

When Modesty Is Controversial

It was probably one of the easiest school assignments ever. For a girl, a dream assignment.

Go to the mall (say what??), sit and watch people walk by.

For a people watcher like me, I was in heaven.

But, there was a bit more to the assignment: I was to look at how women behaved and how men looked at those women.

I walked away from that assignment with a full notebook and a heavy heart.

To be sure, I noted the micro-minis, short shorts, plunging necklines and bare midriffs.

But if this was the only way to sum up modesty, the blogosphere wouldn't explode every year with articles on why women should be covered from neck to wrist to ankle, or why they *shouldn't* ... because women shouldn't be ashamed of their bodies.

There wouldn't be articles by both men and women calling on men to take responsibility for their own eyes and thoughts, or the now infamous post on yoga pants.

And the reason why the modesty issue is so controversial and multi-layered is exactly what I saw that day in the mall.

You can't reduce modesty to skirt length, the depth of a neckline or even how much skin you show. To be sure, I think that many women would agree that these three things are indeed a reflection on how we view modesty, but they are not the sum total of the equation.

There are two reasons why we must take the modesty discussion deeper than just what we put on our bodies.

1. Styles change but the real issue never changes. Every generation presents modest issues. While parents bemoan the fact that school clothes shopping for this generation is a headache for their girls, my mom had the exact same issue when I was young. Modesty is—and always will be—a heart issue. Styles change, but the battle of the heart will always be the same.

2. If we deal with the symptom of the problem, and never address the root, the problem will continue to manifest itself in other areas.

What is the root problem?

1 John tells us that for every sin there are one of three roots: lust of the flesh (*greed*), lust of the eyes (*immorality*), and the pride of life.

Anytime a woman uses her charm to seduce a man, she is immodest. She may use one or more tools: clothing, touch, her eyes, her facial expressions, flattery ... the list goes on.

The tools are merely a symptom of a deep root of sin that needs to be dealt with. When the sin of lust, which breeds immodesty, is dealt with the symptoms will resolve themselves.

It is so easy to allow the debate of whether women should or should not wear pants, bikinis, sleeveless shirts or any other type of clothing to distract us from the real issue ...

... and while I firmly believe that a godly woman's heart will be reflected in a higher standard that does not allow her dress in a certain way, the truth is that an immoral woman can be buttoned at the neck and have a skirt swirling at her ankles.

So my challenge to you in 2015 is this, while Facebook and Twitter buzzes with debate whether or not we should “bind women” in fetters of iron modesty or we should place that

burden on the shoulders of men who are solely responsible for their own thoughts ...

... let's look past the fluff and get to the heart of matter.

1. Let's teach our girls what purity of heart really is.
2. Let's train them to allow the beauty of the Holy Spirit to shine through their eyes.
3. Let's teach them that a heart free from lust will shine on their faces.
4. Let's remind them that a life fully dedicated to the Lord will be reflected in the type of clothing with which they choose to cover their temple.

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