

1Timothy 2:9

I
also
want women
to dress modestly,
with decency and
propriety...

Definitions from:
www.dictionary.com
Websters 1928 Dictionary

MODESTY

freedom from vanity or conceit

Reserve or propriety in speech, dress, or behavior.

Lack of pretentiousness; simplicity.

That lowly temper which accompanies a moderate estimate of one's own worth and importance. This temper when natural, springs in some measure from timidity, and in young and inexperienced persons, is allied to bashfulness and diffidence. In persons who have seen the world, and lost their natural timidity, modesty springs no less from principle than from feeling, and is manifested by retiring, unobtrusive manners, assuming less to itself than others are willing to yield, and conceding to others all due honour and respect, or even more than they expect or require.

2. Modesty, as an act or series of acts, consists in humble, unobtrusive deportment, as opposed to extreme boldness, forwardness, arrogance, presumption, audacity or impudence. Thus we say, the petitioner urged his claims with modesty; the speaker addressed the audience with modesty.

3. Moderation; decency.

4. In females, modesty has the like character as in males; but the word is used also as synonymous with chastity, or purity of manners. In this sense, modesty results from purity of mind, or from the fear of disgrace and ignominy fortified by education and principle. Unaffected modesty is the sweetest charm of

female excellence, the richest gem in the diadem of their honour.

DECENCY

- Conformity to prevailing standards of propriety or modesty.
- The quality of conforming to standards of propriety and morality.
- The quality of being polite and respectable to be fit or becoming.

PROPRIETY

The quality of being proper; appropriateness.

Conformity to prevailing customs and usages.

Proprieties: The usages and customs of polite society

Fitness; suitability; appropriateness; consonance with established principles, rules or customs; justness; accuracy. Propriety of conduct, in a moral sense, consists in its conformity to the moral law; propriety of behaviour, consists in conformity to the established rules of decorum; propriety in language, is correctness in the use of words and phrases, according to established usage, which constitutes the rule of speaking and writing.

The purpose of this supplement is to take a look at the question:
WHOSE STANDARD OF MODESTY?

1 TI 2:9-10

*I also want women to dress modestly,
with decency and propriety,
not with braided hair or gold or pearls
or expensive clothes,
but with good deeds, appropriate
for women who profess to worship God.*

1CO 12:21-24

*The eye cannot say to the hand,
"I don't need you!"
And the head cannot say to the feet,
"I don't need you!"
On the contrary, those parts of the body
that seem to be weaker are indispensable,
and the parts that we think are less honorable
we treat with special honor.
And the parts that are unpresentable
are treated with special modesty,
while our presentable parts
need no special treatment.
But God has combined
the members of the body
and has given greater honor
to the parts that lacked it,*

Did you know you are dressed immodestly? Right now?

I don't have to see you to know this - according to standards of 100 years ago, you are immodestly dressed. And so am I.

Different times and cultures have lived by different standards of modesty. At times a bare arm would have been immodest and in Victorian times they both covered the legs of furniture for 'modesty' and removed the 'modesty pieces' from the bodices of dresses for evening wear!

In some cultures a string or grass skirt is all that is worn - and is considered modest.

The problem is that we cannot go to times that lived such inconsistency for the answers. The Victorian example above is clearly inconsistent on modesty... but is the grass-skirt-clad culture? I suggest we cannot look to the depraved cultures for our answers or freedom or excuse!!! (Perhaps part of our answer would be found if we could find a culture that is morally consistent and see what they do!!! It's not our culture either!) But we need to recognize that acceptable standards of modesty are at some level going to be determined BY the culture. Are we brave enough to interpret what God desires by the word modesty according to His Word – not our culture. We do tend to read into the Word what our culture and 'churchiosity' have taught us – then read back what is actually often only opinion now imbibed with the authority of the Word!

In Bible times a person was considered naked wearing only their inner garment - a neck to knee or neck to ankle garment under their outer cloak.

God does not list neat little rules in Scripture for us to follow regarding what IS modest.

Now I have to confess that part of me really likes rules - they give clarity and conformity. But they don't necessarily help us act right out of the heart - and they don't often make us THINK. Wouldn't it be neater and tidier though if God just *SAID* "don't show off thy belly button", "keepeth thy shoulders covered", or "and behold the woman are to sheweth no greater than 10mm of cleavage".

But even if He had, mankind would have found ways around every rule to 'technically' appear as though the rule is maintained, but it would be the letter - not the spirit of the rule. Man is bent on stretching the limits of everything God asks of us to the outer most place.

Having said there are no 'rules' does not mean God has nothing to say about the way we dress. Sometimes though it's a matter of taking a principle from elsewhere and applying that to dress and thinking through it's application.

I also want to clarify the word 'prude' a little. A modest person is not to be confused with a prude. They are just modest. Prudes go beyond God. They have 'higher' standards than God. And they cannot enjoy what God gave to be enjoyed - in the right time.

GE 2:25 The man and his wife were both naked,
and they felt no shame.

Why does nakedness even rate a mention here? There is something very significant!

GE 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were
opened, and they realized they were naked;
so they sewed fig leaves together and
made coverings for themselves.

Again the significance factor of rating a mention as the first knowledge of good and evil on record. Why do we assume they covered their genitals? It is not recorded. How do we know they didn't cover their belly buttons or their knees?

What makes a person naked? If you saw a picture of a woman with bikinis on you might think it scanty but not naked. If she had the same amount of material as a scarf around her neck, would you not consider her naked? Why?

Is it just our social conditioning? No. As already mentioned... even the most depraved cultures in the world have some form of covering.

There is an inbuilt knowledge of the extra honour due these parts of the body. This knowledge can be seared or refined but it is there. Consider women on a windy day wearing a split skirt... (Wendy Shalit – modesty is a reflex)

The Bible is not a prudish book. The most obvious illustration of this is the Song of Solomon.

Study notes from the NIV on Song of Solomon
-Theme and Theology

The voice of love in the Song, like that of wisdom in Pr 8:1-9:12, is a woman's voice, suggesting that love and wisdom draw men powerfully with the subtlety and mystery of a woman's allurements... This feminine voice speaks profoundly of love. She portrays its beauty and delights... God intends that such love--grossly distorted and abused by both ancient and modern people--be a normal part of marital life in his good creation (see Ge 1:26-31; 2:24).

Literary Features

No one who reads the Song with care can question the artistry of the poet. The subtle delicacy with which he evokes intense sensuous awareness while avoiding crude titillation is one of the chief marks of his achievement.

The dictionary said that a 'prude' is someone modest to the extreme. Biblical modesty is simply modesty – not extreme modesty. Extreme modesty could be inhibiting, damaging, disapproving and detrimental to that which God gave as a gift.

He gave us so many things for purpose AND pleasure.

He just set some limits – that's all!

Wendy Shalit

I don't think we live in shameless times... we are always ashamed of something. We've just mixed up the proper objects of our shame. We are ashamed of smoking, but not see through clothes for young girls...

So what is modest and what is not?

Certainly as women of God we are not to be less modest than what ever is considered acceptable by the culture we are in. We are to dress as is appropriate for a woman who professes to worship God. When our missionary friend Denise is in Australia - she might wear trousers - not immodest by Australian standards. When she is on the mission field in Africa - she wear skirts as trousers are unacceptable there. One could see that as hypocrisy, or one could see that as honouring those she is seeking to serve.

Just as a Christian sometimes need to 'go the extra mile' with modesty, we need not to transfer that in the other direction – lessening our standard for the sake of 'fitting in'. When my folks were in Papua New Guinea, Mum lived by her Australian standards of modesty and did not don a grass skirt for the sake of ministry.

Undoubtedly we can all see the lessening on standards over time...

“That which is common
becomes that which expected
which is then considered normal
which is eventually considered healthy”

Gary Ezzo

Christians are to be like sand bags holding back the floodwaters. So slow the encroachment of evil. Christians are called to be salt and light - the flavouring and preservative in a world going bad.

MT 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?"

MT 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Modesty does not seek its own 'rights' but chooses to honour others above itself.

COL 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

1CO 15: 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

Are we as concerned with being clothed in Jesus as we are clothed in personal style?

RO 13: 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Scripture used indirect and general terms such as 'nakedness' for genitalia and 'lay with' for intercourse. We are coarser in our present day speech than the Bible demonstrates for us.

We know God cares about appropriate covering. This verse is using the treatment of certain parts of the body as it's baseline – an assumed understood level of modesty - for a discussion on the church as a body.

1CO 12:21b... those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

The above verse also illustrates to me that the problem of covering is less about shame and more about honouring that which is and/or makes us and others vulnerable.

We know that God covered Adam and Eve's nakedness.

GE 3:21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

We also know that Noah's son Ham was cursed when he saw his father naked. Genesis 4:9

We know that God does not want men and women to be/live/desire to be other than the gender they are and this is to impact the way we dress.

DT 22:5 A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.

That God desired proper procedure so that nakedness not be exposed on the altar...

EX 20:26 And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.'

The one reference to breasts in Proverbs is certainly sexual...:

PR 5:19 A loving doe, a graceful deer--may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.

There are eight references to breasts in "Song of Solomon"—all sexual in nature.

Three of four references to breasts in Ezekiel are sexual

in context. Other references are to do with mourning (as in the beating of) or nursing babies.

I would conclude that clothing drawing attention to the breasts is immodest.

I believe we need to approach modesty as much from the perspective of 'otherness' as to do with the value God ascribes us.

If we have compassion for men who are:

- a) **trying** to live pure – by sight, desire, not 'awakening' love or lust
- b) **should be trying** to live pure etc etc etc (covers all of them)

...then applying the following verses should be easy for us.

GAL 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

It's not about removing a mans responsibility to guard their own hears and minds... it's just loving your neighbour. If you had a friend struggling with alcoholism over for dinner would you serve wine? If you wanted to catch up with a friend on s diet would it be more considerate to meet at Miss Maud's or in one of your homes?

If we love God we want to be like him. God leads us from temptation not into it.

Hang on to your hat – this is a ridiculously long sentence...

As a mother of sons... and understanding more now about not awakening love... and knowing we must teach our sons 'not to look lustfully at a girl' JOB 31:1.. and to teach them to treat girls as sisters (*1 TIM 5:1 Treat younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity*)... and teaching them to give respect and honour even when a girl doesn't seem to want it... and that they are to protect a girls emotions (emotional lust??) from being inappropriately drawn to him etc etc etc – I STILL wish mothers of only daughters would understand the impact of their daughters clothing and care enough for a child not their own - to teach their daughter care for her brother's purity!

This to me is a practical application of 'loving your neighbour' as much as loving ones own 'freedoms' and rights.

So are we our 'brother's keeper'?

GEN 4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

NIV Study Notes – GEN 4:9 *Where . . . ?* A rhetorical question (see 3:9). *I don't know.* An

outright lie. *Am I my brother's keeper?* A statement of callous indifference--all too common through the whole course of human history.

Each – male and female - are individually and equally responsible for their own purity of heart, mind, soul and body.

Each – male and female - are individually and equally responsible to care for the purity of their brothers and sisters.

I guess one good 'rule' of thumb is – if you're not sure – don't.

Colossians 3:15 "And let the peace from Christ rule (act as an umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling w/finality all questions that arise in your minds, in that peaceful state] to which as [members of Christ's] one body you were called [to live]." Amplified Bible

GAL 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

RO 13:8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another,

for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

RO 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

1CO 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-- 33 even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

RO 14:19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat

or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

1CO 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Romans 12:1-2 (Message version) So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your every day, ordinary life – your sleeping eating, going-to-work, and walking around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to it's level of immaturity, God brings out the best of you, developing well formed maturity in you

Modesty Defined again:

Vines: Orderly, well arranged, decent, harmonious arrangement. The well ordering is not of dress and demeanor only, but of the inner life, uttering in deed and expressing itself in the outward conversation.

Modesty is about attitude.

Modesty is a reflection of the understanding of your value. A woman's understanding of her worth and her projection of that understanding will affect the worth others will ascribe her.

I feel so sad sometimes when I see girls who have no idea of their worth, or how their manner of dress strips them of that worth in the esteem of others towards them.

Modesty is also very much about appropriateness. And the outward evidence of internal consideration for the purity of others and your effect on that.

Indianapolis News Oct 10 1995

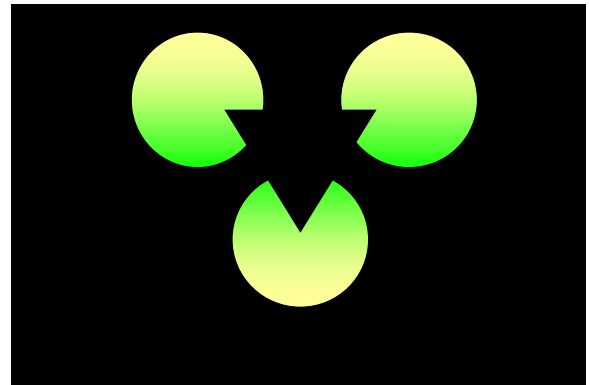
Those who minimize the correlation between immodest dress and sexual promiscuity deceive themselves and others... Perhaps a good rule of thumb is simply to wear clothing that complements one's whole personality rather than distracts from it.

Gestalt Theory

The Gestalt principle of continuity indicates to us that the brain will always seek to complete that which is

incomplete.

You think you see a triangle because it's the most common image your brain wants to use to complete this.



People see a person even though this is just a couple of lines. We naturally seek to continue the visual elements. This is the Gestalt principle of continuity.

A Skirt with high splits invites the onlooker to finish a picture. Designers know this. Movie producers know this. How often is a scene exactly about that which is NOT on screen?!

Bare bellies etc invite the onlooker to complete the picture. It's not the thrill of what is seen but rather of what is yet to be seen.

Why does it matter if someone looks at you (or your daughter) this way?

- Because it is sin for a man to look on a woman in lust.
- Because the way he is wired makes it appealing to look.

- Because the way our culture dresses it makes it increasingly difficult to keep his thoughts pure.
- Because we are to desire the best for our brothers (in the Lord) helping them to steer clear of sin.
- Because we're told not to cause one another to stumble.

- Because it's a protection of you.
- Because it says "I'm worth waiting for – and it's not you or you or you or you either..." (Wendy Shalit)
- Because it's about valuing whose you are.
- Because it's about honouring and not defrauding your husband (present or future)
- Because you were bought with a price and you are not your own.
- Because it inspires a man to be worthy of you rather than seeking to conquer you. (Lisa Bevere)

Modesty damps down crudeness – not eros. (Wendy Shalit)

Modesty is for the sake of the protection and purity – of the dresser and onlooker alike.

Your enemy wants to strip you, make sport of you,
and merchandise your body,
but your heavenly Father wants to clothe you
with beauty, strength, dignity, and honour that will endure.

Lisa Bevere

Modesty is for the sake of the protection and purity – of the dresser and onlooker alike.

Parents are to

- Model
- Teach and
- Reinforce

...modesty for self and others based on the understanding of the value of the gift we have and the preciousness of others through...

- Dress
- Attitude
- Action
- Words and
- Information.

Two books I read promoted a nude statue stating that she was modest because she is looking away. Shamefaced rather than brazen. She may display an attitude of modesty but is it modest for us to look upon her body?

Modesty is a two way street.

If your daughter was kidnapped, stripped naked and found cowering in a gutter by a television crew would you not want to cover her from the eyes of onlookers?

We see young daughters of God out with their mothers and fathers and friends dressed with the total focus of attracting the attention of the opposite sex. If they can't see this just ask the clothing designers.

Lisa Bevere

[These girls] mistakenly equated their ability to inspire lust with personal empowerment. They walked down the street and imagined that men actually wanted them. If they had been a little smarter they would have realized none of these men really wanted them; they just wanted to relieve themselves of sexual tension. .. it's not like these men were asking them to share their lives. They only wanted to violate them and then toss them aside...

The way you attract a man is the way he will expect to be maintained...

If you want a man to appreciate your mind, don't overwhelm him with your cleavage and your navel. Your point will be lost.

We are allowing our daughters to communicate and live mixed messages.

JER 13:17 But if you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, *because the LORD's flock will be taken captive.*

Whose standard?

PS 74:4 Your foes roared in the place where you met with us; they set up their standards as signs.

EZE 11: 12 And you will know that I am the LORD, for you have not followed my decrees or kept my laws but have conformed to the standards of the nations around you."

PS 119:111 Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

PS 119:125 I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.

Please remember this is not a complete discussion on the topic of modesty... just some thoughts on "whose standard" we are to raise, live to, love and example to others.

STANDARD

A flag, banner, or ensign, especially:
An emblem or flag of an army,
raised on a pole to indicate the
rallying point in battle

An ensign of war;
a staff with a flag or colours.
The troops repair to their standard.