

## **“What Can I Do About Immodesty?”**

**By Paul R. Blake**

Last week I received this question from a young preacher. “How do you go about dealing with modesty? What is the right way to go about it, especially when you have ladies, teens and older, who dress immodestly at church services and even more immodestly outside of church services? Do you keep it all in the pulpit? Do you go to them personally... whether to the person themselves, or the parents; or, shrug it off as weakness and move on? This has been weighing heavily on my mind for quite a while. I have preached a couple of sermons on modesty and used other preacher's articles on modesty in our bulletin. Yet the problem persists. Any advice, help, ideas, solutions, etc. you can give to me would be very much appreciated.”

You have hit upon a matter that is both pernicious and pervasive among Christian women. I cannot fathom how a sister in Christ can claim to be chaste and at the same time display her body in such a fashion as to communicate by appearance that she is willing to have sex with any man that passes by. I know that they are merely wearing the current fashions and are in all likelihood unaware of the impact it is having on others. But whether or not they are aware of the effect of their clothes, they are committing the sin of immodesty that is no less condemned than the sin of fornication.

In my 36 years of preaching, I have spoken on modesty extensively and have used “great plainness of speech.” One of the other elders here at TR has also taught on it; from the Bible class lectern he even called the blouses currently in fashion: “cleavage shows.” Here at TR and in most places where I hold meetings or visit, the men dress modestly. In fact, there seems to be an increasing trend among men to wear dress clothes instead of work clothes or casual attire to worship. However, nearly everywhere I go, many of the middle aged and younger sisters come to services in either “backyard casual” or some form of sexually revealing clothes currently in fashion. As an evangelist and an elder, it is a sad and frustrating experience to try to communicate the harm they do to their soul and influence, as well as the pressure they put on the young men who have a hard time keeping their thoughts pure. In short, I don't know how to get through! Perhaps we have lost this generation and will have to wait for the tide of fashion to change, and then try to teach the next generation to be modest.

What I have done since I began preaching is to do a lesson nearly every spring or early summer on modesty. I do not do the same lesson, and I realize there are only so many texts in the scriptures that address it, but at the same time I try to take a fresh approach in each sermon. One of the other elders also addresses the matter occasionally, both in sermons and in his Bible class. In addition, I often put very direct articles in the bulletin for members to read. As elders, we have had to directly address a few who dress immodestly. Obviously, if it is a young person we go to the parents. I would never recommend that you speak to a sister about this by yourself. Take your wife or an older sister or an older brother with you. Due to the sensitive nature of this subject, you could greatly damage your good name should the sister have malevolent intent toward you or decide to retaliate. And if she is easily angered by the discussion, she will be less inclined to make a scene with multiple persons present.

However, the scripturally effective way of doing this is to teach the older sisters to do their God-given job. Titus 2:3-5 still says, “...the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things-- 4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste...” It is their job to teach young women to be discreet and chaste. If there is a problem with immodesty among the younger women in the local church, in all probability part of the responsibility can be laid at the feet of older women who have become either too lazy or too squeamish to step up and teach the young women about modesty. So now we have two sins

being committed: 1) younger sisters wanting to display their fashion sense instead of their commitment to Christ, and 2) older sisters who have abdicated their Christian duty.

Regardless of how you approach this matter, please understand that there is no short term solution. It will take a lot of teaching and even more patience before there is improvement. You will not be appreciated for pressing forward in this matter. In fact, you will very likely be ridiculed and dismissed as an ultra-conservative. There is the possibility you may be asked to leave. One preacher told me years ago that he does not preach on modesty because it is "career suicide." I even had one woman tell me years ago that she thought I was a "closet pervert" because I preached about such things. But here is one fact that many women cannot escape and often refuse to admit: based on every psychological study on this subject, it is as stimulating for women to dress in immodest clothes and be viewed by men, as is it is for men to view them in immodest clothes. I would be inclined to ask, if a sister claims this is not true and that she wants to be seen as a chaste Christian woman, then why does she wear clothing that implies otherwise?

May God bless you in your labors in His Kingdom. In the words of the apostle Paul, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1Cor. 16:13).

### **A Moments Wisdom on Modesty**

- It was the Almighty who decreed that men and women must cover their nakedness by wearing proper and modest clothing. No amount of rationalizing can change God's will. No amount of fashion design can turn immodesty into virtue, and no amount of popularity can change sin into righteousness.
- Dress modestly. Girls, go and find modest clothes and wear them, make them as beautiful as you can and be attractive and make up to your boyfriends with a bright intellect and sweet spirit and attractive demeanor. It is a rather weak girl who has only her body to attract someone.
- The rapid, sweeping deterioration of values is characterized by a preoccupation--even an obsession--with the procreative act. Abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it are openly scoffed at--marriage and parenthood ridiculed as burdensome, unnecessary. Modesty, a virtue of a refined individual or society, is all but gone.
- Modesty is the conscience of the body.
- Modesty is the beauty of women. (Gaelic Proverb)
- Modesty is not only an ornament, but also a guard to virtue.
- When virtue and modesty enlighten her charms, the glow in the face of a woman is brighter than the stars of heaven.