesus**? If you are drawing attention to yourself, then you are drawing attention **away** from God and **stealing His glory**.

Here are some simple questions. Are you considered a trendsetter-usually the first to buy the latest style? Do you spend a lot of time and money shopping for new clothes? Are you always thinking about what you're going to wear? Do heads turn to see your newest outfit-and do you enjoy turning heads? If you can answer yes to even one of those questions, it's quite possible that you are seeking man's attention instead of God's. As a famous evangelist once said, "Be honest about it, would you take all this pain about your looks if every person were blind?"

Pretty...Not Painted

I believe that too many Christian women overdo it when it comes to putting on their make-up. They arrive to fellowship with the world's "come and get me" look painted on their face. They look like showgirls on their way to a nightclub, instead of someone coming in meekness and humility to meet their Lord. Their **faces** are prepared, but their **hearts** aren't! And if the Lord should really move in the meeting so as to bring some to tears of joy or repentance, they would have to fight back the tears for fear they would "ruin their face." How can you be open to a touch from God when you're so concerned about your outward appearance? It's very simple . . . **you can't be!**

"Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but the woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised." (Proverbs 31:30)

Sheep In Wolves Clothing

I would also like to include a brief word to the fellows in this article, for you are not always exempt from the sin of vanity and the desire to be noticed. Sadly enough, I have seen many of my Christian brothers drawing attention to themselves by wearing immodestly tight clothing and looking "just like the world." Many thoughtless Christian men unbutton their shirts halfway down their chest, surround themselves in a potent cloud of after shave-and don't really care that they may be causing others to take their eyes off of Jesus. You too must be sensitive to others and give the Holy Spirit control of your life. You are responsible to surrender this whole area to Jesus and make sure that you are not causing those around you to stumble and fall.

Acting the Harlot?

God does not think beauty is evil-how could He, He invented it in the first place! But beauty corrupted becomes harlotry. In Ezekiel 16:14-15, God says, *"Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you. But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passerby who might be willing."* Here God is speaking to Jerusalem about her abominations. He compares her to a harlot to make His point, since everyone is familiar with how a harlot acts. How many of you are acting like harlots-parading yourselves, seducing with your eyes and trusting in your looks to bring you love and acceptance instead of trusting in God and putting your confidence in Him? You have heard it said that "beauty is only skin deep"-and it's true. But God can see through to the inside, and the things that are beautiful to Him are not always apparent to the common eye.

Perfume, Powder, And Prayer (A Challenge)

The world teaches us that in order to be loved we must be beautiful, sensual, and alluring. We are assaulted daily by billboards, books, television programs, movies, and magazines that teach us "a different gospel." Sure, everyone wants to be loved . . . but why and by whom? All that is supposed to change when we meet Jesus.

I think we will all agree that God is most concerned with the **Inner man** . . . the heart. But I don't think we can say, "Well, I may **look** worldly, but Jesus knows that in my heart I'm not." It is true that Jesus knows our heart, but I believe in most instances our **outward appearance** reflects our **inward condition**. Remember, He called the Pharisees *"white-washed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead mens bones and all uncleanness."* (Matt. 23:27)

God tells us to redeem the time because the days are evil (Eph. 5:16), but many will spend more time in the morning preparing their "outward selves" than they do preparing themselves inwardly for the warfare of the day by seeking God in prayer and His Word. Sometimes we can spend so much time fixing up the outer man that the Spirit inside shrivels up and dies.

I want to present my brothers and sisters in the Lord with a challenge. Measure the time you spend "fixing yourself up" on a daily basis. Then give at least equal time to God in prayer and Bible reading **every day**. We all know He deserves so much more, but if you just start there, you can let it grow as you do.

The Other Extreme

I think it is important to make it clear that I don't think pretty clothes or a little bit of make-up is wrong. In fact, I don't necessarily think that the most godly way to dress is in a bland and unattractive manner. To be quite honest with you, I have seen many people go to the other extreme and try to draw attention to themselves by being untidy, unclean, and uncaring about themselves. They try to prove to others that they are spiritual because of their lack of concern about the way that they look. This too can be another form of pride and self-righteousness-and I believe it is all equally grievous to the Lord. He wants us to find a balance and seek to glorify Him in everything we do. Humility and moderation are principles that the Bible clearly teaches.

Marriage Is No Excuse!

There are many husbands and wives who encourage (and sometimes even demand) their mates to "look sexy." They feel that since they're already married, it won't really hurt to "turn each other on" in the way that they look and dress. I don't think there is anything wrong with dressing to please your husband or wife, in fact I think it's important that you do, but **not at the expense of others**. We must stay within the boundaries of the Holy Spirit, putting Jesus and **His** pleasure first in all we do.

One newlywed in our ministry held up a bare little summer dress to her husband, and shaking her head said, "This has got to go." He said, "But . . . that's one of my favorite dresses!" She said, "Yes, but why do you like it so much?" He slowly smiled and agreed-and out it went!

Closet Cleaning

Many of you may really feel convicted to change and wonder what you should do now, so I would like to give you a few words of simple advice before I close. First of all, go through your closets and drawers and pull out all of the clothing that obviously has to go-and get rid of it! Next, get in front of a full-length mirror, and try on the things that are questionable. Look at yourself from all angles using a hand-held mirror. Look at yourself close up and from far away and see what you "really look like" in the clothes you have been wearing. View yourself objectively, as if you were looking at someone else-and note what your first impressions are of "this person." Check for fit and transparency and get rid of **anything** that doesn't pass the test-this is no time to be sentimental! Finally, each day before you leave the house, do the "mirror check" on anything that hasn't previously been checked or if you have gained weight since last taking a look. You will be surprised to find that some of the things you were sure about won't pass the test. This will help you weed out your wardrobe as you go. Some of you may be afraid that if you do this, you'll end up with **nothing** left to wear! But just remember that the most important thing is to be obedient to God, even if it means having a very limited wardrobe. Besides, when you are all done with this project, you will become a much more careful shopper and end up being a better steward over God's money than you ever were before!

True Beauty

True beauty is Jesus and Him alone. Letting that love flow through us to others is the beauty that is pleasing to God. Paul says we are to adorn ourselves with good works. . . as servants of the Lord, vessels through which others can feel His touch on their lives. Why would we want to substitute the world's counterfeit for the real thing?

True beauty radiates from the face of a godly man or woman. You won't notice much what they really look like because you are too busy noticing Jesus in them. Shouldn't that be our goal? Let's allow Jesus to so fully indwell us that we would never do or say anything that would bring shame to His name . . . yielding our whole lives to Him and serving Him in the inner courts of His holiness. Let's not forget that we are His Bride-and so dress accordingly as we fully divorce ourselves from the world and clothe ourselves with the righteousness of God! (*Isaiah 61:10*)

May God bless you as you seek Him about what all this might mean to you personally. Please take the whole matter to heart (and prayer) and then be obedient to change the things in your life that you find are displeasing to God.

*"Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him; worship the Lord in the **beauty of holiness**."* (1 Chron. 16:29)

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