

From 'Maxim' to Modest, Ex-Victoria's Secret Model Exposes Media's Sexualized Agenda

When a commercial for Victoria's Secret flits on the television, one might think the models featured have it all: rocking bodies, adoring men and friends, comfort and confidence in who they are.

But it's all smoke and mirrors, says Nicole Weider, a former model who did some work for the lingerie giant, as well as magazines like *Maxim*.

It's easy to look at swimsuit and lingerie catalogs and think a model could avoid those jobs if she wanted to. When desperation strikes, however, a model will take a job just to pay the bills. The consequences of such a choice may not be worth the money.

Weider says the degradation surrounding parading herself in her underwear around men can lead to a frightening depression that only one thing can fix: God.

"Basically, God had to crumble everything I thought was important," Weider says. I had a false identity by putting self-worth only in modeling. He had to crumble that perception in my life, so I had a reliance on Him. He had to mold me from scratch. ... If I was still modeling, going about my life in my own doing, I wouldn't have been in a desperate situation where I needed God."

Now, Weider is a spirit-filled activist who inspires women of all ages to pursue God with their bodies and lifestyles. She's made waves in the past with her campaign to end the sale of

Cosmo to minors.

To share her message, she's created a community—and a book—called *Project Inspired*. Weider's goal is to show women they can be godly and feminine, and the book ranges in topics from relationships to bullying to cutting to fashion. Girls need spiritually positive influences, she says, to show them how to ignore what's around them and grow in strength and truth.

"Because the sexualization of young women today is so extreme through media like songs, magazines and TV shows, young girls are taught our worth is only in how sexy we are, if we get a guy or not, that we have to do whatever it takes, including sleeping with them on first date or different sex acts to get the guy to stay with us," Weider says. "The sex pressure is so extreme and devastating to their self-esteem and character."

In *Project Inspired*, Weider writes about how to define a new normal that allows a young woman to surround herself with positive, feminine influences, and it starts with what her soul absorbs.

When Weider first became a Christian, she took a sharp finger to her iPod, deleting any song that was degrading or mentioned women as sex objects. Next, she went to her wardrobe, tossing out shirts and dresses that were too low-cut or revealing.

But downplaying the sexy didn't erase Weider's desire for beauty. In a world where women are constantly encouraged to be nothing more than the object of a man's desire, church women can sometimes go to the opposite extreme and critique others for dressing fashionably or wearing make-up.

"We are all made in image of God and should be proud of our femininity," Weider says. "It's not a sin to care about how we look or wear make-up. It's OK to be a girly girl who is into modest fashion. ... it can be taken to an extreme sometimes (if people say it's a) sin to dress up or wear curlier hair. But

an extreme mentality leads away young women from going to church if the church says they're sinning about caring about how they look. It's OK to be glamorous."

Weider says it boils down to seeking your worth in God, not others in the world or others in the church. When a young woman craves the Word of God, it empowers her to be the woman He designed her to be.