**How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts?**

Part Four:

*The Messages of Modesty*

Introduction: The question of modesty can be challenging for a variety of reasons. We all have all had different experiences in life that have led us to where we are today. Our family background, culture, and past influences shape us all. But what we have in common is greater than any of those differences. We have the same faith and resolve to surrender to Jesus Christ as the King of our lives!

You may be hearing about modesty for the very first time and all I ask is that we begin and end with the Scriptures together. It may be that you have heard this before – but it is important for us to continue to consider what God says so we can lead sanctified lives and encourage one another to do the same.

I have heard gospel preachers say, “We have lost the war on immodesty” and “no one is going to listen to sermons about that subject.” That is sad because this subject relates to our leading a life that glorifies God. We have come together as Christians to study God’s word and give our hearts to the Lord. Our spiritual battle is for individual souls. Every time someone makes changes to live for Christ and to pursue holiness - that is a victory!

We are going to begin with a pivotal question: **“Is there an understandable biblical pattern of public modesty that applies to men and women regardless of culture or situation?”** I believe the answer is: “YES.” That being the case we must go to the word of God for instruction on the subject.

**Biblical, Working *Definition***:

“Modesty is a respectable manner of adorning one’s body and carrying oneself, born out of a freedom from a worldly definition of beauty and worth, and motivated by a hatred of sin and a desire to draw attention to God.”

**This morning we are going to consider: “The Messages of Modesty.”**

What messages are we sending by our dress?

1. **Message # 1: “Grace Changes Us Inside-Out”**
   1. ***Living in the grace of God and pursuing the purity of Christ*** (Titus 2:11-15)
      1. **This is not simply about clothing!**
      2. Deep things must happen in our hearts before modesty becomes a priority.
      3. Guidelines don’t fix everything: Until God becomes our treasure, until His word is our supreme authority, until the gospel of Jesus is the most precious thing to us, and until we long for the fruit of the Spirit more than the acceptance of others - then our attitude toward modesty is going to be shaped by the world more than the Lord.
      4. The goal is not to showcase ourselves to others, but to reveal Jesus Christ to the world (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:19-20, **“Body” is our most visible expression to others)**
   2. ***Modesty is rooted in Christ-like character***: 1 Tim. 2:9-10: [Modesty involves clothes, but it is about so much more – it is about your heart before God, your desire to share Christ, and your love for your fellowman**].** 
      1. Example and Influence: “Proper clothing” (NASB): “Modest apparel” (KJV).
         1. “Respectable,” “honorable,” (BAGD, 445).
         2. “Orderly,” “decent” (Thayer, 356)
         3. “The well ordering is not of dress and demeanor only, but the inner life’s … expressing itself in the outward conversation” (Trench’s Syn. 346).
         4. Your dress expresses who you are to those around you.
         5. **Ask yourself, “What am I trying to accomplish by what I wear?”**
      2. Character and Integrity: “Modestly” (NASB), “shamefacedness” (KJV), or “propriety” (NKJV).
         1. “A *state of mind or attitude* necessary for one to be concerned about modesty” (Pastoral Epistles, Knight).
         2. “…A moral feeling, reverence…respect for the feeling or opinion of others or for one’s own conscience and so shame, self-respect…sense of honor” (ibid).
         3. Shamefacedness is defined as “…a sense of shame…prominently objective in its reference, having regard for others, a sense of shame…modesty rooted in character” (Vine’s Dict., IV, 17).
      3. Wisdom: “Sobriety”(KJV) or “Discreetly” (NASB).
         1. Some have attempted to throw so much clouded ambiguity on the question of modesty that there are no standards of modesty – then they will counter with, “You cannot judge” (Matt. 7:1-5, 20; John 7:24).
         2. Yet Paul tells us to use “good judgment, moderation, and self-control…” (Pastoral Epistle, Knight).
         3. Wisdom requires that questions be asked:
            1. Can I stand, walk, sit, kneel, or bend over?
            2. Am I “naked” according to biblical standards?
            3. Does my clothing emphasize certain parts of my body that would tend to entice others to lust?
            4. Does my clothing indicate a lack of character?
            5. What kind of influence will my clothing have on either believers or unbelievers?
            6. You can dress modestly and attractively, but don’t dress suggestively or provocatively – dress your body in a godly way and dress your life with good works (1 Tim. 2:10)
   3. **Attempt to Evade 1 Timothy 2:9-11:**
      1. It has become popular among brethren who are hesitant to address the modesty issue to argue that this text is merely speaking of status issues and cannot be applied to those who wear too little clothing.
      2. While it is true that the passage speaks to social-wealth status – it is not only speaking of that issue.
      3. Women were drawing attention to themselves socially and sexually (Isa. 3:16-26).
      4. Wearing jewelry or expensive clothing is not inherently sinful, but doing so for the wrong motivations is sinful (1 Pet. 3:1-4, priority, not prohibition).
      5. Godly women were to present themselves differently than the prostitutes of the Temple of Diana (Acts 19:24-35).
      6. ***Biblical principles can be applied to a variety of situations.***
   4. ***Yes, Modesty is about more than clothing; it’s about our heart.***
2. **Message #2: “We Can Know What is Modest!”**
   1. ***Does the Bible reveal principles that should guide us in our decisions about dress?***
      1. The Scriptures do not restrict the biblical definition of “nakedness” to absolute nudity.
         1. Exposure of the thigh is described as nakedness in the Bible (Exod. 28:42; Nahum 3:5; Isa. 47:2-3).
         2. The word “naked” of John 21:7 (KJV) is descriptive of one who is “scantily clothed” or “stripped down” not entirely nude.
      2. “Show me the verse?” (Resisting the whole of God’s teaching)
         1. We can show you the “verses” however we must harmonize biblical teaching in a comprehensive manner.
         2. Does the Bible have to specify a specific profane word before it is sinful (Eph. 4:29)?
         3. Does the NT have to tell us the exact amount to give before we can decide what would be right for us to contribute as Christians (2 Cor. 8-9; 16:2).
         4. Or are we to consider the principles of the gospel as a whole?
   2. ***All moral decisions involve judgments – but some judgments can be sinful (Phil. 1:9-11).***
      1. Ways one can be immodest?
         1. Too short (revealing the thighs)
         2. Too low off the shoulders (showing shoulders, chest, and back).
         3. Too sheer (can see through them)
         4. Too tight, leggings (more suggestive and appealing).
         5. Short dresses/miniskirts
         6. Split dresses, backless dresses, low-cut blouses, and dresses revealing cleavage and breasts.
         7. Swimsuits revealing large portions of the body *(****mixed swimming, public pool****).*
         8. Shorts revealing the thigh, men in public without their shirt on/short-shorts, or wearing tight clothing
   3. ***“Wasn’t this just a cultural issue in the first century - our culture does not see it this way?”***
      1. 1st Century Culture:
         1. Public nakedness went hand in hand with ancient pagan religion.
         2. God’s people covered their bodies in public, while pagans often uncovered theirs.
         3. Paul’s instruction was counter-cultural much like the encouragement to modesty today is distinctive.
   4. **Cultural Norms Do Not Deny Truth of Scripture:**
      1. Brethren have been making arguments that since there are other cultures that are dressing immodestly, we cannot know what is modest.
      2. Scriptural truth is transcultural
         1. Big difference between foot washing and greeting one another with a holy kiss and marriage, sin of homosexuality, and role of women in the worship assembly.
      3. Approach to Scripture that denies any unpopular doctrines in the name of “culture” is dangerous (Homosexuality, Women leadership in the church, Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Tim. 2:9-13; Gen. 1-3).
      4. Many of the cultures brought up not only dress immodestly, but also engage in sexual immorality, polygamy, and idolatry – the gospel calls humanity to change, not remain in sin.
   5. Our standards are to be determined by the Scriptures, not those living in sin (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
      1. “No one else feels that way!”
         1. We should not base what we believe on what others think, but what God has said (Jer. 10:23; Pro. 14:12; Isa. 55:8-9).
      2. “The event determines whether clothing is modest.”
         1. Wedding Dresses
         2. Athletic Activities
         3. Vacation, swimming, recreation
         4. School function/Formal event
         5. The event does not determine what is modest, God’s word does.
3. **Message #3: “Biblical Modesty is Relevant to Men and Women.”**
   1. Men are responsible for sinful lusts regardless of what a woman wears: “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman” (Job 31:1).
   2. Men are responsible for their dress as well as women (1 Tim. 2:8-9, “likewise.”)
      1. Short shorts/without a shirt on (Social Media)
   3. Men are attracted sexually to a woman quickly and visually.
      1. Men are attracted to women more visually, while women tend to be attracted more visually and relationally.
      2. Because men are responsible for their thoughts and actions does not mean that the dress of women is of no consequence!
      3. This is a struggle for all Christians, but it is a daily battle for men - Sisters, you can help your brothers in Christ.
      4. Notice Solomon’s warnings about sexual temptation:
         1. Her lips “dripped with honey” and her speech was as “smooth as oil” but “in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold of Sheol. She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable; she does not know it” (Pro. 5:3-6).
         2. In his warning against the appeal of the harlot Solomon writes, “Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her capture you with her eyelids…an adulteress hunts for the precious life. Can a man take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?” (Pro. 6:25-28).
         3. The description of the immoral woman in Proverbs includes “the dress of a harlot” (7:10).
         4. Why would any father want his wife or daughter to dress like the harlot?
         5. Why would a godly young man encourage a young woman to dress in such a fashion?
   4. Danger of sexual lusts (Matt. 5:28):
      1. The term “looks” indicates a continuous looking with sexual interest in a woman.
      2. It is not merely sexual desire; it is a desire that fantasizes and lacks only the opportunity (Heb. 13:4; cf. 2 Tim. 2:22; Gen. 39:9, 13).
      3. If clothing is being worn which you know will incite lustful thoughts in those striving to resist temptation – how has brotherly love not been violated?
      4. What type of influence are we exerting on other families in this local congregation?
      5. We should not have to fight the battle from our own brothers and sisters in the Lord.
      6. We are all responsible to help one another!
4. **Message #4: “Modesty Honors Marriage”**
   1. Honoring Marriage – Adam and Eve
      1. Before their sin, Adam and Eve made no connection between nudity and shame (Gen. 2:25).
      2. Through sin they lost their innocence and their sense of shame caused them to think differently about their bodies and environment (Gen. 3:7).
      3. Although they felt ashamed, the clothes they were using were insufficient (Gen. 3:7), so God gave them more clothing (Gen. 3:21).
      4. There is a bond between nudity and sexuality.
      5. Sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage, therefore the revealing of the body in a sexual way is reserved for marriage as well (Heb. 13:4).
      6. To publicly reveal large portions of one’s body is to betray your own spiritual purity and to jeopardize others.
   2. Marriage–covenant relationship with your husband or wife (Heb. 13:4; cf. Matt. 19:4-6; Pro. 5:15-23).
      1. If a husband is to be fulfilled and satisfied by “the wife of his youth” then why would he encourage her to seductively reveal her body to other men in the way she dresses?
      2. The book entitled, *“The Secret Keeper: The Delicate Power of Modesty”* by Dana Gresh addresses the fact that there are very intimate and private parts of our bodies that are reserved for our spouse – presently or “to be.”
      3. Modesty is a powerful tool to share the embodied gospel of Christ with the world – don’t let Satan strip you of who you are: “the temple of the Holy Spirit” which “glorifies God” (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
   3. “Don’t judge me”! Remember, God is our faithful Judge! 2 Cor. 5:10-11 – (Prayer)
   4. Invitation! None of us can be holy without the grace and cleansing of Christ!

Review Points and Definition

Introduction to Part Two: Title, definition, and review points from part 1-4

1. **Message #5: “Biblical Modesty Frees Us From Slavery to a Hyper-Sexualized Culture.** 
   1. **Modesty is about true spiritual freedom.**
      1. Some view modesty standards as arbitrary rules that restrict a woman’s creativity and freedom.
      2. But when modesty is motivated from a heart for God the opposite is true.
      3. Habitual immodesty is the result of spiritual slavery.
         1. A woman may define her worth by her body shape, sex appeal, or the brand names she wears, but it is the “hidden person of the heart” which is “precious in the sight of God” (1 Pet. 3:4).
         2. Paul encourages us to live in freedom from slavery to sin and the freedom to be a servant (Rom. 6:12-13; Gal. 5:13-14).
         3. A godly woman can be physically attractive, but it is her whole person that she gives to Christ and to her husband.
         4. Likewise, her husband is to give his whole person to Christ and his wife (1 Cor. 7:1-5).
         5. *“An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her…Strength and dignity are her clothing…she opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue…Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying, ‘Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.’ Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised”* (Pro. 31:10-11, 25-26, 28-30).
   2. Sexualized Objectification of Young Women through Immodest clothing.
      1. Can you imagine if someone said, “I don’t think we can know what the sexualization of women and girls through clothing really looks like?”
      2. Or “I don’t believe we can know clothing that objectifies women?”
      3. Had a sister say, “I believe a woman should look like a woman”
         1. Are you saying that a godly woman cannot present her femininity with modesty and holiness?
         2. Is this saying that if women do not dress in a highly sexualized manner that she does not possess real womanhood?
         3. What are we teaching our sons and daughters with such ideas?
      4. The American Psychological Association was tasked with examining the psychological theory, research, and clinical experience addressing the hyper-sexualized view of girls via media and other cultural messages.
         1. In study after study, findings have indicated that women more often than men are portrayed in a sexual manner (e.g., dressed in revealing clothing, expressing bodily postures or facial expressions that imply sexual readiness) and are objectified (e.g., used as a decorative object, or as body parts rather than a whole person).
      5. Examples of advertisement, clothing, and entertainment are shockingly abundant.
      6. Research links sexualized objectification of young women with three of the most common mental health problems of girls and women: eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression.
      7. Sexual objectification of women has been found to so damage a young woman’s self-image that her ability to have a mature personal relationship with a man is extremely difficult.
      8. What message are we sending our young people when we fail to help them see the whole person!
      9. Why is the ungodliness of Hollywood the standard of how Christians’ dress?
2. **Message #6: “Parents Can Talk to Their Children About Grace and Holiness.”**
   1. Parents are to teach their children the ways of the Lord (Deut. 6:1-9; Eph. 6:4).
   2. Fathers and Husbands:
      1. I have been saying for several years now: “I don’t understand how a father could either allow or encourage his daughter to dress immodestly?”
      2. I have now concluded that for some it’s a matter of having been desensitized to the viewing and consumption of so much sexualized material that they have convinced themselves that they should be proud of men looking lustfully at their daughters (Matt. 5:28; 2 Tim. 2:22).
      3. Or that men have lost the courage to lead their families in a godly manner (Josh. 24:15-16).
   3. How can we strive to teach our children about moral purity and modesty?
      1. Tune in and talk
         1. Know what media your kids are consuming.
         2. Have conversations about the worth of one’s entire person rather than merely how someone looks.
         3. Really listen to your sons and daughters.
      2. Don’t be afraid of questioning choices
         1. Too many fathers are afraid of standing up for what is right in their own homes.
            1. Be willing to speak up and have a conversation.
            2. Fathers, love your wives, sons, and daughters enough to lovingly, but firmly hold up standards of truth.
      3. Encourage and Educate
      4. Be real and model what you are teaching
   4. The Challenge of Social Media: *For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they did not hide it…”*
      1. What are we thinking?
         1. It has been disappointing and on occasion appalling to see some of the images Christians have posted on FB for the world to see or images they have pushed “like” to support.
         2. At best people are not thinking at all and at worst they are indifferent about what was posted.
         3. Pictures revealing immodesty, sexual poses, sexually explicit language should not be posted or supported by Christians.
         4. Our culture is riding a runaway train off a moral cliff and some Christians have decided to get on for the ride.
      2. **Parents and Social Media**
         1. Do you know what pictures and images are on your kids’ FB page?
         2. If you see something inappropriate – demand that they be removed and have a conversation as to why.
         3. If there is a struggle, be proactive and have an honest and kind conversation about it.
         4. If you get the “you don’t trust me” speech – remember that transparency and openness produces trust [“Trust, but verify” RR].
         5. If you are afraid your child will no longer be your “friend”- remember that God charged you to be their parent first – you will be friends when they grow up.
         6. If you decide that by doing what the Bible says you may lead them to rebel – realize that their only hope is for you to be strong and loving.
         7. You cannot have a loving and meaningful relationship if your children learn that they can manipulate and take advantage of you – they will love and respect you for being their parent and God will be pleased!
   5. **Keys for Parents:**
      1. Begin early – don’t allow immodesty until your sons and daughters are 16 and then expect an immediate change.
      2. Take the lead in teaching your children; do not wait for someone else to do it.
      3. Teach your children by your words and example.
      4. Strive to be consistent in standards and application.
      5. Mothers – teach your children what God says and do not undermine faithful husbands and fathers in leadership of the family into holiness.
      6. Fathers do not transfer your spiritual responsibility to lead your family on to your wives! Don’t be an absentee father!
      7. If anyone understands the power of sexual temptation it ought to be you!
3. **Message #7: “This Must Be Discussed in a Faithful Church”**
   1. The local congregation should encourage sanctification in our moral conduct.
      1. There are verses we have already discussed about modesty (1 Tim. 2:9-10).
      2. The apostles addressed all kinds of sexual immorality:
         1. “Sexual immorality,” “impurity,” and sensuality” are described as the works of the flesh which will keep us out of heaven (Gal. 5:19, 21).
         2. God’s wrath will come upon those who practice “sexual immorality,” “impurity,” “passion,” “evil desire,” which “amounts to idolatry” (Col. 3:5).
            1. The term “sensuality,” “licentiousness,” or “lasciviousness” indicates wickedness with sexual overtones.”
            2. It also indicates “a person who has gone so far that he or she ceases to care what people think.”
            3. Thayer says it indicates “indecent bodily movements” or “unchaste handling of males and females.” It would include lustful or immodest dress.
      3. Those who are the most resistant to these issues being addressed in a congregational setting are not discussing the issue biblically at home either.
         1. They spend most of their energy telling their families how they disagree with any strong teaching on the subject, albeit without any scriptural support.
         2. How do you expect their children to dress?
         3. There are times when parents are fine taking a biblical stance until their children hit the high school years.
         4. Then those same parents decide that it is time to find a congregation, elders, preachers who are willing to just not talk about it.
         5. The problem is not that there is an absence of teaching going on – but that they don’t have an appetite for the truth.
         6. Those who are teaching their families about holiness are delighted for the support of their brethren in Christ!
   2. Responsibility of Shepherds
      1. They are to “feed the flock” and guard against “wolves” (Acts 20:28).
      2. Not all people receive moral instruction on this issue at home or even have a physical family.
      3. Shepherds will give an account for having proclaimed the whole counsel of God to the Lord’s people (Heb. 13:17).
      4. “This will disrupt or divide the fellowship” – Then we need to be disrupted to wake our spiritual senses up” (Rom. 13:11-14).
   3. Influence of Deacons
      1. “Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9) with “dignity” (3:8) and a “high standing and great confidence in the faith” (3:13).
      2. We have been blessed with very faithful deacons here at 65: but I know of circumstances where deacons are undermining the work of elders, teachers, and gospel preachers in taking a stand on the issue of modesty because they were participating in sinful activities.
      3. We need a united community to help young Christians’ battle against a hostile culture!
   4. Gospel Preachers and Bible Class Teachers
      1. Work of preachers:
         1. Preach the “word” (2 Tim. 4:2) and the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2) even when some “will not endure sound (healthy) doctrine” but would rather have their ears tickled…” (2 Tim. 4:3).
         2. If you want to find a congregation that will “accumulate teachers in accordance with their own desires” because they have turned their “ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths” you do not have to get outside of central Arkansas.
         3. But is that in the best interest of serving Christ and the salvation of your family?
         4. Some obsess over ensuring that NO teaching is done on the subject but why? Because they are hanging on to the world over the Lord.
      2. Consequences of Silent Pulpits on the Modesty Issue
         1. Leads to a disregard of God’s word (John 12:47-48)
         2. Defile and sear the conscience (1 Tim. 4:7)
         3. Create a culture and environment that makes it difficult to teach the truth in the future: “If we do not preach on it now – the time will come when you cannot preach on it” (2 Tim. 4:2-4).
         4. We can lose our sense of godly shame (Jer. 6:15; 8:12).
         5. Conform to the world, rather than transformed by Christ (Rom. 12:2) AS close to the world as possible?
         6. More likely to move into more immodesty and even other sinful behaviors (2 Tim. 3:13).
      3. Godly women (How do you respond?) Advice?
4. **Message #8: “Expression of Brotherly Love”**
   1. We can teach the truth firmly, but lovingly (Eph. 4:15; Jude 22-23):
   2. It is out of concern for souls that these types of sermons are preached.
      1. Instruction, correction, and warnings are inherent in teaching the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
      2. Loving, but firm preaching is done on salvation, conversion, the church, bible authority, homosexuality, marriage, divorce, and remarriage, etc.
      3. A silent pulpit on moral and doctrinal issues over multiple generations only makes it more difficult to help people in the future.
   3. **The results are positive!**
      1. Modesty is a gift to those around you.
      2. Modesty is an act of brotherly love.
      3. Modesty is a Biblical way of fleeing sensuality.
      4. Modesty shows the world that God cares about the whole person: body, soul, and spirit.

Conclusion: “But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way” (Heb. 6:9). “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you” (Phil. 3:1).