

Should Christians Wear Bikinis at the Beach?

Ah, modesty—the ever controversial topic sure to stir up Christians as youth group girls head to the beach and pools for church retreats and vacations.

Should they wear bikinis? Should they pull T-shirts on? Where is that always-discussed modesty line?

John Piper addressed the issue in a recent podcast:

My approach was never to start with the rules or the guidelines, but to start with God and the gospel and the Bible and the Spirit and faith and joy. Deep things need to happen in a woman's and a man's soul before they have any chance of thinking and feeling about these things in a way that honors God. I will just say this to any woman, any man who dresses inappropriately: Until God has become your treasure, until your own sin has become the thing you hate most, until the Word of God is your supreme authority that you feel to be more precious than gold, sweeter than honey, until the gospel of Christ's death in your place is the most precious news in the world to you, until you have learned to deny yourself short-term pleasures for the sake of long-term joy and holiness, until you have grown to love the Holy Spirit and long for His fruit more than man's praise, until you count everything as loss compared to the supreme value of knowing Christ, your attitude towards your clothing and your appearance will be controlled by forces that don't honor Christ.

That doesn't mean you jump right into the "Thou shalt not's," though. Quoting scriptures like 1 Timothy 2:8-9 could hurt more than help in the first few modesty talks.

Piper offers these three tips:

1) *When it comes to guidelines that grow out of the gospel, start with your staff and the leaders of the ministries that are up front. Don't start with everybody. Start working from the inside out so that there emerges a culture and a modeling from your worship leaders, from your staff who are in front, from the leaders of the youth ministry, and so on. Work with your leaders.*

2) *Deal with parents quietly and work toward common expectations for the young people. That is not easy, but it is a wise priority, instead of attacking things at the most painful point of the way the girls and boys are dressing. Come on, let's get the parents on board here.*

3) *Cultivate the joyful sense that modesty is beautiful. Renounce any mindset that modest means frumpy. From my own experience—I am just testifying as a man now who has been a teenager and a 20-year-old and a 30-year-old and a 40-year-old and a 50-year-old and a 60-year old—I can testify without any doubt that at every age of my life, my masculine life, my hungry life: Sexy dressing of women is less attractive than modest beauty. Of course, it makes the eyes turn. It makes the eyes turn, but there is a world of difference between making men's eyes turn with sexy dressing and being attractive as a beautiful or a handsome person.*

Do you agree? Sound off!